

John Woods Harris, Ensign, USNRF
"John"

Date of Designation: 11 September 1918 NA # 1149

Dates of Active Duty: 17 October 1917 - 1919

Total Flight Hours: 158 hours in Aero M., Curtis F-boats, Curtis R-9s, N-9s and the HS1.

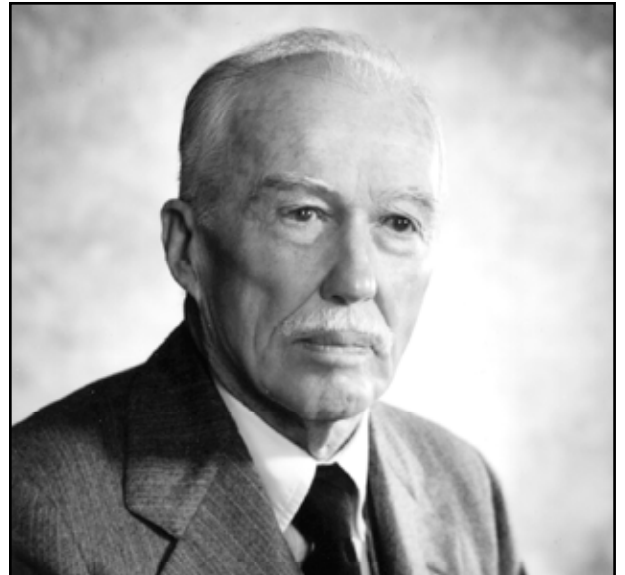
Duty Assignment Chronology

John Woods Harris was born in Galveston, Texas on September 23, 1893. On October 17, 1917, he enrolled in the U. S. Naval Reserve Force (USNRF) as a Seaman Second Class for a term of four years. He advanced from Seaman to Chief Quartermaster.

He commenced basic flight training on April 15, 1918 at Naval Air Station Pensacola, FL., and soloed on June 24, 1918 after 23 flights and 18 hours 53 minutes of flight time. During a subsequent solo flight on July 10, 1918 in an Aero M, the motor quit. The airplane was landed in the water and was towed in by a Coast Patrol boat. He continued into the advanced instrument, bombing, gunnery, navigation phases of training, completing these on August 9, 1918.

On September 10, 1918, he was discharged as a Chief Quartermaster, was appointed Ensign USNRF and ordered to duty at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, FL. On September 11, 1918 he was appointed as Naval Aviator # 1149, for duty involving actual flying in aircraft, dirigibles, balloons and airplanes. After flight training, he ploughed back as an instructor and reported to Squadron III, where he became an instructor in bombing.

During his flying career, Ensign Harris flew several types of early Navy airplanes. He flew the Aero M., Curtis F-boats, Curtis R-9, N-9 and HS1. The Curtis F-boats was the prototype of the later big flying boats. It was a small pusher type bi-plane with inter-plane ailerons. Two pilots sat side-



by-side in front of the engine in a cockpit in the very nose of the aircraft. Because the pilots sat so far forward there was nothing in front of them, not even a windshield to help judge the attitude of the aircraft relative to the horizon. The flight crew was pushed through the air at about 60 miles an hour with the motor noise, engine exhaust and slipstream behind them. The F-boat proved to be a fine aircraft for training pilots.

John Woods Harris spent his entire flying career as a Navy flight instructor and never was assigned to a fleet squadron. He is a true aviation pioneer and was responsible for training many of the Navy's finest fleet pilots. When the war ended, John Woods Harris left the Navy and returned to civilian life.

On September 23, 1997, John Woods Harris was 104 years old. He is currently the oldest member of the Early and Pioneer Naval Aviators Association (The Golden Eagles).