



**Vernon J. Coley, Captain, USN (Ret.)**

“Jack”

Date of Designation: 22 May 1940      NA # 6447

Dates of Active Duty: 15 June 1939 - 15 November 1959

Total Flight Hours: 8,000

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 8

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 150   Prop: 7,850   VF/VA: 2,500  
VR/VP: 5,500   VT: 264

Combat Tours:

WW II: VP-11 (PBY), Dec. 7, 1941 - Jul. 1942. NAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.

(Jul. 1942 - Dec. 1942) South Pacific, including Solomon Islands, Guadalcanal, Tonolei Harbor, Bougainville, Santa Cruz Islands.

Total missions (PBY Catalina) - 41

WW II: VPB-133 (PV-1), Mar. 1945 - Aug. 1945. Tinian, Iwo Jima, Truk, Open ocean between Iwo Jima and Japanese Islands.

Total missions (PV-1) - 28

Aviation Commands:

CO, FASRON 125, NAS Whidbey Island, WA., Mar. 1948 - Jun. 1949.

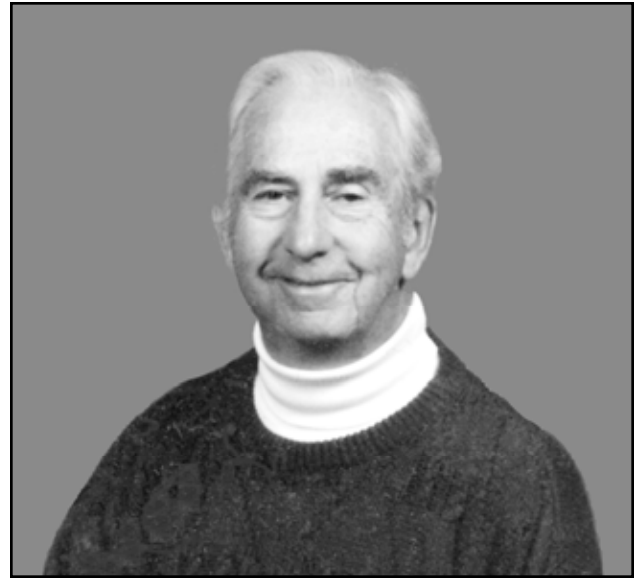
Officer-in-Charge, Project Ski Jump II, Pt. Barrow to North Pole, Feb. 1952 - Apr. 1952.

CO, VP-57, NAS Whidbey Island, WA, Jul. 1952-Nov. 1953 (Deployed to Atsugi, Japan, Mar.- Oct. 1953).

CO, VX-6, NAS Quonset Point, RI, Apr. 1957 - Aug. 1958 (Deployed to Antarctica Sep. 1957-Mar. 1958).

Combat Awards:

1 Distinguished Flying Cross  
3 Air Medals



**Duty Assignment Chronology**

9/39-6/40      Flight Training, NAS Pensacola, FL.  
7/40-6/41      VP-23, NAS Pearl Harbor, HI.  
6/41            VP-23 became VP-11. Moved to NAS Kaneohe Bay, Kaneohe, HI.  
6/41-7/42      VP-11, NAS Kaneohe, HI.  
7/42-12/42    VP-11, deployed in South Pacific.  
1/43-12/43    Operational Training Command, NAS Sanford, FL., NAS Beaufort, SC. - Instructor.  
1/44-3/44      COMFAIR Alameda, Replacement Pool.  
3/44-6/44      COMFAIR Hawaii, ASW Training, NAS Kaneohe, HI.  
7/44-1/45      Night Attack and Combat training unit, NAS Barbers Point, HI.  
1/45-3/45      COMFAIR Hawaii, NAS Kaneohe, HI., - Refresher Training.  
3/45-8/45      VPB-133 (Tinian).  
9/45-10/47    Naval Ordnance Test Station, Inyokern, CA.  
11/47-2/48    Fleet Airborne Electronics Training Unit San Diego, CA. (Sonar School).  
3/48-6/49      CO, FASRON 125, NAS Whidbey IIs., WA.  
8/49-1/50      Test Pilot School, NATC Patuxent River, MD (student - Class #3).  
1/50-6/52      Tactical Test Division, NATC Patuxent River, MD.  
2/52-4/52      OIC, Project Skijump II, Point Barrow, AK., and North to the Pole.  
7/52-3/53      CO, VP-57, NAS Whidbey Island, WA.  
3/53-10/53    VP-57 Deployment (Atsugi, Japan).  
12/53-3/55    FAW-6 (Iwakuni, Japan).  
5/55-4/57      Electronics Test Division, NATC Patuxent River, MD.  
4/57-9/57      CO, VX-6, NAS Quonset Point, RI.  
9/57-3/58      VX-6 Deployed to Antarctica.  
3/58-8/58      VX-6 (NAS Quonset Point, RI.  
8/58-10/59    COMNABS 14 Staff, NAS Barbers Point, HI.  
10/59           Retired from active duty.

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## Summary of Significant Career Events

- (1) Participated in development of PBY Black Cat tactics during World War II.
- (2) Four-day submarine cruise to Iwo Jima in May, 1945, following successful ditching (with starboard engine shot out) alongside the lifeguard sub SS-419, USS *Tigrone*.
- (3) Tested over 20 different aircraft at Naval Ordnance Test Station, Inyokern, CA. (later named NWC China Lake), 1945-1947. Aircraft tested included one of the earliest jet aircraft, the FR-1 Fireball.
- (4) As test pilot at the Tactical Test Division, NATC Patuxent River, MD (1950-52), demonstrated minimum crew P2V, an attempt to reduce tactical load on the crew through use of dark trace radar display tubes for memory. The project failed due to state-of-the-art inadequacy, especially the ball-disk resolver. (After returning to civilian life, I was fortunate to participate in the P3C development at Lockheed, where 15 years later, the concept was successfully implemented using digital computer technology.)
- (5) Project Ski Jump II. In 1953, I led expeditions using the Ski-equipped P2V, the vehicle that made Arctic exploration possible. One of the aircraft, an R4D with the project's oceanographic equipment, crashed during takeoff from ice 750 miles north of Pt. Barrow. After 4 days, I was able to fly in and rescue all 12 of the stranded crew and return to Pt. Barrow with no casualties. Also during Ski Jump II, made a visit to Ice Island T-3 (89 degrees North) with my two P2V Neptunes en route to the North Pole for ice surveys. During the takeoff from T-3, my starboard engine swallowed a valve and caught fire. Landing was immediate! We received outstanding support from COMALSEAFRON and FASRON 114 and especially the USAF Air Sea Rescue Squadron at Elmendorf AFB, who flew in a replacement engine at considerable hazard. We changed the engine, flew the slow time while circling the North Pole, and proceeded to Thule, Greenland. I spent 18 days on T-3.
- (6) During Project Deepfreeze III, 1957-1958, VX-6 supported U.S. research activities during the International Geophysical Year (IGY). On a flight to the South Pole, I lost an engine, requiring an engine change at South Pole Station under extreme conditions (Temperature-63F). I hold the record of being the first (and probably only) pilot to have made engine changes at both the North and South Poles. I also have the distinction of being the second man (the first after Admiral Byrd) to have visited both Poles.