

NASWI & Pacific Northwest Naval Air Museum



PBY-6A on the Ramp across from Sitka, Alaska, July 1949. From the Gene Guthrie Collection, 4/2001 PBYMF 2006-0216B. Photographer Unknown.

Oak Harbor was known for generations as a small, quiet farming community. When Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941, Whidbey Island had already been selected by the U.S. Navy as an important base for seaplanes patrolling the waters of the Pacific Northwest. By 1942, squadrons of PBY Catalinas (large patrol bombers) were routinely departing from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) for missions along the Pacific Coast. NASWI has played an important part in the U.S. Navy's training and coastal defense ever since, deploying to operations worldwide. Today, it is commonplace to see regular fly-bys of EA-18G Growlers; MH-60S Knighthawks; P-3 Orion; the P-8 Poseidon, and others.



Visitors to Oak Harbor can explore the Pacific Northwest Naval Air Museum, which was founded by WWII PBV Veterans and their families, determined to preserve the

history and heritage of the impressive PBY aircraft. It has evolved into an organization dedicated to preserving the history of naval aircraft in the Pacific Northwest, and its impact on the development of the culture of this community. Primarily staffed by volunteer docents, visitors to the museum are treated to flight simulator experiences, night vision goggle training, an A-6 Intruder ejection seat, interactive displays of tail hooks, and a genuine PBY gunner turret. Be sure to check the museum website for updates to their location and hours.

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the museum's PBY-5A Catalina is open to the public for tours, by appointment during the week or at regular intervals during open hours on weekends.



TOP LEFT: EA-18G Growler currently stationed at NAS Whidbey. Photo: Jack Penland.

BOTTOM LEFT: Grumman A-6 Intruder, circa 1979. Photo: Sherrye Wyatt.

ABOVE RIGHT: USN uniform Chief Petty Officer. Collection PNWNAM. Photo: Ric Colgan 2023.