

Aerometeograph Sounding (APOB)

From: Don Cruse
Subject: RE: Aircraft Bourne Met Equipment?
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Those guys are preparing to take an aerograph sounding (APOB) to approx ten thousand feet. NAS Anacostia was one of the sparse network of APOB stations long before radiosonde. The depicted aerometeograph or aerograph is an original model. In first photo the Aerographer is standing with the pilot who is wearing aviation green trousers (and I loved that uniform) and in other photo they are rigging the instrument on wing between struts for flight. Normally one APOB was taken daily. I wish I could name that Aerographer, who looks familiar. APOB was normally flown before dawn—nice and cold.

The aerograph we placed on display at National Museum of Naval Aviation was a later (c.1938), more streamlined model. It was donated. Same model we had aboard USS INTREPID (CV-11) and other ESSEX class CV during 1943-44-45 ... also most new carriers were equipped with radiosonde receiver which we used during GQ tuned to TBS frequencies so we had a clue wot was happening in our task group

Just before USS WASP (CV-7) was torpedoed 15 Sept 42 we briefly anchored Noumea for re-supply. One August afternoon I flew my one-and-only aerograph hop when USS SAN FRANCISCO requested main battery rangefinder calibration. Chief Leo Abraham Lee helped me prepare the aerograph before departing WASP and later obtaining instrument readings when I returned. The SOC-3 a/c in SF was on stbd catapult so it was easy to climb up & use the standard clamp-on spiders & bungee cord to mount the instrument between wing struts for good exposure.

One of the SF mechs loaned me his summer flight jacket to keep me from freezing – I was wearing whites. The SOC-3 was craned off the catapult and into the water, pilot started engine and took off, climbed to ten thousand feet and flew back & forth across the anchorage while being tracked by SF fire controlmen. It was cold. Landed in harbor, taxied to SF for hoisting. By the time I got back aboard WASP my body was returning to normal temp. The chief and I calculated height values and the info was sent to SF by flashing light.

When recently reading “Neptunes Inferno” by James Hornfischer I learned the SF was part of TF64 at battle of Cape Esperance 11-12 Oct 42 – her 8” main battery did good during that night action.

CUL Don