

The Grumman Albatross ... a World Beater

**An excerpt taken from *Kicking Tires and Lighting Fires* by C.W. Swickley
and augmented by photographs from the personal collection of CAPT W. C. Dahlgren. USCG**

At CGAS Brooklyn in early 1961, CDR Wallace C. "Wally" Dahlgren had a conversation with CDR Fletcher Brown, who was a liaison officer with the U.S. Navy and visiting CGAS Brooklyn, who raised the idea that the Grumman UF-1G could probably break a lot of records for seaplanes. This was news to CDR Dahlgren; but very interesting. While browsing through some literature on FAI world records, he came upon several records for amphibian type aircraft. What intrigued Dahlgren was that the Grumman Albatross was capable of breaking many of the old records, or where no previous record existed, setting new ones. By his calculations, the Albatross was capable of setting 23 new marks. The idea that germinated in his mind was, why not do it?



Before setting such an ambitious scheme into action, Dahlgren first had to sell the idea. Sending a letter through the chain of command, requesting authorization to make the attempt, was the first step. The commanding officer forwarded Dahlgren's letter to Third Coast Guard District with a noncommittal "For consideration" endorsement, but by a fortuitous quirk of fate, Headquarters transferred Dahlgren to the Third District as SAR Officer. Thus, Dahlgren found himself in the unique position of recommending approval for his own request. As he later stated, "It was hard not to get a favorable endorsement!"

After being told by Coast Guard Headquarters that these things were usually funded by the manufacturer with operating and crew expenses provided by the service involved, he broached the idea to the Grumman folks at Bethpage. Grumman was all for the idea, and while pledging their support, insisted on including the other major Albatross users, namely the Navy and the Air Force.

Dahlgren, duly placed in charge of the project, worked closely with Grumman to develop a plan. Since administrative expenses for each attempt ran in the neighborhood of \$1,000, and since Grumman was picking up the tab, Dahlgren decided to challenge only nine of the most significant records. The Coast Guard, Navy, and Air Force would share in the glory, each setting three records. Accordingly, CGAS Brooklyn was tasked to provide the Albatross and maintenance support for the Coast Guard and Navy attempts while the Air Force indicated it would provide a plane of its own.

The Air Station chose a recently overhauled Albatross, UF-2G 7255, but before making any attempts at records, the engineering department took several measures to better prepare the plane. The 7255's engines were replaced with the lowest oil-burners and an auxiliary oil tank was installed in the cabin. A series of pumps, valves, and connecting lines made it possible to send replenishment oil out into the nacelle tanks. Then to add lightness, mechanics stripped insulation and other nonessentials from the plane. Since the standard fuel gauges lacked the desired accuracy, mechanics installed "boiler tube" glass sight gauges similar to those used in the old Grumman JRF Goose. This made it possible to readily see the last 600 pounds of fuel.

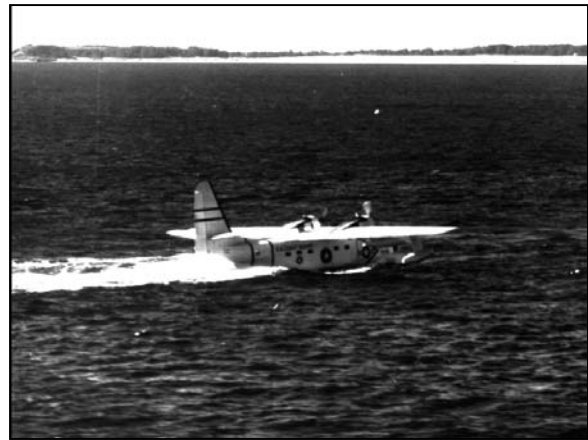
A final measure was to install a doppler navigation system and 7255 was ready to go.



Departure from CGAD Kodiak, Alaska



Arriving Pensacola, NAS Golf Course



Landing, NAS Pensacola Seadrome

BOX SCORE



Speed record -- over 1,000 km (540 nautical miles) closed course with 1,000 kg (2,205 lb) load.
Pilot -- CDR Dahlgren, USCG, achieved 201.5 kts on 13 Aug 62.

Speed record B over 1,000 km (540 n.mi) closed course with 2,000 kg (4,409 lb) load.
Pilot -- CDR Dahlgren, USCG, achieved 201.5 kts on 13 Aug 62.

Pictured at left RADM R. M. Ross, USCG, Commander 3rd CG District greets the speed record crew CDR Dahlgren and CDR W. Gerald Fenlon.

Speed record B Over 1,000 km (540 n.mi) closed course with 5,000 kg (11,023 lb) load.
Pilot - Capt Higginson, USAF, achieved 133.4 kts on 19 Mar 63.

Speed record B over 5,000 km (2,700 n.mi) closed course with 1000 kg (2,205 lb) load.
Pilot - LCDR Hoffman, USN, achieved 131.5 kts on 16 Sep 62.

Altitude record B with 1,000 kg load. LCDR Moore, USN, achieved 29,406 ft on 12 Sep 62.

Altitude record B with 2,000 kg load. LCDR Franke, USN, achieved 20,617 ft on 12 Sep 62

Altitude record B with 5,000 kg load. Capt Ervin, USAF, achieved 17,123 ft on 20 Mar 63

Load record B heaviest to 2,000 meters. Capt Ervin, USAF, achieved 12,125 lb. on 20 Mar 63

Distance non-stop B CDR Fenlon, USCG, achieved 3,107 n.mi (5,750 km) on 25 Oct 62.

VADM Fitzhugh Lee, USN, Chief Naval Training & RADM C. B. Olson, USCG, Commander 8th CG District pose with the entire crew:



Left to Right: ADC W. L. Taggart, RADM Olson, CDR Fenlon, CDR Dahlgren, LT Senn, Art Johnson (NAA Observer), VADM Lee (not pictured: AT1 L. P. Jones)

Mr. Ed Zolkoski, Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation, sponsors of the record attempts congratulates CDR W. Gerald Fenlon, USCG. CDR Wally Dahlgren beaming between them.



FAI Diplôme de Record

FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE INTERNATIONALE

Diplôme de Record

NOUS SOUSSIGNÉS CERTIFIONS QUE *Cmdr Wallace C. Dahlgren U.S.C.G.* (Etats-Unis)
 SUR avion Amphibie *Grumman VF 2 G Albatross* ; 2 moteurs *Wright R 1820-76 D*
 de 1425 HP
 a ÉTABLI LE *13 août 1962*

LE RECORD SUIVANT : *Vitesse de 373,32 Km/h. avec charge de 2000 Kg. sur circuit fermé*
de 1000 Km.
Circuit : Floyd Bennett Field Tower New-York au Triangulation Point
pres Elizabeth City et retour.

Pour NAA LE PRÉSIDENT. *Martin H. Becker*
 Classe C. 3. 11. LE SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL DE LA F.A.I. *W. G. Fenlon*
 LE PRÉSIDENT DE LA F.A.I. *Jacques Lecourt*



National Aeronautic Association

*Representing in the United States of America
The Federation Aeronautique Internationale
awards this*

Certificate of Record

to

Commander Wallace C. Dahlgren, USCG

for

*Class C-3, Group II - Amphibians
Speed Over a 1,000 Kilometer Closed Course With
Payloads of 1,000 Kilograms, and 2,000 Kilograms
Grunman UF-2G "Albatross," Floyd Bennett Field, New York*

13 August 1962

231.96 MPH

Wm. Wecker
President

M. J. Raulo
Contest and Record Board



The Coast Guard awarded medals for 7255's flight crew, including a Distinguished Flying Cross for CDR Dahlgren.

Postscript #1: Those stationed at Brooklyn at the time will long remember the sight of UF-2G 7255 squatting ingloriously on the runway, wheels still in their wells. Not long after she had gained immortality by setting six world records, a moment's inattention in the cockpit resulted in a humbling wheels-up landing!

Postscript #2: After undergoing overhaul at Hayes Aircraft in Dothan, Alabama, 7255 was assigned to CGAD Sangley Point. When the Coast Guard closed Sangley Point, it gave 7255 to the Philippine Air Force. Later, 7255, fully loaded and chock-full with passengers, was on a water takeoff in Manila Bay when an engine failed. The pilot aborted the takeoff successfully and the plane quickly drifted to a stop. Then, intending to get some air circulation in the cabin, the crewman in the afterstation opened the door. But when he did, the passengers panicked. When everyone rushed aft to get out, their weight made the tail squat. Water poured in over the door sill and flooded the plane which then sank.

Somewhere at the bottom of Manila Bay lies 7255 - holder of six world records, most famous of Coast Guard aircraft, and target of affection from those who flew and maintained her. May she rest in peace.

Editor's Note:

In putting this document together, justice was not done to the record holders, the Coast Guard, Grumman AEC, UF-1G CGNR 7255, nor anyone involved. This was caused by the span of time, the lack of resources for Coast Guard history maintenance and no one stepping up to make it happen. We cannot undo what is past; but we can do better in the future and we are just now in the fledgling stages of trying to do just that especially for all of us who wear Coast Guard aviator or aircrew wings.

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