

MTBSTC – A REVIEW

Motor Torpedo Boat Squadrons Training Center

Book by Charles B. Jones

This book, published by Nimble Books, LLC was written by the man who is currently the President of PT Boats, Inc., which is the US national veteran association for personnel who served as crew, officers and base and support personnel in World War II. Whereas Mr. Jones is a former US Navy officer, he has no ties to the boats, outside of being a scale modeler and now, as a historian.

Being the President of the organization which is the ‘depository’ of all things PT puts Mr. Jones in a very good and enviable position of having ready access to data and photographs enough for him to a very good job on this book. Which is, exactly, what he did do and this book will be a welcome addition to any library which contains a section on PT boats.

The book gives the reader an insight into an aspect of the PT boat which few outside of the small PT boat community has any inkling existed. That is, thanks to Mr. Jones, until now. He gives a brief history of the Training Center. I learned something that I was never aware of, and that is even though the official history of the Training Center began on February 17, 1942, the Secretary of the Navy signed the letter which called for its establishment a year earlier.

It was located in Melville, Rhode Island.

The Squadron at the Training Center was officially known as MTB Squadron 4. Originally, the training course at the Center was proposed as a one-month long course and would consist of two weeks of classroom studies and two weeks of practical training. At the beginning, each class in the course would have twenty officers and eighty enlisted personnel. A new training cycle would start every two weeks.

He describes what contracts were issued and what was built on the base under these contracts. Mr. Jones also describes the construction of the famous Quonset huts. The warehouses were covered in the book as well.

The layout of the base was discussed, in detail. This of course, gives the reader a good idea of the disposition of the buildings and just how massive the base actually was. Buildings were also discussed in detail. For instance, the base’s Post Office, was covered.

I learned that, in the three years the base was in operation, the post office was located in four different locations on the base and were operated between three to seven men.

The base had a police and a fire department.

He covered how the Training Center fitted into Task Force 23 and the Center was designated as CTG 23.4. This encompassed The MTB Repair Training Unit, whatever USN training ships assigned to the center, Squadron 4 and the Training Center.

The chain of command of the Training Center was also covered in detail, and I learned the bios of a few of the officers who “ran the show” and Mr. Jones even discusses how John F. Kennedy was an instructor at the center and even had command of the seventy-eight foot Huckins PT-101. This was of course, before he assumed command of PT-109.

The center had a football, basketball and baseball teams which played against different colleges (like Harvard). It had a swing-band and a marching which toured in the region.

The Center closed in 1945 and its squadron, Squadron 4 was placed out of service in 1946. The base became a fuel depot after the war and then, in the 1970s up through to the present day, became a marina and industrial complex and many of the original buildings are still there and in use. However, recently a fire destroyed one of them.

For me, the book brought back memories for me of when I would have my parents take me there when we would visit my older sister at Salve Regina (then, a college, now an university) and I would sit there and imagine the boats entering and exiting the lagoon there and also seeing PT-617 being restored.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in PT history. My only gripe, not enough photos of the boats.

T. Garth Connelly