

JANUARY, 1942

FLORIDA

Since Atlanta had been chilly as well as rather unpleasant in other respects, all of us were very much in the mood for Florida. Nor were we disappointed with it after our arrival, at least not immediately ~~afterwards~~. Florida's flatness was more than made up for, as far as its scenery appealed to me, by the mighty St. Johns river and the rather interesting stands of live oaks, red gums, magnolias, etc., along its banks; and, of course, its ocean beaches seemed incomparable.

RIVER

TREES

FIRST

IMPRESSIONS

OF

N. A. S.

JACKSONVILLE

The size of our <sup>new</sup> station made our eyes bulge, but when we saw planes take off by the dozen and retract their landing gear climbing at what seemed like an impossible rate, they nearly popped out. These were mostly intermediate trainers, SNJ's and a few SNC's, but to us they looked like fighters.

After the usual physical exam we were sworn in as Aviators

! Cadets, and we certainly thought we were something then. Though they still treated us <sup>much</sup> ~~something~~ like reform school kids, we theoretically ranked warrant officers, had our pay raised from fifty odd dollars a month to seventy-five, were assigned two to a room and got better food and service at meals than previously. We were only toggled too to replace our "civvies" with the snappy cadet uniforms, regular Navy <sup>officers'</sup> blues except for no sleeve stripes and a thinner chin strap and different <sup>emblem</sup> ~~device~~ on the caps, though we continued to wear khakis on the base, replacing ties of the same color with black ones.

We had a very easy time for the first two weeks with just one hour of code and one hour of drill daily. While, as third class cadets (those who hadn't started to fly), we only got part of the week-end off, our leisure time was much appreciated. In the first place we



AMENITIES

hadn't had much before, and in the second place there was more to do with it. There was a swimming pool, a good library, free movies every night, but, best of all from my point of <sup>view,</sup> nice places to walk. There were, for instance, groves of mixed

FLORA

hardwoods and pines here and there and in back of our group of barracks a little pond bordered by a strip of woods that stretched almost continuously to the other end of the base, a couple of miles or so away. These were my haunts during many an extra hour for many months. Counting

FAUNA

a few species seen on or over the river I <sup>eventually</sup> identified about an even hundred birds of birds on the base. Mammals were less in evidence, the only really common one being a gray squirrel considerably smaller than ours up north. Cotton tails were seen on occasions, and once I had a fine, close view of a gray fox, <sup>my first</sup> lizards, especially skinks and camaleons,

## LIZARDS

were frequently encountered. The skinks were black above with orange longitudinal stripes and iridescent bluish-green bellies - handsome little creatures indeed. The camaleons were usually either a plain brown or bright green and could inflate a disc-shaped sac in their throats, the stretch of the skin making the sacs appear bright pink. More about the birds later.

## PONTE VEDRA

Tarzonville and its bright light some twelve miles to the north, provided a good source of entertainment there being a choice of movie shows and, for those interested, bars, and one or two good steak houses. For a day off, however, the beach was the main attraction. We soon found Ponte Vedra to be the most attractive section especially as there <sup>there was</sup> a pleasant place to stay in the Inlet, a miniature hotel complete with courtyard, bar and dining room, the last justly famous for its food. Nearly was