

## WRITTEN HISTORY by CAPTAIN Carlton W. Swickley. AvNumber 725

### PBM Training at NAS Corpus Christi in the 1950s.

The PBM training program was divided into morning, afternoon, and evening launches. Crews reporting for the morning launch found their planes lined up on the concrete apron and standing tall on beaching gear (two main mounts and a tail wheel). The beaching crew—tractor operators, line handlers, boat coxswains, general roustabouts, and perhaps a swimmer or two—had been there since dawn's early light, and probably a little before, now stood by ready to begin the day's operations. When it was time to go, tractors pushed the PBMs to an inclined seaplane ramp where a series of lines were hooked up to the plane and to the beaching gear. After the engines were started, the planes waddled down the ramp and waded into the water. Then a tractor pulled on a line which, through a series of blocks, led out to the "king buoy" and back to the nose of the PBM. This bow line served to pull the plane out to the buoy. As this was going on, another tractor followed the plane down the ramp. By keeping a strain on a retaining line attached to the PBM's stern, it could slow or stop the plane if necessary and could also keep the plane's tail from shifting sideways in a crosswind. Once the PBM was waterborne, crewmen reached through hatches and jetisoned the beaching gear which the beaching crew then pulled ashore. Having arrived at the king buoy, the pilot next ordered the bow and stern lines cast off and taxied free of the mooring area, past the breakwater, and out onto Corpus Christi Bay. Like plane handlers on a carrier deck, the beaching crew immediately turned its attention to the next plane waiting at the head of the ramp, overhauled the lines, repositioned tractors, and rigged that plane for launching.

When the morning launch returned around noon, the pilots taxied in, moored to buoys and shut down. Crewboats came out to the planes and exchanged those scheduled for the afternoon launch for those who had just flown. Upon completion of the afternoon flight, pilots taxied inside the breakwater, made a mooring on one of the a king buoys, and shut down. The beaching crew then brought out the main mounts and tailwheel, and with help from the plane's crew, attached them. Others attached those lines necessary for a tractor to pull the PBM stern-first up the seaplane ramp. In essence, it was the reverse of the process used to launch the planes in the morning.