

Whidbey News-Times: Letter: Jet noise is crippling for Navy veteran husband

Tuesday, April 2, 2019 4:27pm

Editor,

As a 19-year resident of Coupeville, I am finding it difficult to understand why, at 79, I am forced to consider selling my “forever” home because of “the sound of freedom.”

I mean no disrespect to the military men and women who serve, but noise from the Growlers is so deeply jarring and piercing it brings my brain injured, disabled husband — a Navy vet — to his knees in tears.

How is this OK?

Why don't you care? Are you not there to serve and protect the population?

How does this ear-splitting brain shattering noise serve us?

I've heard every argument there is. I've been insulted, cursed, told I wasn't patriotic and maligned in every possible way because having the Growlers fly overhead five days a week for hours at a time isn't OK. We are in the crash zone.

Well, sir, it is not only not OK. It is health- and heart-shattering, and, until I draw my last breath, I will do everything in my power to change the Navy's utter disregard for this beautiful reserve we call Whidbey Island.

You have not heard the last from this little old lady from Coupeville.

Again, she rises.

Are House

Coupeville

Whidbey News-Times: Letter: Increased Growler noise diminishes island's value

Friday, March 29, 2019 8:23pm

Editor,

After years of testimonies and commentaries and public meetings and protests, the Navy has determined what it already knew — that, despite the proven and possible harms to health, historic buildings, local businesses, small farms, tourism and our rural way of life, they will stay the course with a four-fold increase of Growler jet pilot training over Central Whidbey.

Here's what I will miss:

- The silence of the forest and beach walks on Ebey's prairie;
- The friends who will likely move away because they can't live with that noise;
- The produce from the farms that will shut down, and the farmers who may move away;
- The local businesses that may not survive a downturn as tourists and customers avoid the Coupeville area;
- The sense — perhaps a fiction — that we who live here get a voice in what happens here. I've attended many meetings and events and hearings where small groups to nearly 500 people struggle to both express our outrage and share our considerable professional knowledge of soils, acoustics, health, toxins, political strategies, the law, the Navy's own specifications and more.

Ours is not the first island that the U.S. military has used for training and testing despite the harm caused to residents.

Vicki Robin

Langley

Whidbey News-Times: Letter: Growler noise levels are overwhelming, unfair

Friday, March 29, 2019 1:44pm

Editor,

For the past three years, I've attended meetings, presentations and rallies, signed postcards, written letters and hoped that the U.S. Navy would minimize their presence in the skies over the Salish Sea, the Olympic Peninsula, San Juan Islands, Coupeville and Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve.

The hope ended this week following the announcement by the secretary of the Navy, which basically said, "Hell no, we're going to do what we wanted to do from the very beginning."

And they are.

On the first day of spring, a day with a record-breaking high temperature, I did what anyone who loves to garden would do: grabbed my trowel and gloves, seed packets and headed outside to enjoy the beautiful day.

My dog and two cats joined me, curled in the sunshine. I had barely started digging when wham.

Here "they" came. They, of course, being the dreaded Growlers.

The cats and dog raced to the house. I covered my ears, left everything on the ground and ran inside. Once inside, I closed all the windows and doors on a beautiful 75 degree day.

Eventually, the jets left and I ventured back outside. In less than 30 minutes, they returned. Back inside we went. This pattern continued until 11 p.m.

What's ahead? A summer of deafening jet noise, day and night, doors and windows shut, pets cowering and me, a captive in my own house.

The Navy has no intention of collaborating with its neighbors, but they are not going to win. This island does not belong to the Navy. It belongs to the people of Washington state. All the people.

You don't have to live here to care about what is happening. Stand with the many people who are taking on the military and fighting to preserve our homes, businesses and Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve. The battle has just begun.

"This land is my land, this land is your land ... this land was made for you and me."

Roxallanne Medley

Coupeville

Whidbey News-Times: Letter: Island shouldn't have to put up with noise abuse

Tuesday, March 26, 2019 7:49pm

Editor,

Listening to the Growlers practice last week at both airports led me to a significant conclusion. I have over 30 years' experience planning and developing civilian airports all across this country. So I do know about airports, their use and compatible land use in surrounding areas.

Growlers aircraft, because of their maximum noise in a down and dirty flying configuration, affect an enormous area.

At the OLF, about 40 square miles are seriously disturbed. Ault Field, because of crossing runways, possibly affects about 50 square miles. As the noise impact area at the two airports does not overlap, combining both results in a negative impact over an area of about 90 square miles. This negative impact affects quality of life, health issues and economic values for the people living in the area. Is it worth it?

By comparison, at civilian airports such as Bellingham or Paine Field, the negative effect of aircraft operations would be perhaps three square miles at each location. Thus, it would take about 30 civilian airports with similar numbers of operations to cause as much disturbance to residents as we experience here on the north end of Whidbey Island. Modern commercial aircraft are remarkably quiet. The Navy's 737 is also no problem at all. Is it reasonable for the residents of the north half of Whidbey Island to continue to put up with this abuse over such a large area?

Are the elected representatives such as county commissioners, mayors and other public officials properly representing us?

I thank you, our local paper, for being the help you are.

Robert O. Brown

Coupeville

Peninsula Daily News: LETTER: Commander either poorly informed or misleading

Tuesday, April 2, 2019 1:30am

Your March 16 issue described a visit by Rear Adm. Scott Gray to Port Townsend's Northwest Maritime Center ("Rear admiral discusses Growlers, community relations," PDN).

The commander of the Northwest region either is poorly informed or is trying to mislead the public.

Unbelievably, he compared the emitters used for electronic warfare training to walkie-talkies.

According to the September 2014 Environmental Assessment for the Pacific Northwest EW Range, page 3.2-26, the transmitters operate with a peak power of 100kW — that's 100,000 watts.

A commercial walkie-talkie is limited by the FCC to just a few watts.

That's off by a factor of thousands.

He also said that the Navy has spent a lot of money on technology to quiet the EA-18G Growler.

There hasn't been any evidence that the Growlers are any quieter, so one has to wonder, where did all that money go?

This again shows the Navy's utter disregard for either the truth or for the intelligence of the residents of the Northwest, or both.

As a Vietnam-era veteran with additional service in the Navy Reserve, I'm saddened that the relationship the Navy has with the community has degraded to the point where we suspect an ulterior motive in anything a military commander tells the public.

Larry Morrell,

Port Townsend

Peninsula Daily News: LETTER: Navy should explore carrier landings on barge

Sunday, March 24, 2019 1:30am

'Dangerous' barge

I wish Navy Admiral Scott Gray would address why landing practice could not be done on an anchored barge or surplus carrier a few miles west of Whidbey Island, where it might have less noise impact on residents, human at least. ("Rear admiral discusses Growlers, community relations," PDN, March 17)

A few years ago, I emailed the Whidbey NAS public affairs office about that, and was told it would be too dangerous.

I received no reply to my follow-up about why.

How would a low-level flight emergency over water be more risky than over land?

It would be helpful to know why this is not an option.

Randel Washburne,

Port Angeles

The Islands Weekly: LETTER: Military Industrial Complex

- Thu Dec 20th, 2018 1:36pm

I have lived on Lopez Island for 50-plus years. Since that time the population of the area has grown many fold. In example the Mount Vernon population has grown approximately 4 3/4 times since 1968. For all of those years, Naval Air Station Whidbey was a source of noise from the jets practicing carrier landings and the like. Since then the base has expanded to several times the number of jets it supports. The Prowler jets that preceded the current Growler jets were far fewer and made far less noise. It has become a poor fit in this almost urban area and should be moved to an area that will impact far fewer people. NAS Whidbey used to be a fairly good neighbor, but at a well-attended meeting on Lopez three years ago, the base captain, when asked about the panes jettisoning fuel in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, replied, "The seals on Smith Island don't seem to mind." The Navy stated the proposed addition of 36 more Growlers and the projected increase of 300 percent in training flights is not a significant impact on the area.

The whole "defense" establishment has expanded explosively in recent years. The United States allocation of funds was 602 billion in 2017. America now spends more on defense than the next seven biggest spenders' military budgets combined (2015 stat). Our Navy happily finds ways to

deal with the taxpayers' largess. It is now using Washington State parks for Navy Seal covert operations practice. It is experimenting with new long-range sonar to the detriment of our off-shore whales and other marine life. It is using Olympic National Park as a new search and destroys target area for the \$68-million Prowler jets. That's quite a blow to a National Park that "used to be" referred to as the quietest in the nation.

I wonder how large a military budget would be reasonable? I expect many people would say, "Whatever the powers that be think appropriate." I feel we are way beyond the "appropriate!" I think that using one-third of the annual military budget for Medicare for all and free college would yield a much greater benefit to the average taxpayer. Would we still be safe? At the Trident Submarine Base in Hood Canal, we host 14 Trident subs. These subs carry 24 missiles, each of which can MIRV into 17 70 kiloton nuclear warheads. That's 408 total per sub! The bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were 20 kilotons and 14 kilotons by comparison. In other words, just one of these subs could destroy the world as we know it. Our military strategy is called "massive overkill." Are we safe yet? Should we be changing priorities? Can we get our government to wean the Military Industrial Complex to get more real benefit from our tax dollars?

Gregg Blomberg

Lopez Island