

THE STINGER

VAQ-138 Newsletter

MAR 2009 EDITION

TWO MONTHS DOWN...



Lt. Cmdr. Jason Willenberg (left) poses for a picture after helping Aviation Electronics Technician 2nd Class (AW) Neal Laliberte (right) don his flight gear before his first ever flight in an EA-6B Prowler.

By
Lt. Brett L. Jones

The Yellow Jackets of Electronic Attack Squadron One Three Eight (VAQ 138) are one month into their Western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment. As members of Carrier Air Wing Nine (CVW 9) and Carrier Strike Group Three (CSG 3) aboard USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74), the Yellow Jackets have proven that they can work hard during the long hours of maintenance and flight operations, but they also know how to have a good time in port.

The hard-working Maintenance Department has demonstrated the ability to operate and perform despite the quickly changing climate. While operating in the seas near Guam where days have been absolutely perfect with temperatures in the seventies with little to no humidity, VAQ-138 participated in numerous training flights individually and in coordination with other CVW-9 aircraft. However, there have also been days with high humidity and high temperatures which made for challenging flight deck operations. As a part of their working uniform, all Yellow Jackets are equipped with Camelback-type water containers to keep them hydrated in the heat and humidity. The aircrew also have them integrated into their flight gear while the enlisted maintainers wear them over their flight deck jerseys and float coats.

A few weeks ago, two Yellow Jackets received their first backseat rides in the EA-6B Prowler. Aviation Electronics Technician 1st Class (AW/MTS) Chad Sweetser (Enumclaw, WA) and Aviation Electronics Technician 2nd Class (AW) Neal Laliberte (Bismarck, AR) were selected to become in-flight troubleshooters. Using in-flight troubleshooters enables the technicians to see, first hand, exactly how the systems work and take note of certain failures and issues so they know how to fix them in the shop. In order to be eligible to fly, they had to complete basic water survival class and learn how to properly don flight gear. During AT1 Sweetser's flight, he witnessed a flyby of the ship where the Prowler flew over the flight deck at 200 feet and over 400 knots. After the flight, AT1 Sweetser returned with two full airsickness bags, causing lots of laughter and good natured ribbing from his fellow Yellow Jackets. Sweetser remarked, "The cat shot was not like the roller coasters ... I have a newfound respect for what the Prowler can do." Laliberte's flight was also a little out of the ordinary as well. During the flight, the jet had a minor emergency and had to terminate their flight early. Both maintainers were thrilled with the experience and are awaiting the chance to do more in-flight troubleshooting.

This past week, the Yellow Jackets took a break from the long, grueling hours of flight operations and enjoyed a few days in Hong Kong. Many enjoyed their experience of the Asian culture as they toured local monasteries, shopped at street markets, and ate authentic Chinese cuisine. This was the first of many port visits for the Yellow Jackets and their comrades of CVW-9 and CVN-74. There are many more amazing places to see in the Western Pacific as the Yellow Jackets continue the 2009 deployment.

From JACKET ONE...

Yellow Jacket Family and Friends. As I write this, we are coming up on the end of the second month of deployment. So far, the squadron has performed superbly due to the hard work and dedication of the fine Sailors that make up this great squadron. Your continued support from home allows them to maintain the hectic pace of operations while we are on cruise. On behalf of the entire command, I thank you.

In addition to flying while we're at sea, we have had the opportunity to visit three ports since we departed the States. We have been to Hong Kong, Sasebo, Japan and Busan, Korea. I know everyone enjoyed the time to visit these foreign countries and experiencing the different cultures. The Yellow Jackets are fantastic ambassadors of the United States and continue to maintain the positive image of Americans abroad.

If you have not heard, our port schedule has changed slightly again. As before, I cannot put dates here, but the Ombudsmen and the FRG President have the most current information. I can tell you that after Korea, we will visit Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, though not necessarily in that order. The second port call to Japan has been taken off the list and has not been replaced with another yet. Furthermore the final port call of cruise and whether or not there will be a Tiger Cruise have yet to be finalized. I will continue to keep you posted as the schedule continues to change.

That's it for this installment of the Stinger. Happy Easter (a bit early) and have a great spring! Thank you again for your sacrifices and commitment to the squadron. Take care and I will talk you all again in the near future.

CDR Kyle "Banjo" Higgins
Commanding Officer



CMC CORNER

Greetings Yellow Jacket Family. We are all doing fine out here with the JOHN C STENNIS Strike Group. The first two months has gone by pretty fast and we are doing all we can to maintain high morale and discipline. Our Sailors performed incredibly during our visits to Hong Kong, China and Sasebo, Japan. They are working hard underway keeping the jets flying and the readiness of the flight crews at a very high level. I hope by now some of you have received DVD's through the United Through Reading Program. If not, take the time to ask your spouse about it. Communications from the Rock are going well and I am very pleased with the job our OMBUDSMEN are doing. If ever you have a question please contact them by email or phone and ask. They are not shy in asking the command triad for answers if they cannot answer the question themselves. Tell them thanks for us. The rating exams are being taken now and I am personally looking forward to congratulating many Yellow Jacket Sailors when the results are released later this year. Let me just say thanks to all of you for your undying support for what we are doing out here. Your prayers, cards, letters and boxes are really appreciated. Thank you and God bless you and your families for your sacrifice and dedication to our Sailors and this great nation.

CMDCM (SW) Gregory Hixson

Your Command Ombudsman says...

Hi Yellow Jacket Spouses,

I hope this newsletter finds you all doing well. I'm sure by now you have all started to get into a routine, but I just wanted to let you know that Brittanie and I are here for any of you. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to call either one of us. Just a reminder that the FRG meetings are held every first Saturday of the month at building 13 at 4:00 p.m. That's a great way to get detailed information from Brittanie and I that we are not able to talk about via email and a chance for you and your children to meet others. I can be reached at (360) 929-5383. Hang in there and I hope to see you at the FRG meeting.

Sincerely,

Joyce Baatz

VAQ 138 Ombudsman

What's up with the FRG?

FRG is in full swing. We are starting our first fundraiser, which will be bracelets. We hope to have the majority of orders in come the 3rd week of March.

The halfway there party has been set at April 5th from 1:30pm until 3:30pm at the bowling alley. Plans are still in the works for an Easter gathering and we will be soon making calendars for everyone to start marking off the days until return. Ultimately we will also be working on a calendar of sorts to send out to everyone on the boat as well.

We are working on getting participation in United Through Reading. Our home front coordinator is Jacqueline Forrester and the ship coordinator is Chief Sellers. If you have any questions please contact your coordinator. If you have any activities, suggestions or questions for FRG please contact Jacqueline Forrester by phone or email (jacquelineforrester@yahoo.com or 360-682-6201).

The last thing we are working on composing is an emergency contact/babysitting list. We would really like to have about 5 people that can take in children for a short time if an emergency should arrive and we would need babysitters. If you would like to volunteer please contact Jacqueline Forrester.

Recent Awards & Re-enlistments

Aviation Warfare Specialist Pin Awardees:

YN2(AW) Karr
AME2(AW) Vandusseldorp
AO3(AW) Covarrubias
AM2(AW) Whitehead
AM3(AW) Wroblos
ADAM(AW) Tallorin

Good Conduct Award:

AD2(AW) Bailey
AD2(AW) Hamblet
PS3(AW/SW) Sickles
AD2 Grimaldo

Re-enlistments:

MA2 Wright
AM1 Cloinger

Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medal:

AZ1(AW) Forrester
AZ3(AW) Brown
YN3 McGilvra

Letter of Commendation:

AM2(AW) Niemeyer
AD3(AW) Lun
AM3 Zapata
AMAA Cmar
ADAN Fleckenstein

Skipper Higgins delivers Valentines Day Candy!!

(Thanks to the Spouses' Club who put these bags together)



Yellow Jackets at work afloat...





F.Y.I

Command Ombudsman:

The VAQ 138 Ombudsmen are:

Ms. Joyce Baatz

(360)929-5383 or (360)682-5602

joycebaatz@comcast.net

&

Ms. Brittanie VanDusseldorp

(360)720-2626

ombudsmanvaq138@gmail.com

Going on vacation?

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(360) 257-2432

Command Address

Rank/Name

VAQ-138

Unit 25412

FPO AP 96601-6422

This address can be used when the command is underway aboard the USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN 74)

Family Readiness Group (FRG) President

Ms. Jacqueline Forrester

360-682-6201

jacquelineforrester@yahoo.com

UPCOMING SQUADRON AND FAMILY EVENTS AROUND THE AREA

- Halfway Party: Apr 5th, 1:30pm – 3:30pm, bowling alley

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Naval Hospital Oak Harbor

(360) 257-9500

American Eagle Housing

(360) 257-3331

Navy Marine Corps Relief Society

(360) 257-2728

Red Cross

(360) 257-2096

Chapel

(360) 257-2414

Child Development Center

(360) 257-3302

Navy Legal

(360) 257-2126

Poison Information Line

(800) 732-6985

Fleet & Family Support Center

(360) 257- 6289

Military One Source

(800) 540-4123

Tricare Service Hub

(800) 874-9378

Veterinary Services

(360) 257-5537

Tipsy Taxi

(360) 257-4847

Youth and Teen program

(360) 257-3150

Base information line

(360) 279-1080

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will.

-Anonymous



United Through Reading[®]

The United Through Reading[®] Military Program helps ease the stress of separation for military families by having deployed parents read children's books aloud via DVD for their child to watch at home. This powerful program is available to all deploying military units and at select USO locations. It provides parents a chance to make powerful and lasting connections with their children and parent from afar.

Contact Chief Sellers for more info: jeffery.sellers@navy.mil



Websites for Heroes
 keeping our military families connected

Offers secure websites donated to military families with the capability of uploading unlimited photos, message board or blog postings, calendar updates and up to two hours of streaming video. A great and easy way to stay connected with your loved one while being away.

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 Unified Messaging™

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Notable Yellow Jackets

Sr. Sailor of the Year: AO1(AW/FMF) Doyle
Sailor of the Year: AZ1(AW/SW) Tolbert
Jr. Sailor of the Year: YN3 Shroyer
Sailor of the Year: AM3 Zapata
Plane Captain of the Year: AO3 Covarrubias

Sr. Sailor of the Quarter: AM1(AW) Petty
Sailor of the Quarter: AM2(AW) Zapata
Jr. Sailor of the Quarter: PS3(AW/SW) Sickles
Blue Jacket of the Quarter: ADAN Fleckenstein
Work Center of the Quarter: Line Shack