

Zappers, Attention On Deck !!!! The KA-3B Zapper Era ...the saga continues !!! SCROLL DOWN to see the "Whale of a Tale" article written by Ralph Poore.

Smitty clipped out a few emails and put them here for all to see.....

Gentlemen:

I, Ralph Poore, was privileged to have been a part of the EKA3B standup. I certainly agree that Jim Ostrergren should have been recognized for all he did.

When I arrived at Alameda the CO, CDR Charles McDowell was "in charge"....sort of. He was a fish out of water concerning almost every aspect of his command in my opinion. He did go through "part" of the A3 syllabus at Whidbey. He never made night carquals. He ignored the basic requirements to field a new airplane, new training, new tactics new maintenance requirements and the manpower to make it all happen. The EKA3B was a Quick Reaction Capability, known as QRC. While QRC provides the money for new hardware, all other logistic requirements are ignored. CDR McDowell had unfortunately inherited a bag of worms. However, he was loathe to signal his superiors that trouble was brewing concerning the ability to field detachments of EKA3B's.

When I arrived, I relieved Cliff Hubard as squadron Operations Officer in that Cliff was going to be the O-in C of the detachment going to the USS Enterprise as I recall.

I was underwhelmed by interest from the CO.

Bill Nevius was squadron XO and had just gone through the VAH-123's syllabus just ahead of me.

As the weeks passed it was clear we could not meet commitments and in frustration one Saturday morning I drafted a message from VW-13 to COMNAVAIRPAC and COMFAIRALAMEDA alerting them to the truths. We had no airplanes, no training, and no time to lose in creating some sort of fall back plan. All day that Saturday I worked with the CO and XO to release the message. CDR McDowell finally released it late Saturday afternoon. I hand carried it to the Communications office at Alameda.

On Sunday afternoon the XO called me at home and related that he and the CO had been summoned to go to San Diego and face the music. he said I was to go as well since I drafted the message.

The icy reception we received Monday morning was hard to swallow. Both my CO and XO sat on their hands and I was the designated speaker. I was well prepared and carefully explained the situation and concluded with a suggestion that we hastily create one more EA1E detachment to fill the gap.

The flags present thanked me and I was excused.

The trip home was in silence.

By mid-week all my recommendations were approved and VAW-13 was still in business.

We did muster up one more Spad detachment which gave some breathing room to concentrate on the needs of the EKA3B's.

For those of you who have not read my article titled "A Whale of a Tale" in the summer 2010 issue of "Wings Of Gold" I commend it to you. Therein I document the beginnings of modern electronic attack which those of us in the EKA3B's pioneered.

In brotherly faith,

Ralph

I was in VAW-13 in 62-65 so we "Had all the fun"!!! For these that followed and experienced the end of the AD-5Q world; the transition to the EKA3B's followed by the EA-6A's; then to EA-6B's was a VERY DIFFICULT PERIOD for all. The current fielded platform – EFA-18G is one awesome platform.

My best,

Ned Lester

John, had you been on that first wave into Cubi you know I would have been standing at attention in dress whites..... But I would not/ could not abandon the Beaver scope for anyone less...Fox

On Jan 29, 2011, at 10:04 PM, "john dillon" <ironjaw@verizon.net> wrote:

I was not privy to what has been covered in previous emails on the subject of the EKA-3B Stand-up, however, I was ops officer on the 2nd EKA-3B Det to deploy. We sailed on Enterprise on Jan. 3rd 1968 with Cliff Hubbard as OinC. I well remember arriving at VAW-13 Det Cubi and the cold reception we received. I also recall the C.O. VAW-13 calling an all officers meeting in Alameda in about Aug/Sept. of 1967 after returning from Cubi. He drew a chalk line from top to bottom of the blackboard and label the two sides Alameda and Cubi. And, then he wrote on the Cubi side "animals" and on the Alameda side "Gentlemen." Jim Ostegren took the first EKA-3B Det out on Ranger just a couple of months before we sailed. I arrived Alameda from Whidbey in early June 67 and was designated maintenance officer, of course I had little experience in maintenance and very little time in the A3 I flew the squadron's acceptance test flights and my log shows a first flight on July 6/67 in 147655, 147659, on 24 August, 147663 on 28 August and 144628 on 26 Sept. Jim deployed in I believe in Oct. with most of the aircraft and personnel. Det Enterprise started receiving its aircraft just in time to board Enterprise in November for pre deployment work-up. Jim Ostegren should have received a medal for fielding that first Det. Looking back I am surprised that we did not lose a few in those early days. John Dillon

On Jan 20, 2011, at 11:42 AM, Paul Denning wrote:

Smitty, perhaps you could pass this on---in response to John O'Connor, yes I, "The Red Fox", transitioned to the A-3 from the Spads---I recall respectfully and gratefully, CDR.Cliff Hubbard. Particularly since he didn't put me in hack for not providing a royal welcome in Cubi when they flew the whales in---We were quite fully occupied in the Zapper Lounge, dutifully, (I was SDO..) on the Beaver scope with little time or patience for senior officers--as the senior Ensign on board, I felt comfortable in sending the truck down to pick them up and then transit to the BOQ for drinks in the lounge...We didn't want to spoil them...I later got the word that they were not pleased with the informality of our reception. My defense was that it was " Pure Det Cubi..." VR, Fox

Paul F. Denning

Jim Ostergren said 01/19/2011

Jerry -- Here is more info. I was the pilot who brought the prototype EKA-3B into the VAW-13 Alameda line one Friday morning following an early morning range hop at China Lake. The skipper still had the squadron at Friday morning inspection when I taxied in. I did most of the Opeval flying. I picked the aircraft up at the Douglas plant, Long Beach, took it to Pax River (3-4 weeks), then to Pt. Mugu (many weeks) for radiation testing, and then on to China Lake for tactics development. I was doing it TAD from VAH-2 and had a crewman from there. Some of you fellows joined me for some of the later flights. After arriving in Alameda I then went back to Whidbey to execute PCS orders to VAW-13 and arrived back in Alameda about 3-4 weeks later when more of you had arrived. I think Cliff Wakatake also flew some of the later test flights. The test bed aircraft was then inducted into O & R for formal conversion. We then started getting the first converted EKA-3Bs from O & R and we started our training. I think that original prototype EKA-3B is now on display sitting on the stern of the USS Midway in San Diego. Oh Such memories!!!
As ever, Jim Ostergren

I just read the local obituaries and they had a Clifford Hubbard, Capt. listed as bringing the first AD3s to VAW-13. He had a interesting life and I wonder if anyone remembers him. You can do a search on whidbey news times to get the complete obit.

Jack

A WHALE OF A TALE

Origins of Electronic Attack

While many have some appreciation and knowledge of the history of electronic warfare which had its true origins in World War 2, few in the ranks of US Naval Aviation have any real data concerning "how" we have managed to create the superb capabilities embodied in the Navy's fleet of EA6B "Prowler" aircraft, and now, the EA-18G "Growler."

The purpose of this writing is to document the background of the EKA-3B Skywarrior, affectionately known as "The Electric Whale" and the legacy that was created by that effort which has led to the vital capabilities we have today. Importantly, the many roadblocks to eventual success as well as the many achievements by dedicated officers and enlisted alike are at the heart of this writing.

Within Naval Aviation, the topic of "airborne countermeasures" was a step-child within the Attack community for many years with no real organized effort to capitalize on the proven value which countermeasures could offer. Following WW2, some modest capabilities were embodied in night attack variants of the Douglas Skyraider, the AD4N and AD5N models. As regular attack

squadrons gained some night attack efficiency, the dedicated night attack squadrons, VC-35, and VC-33 (later designated VAAW 33, and 35) were disestablished and one small contingency of AD5N's (later designated EA1E's) were preserved and a new squadron, VAW-13 was established. This single squadron possessed all the electronic countermeasure knowledge and capability within carrier based Naval Aviation. As the fleet was transitioning to jet powered aircraft, primarily the VF and later the VA squadrons, propeller driven assets were placed on the back burner so to speak and largely ignored except by a few officials within the Naval Air Systems Command, which provided the electronic devices unique to these aircraft. Electronic Reconnaissance capabilities were outside of VAW-13's mission and this effort was supported by squadrons VQ-1 and VQ-2, which were largely tasked as "national assets" and supported higher authority. The VQ efforts "take" was highly classified and not given wide distribution.

VAW-13's value, or perceived lack of value to the seniors within the ranks of Naval Aviation, became evident when the squadron was relocated to Agana, Guam in the early 1960's. Base loading at CONUS Naval Air Stations to house jet propelled aircraft was considered too valuable to house the EA1Es. So, a deal was struck with the US Air Force to give space to VAW-13 and all of its assets, on Guam, well out of the mainstream of Naval Aviation interests. The squadron, whose self appointed name was "The Zappers", was left to its own devices as to what the mission really was and how to accomplish that mission. No true leadership from seniors within Naval Aviation was provided, so the true mission turned to survival in face of the snub of being expelled to Guam. This survival technique grew into a real mission, of sorts, as the war in Vietnam began to warm up. Small detachments of EA1Es, their aircrew and a modest maintenance effort were "temporarily" based at NAS Cubi Point, in the Philippines. From there, VAW-13 flew uncounted sorties from Cubi to various hot spots in Vietnam in support of the Navy's CTF -77 tasking. Due to the range of these aircraft, sorties from Cubi Point to South Vietnam and return were often six hours or longer in duration. Countermeasures targets were varied, but were mostly assortments of older US fire control systems which had been given to "allies" in WW2, or copies of those systems. There was no practical way to measure any effectiveness of these missions, and since the aircrews were not "Carrier Qualified", coordination with CTF-77 flight plans was nearly impossible, so this "survival" effort continued at a low key for a few more years. After the "Tonkin Gulf" incident, when the air warfare campaign progressed into North Vietnam, the nature of the threat changed, dramatically.

THE OCTOBER SURPRISE

Introduction of the Soviet SA-2 Surface to Air Missile (SA2) system to the North Vietnamese air defense network was observed in the summer of 1965 through aerial photography. This event did not surprise US Military seniors, nor was it considered to be something to really worry about. Rationale for this ambivalence had its roots in our own experience with electronic devices and their relative fragility. It was assumed the Soviets would have similar experiences and the ability to make SA-2 systems "transportable" was scoffed at. This perception was rudely challenged when a flight of USAF F-4's were shot to pieces by a battery of SA2 missiles in

October of that year. The alarm bells began to ring and the demand for "something to counter this brand new threat was high on the mind of all. The lessons of the past had been ignored. SA2 effectiveness had been displayed by the Russians and the Cubans against high flying reconnaissance flights many years before, but those facts were lost in the arrogance of our time. Concurrent with this event, the USAF, needing more space at Agana, Guam for their own assets required VAW-13 to vacate their spaces. That squadron was hastily relocated to Naval Air Station Alameda where other "unique" Naval Aviation assets were forming. Once again, well outside the mainstream of Carrier Based interests. VAW-13 continued their deployments to Cubi Point, rotating aircrew and maintenance personnel on six month rotations. The density of VAW-13 officers, pilots and Naval Flight Officers became so deep that the CO of NAS Cubi dedicated an entire wing of the Cubi BOQ to them. This home away from home became legendary and soon VAW-13 had their own bar. It was known as the Zapper Lounge, and provided a place to recharge individual batteries and relax between their arduous six to ten hour missions. The Zapper Lounge became very popular among many communities, not the least of which was the Navy Nurses assigned to the base hospital. Regulations required that the nurses wear full uniforms when entering the officers club. This included the wearing of hose, a genuine problem in the tropical climate of the Philippines. So, it was not unusual to find a nurse or two sipping an adult beverage in the lounge at any hour of the day or night. This just added a bit of color to an otherwise backwater of Naval Aviation. The Cubi detachment was to become very important in the future of the electric whale.

QUICK REACTION CAPABILITY (QRC)

It was obvious the Navy needed some new kinds of countermeasures capabilities and they needed them fast. Normally, to acquire anything "new", a rigid and formalized process is involved wherein all the elements to support a new capability are identified and planned for. This process takes time and the labors of many Navy Department officials to assure that all the support systems are ready to provide whatever is required. Within the Acquisition Authority rules governing Navy procurements, there is an ability to bypass all the normal processes. This ability is known as Quick Reaction Capability or QRC for short. This allows the purchase of some new item, but bypasses all the logistic support system. Thus, the initial hardware to place in Navy Carrier based aircraft to warn that the aircraft was being "painted" by a hostile radar was called "shoehorn." Shoehorn elements ranged from small items stuck to the inside of aircraft canopies to wired-in systems which would audibly warn the pilot with a special warbling tone when his aircraft was being "painted" by a hostile radar signal. While these items were useful, they did nothing to counter the threat. In the summer months of 1966, one year after SA2s were seen in North Vietnam, the concept of introducing a new airborne countermeasure was tabled by the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). This new ability was embodied in another QRC effort to convert existing Douglas A3 Skywarrior aircraft to house an electronic means to defeat the SA2 and other recognized threats. The Heavy Attack mission of the A3, the delivery of

atomic bombs on strategic targets had been eroded over time with the introduction of ballistic missiles to provide strategic capabilities. While the A3 community had long enjoyed their status and prestige, that mission had largely evolved to the provision of in-flight refueling services to VF and VA aircraft. So, there were A3 airframes in excess of current needs and it seemed a practical idea to use these proven airframes for the "new" mission. That so called "prestige" went far to give limited support to the new countermeasures mission to be given the A3.

The concept was called Tanker-Countermeasures-Strike or TACOS for short. It was envisioned the A3 could continue to be a bomber, while also hosting a new electronics suite and keep its in-flight refueling capability as well. It was soon recognized that the traditional bomb bay doors on the A3 would need to be modified to house jamming system antennas. The "Strike" or bomber capability was removed from consideration, and thus, the A3 was no longer a bomber and the Heavy Attack mission was retired. VAH squadrons now flew the KA-3B, K being the indication of "Tanker" or in-flight refueling ability. The designation of the new countermeasures variant of the A3 was EKA-3B.

Quick Reaction Capability procurement of EKA-3B electronics was approved and the move was on to commence the conversion process. The Naval Air Rework Facility at NAS Alameda was the site to accomplish the work. In total more than thirty A3 airframes were to undergo the conversion. Time to accomplish the total conversion was about six months. The wheels were in motion, but many snags were about to surface. In early 1967 the die was cast concerning the future of the EKA3B and the people who would inherit the responsibility to deploy it. Apparently the "hard core" of the VAH community based at NAS Whidbey Island in Washington state eschewed any interest in absorbing the new mission and it was determined that VAW-13 retire its EA-1Es and transition to the EKA-3B. This decision, draped in parochialism, haunted the "electric whale" for years to come. Rather than utilizing experienced A3 aircrew and maintenance personnel to support the effort, entirely new and mostly "shanghaied" individuals from other communities were ordered to Alameda. Aircrew was indoctrinated at Whidbey Island, attending a major portion of the VAH curricula which culminated with night carrier landings for the pilots and navigation training for the Naval Flight Officers. On average, each pilot had accumulated about 100 hours in the A3 when arriving at NAS Alameda. NFO's had very little actual flight time in the A3 and no one had ever seen the electronic countermeasures suite in the EKA-3B before. Since QRC did not allow any dollars for training or training equipment, all learning was on the job, Coupled with this issue was the lack of man-power, or billets, to support an expanding role for VAW-13. Eventually, the manpower problem was solved at the expense of other communities, as an example the Antarctic support efforts. Such was the impact of QRC.

THE AIRCRAFT

While the A3 aircraft was not inherently difficult to fly, it was, and remains so, the largest and heaviest aircraft to routinely operate from aircraft carrier flight decks. Launch weight was

usually 78,000 pounds and arrested landing weight was limited to 50,000 pounds. Aside from size alone, there were variants of the A3 airframe which had differing reaction to flight conditions and pilot behavior. Later models of the A3 had a Cantilevered Leading Edge of the wing, giving them better slow speed stability, These "CLE" variants, known in the trade as CLEOs flew somewhat differently than their non-CLE sisters. It was no big deal, but it did add another element to the learning curve. The A3 had a large, somewhat complex fuel system that had to be monitored and managed by the pilot. Fuel was distributed to wing tanks, forward tank, an auxiliary tank, and the main tank which fed the engines. An out of balance configuration by improper fuel transfer was something to be avoided. Normal aircraft carrier flight operations limited take off fuel to about 85% of total capacity at launch due to weight handling limits of the flight deck catapults. Landing weight fuel capacity was limited to 5,000 pounds. (4,500 pounds if the chaff dispenser was installed)The fuel quantity system installed in A3's was always problematic. It was a "capacitance" based system that was maintenance intensive. At the 5,000 pound level, it meant that the A3 had fuel for about two approaches during daylight operations. Each tour around the landing circuit required about 900 pounds of JP5. If the pilot/deck conditions/weather/sea state required more than two landing attempts, the aircraft was now very light and would "float" over the flight deck, resulting in even more trauma. At the 3000 pound level, a low fuel light would alert the pilot which tended to raise blood pressure.

The added weight of countermeasures equipment was another factor that became a problem. The EKA-3B had two large chaff dispensers installed in the bomb bay which weighed around 500 pounds. If loaded with chaff, the weight increased commensurately. Further, there was no way to determine "how much" chaff had been dispensed which made the entire chaff dispensing concept un-workable. No EKA3B ever dispensed chaff. Because of the added weight of all the countermeasures hardware, the EKA-3B was limited to 4,500 pounds of fuel to make an arrested landing. Wing Commanders, Air Bosses and Aircraft Handlers aboard the various CV's were largely insensitive to the peculiarities of the A3, especially during night operations. Because the A3 was so large and because it was used as an in-flight re-fueling asset it was always the last aircraft to come aboard during cyclic operations. Generally speaking, the A3 was required to keep "give-away" fuel available until it began its' own approach to the flight deck. This often meant dumping fuel all the way to final approach. The pilot not only had to fly the approach, but carefully monitor fuel remaining, and to stop the fuel dumping action at the correct level. It made for a busy cockpit.

Mastering the A3 in the aircraft carrier flight pattern, especially at night, was seen as the real test of one's flying skills. On the smaller carriers, such as Bon Homme Richard and others of that class, the narrower flight deck made A3 landings highly critical and was a reason to reassign pilots who just could not keep the A3 within the bounds.

For pilots transitioning from other aircraft to the A3, there was a steep learning curve to

manage. First, the aircraft was large. Secondly, it was very large and third, it was extremely large and required skills which took time to master. Given the QRC nature of the EKA-3B project, there was neither the time nor the aircraft available to get very comfortable. Transitioning pilots were much stressed and had to stand tall. Some few aviators could not make the grade and some that did remained a questionable asset in that given the slightest reason for landing on a runway at night rather than make a night arrested landing, they would opt for the runway. This weakness was not widespread, but it did exist. In the main, about 90% of the transitioning pilots did quite well. Their experience level varied from several thousand hours at the controls of a navy aircraft, to fresh graduates from flight training.

Maintenance support for deployed EKA-3B's was another steep hill to climb. Skilled enlisted men of all ratings were hard to come by. Chief Petty Officers were severely tasked to get the various support crews qualified. The time and deck space required to accomplish routine maintenance "checks" on the A3 airframe resulted in accomplishing those tasks off the aircraft carriers. Thus, the original VAW-13 "detachment" at Cubi Point was re-named the Joint Aircraft Maintenance Detachment or JAMDET, staffed by a cadre of the various enlisted ratings from each of the deployed EKA-3B units. As a result, each EKA-3B detachment usually had only two of their assigned three aircraft on board at any one time. The JAMDET was managed by one qualified maintenance officer supplied by the VAW-13 Alameda staff. He was rotated on six month intervals. In the main, this operation functioned well and the maintenance was adequate. Local support for this shore based effort was enthusiastically provided by NAS Cubi Point's Intermediate Maintenance Department and logistic support was provided by the staff at COMFAIR SOWESTPAC, also based at Cubi Point.

DETOUR

By mid 1967 VAW-13 was falling steadily behind in the effort to field detachments of EKA-3B aircraft and aircrew as well as a maintenance cadre. Navy seniors had decreed that detachments of three aircraft and four sets of aircrew would constitute a detachment to deploy aboard each Vietnam-bound Aircraft carrier. The first of these detachments was slated to deploy in September, 1967. By August 1st, it was clear that VAW-13 could not meet this commitment and some relief had to be invented. After a very tense exchange with senior Naval Aviation officials a relief plan was developed, but careers were impacted in the process. This was one more result of QRC. VAW-13's inability to overcome a poorly supported operation to date was not a welcome message to digest in San Diego.

With senior concurrence a hastily assembled detachment of EA1E aircraft, crews and maintainers was assembled and deployed in lieu of the EKA3Bs. This was to be the last of the EA1Es to deploy and they received no accolades from any quarter.

Lack of sufficient aircraft, too few aircrews, parts and other hardware items continued to plague VAW-13 for the remainder of the year. By early 1968, logistics began to fill the gaps and the

first of many EKA3B detachments was fielded, on time, but not without incident. Skill levels were still weak but no slack was available due to the tempo of operations in the Tonkin Gulf. Back at Alameda, training was limited to about 50 hours flying time before deployment, and this included the necessary Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) mandated by higher authority. As a consequence, deploying VAW-13 detachments were thin in skills of all kinds, but managed to get the job done

The topic of training for electronic warfare and practicing against realistic training threats was, and remains, a very difficult task. Since Countermeasures is directed at systems in the hands of an enemy, it is sometimes not possible to replicate those threats without training devices. Security classification of this topic alone restricts writing about generalities rather than specifics. It will suffice to say crews had no training devices and all learning was on the job.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

To label the EKA-3B as a pioneering effort was not far from reality. IF the situation and geometry between the threat and the EKA-3B was correct, and IF the Naval Flight Officers involved were alert, and IF the electronic systems themselves were functioning to design specifications, positive results were often achieved with SA2 missiles going "dumb". The value of the EKA-3B had to be learned and earned the hard way. The secret to success of the ability to counter the SA2 was in the geometry between the jammer and the target. Since the ALT-27 missile jamming system antenna was located on the ex-bomb bay doors of the A3, it is essential that the antenna not be blocked by the wings during a turn. Thus flat skidded turns were necessary to remain effective, and the distance between the jammer and jammees was limited

There were other capabilities embedded in the electric whale that must be mentioned. Their employment or lack thereof is a result of other shallow thinking, lack of knowledge, or just plain stupidity, or combinations of all the above. The aircraft had a great communications jamming system installed, identified as the AN/ALQ-92; it was state of the art and had a panoramic, easily understood display that covered a very wide spectrum of very high frequencies. Specifically, it covered the range of radio communication known to be used by Soviet, Chinese, and North Vietnamese air defense networks. The operator of this system could rapidly scroll to any intercepted frequency and listen to the audio being transmitted and jam this signal off the air with a flick of a switch. Since the electric whale had four antennas mounted under blisters on both sides of the aircraft, jamming energy could be concentrated in a single direction. All one needed was identification of "bad guy" frequencies and the air defense system could be totally disrupted. Gaining access to those frequencies was another roadblock that was only partially overcome. Knowing the proper frequencies was essential since none of the EKA-3B NFOs were linguists. In the main, with only one exception known of, operators of the EKA-3B

were not allowed to know the enemy frequencies. So, this capability was just so much ballast and went unused in nearly all EKA-3B equipped units.

Some other "whiz-bang" countermeasures were also introduced during the first year of EKA-3B deployment and this was the anti-radiation missile, which was allocated to various VA squadrons. Since the A3 was much too large and vulnerable to be used as a rocket launch platform, the honor went to the A7. This became a popular countermeasure because it was very visible and results could be seen at once. This new weapon eventually led to renaming electronic warfare to Electronic Attack.

REACHING STABILITY

By the end of calendar year 1968, VAW-13 was re-designated VAQ-130 and it was decreed that all returning detachments assigned to the many CV Air Wings would transition from Detachments of VAQ-130 to separate VAQ squadrons. Concurrently, a VAQ "Wing Commander" VAQW-13 was established to provide management oversight to the new squadrons. The new VAQ squadrons were equipped with three EKA3B's and two KA3B's to augment the in-flight refueling task. Those of us deemed eligible were notified we had screened for command and faced the future. Not much else changed however, since aircraft, systems and the lack of training systems were still a large problem. The good news was that these newly forming squadrons enjoyed very high morale and it was obvious a new breed of individuals had formed an entire new Naval Aviation community. This was accomplished in spite of the many months of arrogance and ignorance of the old VAH community, the wisest of those experienced A3 types were now anxious to become members of the VAQ world since they sensed a better future embodied in the just approved EA6B procurement.

While it was still a few years before the EA6B would become a reality, it was not too late to change alliances. During the next two years, the venerable electric whale became a commonplace entity on all CV flight decks and more opportunities arose to prove their merit, not just as airborne tankers, but as true countermeasures platforms worth the flight deck acreage they occupied. VAQ squadrons 131, 132 1 33 134 135 and 136 were established in 1969 and several more the following year. To the credit of all who flew and supported the EKA3B, the safety record was great and so were the battle efficiency "E's" awarded to a few who had exceptional airframe availability.

PASSING THE BATON

Throughout the history of Naval Aviation experiences with tactical electronic warfare, there have been times when the flame of existence has flickered and almost died though lack of attention. It is my view that the EKA3B "experiment" was a roaring success that rekindled the flame and at the right time. The lead to keep that flame alive was passed to the new, in 1971,

EA6B community home based with other A6 assets, wisely, at NAS Whidbey Island. The legacy handed to those good Navy people seems to have struck fertile ground in that the reputation they have collectively put together is not equaled elsewhere. Accolades are warranted to the men and women who have stood up to the challenge and made the Electronic Attack capability second to none. Many EKA-3B aircrew transitioned to Whidbey Island and became critical assets as that new aircraft was introduced. An entire training establishment had to be created from raw materials. The brilliance, innovation and fortitude of that "legacy crew" paved the way.

THE FUTURE

More than 40 years have passed since the EKA-3B became a reality and it has been more than 35 years since the EA6B "Prowler" was introduced. The Navy infrastructure to support the Electronic Attack mission is wide spread and strong. As the EA6B airframe reaches its end of service and the EA-18G "Growler" becomes the latest airborne countermeasures asset in the fleet, keeping the flame alive now passes to an entire new generation of electronic wizards. If the new two place EA-18G can manage to handle the workload and sustain the superiority proven by its predecessor, then the lamp will continue to burn brightly.

Permission to publish here by Ralph Poore, Captain USN for the enjoyment and historical preservation of the VAW-13 & VAQ-130 Zappers.

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