

HISTORY OF

FLEET AIR RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON ONE

The history of the squadron started in October 1951 as a Special Projects Division of the Air Operations Department at the Naval Station, Sangley Point, Philippine Islands with LCDR. J. T. DOUGLAS as the Officer-in-Charge. The Division was organized as a Special Electronic Search Program with four P4M-1Q aircraft and a primary mission of airborne electronic counter-measures in the Pacific Fleet. Electronic counter-measure operations were assigned to the Naval Communications Unit 38 CHARLIE and reported to the Special Projects Division Officer to perform their airborne duties.

In December 1952, LCDR. A. W. SWEETEN took charge of the Division as the Officer-in-Charge. On 13 May 1953, the Division was assigned to Airborne Early Warning Squadron ONE as Detachment "ABLE".

In June 1954, the squadron was redesignated VW-3, Detachment "ABLE", with a crew of 22 officers and 110 enlisted men. LCDR. A. W. SWEETEN remained the Officer-in-Charge until he was relieved by LCDR. E. R. HALL in June 1955 at which time the detachment was re-organized and commissioned Electronic Counter-measures Squadron ONE (VQ-1) with LCDR. E. R. HALL as the Commanding Officer. In June 1955 two additional P4M's were assigned bringing the total to six.

After becoming a commissioned squadron, the men received further good news in September 1955 when they were informed that their squadron would be leaving the hot, rainy, humid climate of the Philippines and would be moving to Iwakuni, Japan.

By October 1955, the movement of the squadron from the Philippines to Iwakuni, Japan had been completed. The crew quickly adapted themselves to the local environment and made many friends with the Japanese Nationals. After being informed that the squadron would be permanently based at Iwakuni, the morale of the men was greatly improved, for they were now able to bring their families from the States to Japan.

CDR William H. HUFF reported to the squadron in June 1956 and became the new Commanding Officer, relieving LCDR. E. R. HALL. By this time the squadron was fully organized, and the officers and men took additional pride in their organization. The personnel complement of the squadron had been increased to 28 officer and 220 enlisted men. During June of 1956 a squadron record for flight hours was set, as 289 hours were logged, including 209 operational and 30 training hours. On 20 July 1956 LCDR. F. E. STRUTHERS brought in the 1000th P4M landing since the squadron was commissioned. The squadron was now definitely standing on its own feet and was now a self-supporting unit.

During the month of July 1955 LT. J. EDIXION experienced one of the most unusual accidents in modern aviation history while flying the P4M aircraft. One of the reciprocating engines fell completely off, sending the plane into a flat spin. By displaying unusual skill, LT. EDIXION made a recovery at 3000 feet with the aid of the auxiliary jet engines and flew the plane 100 miles into Naha Air Force Base at Okinawa. The only person injured during the freak accident was LT. EDIXION, who received a sprained ankle as he stepped from the aircraft after landing it safely on the air strip at Naha.

On the darker side, the squadron suffered a serious catastrophe during the month of August 1956 with the loss of one P4M and 16 men. This was caused by hostile and aggressive gunfire in the vicinity of the Taiwan Straits. As a result of this tragedy, all squadron personnel exhibited an intensified "can do" viewpoint toward their individual and collective squadron jobs, making for an efficient, cooperative, and smooth-running organization in which all worked together as one.

CDR. Harvey LARSON reported to the squadron during the month of August 1956 as the new Commanding Officer. Shortly after CDR. LARSON's arrival, a new era of aviation was born and introduced to Iwakuni, namely, the arrival of two A3D-1Q Skywarriors. The A3D's arrived in Iwakuni on 3 November 1956.

All hands turned out to see the planes land on the strip. This was a very impressive sight to the men of Iwakuni, and VQ-1 personnel were gratified that these new aircraft were now a part of the squadron.

With the arrival of the A3D's, the crew had a tendency to visualize the squadron's P4M's as being somewhat obsolescent.

While it is true that the P4M-1Q was relatively slow when compared with the modern-day jets, it still was considered the faithful work horse for the squadron. The P4M-1Q was a long range patrol and reconnaissance aircraft that carried a sixteen man crew and was powered by two reciprocating engines and two turbo jets. The jets were normally used during takeoffs, landings and high-speed operations, while the reciprocating engines powered the aircraft during normal cruise operations. Martin, manufacturer of the P4M-1Q Mercator aircraft, built about twenty planes and sold them to the Navy in 1950, at which time this aircraft was considered to be the most modern patrol and reconnaissance plane in aviation history. Since their delivery to the Navy, the P4M's had performed their assigned duties in a faithful manner and for this reason many of the pilots had a sentimental feeling toward them.

On 27 November 1957 CDR N. P. BYRD, Jr., relieved CDR LARSON as the new Commanding Officer. With the new Commanding Officer, the squadron continued to perform its assigned mission of electronic countermeasures in support of the Seventh Fleet. Additionally, daily training was held for officer and enlisted personnel. They were taught to fly and maintain the three different types of aircraft used by the squadron at that time, namely, A3D-1Q's, P4M-1Q's and TV-2's. Training was also conducted for the squadron's personnel to qualify them to better support and assist the fleet in such other duties as may have been assigned. The command still places strong emphasis on qualifying men as Aircrewmen.

CDR. R. C. JAMES became the new skipper on 30 November 1958. Tragedy began to strike with the crash of one of the squadron's A3D-1Q's piloted by LCDR DECKER in the inland sea near Iwakuni on 28 May 1959. On 16 June 1959 a P4M-1Q was attacked in the Sea of Japan near Wonsan, North Korea. CORDER, AE2, the tail gunner was seriously wounded and two engines and the rudders were shot up. The aircraft, commanded by LCDR MAYER, was barely able to make it to a safe landing at Miho Air Base. More bad luck followed in November 1959, when the squadron's first A3D-2Q was lost near Wake Island during TransPac. No trace was found of the four crewmembers or the aircraft. Lady Luck again frowned our way in December 1959, when a severe windstorm struck our detachment at Shemya, Alaska, causing heavy damage to our hangar, and inflicting strike damage to a P2V parked inside.

On 20 October 1959, CDR W. R. KNOPKE took the helm.

The official name of the squadron was changed to FLEET AIR RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON ONE on 1 January 1960. New personnel began pouring in to man and maintain the new aircraft soon to arrive. Both 'old salts' and newcomers were quickly hustled away to schools to obtain the skills that would be needed for their part in the squadron's facelifting. The first F9F-8T arrived in Iwakuni 12 February 1960; the first WV-2Q on 21 February 1960; the first A3D-2Q on 5 March 1960.

Preparations were being made for the squadron to move to Atsugi Naval Air Station, and both men and wives were looking forward to the change of scenery and an abundance of well stocked PX's. The anticipation became a reality in June 1960. The move was completed and normal operations commenced at NAS Atsugi on 1 July 1960. On 22 July 1960 the last faithful P4M-1Q was retired with the A3D-2Q's and the WV-2Q's becoming the work horses for the squadron.

The first weeks of 1961 were marred by a tragedy. One of the squadron's

new A3D's crashed at NAS Atsugi on Friday the 13th of January. The four men aboard, LCDR A. R. HODGES, LT H. P. SAMS, E. TAYLOR, AM1, and O. J. CLARDY, AO3, were killed in the accident, the cause of which was undetermined.

On 22 January 1961, CDR T. H. MOORE relieved CDR W. R. KNOPKE as the Commanding Officer.

In March 1961 a flight record was set within the squadron when 101.5 hours were logged in the F9F-8T. Also in March, VQ-1 won the Admiral's Cup Competition in the COMFAIRJAPAN sports competition.

Vice Admiral Charles D. GRIFFIN, Commander Seventh Fleet, visited VQ-1 on 8 July 1961 inspecting the squadron's operation and aircraft.

Again on 15 September 1961 VQ-1 was awarded for its athletic achievements by capturing the NAS Atsugi Captain's Cup.

CDR J. W. JENKINS relieved CDR T. H. MOORE as the Commanding Officer of VQ-1 on 22 November 1961. Present at the ceremony held in VQ-1's hangar at NAS Atsugi were Captain J. A. MASTERSON, Commanding Officer, NAS Atsugi; Rear Admiral W. A. SUTHERLAND, Commander Fleet Air Western Pacific; and Rear Admiral B. M. STREAN, Commander Taiwan Patrol Force.

On the 15th of December 1961, VQ-1 received one more A3D-2Q and retired its two F9F-8T's shortly after in February of 1962.

CDR W. J. WACKER relieved CDR J. W. JENKINS as Commanding Officer on 17 November 1962. The next year was highlighted by VQ-1 winning two NAS Atsugi Captain's Cup competitions; the first time being the third win allowing the squadron to retain permanent possession of the trophy. The squadron also received an A-3B type aircraft on 17 October 1963.

After serving for 10 months as Executive Officer CDR A. T. HOLT relieved CDR W. J. WACKER as Commanding Officer on 21 November 1963.

Another A-3B came to the squadron on 26 December 1963.

The VQ-1 Skywarriors again displayed their prowess on the athletic field by capturing their fourth consecutive Captain's Cup award on 20 April 1964.

The squadron received the Commander, Naval Air Force, Pacific, Quarterly Aviation Safety Award for the first quarter of 1964.

As of September 1964 the squadron has 11 EA-3B's, two A-3B's and four EC-121 type aircraft. There are 77 officers and 422 enlisted men in what continues to be "THE NAVY'S NUMBER ONE SQUADRON".

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