



It's all about the people: NAWCWD celebrates 65 years of EW excellence



Norris Procter, 99-year old electronic warfare plank owner, smiles while talking about how he and Cmdr. Clifton Evans started the countermeasures department at Point Mugu in 1951 during a 65th Anniversary of EW Excellence ceremony hosted by Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division on April 21 in Point Mugu, California. Countermeasures would grow to become what we know at electronic warfare today. (U.S. Navy photo)

NAVAL AIR WARFARE CENTER WEAPONS DIVISION, POINT MUGU, California - Nearly 600 people gathered April 21 to celebrate 65 years of U.S. Navy electronic warfare excellence at the discipline's birthplace in Point Mugu, California.

Hosted by Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, the ceremony included informational displays, the last U.S. Navy EA-6B Prowler, and guest speakers including Rear Adm. Mark Darrah and EW plank owner Norris Procter, who helped launch the U.S. Navy's EW capabilities at Point Mugu in April 1951.

Before then, pilots trained under strict radar silence to reduce interference. For those in the know, that just didn't make sense.

"What are they going to do when they get out there in real life?" Procter asked.

His boss, one of EW's founding fathers Cmdr. Clifton Evans, had an answer: bring Procter to Point Mugu and begin testing how to help U.S. forces operate in a congested radar and



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radio environment – and deny our adversaries the same operating capabilities.

“I came to Point Mugu to establish a countermeasures department,” Procter said. “That’s how we really got started; we were starting from scratch.”

For Darrah, who started his naval aviation career in a Prowler and now serves as the program executive officer for Unmanned and Strike Weapons with Naval Air Systems Command, people like Procter are what make the U.S. Navy’s long history with electronic warfare great.

“You weren’t afraid to take chances,” Darrah said, addressing Procter directly. “You were doing things people told you you couldn’t do.”

And that spirit lives on in today’s EW departments within NAWCWD.

“Clifton Evans [had the courage] to tell people what was right,” Darrah said. “To point out what we were missing. We were missing the fact that we had systems that were vulnerable. He came with a solution, and we are here today because of that courage. It continues today in what you do.”

Because of that courage, EW professionals who go above and beyond are honored with the Commander Clifton Evans, Jr. Award. As part of the ceremony, those honored with the award in the past five years were recognized.

“We thought it would be important to really cap this event with recognition of some of our outstanding professionals,” said Dr. Ron Smiley, national director for NAVAIR’s Avionics, Sensors and E*Warfare Department. “It’s all about the people.”

To mark the 65th anniversary, Dr. Andrew Chen, electromagnetic spectrum chief engineer, was honored with the EW Director’s Excellence Award. Smiley praised him as a role model of electronic warfare professionalism.

“Dr. Chen has in the past,” Smiley explained, “and continues to give his utmost in the field of electronic warfare.”

For Chen, the award was about more than just his own work.

“To me,” he explained, “this award exemplifies all the great professionals we have at NAWCWD doing great work, supporting warfighters. I’m proud to be part of the community.”

And it’s a community deserving high praise, according to Darrah.

“People are making a difference here, and have been for years,” he said. “There are people in theater right now who are counting on everything you do.... It means something to people in the Fleet; people’s lives are counting on the work you have done here at Point



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Mugu.”



Rear Adm. Mark Darrah, program executive officer for Naval Air Systems Command's Unmanned Systems and Strike Warfare, delivers the keynote address during the 65th Anniversary of EW Excellence ceremony April 21 in Point Mugu, California. (U.S. Navy photo)



Dr. Ron Smiley, left, Naval Air Systems Command's national director for Avionics, Sensors and E*Warfare Department, honor Dr. Andrew Chen with the EW Director's Excellence award during the 65th Anniversary of EW Excellence ceremony in Point Mugu, California, on April 21. (U.S. Navy photo)