

Hats off to...

AO3 Thomas Zeman and AME3 Christopher Stark

By Lt. Dwight Clemons, VAQ-136

Imagine four connected football fields with more than 50 airplanes and helicopters parked on them. Now, imagine at any given time, 35 of those airplanes have their engines running. Add 25 Volkswagen-size “tractors” and a giant mobile crane. Raise all this 60 feet over the water, and put yourself and about 300 of your friends in the middle.

The roar of the jet engines is deafening. Hot exhaust tries to blow you over the side or into a turning propeller.

It’s your job to crawl under the belly of a running EA-6B. As you start to dive under the jet, you’re tackled and thrown onto the steel deck. As you struggle to get up, two sets of hands pull you out from under the Prowler’s intake that almost sucked you in. You’ve just had your life saved.

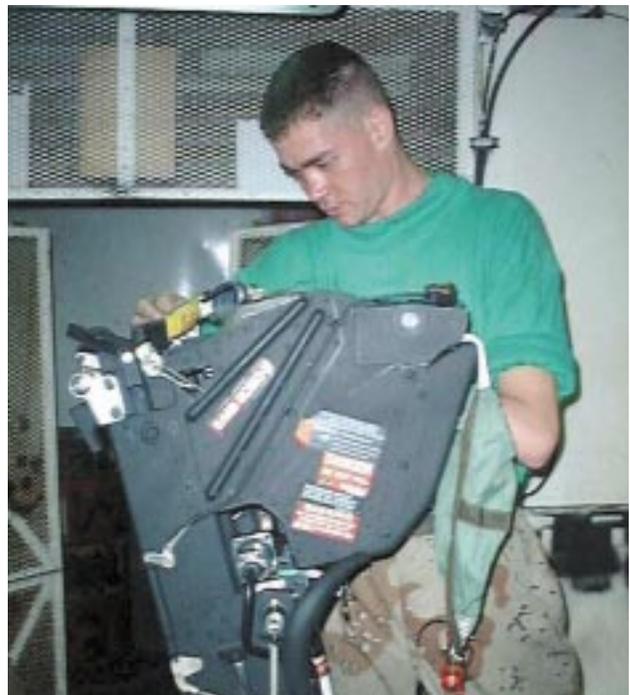
That’s what happened to a VAQ-136 aircrewmembers recently.

During a routine flight-crew change, a junior plane captain headed under a Prowler to catch the overflow fuel when the engine was shut down. As he headed to his assigned location, he took the fastest and straightest route. Unfortunately, that path was directly below the intake of the running engine.

AO3 Thomas Zeman and AME3 Christopher Stark saw the airman, and an instant before he would have been sucked in, they tackled him and pulled him to safety. ■



AO3 Thomas Zeman



AME3 Christopher Stark