

NAVAL AVIATION NEWS

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- **F-35C Lightning Traps aboard *Nimitz***
- **History of the Atlantic Test Range**
- **Meeting Challenges at the Fleet Readiness Centers**

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MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST: THE REST OF THE STORY

By MCI Ernest R. Scott

MC3 Dustin Good records video of flight deck operations aboard USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) on 11 February 2012. (Photo by MC3 Kasey Krall)



From the flight deck to the flight line, from high seas to desert sands, they stand ready to conduct humanitarian efforts, provide wartime support and address public concerns. Yet despite their dedicated service, their story largely goes untold. They are the ones behind the cameras, capturing the Navy's story and sharing it with the world.

Mass Communication Specialists (MCs) are Sailors who perform public affairs and visual information duties. The rating was established 1 July 2006 when the Navy combined four ratings: Photographer's Mate (PH), Journalist (JO), Draftsman (DM) and Lithographer (LI). The Sailors of the MC community do far more than photographing your command awards ceremony: they are a group with responsibilities and experience as diverse as the history of the rate.

Walter Leroy Richardson was the Navy's official photographer, and joined the Navy in 1911 as a cook aboard USS *Mississippi* (BB 23). Richardson had a passion for photography and spent his off-duty time taking photos for the *Mississippi* and its crew. When the ship dropped anchor in 1914 at the former Naval Shipyard Pensacola, Fla., Richardson was



Lt. Walter Leroy Richardson

recruited to survey the land for a future naval aeronautical station. Recognizing the need for a photographer, the Navy later transferred Richardson to a shore command where he spent more time employing his talent.

Today's MCs possess the same creativity and curiosity displayed by Richardson; however, MCs should not be dismissed as "just photographers." As the eyes and the ears of the fleet, MCs deliver photos, video, audio, graphics and written communications to the public from around the globe. As a photographer aboard an aircraft carrier, an MC takes and reviews aerial photos, scans and edits digital video images, performs digital editing, and operates various types of still and video equipment. MCs are relied upon to gather facts, write speeches and articles, edit, and produce radio and TV news programs and training films.

MCs also fill a vital public affairs role by supporting in-port carrier tours and underway embarkations for civilians, media correspondents, the DoD, and national and international government officials. Because MCs are often viewed by their guests as the face of their command, and by extension, the face of the Navy, MCs must relate to people in a creative

and professional manner. They need exceptional writing and speaking skills and a genuine interest in people, ideas and information. Other traits of a successful MC include a good memory, maturity, creativity, exemplary military bearing and good personal appearance.

The life of most MCs begins at the Defense Information School at Fort Meade, Md., where they enter "A" School. In this joint-forces environment, members from all branches of the U.S. military, DoD civilians and international military personnel train in public affairs, print journalism, photojournalism, photography, television and radio broadcasting, lithography, equipment maintenance and various forms of multimedia. After completing this 25-week course, many of the Navy's newest MCs continue on to "C" School for advanced technical training while others join the fleet.

Assignments for MCs vary greatly and a news media career with the Navy goes far beyond the scope of similar jobs in the civilian sector. MCs may work aboard aircraft carrier flight decks during a frigid Virginia winter, in the sweltering deserts of Djibouti with combat construction teams, or in climate-controlled broadcast stations. Work may include using precision computer graphics equipment in an office or work throughout a ship or station. Regardless of the task, MCs are responsible for creating a product that tells the Navy's story to local, national and international audiences.

During times of crisis, the first question leaders ask is: "Where are the carriers?" MCs are quick to provide a reassuring response with daily coverage of maritime security operations, strike operations and theater security cooperation efforts. For those unfamiliar with the process, flight operations aboard an aircraft carrier can appear as a flurry of Sailors in their colored jerseys and helmets, launching and recovering aircraft. It is the duty of the MC to show the well-choreographed process aboard the flight deck and highlight the highly trained and dedicated Sailors serving aboard the centerpiece of the Navy's forward-operating forces.

MCs are also at the forefront of social media and digital communications. Whether taking the first images of airstrikes against the Islamic State group from the flight deck of USS *George H.W. Bush* (CVN 77) or recording hometown "shout-outs" from the ship's crew, a single moment captured by an MC can have a profound impact at home. Exclusive imagery of a forward-deployed carrier can be used by media outlets globally, while a video of a deployed Sailor reading to their child can help ease the stress of having a loved one far away from home.

MCs are not only masters of their craft; they have an overall understanding of the Navy and the importance of the individual. Through their documentation, MCs are afforded the unique opportunity to experience various rates

within the Navy and different commands across DoD. MCs possess a strong sense of pride in their country, Navy and service of their fellow shipmates. Few professions can rival the dedication to duty, mission and tradition found in the MC community. ✈️

MCI Scott joined the Navy in 2007. He is stationed at Naval Air Force Atlantic in Norfolk, Va.



Photo by MC2 Kenneth Abbate



MCSN Nicolas C. Lopez



MC3 Travis K. Mendoza



MC2 James R. Evans



MC3 Aaron Holt



MCSA Matthew A. Lawson



MCSA Veronica Mammina



MC2 Greg Johnson



MCSA Ignacio D. Perez



MC3 Lorenzo J. Burlson



MC3 Will Tyndall



MC2 Walter M. Wayman



MC2 Kenan O'Connor



MC3 Josue L. Escobosa



MC2 Jason Graham



MC3 Karl Anderson



MCSN Kole E. Carpenter



MC2 John Wagner



MCSA Edward Gutierrez III



MCSN Emily M. Blair



MC3 Paolo Bayas



MC2 Jacob Estes



MC2 Alan Gragg



MC2 Heidi J. Giacalone



MC1 Josh Huebner