

1A3 NEWSLETTER

“UNITING OUR COMMUNITY BY STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS & ALIGNING OUR FUTURES”

OP-ED

OG SEL INTERVIEWS

JACOB JASSOY
TRAVIS STRONG
JOSHUA NELSON
21 APRIL 2022

In an effort to investigate advanced training opportunities, we sat down with the OG SELs at Robins, Tinker, and Offutt. The conversation shifted to an overarching idea of how our career will change in the near future. Below is a quick summary of their BIO’s.

CMSGT Dustin Johnson entered active duty in 1996. He served on the E-3 for the next 10 years and then spent 7 years flying on Data Masked. He has since served in staff and SEL positions, to include his current position as the 552nd OG SEL, Tinker AFB.



CMSGT Annika L’Ecuyer entered active duty in 1996. She served on the E-4 for the next 7 years and then spent 9 years flying Special Airlift Missions. She has since served in staff and SEL positions, to include her current position as the 55th OG SEL, Offutt AFB.



CMSGT Jeffrey Taylor entered active duty in 1993. He served on the E-3 for the next 12 years. He then spent 10 years flying on JSTARS, and 5 years with the MQ-9. He has since served in staff and SEL positions, to include his current position as the 461st OG SEL, Robins AFB.



As you can see each of the OG SELs have had vastly different experiences in the Air Force. That being said, you will find that they have a common idea of how our career will continue to thrive in the future.

OG SEL INTERVIEWS continued on page 2

Current Events

1A3 SEL SUMMIT SUMMARY

ZACHARY “BG” BAUMGARDER
21 APRIL 2022

The evolving Air Force environment has set the requirement for compound solutions to achieve lasting and durable successes for the 1A3 AFSC. Over the last 10 years, we have seen several AFSC mergers into the 1A3 community that created complexity across different mission sets, coupled with geographic and communication barriers forcing leaders to formulate decisions within a narrowing scope. This diversity in mission, geography and a lack of exposure to the various missions within our community have reduced Senior Leaders’ collective ability to see and approach what are so often shared enterprise-wide challenges.

The first-ever 1A3 World-Wide SEL Summit was used to address the above issues by targeting specific stakeholders both internally and externally to the 1A3 AFSC. These influencers included not only SELs from over 26 geographically separated units, but also the Career-Field Manager, AFPC CEA Assignments Manager, CEA Center of Excellence Commandants and seven CEA MAJCOM Functional Managers. Additionally, 25 specialized presentations were briefed ranging across strategic, operational and tactical levels. Specific areas included CFM direction, MAJCOM impacts, individual MDS challenges, man-power, advanced technologies, undergraduate flight training and career-field vectoring. Lastly, multiple social events and open discussion forums increased cohesion for attendees outside the target briefings, giving additional opportunities for SELs to devise solutions to overcome challenges.

This event offered a forum to reorient the 1A3 community for the next fight, by allowing in-person direction from the CFM. He advised Force Health and Keep Rates for all 10 aviation career-fields. Additionally, the 1A3 SELs were advised on Force End Strength Management, Enterprise Accession & Retention Initiatives. The CFM also informed the audience about how CEAs will be developed in the future, this subject covered functional development, EDT vectoring, and the repackaging of CEA specialties. Lastly, he highlighted some of the advanced courses offered to CEA leaders, including both the current CEA Senior Leadership Course, as well as, the newly developed CEA-Staff Course.

The CEA Center of Excellence highlighted some of the upcoming changes coming to the schoolhouse. This included specialized tours of the facility, as well as, multiple briefings on the modernization of the 1A3 course and Aircrew Fundamentals curriculum. The projected framework changes will eliminate repeated instruction delivery for our advanced students and previously qualified CEAs.

Currently, Air Force direction and world events are forcing leaders to think outside the status quo, while being emotionally intelligent, strategic and top-level communicators. The 1A3 WW SEL Summit provided a platform for otherwise disconnected SELs to network and develop plans to solve previously impossible challenges. The 1A3 career-field will be continuing the success of the first 1A3 World-Wide SEL Summit, by prioritizing the stand-up of future conference events each year. The next Summit will be hosted by the 89 OG at Joint-Base Andrews and is scheduled for 7 - 9 March 2023. CMSgt Ryan Starkey (89 OG/SEL) will be championing the event with SMSgt Eric Johnston as the project lead.

OP-ED

OG SEL INTERVIEWS CONTINUED

The rest of this article will be excerpts from the interviews. TSgt Jacob Jassoy interviewed CMSgt Dustin Johnson, TSgt Travis Strong interviewed CMSgt Annika L’Ecuyer, and MSgt Joshua Nelson interviewed CMSgt Jeffery Taylor. Each of the interviews were conducted in March 2022.

How we as a community prepare for the future

Chief Taylor: As 1A3s, we are often tasked with doing different things. Be it different platforms, missions, one off assignments, standing up new capabilities. The common thread among all of these is our inherent flexibility and our internal drive to just be phenomenal aviators and Airman. One of the questions I get often is how do I succeed as an aviator and as a 1A3. There’s nothing cosmic about it. Work hard. Make yourself indispensable. Understand that there are multiple sides to whom you are as an Airman, both individually and from an AF perspective in what we get asked to do. We need to be prepared to take on whatever the USAF asks. All of the scariest things I have been asked to do over a 30 year career turned out to be the most memorable. MC-12s, MQ-9s, standing up new units, all wonderful opportunities. I’ve made lifelong friends and met phenomenal leaders every time.

Right now as 1A3s, very few get to go to WTI. We don’t have an Advanced Instructor Course yet. The best course we have; our top shelf course is CEASLC. It’s different from Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course, as it’s based around leading an operational or flying squadron and all the various components that covers anything from manpower to senior leader communications. They are installing a new course, CEA-SC (Career Enlisted Aviator Staff Course), with the goal to push CEASLC down to TSgts about to fill a flight chief role and install CEA-SC to be offered at the seasoned MSgt and SMSgt level. It is under development right now with hopes of filling classes in the summer of 2022.

Chief L’Ecuyer: You have to be relevant and don’t just have the same conversations that we need to be the same way all the time. You should be like ‘If you need me to transition to do this, I can do that.’ Of course, those first groups of people that decide to raise their hand, they’re paving the way for how everybody else is training and it's going to be harder for those first groups. However, we need to at least get them in the mindset of ‘Oh, I can do that’. We're critical thinkers. We already know we have a lot of skills from our maintenance background, and from the cyber aspect, we're not pure operators. We know what the guts look like. We understand guts of things, systems of systems. It's better to be a jack of all trades than just a master of one. The Air Force has these buzzwords like MCA (Multi-Capable Airman) and really what they're asking us to do is just be able to do whatever needs to be done. We do need to educate ourselves to be better at what we do now but also look for those opportunities.

Being up front with you though, if you want me to make the sausage, it's not gonna happen. Because as a Group Chief and even your 1A3 Chiefs, they’re being pulled in eight different directions. But if you have a group of people that are like ‘We're going to come up with a plan, we're going to write it down and present it’. If it's packaged and ready for a decision, it is so much easier to sell.

Chief Johnson: As a RADAR Tech, should I be able to look over somebody's shoulder and look at a console and find out that somebody's breaking an airspace? You know, the old me would say ‘no, I have no idea what I'm looking at’. I took pride in it. I took pride in it! And now I'm ashamed that I was proud of the fact that I was ignorant about tracking aircraft. I told folks recently there’s a wave coming. Knowledge and capability are your surfboard. You better start learning how to use it because you're either going to learn to surf this wave, or it's going to bounce you off the coral.

Now we're gonna have a bunch of Swiss Army Knife aircraft to do, whatever they need to do, right? We need a Swiss Army Knife type Airman, to do whatever those aircraft need Airman to do. So I've told folks, and I'll stand by this but, if you want to remain a flyer, the best thing you can do for yourself is to be as value added as possible. Attack your gaps in knowledge because I know at any given time what I'm weak at. I know what probably could use a little bit more attention. If I'm a sensor operator and I don't know anything about links, I'd be jumping on the treadmill, setting it to 10, and running towards knowledge on being a link operator. The wallflowers, they're gonna be the first ones to be given the options outside of wearing a flight suit.

I do think we're value added and I will tell you what, I'll look you right in the eye and say that if I thought that cutting CEAs or 1A3 specifically away from an airframe made that a more lethal airframe, I would be the first advocate to say ‘Hey, listen! Nobody wants to be self-loading baggage’. But I will never believe that any airframe, that's multi-role, is better served by having less people who are going to have the experience, longevity, and the drive to become the best in their career field over, not just over a 3 or 4 year period, but a 10 to 15 year period. That's where our value is added.

So the Group Commander is getting requalified right now and he was sitting down in the sim. He was blown away by how awesome the Mission System Operator sitting next to him was. He's just like ‘he saved my bacon on a half dozen different occasions’. Now I happen to have been around when they got rid of the D shreds, right? For the 1A4 Deltas, they got rid of those enlisted weapons controllers. I was in a unique position to leave NATO AWACS right after that happened. Then I jump onto an aircraft that was controlled by the first generation of 13B that had not been taught by the enlisted. It was terrifying! So, without getting into the specifics of that, there is a very important discussion going on right now behind the scenes and in front of the scene sometimes.

OP-ED

OG SEL INTERVIEWS CONTINUED

Ways to make us more capable Airman

Chief Johnson: So, depending on the crew position right now here at Tinker, there is a number of different courses that have already been explored. So, the Radar techs, have their EW course that they've already broke the seal on going down to Pensacola. We also have the JICO courses and JICO like courses that are going on and we have security plus and network plus. What it comes down to is bouncing this off of us at the group level or more specifically tactics in the OSS, and then building these proposals for you guys to be able to attend the things that you guys need. If you're looking for ways to build it up, that's something I would absolutely like to be involved in, but I know that we've already got a number of these actually built out and I think it's just a matter of coding them and leveraging the work that's already been done. Now I can't get too far into it because first it's not very well-baked and second I don't know enough to speak authoritatively about it, but I know that we have people who have been in touch with the 8th Weapons School. I know that we're actually trying to leverage some of the things that the 13 Bravos are doing as well, in creating an advanced course.

Chief Taylor: When I had the opportunity to be a Sensor Operator on MQ-9s, they had a Sensor Operator Advanced Instructor’s Course, which I fought for and encouraged my Sensor Operators to go to. The Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course and Advanced Instructor’s Course are leadership and problem solving courses that are hidden inside of a weapons and tactics type casing. We label them weapons, tactics and instructor courses but what they really are, are leadership and problem solving courses. When I got a SOAIC graduate, I could give them a task that had nothing to do with weapons and tactics. For example, I’d say “solve the AF Childcare issue.” Nothing to do with weapons and tactics but the way they teach you to break down problems, and attack them in layers to generate an outcome that’s favorable can be applied to any problem. Life problems, work problems, Marine problems, it doesn’t matter. So when we get an opportunity to send people to WTI and hopefully one day AIC, we are not only creating phenomenal instructors, not only creating people that are savvy when it comes to the fight but we are also creating leaders that can solve any problems thrown their way.

Chief L’Ecuyer: There's definitely an appetite for the training that you're looking to do. Now, whether these courses are the right ones, we have to figure that out, but I hope there's a lot of stuff out there that we don't even know of. We currently have two 1A8s that are attending a navy equivalent to weapons school at NAS Fallon. So they're going through this and we are then going to create an operating location there. Those two people are going to PCS there and help develop the advanced instructor course. So they could be patches. And then we're trying to build reciprocity with the 8th Weapons School. There might be an opportunity to build like the National Cryptologic School. Well, what do we have? What do we have for development? We have the Center of Excellence. So maybe we have that framework, Well AETC is kind of crappy sometimes. You can quote me on that, they're kind of crappy. Here's a quote for you. They are a big slow turtle on their back. I mean, I probably won't be around to see any of this great stuff, but I think it’s a possibility. We just need to think outside of what we know. Some people will be scared of it. We have a lot of chiefs I think, that'll fight for it. Even though we're old and we've been doing something the same way, we recognize that we got to do something different.

EDITORIAL

FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

DANIEL “GRINDER” GRINDSTAFF
21 APRIL 2022

Thank You for reading the second edition of the 1A3 Newsletter. One thing in these interviews that really resonated with me, was when the old crusty Chief Johnson said he was ashamed of his attitude when he was younger. I know I had that same arrogant pride in my willful ignorance when I was younger. I look back on it now, and I can’t even understand my own point of view anymore. Marcus Aurelius wrote “Suppose a man can convince me of error and bring home to me that I am mistaken in thought or act; I shall be glad to alter, for the truth is what I pursue, and no one was ever injured by the truth, whereas he is injured who continues in his own self-deception and ignorance” I regret having that attitude as a young Airman, but I believe it is our job as mentors, to help guide the next generation past that youthful arrogance as fast as possible, not just for the Air Force’s benefit, but their own.

In our next edition, we will be interviewing some recently retired members, in the hopes of sharing some of their lessons learned from the retirement process itself, but also from their life after the Air Force. Lastly we would like to announce the Association of 1A3’s first general meeting, scheduled for Tuesday June 7th at 1400 ET. We will introduce our Board of Advisors, chart a path forward for elections, discuss organizational structure, and create an agenda for the next quarter’s gathering. To join this meeting, dial 410-874-6750 and enter 630919101# when prompted.

If you have any questions about the topics covered, or any suggestions for the next newsletter please email me at Daniel.P.Grindstaff@gmail.com Please visit our new website **AssociationOf1A3s.com** where we post this newsletter, as well as other general information as it becomes available.

