

AVIATION “SKETCH” ARTIST PROFILED ON TEXAS TV



By JO2 Harrold Henck, USNR

Work with passion and not for glory and people will notice. That might be an appropriate maxim for the endeavors of Dr. Carlton “Sketch” Eddy of San Antonio, Texas. The self-taught artist has turned a simple pastime into a professional hobby and attracted an ever-growing fan base for his paintings. Dr. Eddy’s art gives insight to a world few ever experience—the realm of Naval Aviation. More specifically, it captures the drama of people and machines as they interact on the windswept tarmac of massive floating airports.

Naval Aviation News has long recognized Dr. Eddy’s artistic acumen and readers may recall his work in past issues, such as May–June 1998. The professor’s love of art combined with his reverence for the Navy has resulted in a series of popular maritime aviation prints. His work has been displayed in the National Museum of Naval Aviation, Pensacola, Fla., and he serves as an official artist for the U.S. Coast Guard. Now, thanks to a recent Texas



Photo courtesy Texas Country Reporter

television program, Eddy’s work is gaining wider public attention.

“Texas Country Reporter,” a syndicated program of the Lone Star State, profiled Dr. Eddy last spring and captured the essence of the artist’s muse. Working on the flight deck of the legendary carrier *Lexington* (CV 16), now berthed at Corpus Christi, Texas, Dr. Eddy (left) was surrounded by vintage naval aircraft. He knows his critics in the Naval Aviation community expect accurate draftsmanship combined with artistic realism. Painting aboard *Lady Lex* inspired Eddy. “Being in the presence of my subject is far superior to relying on photos or conjuring up memories,” Eddy remarked. “I can look at each plane, capture every detail and create an authentic portrayal.”

The Texas show highlighted an especially meaningful turning point in Dr. Eddy’s artwork. When son Ethan served in the Navy a few years back, Dr. Eddy experienced a catharsis in finding both a way to express support and to relieve fundamental fatherly concerns. To

keep in touch, the elder Eddy began a series of letters adorned with hand-drawn Naval Aviation scenes. Sent to Ethan while on board *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72), the meaningful missives found a following among the carrier's crew. In the November–December 1998 issue of *Naval Aviation News*, Dr. Eddy commented:

“When a son or daughter joins the Navy, not only does that individual enlist, but in a real sense the entire family goes Navy. To the family at home, a Sailor on an aircraft carrier is engaged in a little understood, yet poignant mixture of daily duty, faraway ports and shipborne international peacekeeping and diplomacy.”

Dr. Eddy's artwork so graphically conveyed his feelings that every letter sent became a mail call for the entire crew. Eagerly anticipated, the ship's company often gathered to see what new scene would be portrayed on the envelope. Through art, Dr. Eddy's letters bridged a communication gap and celebrated

the work of his son and his shipmates.

The attention garnered from his imaginative communiqués ultimately yielded an invitation to visit *Abraham Lincoln*. While aboard, Eddy was awed by the experience and commented in his TV interview that “a carrier deck during flight ops is amazing. You really have to be there to appreciate the incredible seriousness, danger and excitement of the action.” The artist took full advantage to paint what he saw. According to Eddy, the “smells and colors [of the flight deck] are very powerful in conjuring up feelings” and inspiring artistry.

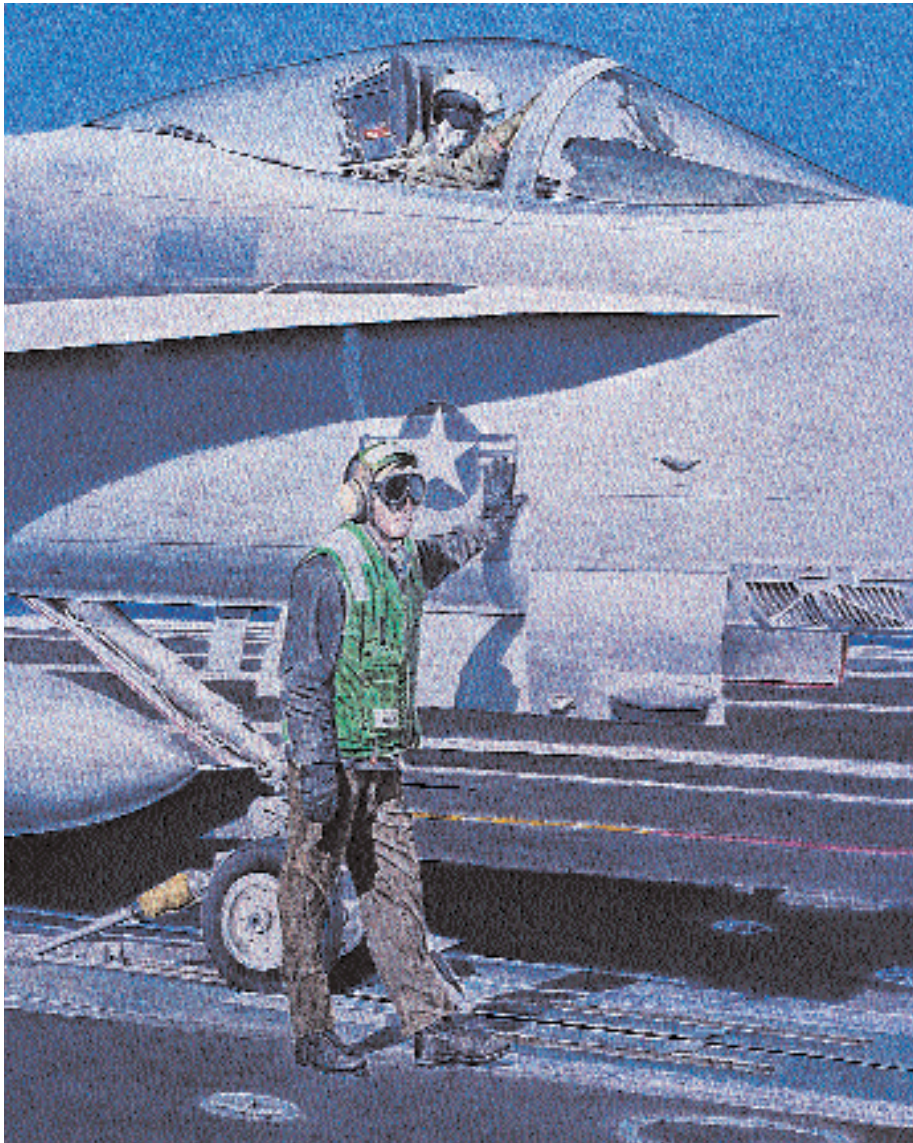
One visit led to another, and each visit furthered his convictions. Describing a typical flight deck environment, Eddy observed, “It's an ever-changing scene of drama and excitement in which man and machine are locked in a complex ballet of incredible precision and bone-numbing brawn—all set amidst jet blast, whirling props, swirling steam, winds over the deck and ear-splitting noise.”

Dr. Eddy has great admiration for Naval Aviators. Through his artwork, he pays tribute to them and vicariously fulfills a personal ambition. The artist dreamed of becoming a pilot but his eyes didn't pass muster. Eddy instead became a biomedical researcher and is currently on staff at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. Despite his lack of flight experience, Dr. Eddy has earned the respect of those he depicts. When asked by “Texas Country Reporter” why veteran pilots admire his work, the modest artist waxed poetic:

“To be accepted by people who do something very unique, and not be considered just an outsider who doesn't understand, is extremely satisfying. I think they see me as an advocate who's willing to give them a pat on the back and acknowledge what they do.”

Dr. Eddy's acceptance is probably best exemplified by the casual, yet respectful appellation his patrons have bestowed upon him. Sailors and Naval Aviators alike, many of whom now proudly hang his work on their walls, simply call him “Sketch.” ✈️

JO2 Henck wrote this article during reserve active duty training on the *Naval Aviation News* staff. In civilian life, he is a social studies teacher at George Ball High School, Galveston, Texas.



Opposite, top, “Sketch” Eddy, left, and son topside aboard *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72). Above, Eddy's painting “Holding on Amber” depicts son Ethan preparing to launch an F/A-18C *Hornet*.