

# Ensign carries on family Orion tradition

by Lt. Kenny Vaughn, VT-31 PAO

The old saying is that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. In the case of the Reichel family, the pilot doesn't fall far from the Orion.

Ensign Julie Reichel, a recent graduate of Advanced Training Squadron Thirty One (VT-31), is on track to become a third-generation P-3 pilot as she heads to the P-3 Fleet Replacement Squadron Thirty (VP-30) in Jacksonville.

Reichel was awarded her Naval Aviation Wings on May 20. There to help her celebrate were her father, retired Lt. Cmdr. Richard Reichel and her grandfather, retired Lt. Cmdr. Alfred Reichel – both prior P-3 pilots.

"Although I did not grow up hearing P-3 bedtime stories I vaguely knew of the military tradition in my family by way of model aircraft in my dad's office, and deployment stories from my mom," Reichel said.

The Reichel family's P-3 legacy began in 1964, when Alfred Reichel oversaw VP-22's transition from the P2V Neptune to the P-3A Orion at Moffet Field, Calif. The ensigns' father, Richard Reichel, flew P-3C's from 1983 to 1986.

Almost a half-century after her grandfather helped introduce the P-3, Reichel will begin training on the same platform, albeit in an upgraded model series.

Her father could not be prouder.

"Julie is a truly special young woman who combines intelligence with common sense and a good heart," he said. "If this is the future of Naval Aviation, this nation is in good shape for another hundred years!"

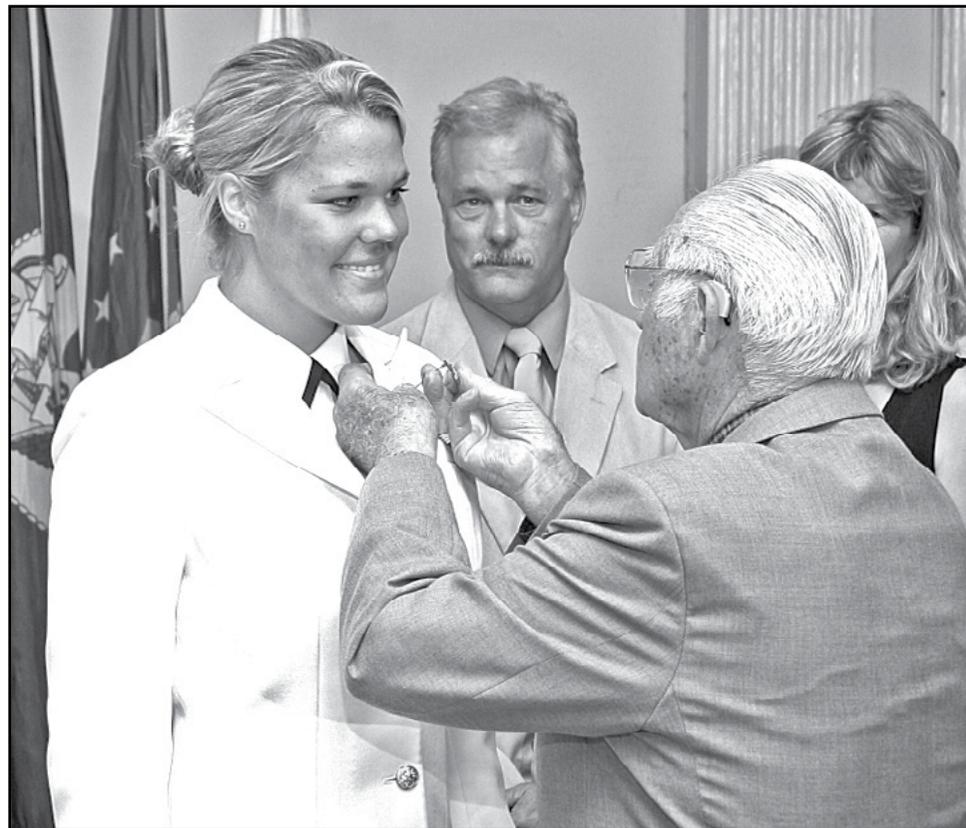
Despite the family tradition, Reichel is quick to point out that she has gotten to this point in her Navy career by her own inclinations.

"I was not sure if aviation was something I could be passionate about in the beginning – but I am so grateful to be able to honestly say that my affinities for aviation have grown," she said.

Squadron relocations have made it impossible to follow dad and granddad's footsteps. Both men served in VP-47 at NAS Moffet Field, but it has since relocated to NAS Kanehoe Bay in Hawaii. Reichel is leaving open the possibility of joining VP-47, admitting that she would enjoy being stationed in either Whidbey Island or Kanehoe Bay.

Efforts are ongoing to sustain P-3 operations until the replacement platform, the P-8 Poseidon is fully operational. The irony is not lost on Reichel; in 1964, her grandfather was one of the first to fly the new P-3A. Reichel could possibly do only one tour before transitioning to the P-8.

"I find it really interesting that my granddad was one of the first to fly P-3s, and I will be one of the last," Reichel said.



Ensign Julie Reichel has her Naval Aviator wings pinned on by her grandfather as her father watches. Reichel is training to fly the P-3 Orion – which both her father and grandfather flew. Photo by Hugh Lieck

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