

G THE HIGHER YOU

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PHOTOS BY MC3 CRAYTON AGNEW

“The higher you go, the more people you serve. Not the other way around.”

“That one lesson from my father always stuck with me,” said Cmdr. Matthew Enos, Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 11, [then] executive officer. “It was something that makes sense now. Not many people who choose the Navy as a career can say that they were mentored from birth by a CMC.”

Command Master Chief David Enos Sr. gave the Navy 30 years of service. Fifteen of those he spent as a CMC. Every opportunity he had to make rank he did it. He earned the rank of master chief in 15 years as a sonar technician, which is nearly impossible nowadays, before retiring in 1991.

It was after attending a Blue Angels airshow with his father, Cmdr. Enos knew he wanted to fly jets in the Navy.

He commissioned through ROTC at Virginia Tech in 2002. Throughout his 20 year Navy career, he has served all over the world, in a variety of leadership roles in various commands

and squadrons, before becoming VFA-11’s executive officer in 2019.

At commissioning, his father rendered the first salute. While Cmdr. Enos was proud of his own accomplishment, his father was even prouder.

“He influenced my career in many ways,” said Cmdr. Enos. “Even though growing up I used to think ‘stop with the lectures for crying out loud,’ I now realize that he gave me a ton of leadership tidbits that I carry throughout my career. As I’ve gotten older and matured, I realized the things I heard him say my entire life became incredibly useful in my Navy career. It felt like I was given a cheat code. It shaped my perspective on life and perspective on leadership.”

Master Chief Enos deployed 10 times during his service in the Navy. Now he gets to do his 11th with his son.

Truman recently held a burial-at-sea aboard the ship allowing Cmdr. Enos the privilege to participate in returning his father to the sea for the final time.



“The burial-at-sea was very emotional, especially during the practices,” said Cmdr. Enos. “During the actual ceremony, it was emotional, but I was able to keep everything nice and collected. The moving part to me was the fact that all of [this effort] was dedicated to these 16 individuals and my father happened to be one of them. I was fortunate enough to be on this ship to participate for mine and my family’s sake. My father loved everything about the Navy.”

“My family is thankful that they can have some form of representation. Being able to be there to return his remains was perfect and I couldn’t think of a better way to end the chapter,” added Cmdr. Enos.

The burial-at-sea was even more moving for Cmdr. Enos as all of the Carrier Airwing (CVW) 1 CMCs participated in the ceremony.

Enos. Sr. always knew he wanted to be buried at sea. Cmdr. Enos’ initial role after his father passed was to help his mother with arrangements. He never expected he would have the chance to be part of the service.



Carrier Airwing (CVW) 1 CMCs during the burial-at-sea.



Matthew Enos at David Sr.'s reenlistment.

“Years ago, my mother wasn’t too keen on the idea of a burials-at-sea,” said Cmdr. Enos. “But the Navy was always a major part of his life, as well as hers, being that she was a 30-year Navy wife. It just made sense.”

On June 23rd, Enos Sr. passed while the Truman was underway for Tailored Ship’s Training Availability (TSTA) and Final Evaluation Period (FEP).

“I got the phone call after landing one of my flights,” said Cmdr. Enos.

“I called home and talked to my mom and she told me that my father had decided that, while dealing with heart and renal issues and on dialysis, he had enough. It was becoming too much of a painful an existence.”

During TSTA/FEP, Cmdr. Enos was able to return home. His entire family was able to get together and spend Enos Sr.’s last days with him.

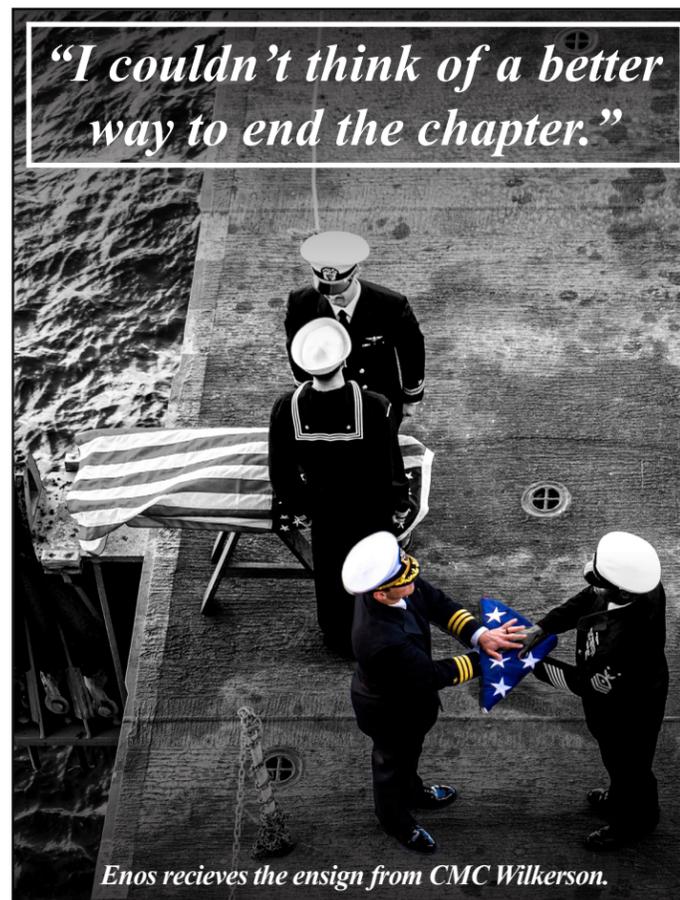
“This is going to sound twisted, but the day he passed I was back on the ship,” said Cmdr. Enos. “While he was still coherent, he was like ‘What are you doing here!? Are you just here to watch me

die? Go do your thing.’ The Navy meant so much to him that he felt like he was impeding on what I was supposed to be doing here as the executive officer of VFA-11. He said, ‘There’s not much more we can say, so go do your thing.’”

The day Cmdr. Enos was scheduled to be back on the Truman, he received the call from his mother saying that his father passed that morning.

“It wasn’t that long ago,” said Cmdr. Enos. “But many people aren’t fortunate enough to participate in a memorial service like I did and get the type of closure we had prior to him passing. We were able to get together multiple times and get to say everything that was on our mind. Although it seems a little fresh, my family is completely at peace with it.”

Cmdr. Enos now serves as the VFA-11 commanding officer, and while he didn’t get the chance to serve with his father, they bonded immensely over Navy stories and leadership challenges from their careers. His father loved the Navy until the day that he passed. Now CMC David Enos Sr. can rest in the sea that he was committed to throughout his life. Fair winds and following seas, Shipmate.



Enos receives the ensign from CMC Wilkerson.



David Enos Sr. as a junior Sailor.