The ship you will be visiting on your field trip is called the USS Midway. Did you ever wonder how it got its name? First of all, every Navy ship in the United States has a name beginning with USS, which stands for United States Ship. Midway was the name of an important battle in World War II. That’s why the Navy chose Midway for the name of this ship.

One of the first things you will notice when you arrive at the Midway is the large 41 painted on the side of the ship. What could that mean? Well, the Navy numbers its ships in order, as they are built. The very first aircraft carrier ever built in the United States was the USS Langley, built in 1922. It was number 1. The Midway, built in 1945, was number 41. The newest carrier now in use is the USS George H. W. Bush, number 77.

The next thing you will notice about the Midway when you drive up close to her is her size. She is HUGE! She is 1,001 feet long, which is about the length of 3 football fields. She is as high as a 20-story building. And, she weighs almost 70,000 tons! That means she weighs about as much as 14,000 elephants or about the same as 6,000 school buses. The Midway could carry up to 80 planes. She has 3 elevators that were used to move planes from the flight deck to inside the ship. Each of these elevators could carry 110,000 pounds. The Midway’s crew numbered 4,500 men. In order to keep those men well fed, the Midway’s 4 galleys (kitchens) had to serve over 13,000 meals a day!

Notice that the USS Midway is referred to by using the word “she”. That is common for ALL ships. It goes back to ancient times when sailors named their ships after the women they loved and left behind when they went out to sea. Don’t be surprised if you hear a former Midway sailor say something like, “The Midway was my favorite ship. She was the greatest. I will remember her forever.”

The USS Midway sailed in every ocean in the world and fought in the Vietnam War and in the First Persian Gulf War. She served in the North Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Western Pacific Ocean. Not just a warship, she was also involved in efforts to help people. In 1975, the Midway was off the coast of Vietnam to help evacuate South Vietnamese people fleeing from those who had taken over their country. In 1991, when Mt. Pinatubo erupted in the Philippines, the Midway delivered emergency supplies and rescued stranded American military personnel. Some say that because of her proud career and service, the Midway is “magic”.

In 1992, after a career that lasted 47 years, the Midway was finally decommissioned, or retired. She was getting old and there were newer, more modern ships that had been built to take her place. Over 200,000 men had served on the Midway during those 47 years. She had received many awards for outstanding service. Many people felt her memory should be honored, and they didn’t want to see her rust away and become forgotten. They made plans to bring her to San Diego and turn her into a museum.
Diego and make her into a museum. The USS Midway Museum opened in June of 2004. Since that day, 350,000 students from San Diego and beyond have come on board to explore and learn. We look forward to the day when you come aboard with your class and experience the “Midway Magic”!