As this issue of Currents went to the printer in mid-April, the museum remained closed, difficult decisions were being made, and yet there also was some good news.

The museum was proud to make its commitment to pay all employees through April 25. It was an important and well-deserved pledge. Thereafter, most employees were furloughed with the good news that most would qualify for 100 percent of their compensation at least through June 30, as authorized by the federal CARES legislation. They also would retain their insurance benefits at least through June 30.

As we take care of our employees to the best of our ability, a number of shipboard construction projects have continued at an accelerated pace due to the museum’s closure. For example, work continues on our new Café 41, although we may delay its opening until early next year. A persistent port catapult leak is being repaired while significant work is being performed on all three aircraft elevators. Preparatory work
Greetings from the flight deck of Midway where we are headed toward summer and are battling our first serious setback in attendance due to the coronavirus challenge. I hope that all of you have remained safe from infection.

Through March and April, it certainly had been our top priority in maintaining Midway as a safe environment for our volunteers, visitors, Members, and staff upon learning the virus had reached the U.S. We immediately ramped up our daily cleaning protocol on the ship at that time before deciding to close Midway to the public, our staff, and volunteers in mid-March.

We’ve all heard that the measure of a program is not how everyone performs when everything is going well, but rather their performance when things go badly. This has been our opportunity to show what we’re made of, and I’m very impressed with how your Midway team has handled it as we approach summer.

While there have been many challenges over the past 16 years, the coronavirus is the first one that has dramatically affected our programs in a negative way. Prior to our closure, we saw education groups cancel their visits to Midway, and we certainly had our share of after-hours private event cancellations. For the first time since we arrived in San Diego, our attendance saw a precipitous drop in the weeks leading to closure.

We soon recognized that the date of re-opening would be uncertain and that recovery—both in our community and in our economy—would be protracted. Working from home since mid-March, our museum leadership has focused on core activities and collaboratively identified where we can reduce our expenses, likely for the remainder of 2020. By late March, the senior managers began holding weekly teleconferences to assess and coordinate activities.

Within two weeks of closing, our stellar marketing team repositioned much of our website from a visit-planning orientation to a source of information and inspiration during these trying times. I encourage you to visit www.midway.org if you haven’t done so recently. In addition, this issue of Currents is the first that we have delivered digitally to the majority of our Members, saving substantial printing costs.

Fortunately, your USS Midway Museum is on a solid financial footing with substantial reserves, thanks in large part to the ongoing loyalty and support of our Members.

We continue to monitor the situation and make prudent decisions based on the circumstances, always with the safety of our crew and visitors in mind. We will not panic and we will keep everyone informed. Ultimately, Midway will emerge as the strong and persevering ship that it has always been throughout her history.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII and I know the Greatest Generation would expect nothing less than professionalism and calmness under duress from those of us who inherited their gift to us. A thought-provoking message circulated on social media recently: “The Greatest Generation preserved freedom around the world. We’ve been asked to sit on our couch at home. We can do this!” Onward and upward.

By the Numbers

4,800

The number of pounds of laundry processed every 12 hours aboard the USS Midway, the equivalent of 2.4 tons of dirty clothes.

— MIDWAY PARTNERS —
A World That Defies Explanation
By Jill Hammons, Membership Director

What do I write? What do I say? “We are all in the same boat!” literally and figuratively. We are facing a worldwide crisis that is unprecedented. Everyone from the grocery clerk to the administrative clerk, from military service personnel to teachers and students, and from gardeners to grandparents have hunkered down while binging on Netflix and popcorn, loving on our loved ones and pets, learning how to paint or crochet (things we have put off), listening to good music, reading actual books, playing cards, cleaning out long-forgotten closets, and shredding years-old paper bills and records.

And I would be lying if I didn’t add worrying and/or shedding a few tears, too. Yes, we are all in the same boat.

We are proud and loyal USS Midway Members who are a family that loves this ship and what she has stood for since her launching 75 years ago: strength, power, and resolve.

In her strength, Midway also was a caring entity, one who saved literally thousands of disenfranchised and frightened people worldwide. Midway knew when the going got tough, to get going and assist, help, and care.

Throughout the course of history, there have been periods where we realize there are things bigger than we are, and that things sometimes happen to us or because of us. Such is a time we are facing now.

Under the wise leadership of Mac McLaughlin, a retired rear admiral who is showing his innate leadership skills now more than ever, Midway’s staff and volunteers have heeded advice to stay home and stay away from each other.

We are a TEAM. We are staying focused on being healthy, being smart, and having hope that this, too, shall pass. The health and safety of our guests, Members, staff, and volunteers remains our top priority.

Together, as a FAMILY, as a TEAM we will weather this storm and move through these challenging times to look forward to the wonderful day that Midway Magic is BACK!

Extending Your Midway Membership at No Cost

We are as disappointed as you are that we had to close the USS Midway Museum and reschedule or cancel many of our exciting events and programs. We very much miss you all and are looking forward to seeing your smiling faces back aboard soon.

As a result of this mandatory closure, we would like to honor our commitment to you by extending your Midway Membership at no cost for the length of time we must remain closed.

How will this work? The extended time will automatically be added to your original expiration date when we reopen again. There will be no need for a new Membership card as you will simply proceed to the entrance to have your card scanned and show your photo ID. VOILA! Then, on you go....

Even though the Museum is closed, we must continue to maintain, enhance and preserve the historic Midway. After all, rust never sleeps!

If you would like to help with some of those costs during this extraordinary time, kindly visit www.midway.org/give. All donations are eligible for a tax deduction.

Your proud USS Midway Museum is a well-known symbol of strength, peace, and freedom. Anything you can do that will keep her strong and healthy during these challenging times would be wonderful.

Friends — please stay safe, stay humble, stay kind, and stay home.

My heartfelt appreciation,
Taking the USS Midway Ashore!

During this time of closure, the Midway team has been working fulltime to develop new online content for the entire family!

This is the first issue of our popular Currents newsletter to be made available to everyone on Midway’s website! Discover what makes Midway Magic, the contributions of our volunteers, and the Midway legacy that inspires to this day!

Little Skippers: Activities for Kids

Meet Airman Sam Rodriguez! Aboard Midway, Airman Rodriguez guides kids through our Junior Pilot Program to help them earn their wings and narrates Midway’s Family Audio Tour. Now you can download activity sheets for some enriching family fun!

Nautical Alphabet

Did you know that flags flown on U.S. Navy ships are used for communication? Study the flags and corresponding letters and practice writing your name in nautical flags!

Honoring Our Midway Volunteers

It is no secret aboard Midway that our volunteers make the Midway Magic come alive each day. From answering the questions of our guests to restoring aircraft, our Volunteers help keep us “ship shape” in more ways than we can count! We are honored to highlight some of the volunteers that make a difference aboard Midway on our social media channels.

USS Midway - Ship’s Stories

Find out the latest information on the USS Midway Museum, enjoy Midway Currents and read the most recent blog from Midway’s Ship Historian, Karl Zingheim!

Docuseries Featured Videos

Enjoy two more stories from Midway’s new docuseries, United Stories of America, brought to you by USAA.

Plus virtual tours, galleries and so much More! Log on now to midway.org
Midway’s Skeleton Crew of 1955 is Revisited

By Karl Zingheim, Ship’s Historian

From the start, “Karl’s Korner” (a blog regularly appearing on Midway’s website) has been a place for me to share with you—our social media followers, our visitors, and our Midway family—slices of history from my screen to yours! Although the USS Midway Museum was closed for the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, and guests in March and April, my mission of sharing these stories with you does not stop. In fact, as Midway continued to operate behind the scenes and from the homes of our staff well into April, we quickly learned what we can accomplish while operating with a skeleton crew.

We will take it back to 1955. Did you know that the recent pandemic circumstances are not the first time the ship has accommodated reducing staff? In the summer of 1955, the Midway completed an epic around-the-world cruise from Norfolk, Virginia, to Alameda near San Francisco. The voyage foreshadowed a lengthy overhaul and modernization to bring the World War II-era carrier into the supersonic age.

In August 1955, the Midway arrived at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Washington. Since the repairs and modernizations were going to be so extensive, the ship was scheduled for decommissioning in October prior to handing her over to the yard personnel. This required an extensive and hectic process of removing all manner of stores, parts, fuel and lubricants, and other consumables a warship needs.

Next, all equipment slated for replacement, or no longer required, was logged out and removed. Even the ship’s boats departed for storage or for use with other ships. Eventually, the ship’s company accelerated its dispersal to other assignments. Presiding over this dwindling crew was Commander Richard S. Rogers, formerly the Midway’s Executive Officer, but now her transitional commander. In World War II, he flew Wildcat fighters. On June 5, 1943, Rogers so effectively strafed the surfaced German u-boat U-217, that an accompanying Avenger sank the submarine with well-placed depth charges.

On October 14, 1955, Rogers bade farewell to the last of the Midway’s old crew before moving to his next assignment.

Over the ensuing 23 months, the Midway transformed into a carrier able to operate the latest shipboard aircraft, including the F-8 Crusader. Sporting an enclosed bow, and an angled flight deck extension, Midway began to take on the appearance we all know today. In the second half of the 1960s, Midway saw another skeleton crew prepare for her next makeover. So, in a peculiar sense, the present circumstances are just another tour of minimal manning for a carrier always in transition, respectfully.

In a time when many things are uncertain, it is encouraging to see the community come together in so many ways. We thank you all for your support as we navigate this time together. Midway and her shipmates have always found a way to come back stronger than before.

This will be no different.

Following a two-year modernization overhaul, Midway’s bow had been enclosed and an angled flight deck had been added. Here, Midway is at anchor not far from the entrance to San Diego Bay.
Museum’s Volunteers of the Month

Paul “Chappie” Ward
Docent, Outreach, Exhibits

January, 2020

Paul “Chappie” Ward brings a very positive energy to the Midway team, most notably as a member of the Outreach team. Paul also is a dedicated supporter in exhibits, taking on tasks ranging from deep cleaning to painting preparation. He also is a loyal Docent, serving not only regular watches, but evening events. He’s known as “Happy Chappie!” He served with the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff’s Office and in the pastoral ministry.

George Sykes
Curatorial, Exhibits, Youth Programs, Outreach

February, 2020

George began at the Midway supporting the Curatorial department and has stepped up to become one of our most dependable booksellers. He also is a key contributor to youth overnight programs and enjoys sharing the Midway story at community outreach events. George began volunteering aboard Midway in June of 2014, and in more than five years has logged 6,000 volunteer hours.

Continued from cover

As we take care of our employees to the best of our ability, a number of shipboard construction projects have continued at an accelerated pace due to the museum’s closure.

As with other businesses, our closure has had a significant financial impact on the museum. When we do reopen to the public, we are anticipating lower attendance than we would normally expect and fewer special events being held on the ship. This has required us to review all the Midway’s operations and programs, and make some very difficult decisions this month.

This has included operational budget reductions for the remainder of 2020 and staff reorganizations in some areas to appropriately reduce our substantial labor costs. The ongoing support of our Members has contributed to a very strong museum financial foundation, and it is our mission to preserve that foundation as much as is feasible for the future needs of Midway. That requires us to bring our expenses in line with our reduced revenues as much as possible.

Thank you for your support, and I’m looking forward to when we can reopen and our incredible team is back together again sharing the Midway story with our Members and guests.

Does this clear-plastic model look familiar? It is believed it is the same model that is on display on Midway’s hangar deck today. Guests are fascinated to discover a see-through scale model of the USS Midway as it was commissioned 75 years ago. No one is quite sure where the model was stored between the 1950s and 1990s, but it came to San Diego when Midway arrived in late 2003 and was one of the museum’s initial exhibits.
Patriots in American history were hailed as freedom fighters. We owe so much to their foresight and tenacity. Our Midway Patriots are those who have included the USS Midway Museum in their estate plans and by doing so, are fighters for preserving Midway and supporting our vision to become America’s Living Symbol of Freedom. Funds from estate gifts help to build our endowment to ensure Midway Magic endures long into the future.

The dedication and generosity of our Patriot Society members is unparalleled.

Arthur B. Aydelotte  
Gerard & Catherine Baer  
John H. Bing, Sr. Trust  
RADM Ronne Blue, USN (Ret.)  
James & Paula Boyle  
James E. Bucklew  
Caler Jordan Trust  
Mary C. Crawford Trust  
Timothy John Duerr  
Michael M. Earley  
Larry & Roberta Ernst Family Trust  
Richard J. Fox & Sally D. Fox Family Trust  
Pam & Ken ‘Gunner’ Guyer Family Trust  
Jill Hammons  
Robert K. Holst  
Frank & Sharon Hudson  
Robert Jagemann, USN (Ret.)  
Michael & Christina Katz  
Ed & Julie Krummenacher  
Frank & Carolyn Laughton  
Clifford & Jean Lura  
Arthur & Bethann Lyons  
Jerry & Kitys Mitchell  
CDR James & Sandra Nash, USN (Ret.)  
Bonnie Nelligan  
Michael Newton  
Chuck & Tracy Nichols  
John M. Orlowski  
Dr. Frederick C. Orton, Sr. & Carol A. Orton  
CDR Lloyd L. Parthemier, USN (Ret.)  
David Payte  
Gilbert & Lois Schwartz  
Jack J. Scott  
CWO2 & Mrs. Rudolph T. Shappee, USN (Ret.)  
Graeme & Joni Shirley  
Jerrold & Luanne Siegel  
Carol Sommer  
Stames Family Trust/ Wynn McMahon Trust  
Roland L. Stebbins, USAF  
Swantz Trust  
COL & Mrs. Joseph Timmons, USAF (Ret.)  
José T. Viesca, Jr., MSgt., USAF (Ret.)  
LT Mike Weakley, USN (Ret.)  
CAPT Henry A. Wojtczak, MC, USN (Ret.) & Ann C. Wojtczak

Thank You!

For more information on how you can become a member of Midway’s Patriot Society, contact Dan Beintema, Midway Foundation President at: dbeintema@midway.org or (619) 398-8282.
Southwest Airlines’ support of museum visitors’ experience and inspiration is pervasive. Its messaging support includes “welcome aboard” messaging at the ticket booth and bag check tables, in passenger elevators, on the museum’s tour maps, and in the Southwest Airlines Flight Academy Lab that hosts programs for Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and the U.S. Navy’s Flying Midshipmen.

Celebrating six years of partnership in 2020, Southwest Airlines continues to increase its support for Midway and has been named Official Airline of the USS Midway Museum.

“We are all about hospitality and creating great experiences,” said Lidia S. Martinez, Manager of Community Outreach at Southwest Airlines. “Midway docents, safety staff, and volunteers are also devoted to the same high guest relations standards and they deliver a remarkable, educational, hospitable experience for museum visitors.”

For example, Southwest Airlines support of Midway’s Flight Academy teaches the principles of flight during youth education and overnight programs including Operation Wing Scout which was patterned after the original program of the 1940s for San Diego Girl Scouts.

“Southwest Airlines and the Flight Academy are pivotal to the success of our educational onboard overnight and aviation programs,” said Robert Johnson, Youth Programs Manager on Midway. “And these unforgettable experiences have touched thousands of people.”

“Southwest Airlines and the Flight Academy are pivotal to the success of our educational onboard overnight and aviation programs”

“Midway and Southwest Airlines share a commitment to exceptional guest experiences and our San Diego community,” said Craig Fisher, Midway’s Director of Partnership Marketing. “But what makes our relationship so strong are the values we share and the business practices we’re committed to including what Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly calls ‘living by the Golden Rule, embracing civility, and delivering Heartfelt Hospitality.’”

Southwest Airlines is known for a “triple bottom line” approach that contributes to the carrier’s performance and productivity, the importance of its people and the communities they serve, and an overall commitment to efficiency and the planet.

In its 49th year of service, Dallas-based Southwest Airlines Co. (NYSE: LUV) continues to differentiate itself from other air carriers with exemplary Customer Service delivered by more than 60,000 employees to a customer base topping 130 million passengers annually. Southwest became the nation’s largest domestic air carrier in 2003 and maintains that ranking based on the U.S. Department of Transportation’s most recent reporting of domestic originating passengers boarded. In peak travel seasons, Southwest operates more than 4,000 weekday departures among a network of 102 destinations in the United States and 10 additional countries. Southwest has also announced its intention to serve Steamboat Springs, Colo. by the end of 2020.

Southwest coined Transfarency® to describe its purposed philosophy of treating customers honestly and fairly, and low fares actually staying low. Southwest is the only major U.S. airline to offer bags fly free® to everyone (first and second checked pieces of luggage, size and weight limits apply, some carriers offer free checked bags on select routes or in qualified circumstances), and there are no change fees, though fare differences might apply.
A Treasure Found

Here is a letter Executive Assistant Lori Cartmill received about POW Jack Ensch, now a Docent aboard the USS Midway Museum. We forwarded this to Jack and look forward to his report after he speaks with Christine.

Dear Ms. Cartmill,

While looking through my old jewelry box yesterday, I came across this POW/MIA (Vietnam War) bracelet which I got in late 1972 while still in high school (I am now 62 years old). I remember donating money to an organization to help the families of POW’s/MIA’s.

I received this bracelet with the name of a military personnel who was either listed as a POW or MIA. If they returned home alive, you would put a blue sticker with a white star on the bracelet. My bracelet was inscribed with the name, Lt. John Ensch. When I learned Lt. Ensch had returned home alive, I placed the blue sticker with the white star on my bracelet and continued to wear the bracelet until I graduated high school in 1974.

After finding the bracelet yesterday, my husband suggested I do a search to put a face to an event from so long ago. WOW, a video on your site with now-retired Captain Ensch!!!! Thank you for posting that video. I cried with tears of joy and I hope Captain Ensch will see somehow this email and that he knows I still have the inscribed bracelet.

I would like to thank Captain Ensch for his service and sacrifice...I prayed every day for his safe return.

I would like to thank Captain Ensch for his service and sacrifice and to let him know that wearing that bracelet inscribed with his name made it so personal and meant so much to me (especially for a young teen who didn’t know what else to do to support our troops). I prayed every day for his safe return.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Christine M.
Henderson, NV

Several Americans have contacted Jack Ensch after wearing his POW bracelet in the early 1970s. This photo was part of a San Diego Union-Tribune article about Ensch in 2010 and how Dorothy Johnson in Ohio found him after wearing his bracelet after buying it at the Ohio State Fair and keeping it in her jewelry box for years.

The U.S. Navy’s Leap Frogs are rock stars aboard Midway when they parachute onto the flight deck. They always take time to interact with youngsters who even help them repack their parachutes!
Digital Technology Key to Planning Aircraft Exhibit

A demonstration of innovative digital scanning technology by a private company, Emesent, for the U.S. Navy recently provided the USS Midway Museum with invaluable information in planning the permanent installation of its recently acquired TBD Devastator aircraft.

The Navy was interested to see how Emesent’s “Hovermap” might create accurate digital twins of Navy vessels. Hovermap technology can scan and process data in an hour, a process that might take more than a day using traditional technology. Midway offered a great opportunity to show the Navy the technology’s capabilities.

While demonstrating aboard Midway, museum officials asked if Hovermap might be used to determine if the Devastator could fit in a new location that posed significant installation challenges. Emesent agreed.

A scanner was used to scan the Devastator (whose wings were not yet attached) in about five minutes. The new exhibit space also was scanned. Emesent staff then digitally added the wings to the Devastator and digitally placed it in the proposed location.

The verdict was that the aircraft would fit (with little room to spare). The evaluation by Emesent saved the museum substantial time, money, and potential interference with guests touring the museum.

Meanwhile for the Navy and others, the ability to quickly scan an area in 3D to determine if new objects or equipment will fit is extremely useful, especially where space is limited or the items have complex shapes. Examples include storing equipment on the deck of an oil rig, or fitting a new piece of machinery on a factory floor.

Members can view the video of the Devastator digital video here: https://vimeo.com/389406831.

A Blogger’s Perspective of Midway

In today’s social media world, visitors to Midway have the opportunity to share their experiences almost instantaneously with friends and family. Here is one blogger’s example last December (with reprint permission) of how, with Members’ ongoing support, volunteers and staff are meeting the Midway mission to preserve, inspire, educate and entertain every day:

My family was in San Diego for Thanksgiving break this year, and one day I was dragged against my will to visit the USS Midway Museum. Nothing against the museum itself, but I remember visiting the museum several times before as a kid and didn’t feel the need to go again. However, using the excuse of my younger brother having never gone before, my dad convinced me to go as his chaperone.

The inside of the museum looked pretty much the same as I remembered, with the addition of some new flight simulation experiences. However, I was surprised to find myself interested in reading every little text that was written on a plaque. It was great to be able to learn about history again after having not taken a history course since high school.

One particular plaque stuck out to me. It described the turning point of the Battle of Midway. To give some very light context, the Battle of Midway took place 6 months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and was a super-important naval battle against the Japanese. The American side was heavily disadvantaged in terms of numbers and experience and suffered heavy casualties in the beginning. However, within just 6 minutes, American dive bombers were able to land direct hits on all four Japanese fleet carriers, thus securing victory and significantly decreasing the overall duration of World War II.

Time is the greatest equalizer, as everyone is given the same amount each day and how it’s used is up to each individual.

I left the museum that day more inspired than I had ever been the previous times that I visited. Not only did my appreciation and respect for the people who defend our country grow, but I also realized how precious every second of every minute of every hour was. The course of history changed drastically within those 6 minutes.

If something that big could happen within a couple minutes, how much more so could I change my life in that short amount of time? Time is the greatest equalizer, as everyone is given the same amount each day and how it’s used is up to each individual.

Although it’s a bit early for New Year’s Resolutions, it’s never too early to start making the most out of my time now.
Water Intrusion A Vexing Challenge

San Diego received some particularly heavy rains at various points this past winter. Each storm revealed new leaks ("water intrusion" in Navy lingo), caused by corrosion and rust. Midway’s great Engineering Department and others rallied when pools of rainwater were spotted.

The San Diego area received extremely heavy rain over Thanksgiving of last year, causing water to leak in from the flight deck. Hangar bay one was flooded from the Battle of Midway Theater to the museum exit.

In addition, some of the rainwater found its way down to the main deck and reaching spaces used by Education and Engineering.

Librarians coming to work the day following Thanksgiving were greeted by a strong “rotten fish” smell coming up the ladder from the second deck. Early staff and volunteer arrivals all pitched in together to clean up the mess before the museum opened on what typically is one of the busiest days of the year.

Our Engineering crew discovered the rain came in through the port and starboard catapult runs leaking. Emergency pairs were made and now the Engineering Department has a plan to permanent seal the two catapult runs to prevent a reoccurrence.

The USS Midway Library team, headed by Children’s Book Donation Chairman Liza Aguirre-Oviedo, recently delivered more than 500 children’s books to George Dewey Elementary School in Point Loma. The books had been donated to the Midway Library during its Christmas book drive in memory of Joan Ring.

Joan, who passed away last year, attended Dewey for four years. The Midway donation delegation included Martha Lepore and Bonnie Brown from the Midway Library, Heather Wood representing Joan’s family, and Art Oviedo who gave support.

Receiving the books on behalf of Dewey was Terri Crago. Dewey has approximately 300 students, 80 percent of whom are from military families. Before heading to the library, Liza told Terri that she had gone through every book to make sure that it was in good condition and that it was appropriate for an elementary school student.

Terri showed the Midway team some old pictures of the Dewey School from the 1940s when Joan would have been a student there. Heather promised to go through Joan’s pictures and find one from her days at the school.

Take a close look at this shirt. It’s similar to many that are sold in the museum’s gift shop. But with one glaring difference. That’s the USS Iowa battleship, a far cry from Midway! Needless to say, there’s not much of a market for a USS Midway salute to the USS Iowa, so all the shirts were promptly sent back to the manufacturer.
A Pilgrimage Back to Midway Magic

For many USS Midway sailors, a return visit to the museum becomes a pilgrimage to relive experiences and fuel memories that have lasted a lifetime. The library crew often documents their visit. Here are some edited excerpts from the library’s Phil Eakin about Richard Pinker’s visit earlier this year:

When Richard Pinker and his wife, Ellen, visited the ship Richard asked how to get to W Division, he was directed to a couple Safety volunteers where he could ask to be taken to his spaces as a former crewmember. They appeared in the library about 3 p.m. We had found him in the 1972-73 and 1974 cruise books in W Division (weapons).

Richard handled bombs. One of the types of conventional bombs he handled had a painted yellow line around the business end of the bomb. It was a type of bomb that did not explode on landing. Once some curious person got near it after it landed, it would arm itself and when the person started walking away it would blow up. Richard said we lost a number of our own people to that type of bomb so they painted the yellow line around the tip to alert friendlies to the type of bomb it was and to stay away.

He left in early 1975 and was discharged there, after a four-year enlistment. He then worked as a mechanic for American Airlines for 34 years before retiring four years ago.

Richard also mentioned his job was to take assembled bombs off the conveyor and place them on a bomb cart. Up to three bombs would fit on one cart. There was a doorway where he worked that had an opening to a bomb elevator shaft. He was accustomed to moving the cart loaded with bombs quickly when bombs were to be transported within the ship.

One day, the elevator shaft door was open and he pushed the cart through the doorway, but the elevator kept going down to a lower level. He tried to grab the cart but had to let it fall down the shaft. He said he knew the bombs wouldn’t explode because they weren’t armed yet, but everybody else in the space ran away. The bombs did not explode.

He was a bit bemused when asked about his best memory of Midway. His wife said they visited a space off the tour route earlier in the day, courtesy of a “nice Midway person.” (It was the museum’s Chief Engineer, Len Santiago.)

Richard and his wife said the nice man (Len) took them to other spaces Richard wanted to see that were off the tour route. Even so, there were a couple they couldn’t get to. The man told them to give him more time if they wanted to come back another day and he’d try to fix it up so they could see more.

Editor’s Note: Hundreds of former USS Midway crewmembers have returned to Midway since it opened as a museum. The museum’s staff and volunteers make every effort to help them visit the spaces where they worked, for which the crewmembers are always extraordinarily grateful.

Among the unsung heroes of the museum is the nearly all-volunteer air wing of aircraft maintenance and restoration personnel. For approximately 20 years, they have been using a hangar at North Island Naval Air Station, spending thousands of hours restoring aircraft such as this one. Under the leadership of Walt Loftus, their ability to transform a rusty skeleton into a spotless and meticulously painted and historically accurate aircraft is truly remarkable. It’s no wonder that Midway’s air wing is one of Midway’s most popular features according to our guests.
Midway’s first and longest-continuing marketing partner, Kaiser Permanente, celebrates those who served by sponsoring Midway’s “I Served” program. The program recognizes guests who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces by providing each with a special badge that can be worn during their visit aboard Midway. The badge acknowledges their service with a simple thanks message from Kaiser Permanente and all of us.

“We are so grateful for our veterans, and this program gives us an opportunity to say, ‘Thank you!’”

Midway docents, staff, and other volunteers acknowledge badge wearers with their own “thank you,” and onboard posters also encourage Midway guests to express gratitude to badge wearers for their service, sacrifice, and dedication to the cause of freedom.

“The ‘I Served’ program allows Kaiser Permanente to offer veterans onboard the Midway much-deserved recognition for their service to our country,” said Rodger Dougherty, Senior Director of Public Affairs for Kaiser Permanente. “We are so grateful for our veterans, and this program gives us an opportunity to say, ‘Thank you!’”

Kaiser Permanente also sponsors Midway’s Sick Bay and Battle Dressing Station exhibits, is presenting sponsor of Midway’s STEM Education Onboard Field Trip Experiences that benefit more than 50,000 student visitors annually, and is an annual Commander sponsor of the Midway American Patriot Award Gala.

“We are very grateful for our relationship with Kaiser Permanente,” said Craig Fisher, Director of Partnership Marketing on Midway. “Besides the invaluable support, Kaiser and Midway share a commitment to those who serve, to STEM education, and to a culture of health and wellness.”

Kaiser Permanente began at the height of the Great Depression with an inventive young surgeon and a 12-bed hospital in the middle of the Mojave Desert. Today, Kaiser Permanente health plan membership exceeds 12 million members in eight states and the District of Columbia. Locally, Kaiser Permanente cares for nearly one in five (more than 630,000) San Diegans and continues to grow every day.
GEICO Military has expanded its support for Midway by becoming the exclusive presenting sponsor of Midway’s planned 45th Anniversary of Operation Frequent Wind celebration and Midway’s 75th Anniversary of the End of WWII celebration scheduled for August 14, 2020. These exclusive sponsorships are in addition to GEICO Military’s commitment to a multi-year presenting sponsorship of Midway’s Operation Frequent Wind exhibit.

Midway’s 75th Anniversary of the end of WWII celebration (tentatively scheduled in August) will be an evening event and include live entertainment, food, guest speakers, and dancing. Admission to this evening celebration is expected to be a ticketed event.

Midway’s 45th Anniversary of Operation Frequent Wind activities, originally scheduled for April 26, were cancelled due to COVID-19. They would have honored the 45th anniversary of the fall of Saigon and Midway’s rescue of more than 3,000 refugees. However, GEICO Military also continues its sponsorship of Midway’s Operation Frequent Wind exhibit.

It tells the story of Midway’s role in the evacuation of Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War when thousands of Vietnamese refugees fled in overloaded Army helicopters bound for U.S. Navy ships offshore. Forty-five Huey light helicopters and three large CH-47 helicopters filled with civilians landed aboard the USS Midway on April 30. As rainy conditions developed late in the day, a light observation plane approached the USS Midway. When overhead, the pilot dropped a note requesting that the congested flight deck be cleared so that he could attempt a landing. Upon learning that the pilot’s wife and five children were also aboard the plane, Captain Larry Chambers ordered the flight deck cleared. Helicopters and other equipment were pushed off the flight deck into the sea, and Major Bung Ly successfully landed his plane on the flight deck with room to spare.
The USS Midway Museum is proud to be a periodic training facility for our U.S. Navy SEALs. Whether it is a mock assault on the bridge or jumping off the flight deck into the water, the museum is a valuable training resource in the early hours before it opens to the public. Here, a group of SEALs arrive at Navy Pier early one morning, presumably after rowing across San Diego Bay in small rafts.

A recent demonstration by the Navy’s explosive ordnance disposal team clearly caught the attention of museum visitors. A goal of the museum is to work with various Navy commands in the region, giving each the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities and contributions to our nation’s safety to museum visitors.

Editor’s Note: For some people who visit the USS Midway Museum, it is a trip of deep emotion. Sometimes to honor the memory of a shipmate. Or perhaps to pause and reflect on the life of a loved one. These guests usually arrive and later depart anonymously, a few hours and perhaps some tears later. Recently we discovered that visiting for one man wasn’t enough. He left a written message in the intake of the F-8 Crusader on the flight deck.

It was a letter to his late father, accompanied by a grainy photograph of the time when the father and son had visited the museum in 2017. We don’t know the father’s name or whether he served aboard Midway. All we know is the first name of the heartbroken son, Josh.

Dear Dad,

I can’t believe this was us (the photo) three years ago. A lot has happened since then. I wish so much you were still here to meet Erin and Larry. I know you would really like her. She’s going to be an amazing partner.

Mom misses you so much. It really breaks my heart to see how much she’s hurting without you. We all miss you so much, but I know she misses you terribly. I don’t know how she does it. I wish I could do more for her and be a better son.

Everyone else is doing well. We just miss you so much. Life isn’t the same without you. Especially at family gatherings. No one mixed a drink or told a story better. I wish I was more like you and try to be each day.

I hope you’re looking down fondly on each of us. Please tell Aunt Pat she is missed as well.

I love you dad and miss you every day.

Josh

Airwing Manager Walt Loftus has plans to preserve and display the letter and photo, as both a reminder and tribute to the dedication and work of Midway’s staff and volunteers and as a reminder of how important the museum is to so many people.
Save the Date!
Thursday, September 3, 2020
Midway’s Flight Deck
6:00 p.m. • Black Tie

Annual Gala 2020
Celebrating the 75-Year Legacy of the USS Midway

Event proceeds benefit our ‘No Child Left Ashore’ scholarship fund aboard Midway

Gala Chair:
Connie Conard

Honorary Chairs:
Ben and Nikki Clay

For more information, contact Norma Nicolls at (619) 398-8294 or nnicolls@midway.org

For tickets & sponsorship opportunities, visit www.midwaygala.org

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A Young Boy & Admiral Nimitz

By Dave Harper, Docent

I was called Billy from birth and in August of 1941, a contractor with a project in Pearl Harbor hired my father as a carpenter, and shipped our small family (dad, mom, and me) to Hawaii.

Four months after our arrival, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Dad later joined the Civil Service Public Works Department and quickly became a supervisor of the carpenters.

A year after the bombing, Admiral Chester Nimitz made it known that he wanted a regulation-sized horseshoe pit installed in the back yard of his quarters so he could shift his focus for a few moments from the war to a short, steel, stake forty feet away.

My father, ever mindful of the benefits of knowing people in high places, became the horseshoe supervisor, overseeing the horseshoe project from start to finish. As a supervisor, dad drove a Navy pickup, and often took me to work with him.

On December 15, 1942, Admiral Nimitz visited his quarters to see when he could “pitch a few shoes” in his new pit and I happened to be there. I was just over three years old, with no knowledge of what was going on beyond my immediate surroundings. I’m sure I was fascinated by this grandfatherly man with the four stars on his collar.

Nimitz told my dad he was going to have his driver take him to check on various projects on the base and he would be delighted to have me ride along with him. Done! An hour or so later, I was returned to my dad with an official Navy photograph of Nimitz signed to me! It has been a prized possession in our family ever since.

When I became a Midway Docent, I discovered that the photo of Nimitz used in the Battle of Midway exhibit, is the same photo I have, so I decided to donate my original, signed, photo to the Midway so it can have a home after I’m gone.

Docent David Harper’s cherished photo from Admiral Nimitz has both personal and historical significance.
North Island Credit Union Supports Leadership Programs for Youth

Continuing its partnership with Midway through 2020, North Island Credit Union’s support focuses on two critical aspects of Midway Education. One is support for the “No Child Left Ashore” scholarship fund that insures no class wishing to come aboard Midway for STEM education is turned away because of a lack of funds. The other is for Midway’s Leadership Academy which hosts the Travis Manion Character Does Matter program.

“There is no better example of an impactful student program than those presented by the USS Midway.”

North Island Credit Unions also sponsors Midway’s three patriotic-themed special public events: Legacy Week (Memorial Day weekend), July 4th Family Celebration, and Veterans Day Celebration.

“We are committed to supporting local institutions, youth, and education in our San Diego community. There is no better example of an impactful student program than those presented by the USS Midway,” said North Island Credit Union President/CEO Steve O’Connell. “We’re honored to support the USS Midway again this year and expect that our contribution will make it a little easier for young people to participate in the special programs they provide. We are also hopeful that those in our community will enjoy the onboard celebrations that we are proud to sponsor again this year.”

California Credit Union is a federally insured, state-chartered credit union founded in 1933 that serves public or private school employees, community members and businesses across California. With more than 165,000 members and assets of $3 billion, California Credit Union has 24 branches throughout Los Angeles and San Diego counties. The credit union operates in San Diego County as North Island Credit Union, a division of California Credit Union. California Credit Union offers a full suite of consumer, business and investment products and services, including comprehensive consumer checking and loan options, personalized financial planning, business banking, and leading-edge online and mobile banking.

Visit northisland.ccu.com for more information or follow the credit union on Instagram® or Facebook® @northislandcu.

Here is a rare look at the cockpit of the TBD Devastator reproduction now on display at the Battle of Midway Theater on the hangar deck. The controls are remarkably primitive for an aircraft designed to fly at a low elevation directly toward enemy ships before releasing a single torpedo. The Devastator proved to be poorly matched against enemy aircraft and its torpedoes were unreliable. It was retired from combat duty shortly after the Battle of Midway.
Achievements of Midway Captains

Courtesy of research and former Midway sailor Troy Prince (spanning 40 captains)

Of the 40 men who commanded the USS Midway over 47 years’ service, a remarkable nine went on to reach the rank of Vice Admiral and two reached Admiral.

Several other Midway skippers became Rear Admirals, including Riley Mixson, a co-recipient of this year’s Midway American Patriot Award.

Thanks to Troy Prince, a great friend of the museum and USS Midway researcher, here are the nine Midway skippers who went on become Vice Admirals:

- CAPT Joseph Bolger 1945-46
- CAPT Herbert Duckworth 1946
- CAPT John Whitney 1946-47
- CAPT Marcel Gouin 1948-49
- CAPT Wallace Beakley 1949-50
- CAPT Frederick Kivette 1950-51
- CAPT Frank O’Beirne 1952-53
- CAPT Reynold Hogle 1954-55
- CAPT Arthur Cebrowski 1990-91

The two Midway commanding officers who ultimately became Admirals before retiring were Captains Ralph Cousins (1960-61) and Sylvester Foley, Jr. (1972-73).

Not unexpectedly, not every sailor who served aboard Midway was an English major. This label likely should have been “Firemain.” And at several locations on the hangar deck, some signs reading “Hanger Deck” exist to this day.

The museum attracts all manner of wildlife throughout the year. Is this pelican admiring Midway’s gold-painted anchor which is an honor bestowed on a ship when it achieves low crew attrition and high re-enlistment rates?

A tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes demolition work often is necessary before a compartment aboard Midway is ready for restoration for public access or as office space for staff and volunteers. A hardy group of volunteers has saved the museum tens of thousands of dollars in demolition costs over the years as it’s always ready for the next assignment. Here, the crew is working on dismantling compressors in a compartment one level up from the hangar deck near the gift shop. It is the first necessary-and-dirty step toward preparing the space as potential office quarters in the future.

Captain Art Cebrowski (right), shown here with actress Brooke Shields and Rear Admiral Dan March aboard the USS Midway, later became one of a handful of Midway skippers to reach one of the admiral ranks later in his career.

The museum attracts all manner of wildlife throughout the year. Is this pelican admiring Midway’s gold-painted anchor which is an honor bestowed on a ship when it achieves low crew attrition and high re-enlistment rates?
This near-perfect reproduction of a World War II-era Devastator arrived on Navy Pier in pieces a few months ago. Its journey began in a Canadian movie studio where it was used for the filming of last year's MIDWAY movie. The museum acquired it for display on Midway because there are no Devastators suitable for display anywhere in the world and it played a key role in the famous Navy victory in 1942. Our volunteers have spent the last few months reassembling and then adding authentic touches before it goes on permanent display near the Battle of Midway Theater on the hangar deck.