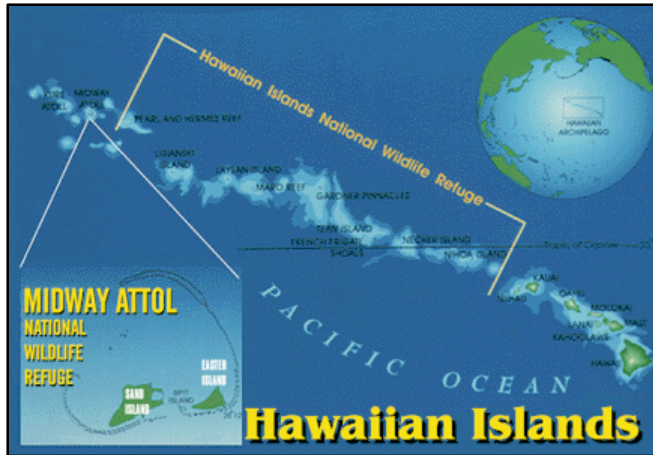


GEOGRAPHY OF MIDWAY



About 2800 miles west of San Francisco and 2200 miles east of Japan lay the reef-encircled atolls known as Midway. The geographic designation of latitude 28 degrees north, longitude 177 degrees west, places Midway in the Northwest Pacific Ocean (Oceania). The elevation is approximately 13 feet (4 meters).

Midway is actually comprised of two main islands. The larger was officially named "Sand Island," but to its former residents, it is "the" Midway. It is approximately 3 square miles in size. The smaller island, "Eastern," lies about a mile east of Sand Island and is less than one-fourth its size.

The islands are situated on the former ridge of an old volcano that sunk in the Pacific and which is now only visible as a reef not more than 3 feet above the water. The reef is overgrown with coral. A large number of brightly colored fish inhabits these waters, as do three species of shark, stone fish, manta ray, sea turtles, and many other creatures.

Geographically, Midway is appropriately named. Not only does it lie near the middle of the Pacific Ocean equidistant between Japan and the United States, but it is also halfway around the world from Greenwich, England. The International Date Line is just 140 miles to the west of Midway, and its former residents were the last people on the planet to see the sun set each evening.

Although Midway is not a South Sea island, the climate is semitropical. The weather is generally uniform throughout the year with two distinguishable seasons--summer and winter. Midway summers are warm and slightly humid, prevailing from July to October, with an average high of 78 degrees. The highest temperature ever recorded was 92. During the winter months of January through March, temperatures average 66 degrees, with the lowest temperature ever recorded at 54. In the winter the relative humidity is high as well, and winds have been known to blow quite severely at times--hard enough to blow down the shallow-rooted ironwood trees and uproot shrubbery. At times it is cold enough to require space heaters.

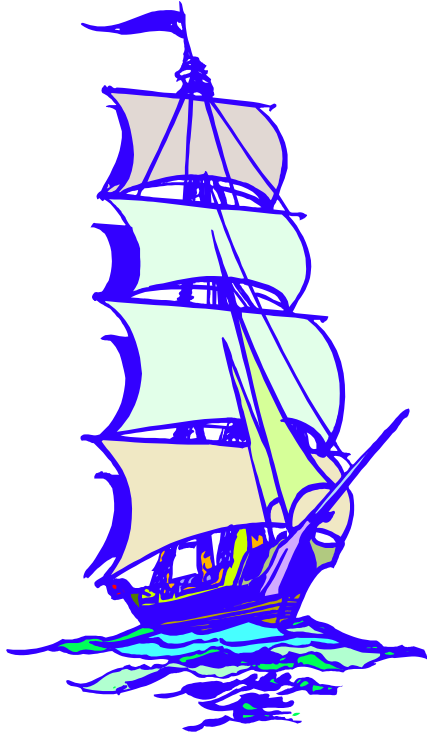
NOTE: From Jerry Baber, May 16, 1997: I would like to correct the lowest temperature ever recorded on Midway. It was 51 degrees F. I recorded it myself on a very stormy winter night in 1973. It may seem a trivial thing to remember, but it was a record.

Midway has never been inhabited by any native populace. At one time more than 3000 persons, mostly military personnel and their dependents were stationed on the island. However, Midway has always been a haven for hundreds species of birds, including the well-known "Gooney Bird" (Laysan albatross), and many years ago the island was designated as an official bird sanctuary by the U.S. government. Common bird species on Midway include the white gooney, black gooney, frigate bird, booby bird, common fairy tern, brown noddy, black noddy, and the common mynah bird.



HISTORY OF MIDWAY

DISCOVERY TO TURNING POINT



Officially discovered on July 5, 1859, by Captain N.C. Brooks, the island was initially named "Middle Brook Islands." However, Brooks kept the discovery to himself. Historians believe he kept the island secret so that he could sell it to the North Pacific Mail and Steam Ship Company, which was looking for a mid-Pacific coal depot for their vessels crossing to the Orient.

Rumors of the island's existence spread nevertheless, and in 1876 the U.S. government sent out Captain William Reynolds, in command of the U.S.S. *Lukawana*. On August 28, 1876, Captain Reynolds took formal possession of the islands and renamed them Sand and Eastern. The outer harbor he named Welles Harbor, after the secretary of the Navy, and the roadstead he named Seward Roads, after the secretary of state.

Several large vessels met their fate on the coral reefs that surround the islands. Among them were the fishing schooner *General Siegel*. It was at anchor in Welles Harbor on November 16, 1876 when it was hit by sudden gale winds and literally went to pieces on the reef. The 467-ton schooner *Wandering Minstrel* met with a similar fate in January of 1877. On October 22, 1903, the *Julia E. Whalen* schooner was dashed to pieces on the reef, and a vessel carrying a large load of coal from New Castle to Honolulu went down on December 28, 1906.

President Theodore Roosevelt issued an executive order in 1903 which placed Midway under the jurisdiction and control of the United States Navy. Foreign poachers and pirates were ejected, and in 1908 Midway was annexed to become the first island belonging to the United States beyond its continental shores.

B. W. Colley, an official of the Pacific Cable Company, had been appointed naval custodian and Justice of the Peace in 1903. He was in charge of directing the Pacific Cable Company's efforts in transforming the barren Sand Island into a habitat for people. The effort took 32 years! Plants, topsoil, horses, cows, and poultry were imported; grass from California was planted on the beaches to hold the sand in place; and ironwood trees were brought in from Australia. Finally in 1935, the Gooneyville Lodge was built to quarter passengers of Pan American Airways' flying clippers. Midway lagoon became the first stop from Hawaii to points east.

The Hawaii Dredging Company was contracted in 1938 to carry out a million-dollar channel dredging operation to make Welles Harbor approachable. The company eventually removed 3 million cubic yards of material. The U.S.S. *Swan*, a mine sweeper-type of aircraft tender, was the first vessel to safely enter the Midway lagoon.

The Naval Air Station began construction in March 1940 with the arrival of the U.S.S. *Sirsu*. On August 1, 1941, with Commander C. T. Simard as commanding officer of the island, Midway was officially commissioned as a Naval Air Station. Runways were built to accommodate air traffic on both Sand and Eastern. However, in 1941 more ominous things laid in store.

History records that on December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed by Japan in a surprise attack. But Midway, too, came under heavy fire by a Japanese raiding party of four ships. The Americans held fast and returned the fire. First Lieutenant George H. Cannon of the United States Marine Corps, refusing to leave his post, was killed by enemy shell fire and died from severe blood loss. The Japanese ships were forced to withdraw with severe casualties. Cannon became the first marine of World War II to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Later, when the first school was built on Midway, it was named for this stalwart man.

THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY



In June of 1942, a large Japanese task force approached Midway with intentions of taking the island. Its strategic location was recognized as a valued prize by the Japanese forces, and an all-out attack was mounted, causing heavy damage to nearly all of the above-ground facilities on Midway. However, the United States stood its ground; the Japanese were met by aircraft carriers and other Midway-based aircraft. The ensuing battle ended in a crushing defeat for the Japanese and marked the turning point of the war in the Pacific. The air raid tunnels that were constructed during this time remained for several decades after the war, serving as a visual reminder to all Midway's residents of the importance this tiny island had played in recent history.

SETTLEMENT OF MIDWAY

The years that followed World War II saw Midway evolve from critical war outpost to Navy caretaker status. Midway became an important refueling stop for military aircraft and ships, particularly for submarines based at Pearl Harbor. Construction projects provided new housing, a galley, a chapel, a commissary and Base Exchange, a school, and other vital and/or recreational buildings. Military personnel with orders to Midway and who had a rank of at least E-5 were entitled to bring their dependents. As the island became populated, there was often long waiting periods for permanent housing. On August 13, 1946, the first birth was recorded on Midway. In April of 1953, KMTH radio was established as a branch of AFRTS (Armed Forces Radio and Television Service), with KMTH television service commencing in the early 1960s.

Living on Midway

(BEFORE IT WAS CLOSED)



THE NAVY

It took work and dedication on the part of the men and women serving in the Armed Forces to keep Midway running smoothly. The Navy had the largest number of personnel stationed on the island, and these personnel were assigned to various organizational departments. They included:

- Administration ("Admin"). This department handled all of the paperwork on the island--central files, personnel, plans, legal, post office, mess Halls, and special services (including entertainment).
- Air Operations ("Air Ops"), which represented the largest segment of personnel on the island. They were responsible for air traffic control, ground electronics, maintenance, search and rescue, terminal, and ordnance.
- Weapons division.
- Weather service.
- Medical and departments.
- Harbor Operations, which controlled Midway's harbor and port facilities.
- Navy Exchange, a base exchange with the official name "Country Store" but seldom called that. It carried merchandise from the states and Far East, and also ran the snack bar, barber shop, laundry, beauty shop and tailor shop.
- Public Works, responsible for the maintenance and repair of buildings, transportation, all public utilities, and just about everything else.
- Security comprised of the base police force (MPs), fire department, and guard force.
- Supply, which handled disbursements, shipping and receiving, stock control, the fuel farm, and the food service division.

- Commissary, the military equivalent of the civilian supermarket.
- Communications. This department provided all communication services for the island, including the operation of KMTH radio and television.
- Naval Security Group Activity stationed on Eastern.



THE AIR FORCE

The U.S. Air Force played an important role on Midway. The 607th Military Airlift Support Squadron (MASS) operated out of Midway, moving Military Airlift Command (MAC) aircraft through the island in a timely manner.

Originally a small detachment of the 1502 Air Transport Wing at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, and the unit was reorganized into a squadron on October 8, 1965, to provide expanding support services. Both single and married personnel with dependents were stationed on Midway both before and after the official 607th MASS organization.

NOTE: From Bob Wilder, April 2, 1997: Regarding the earlier presence of the USAF on Midway, there was Detachment 8, which was the 6926th Radio Squadron Mobile (USAFSS); but before that, there was the 6490th Support Squadron under the command of Major Alric E. Mayea. The 6490th had the General Court authority and logistical support for all Air Force personnel assigned to "Operation Green Moon." The 6490th was classified as a 119L organization.

THE CIVILIANS

A small number of civilian employees, many with families, lived on Midway too. Civilians provided special services to the Navy that required technical expertise, such as refrigeration. The Bank of Hawaii, Midway branch, and the Navy Exchange also employed civilians.

Although tours of duty on Midway varied anywhere from 12 months for single military personnel to 18 months or longer for those with families, civilians resided on Midway for much longer periods of time, some for more than 10 years.



TO LIVE ON AN ISLAND

Personnel leaving for Midway were provided with a booklet entitled "Living on Midway, the Navy's Most Beautiful Isle." It was meant to help indoctrinate them to island life. However, the book left out one very important piece of information: there was no fresh water in the housing units except for a tiny spigot located in the kitchen. All other faucets in the bathroom, kitchen, and laundry room ran brackish water. Bathing, washing clothes, and other water-related activities except for drinking were done in water from the sea. (The sea water was treated to remove some of the salt and impurities, but it was still brackish.) The result, of course, is that white clothes never really washed out white; they had a permanent yellow tint.

THIS BOOKLET, CIRCA 1965, WAS WELL WRITTEN AND INFORMATIVE AND PROVIDED AN ACCURATE OVERVIEW OF LIFE ON MIDWAY. IT IS REPRINTED BELOW WITHOUT ALTERATION OF ORIGINAL TEXT EXCEPT FOR MINOR EDITING CHANGES.

"THE NAVY'S MOST BEAUTIFUL ISLE"

PREPARATION INFORMATION FOR MIDWAY DUTY TOURS

DUTY TOURS: Normal tours of duty on Midway Island are 12 months if dependents are not on board the station if dependents are with the serviceman, a normal tour is 18 months.

HOUSING: Only government quarters are available. Due to the shortage of housing, government quarters are available for personnel in pay grade E-5 and above. The present waiting period for both officer and enlisted (certain key billet officers accepted) is four to six months. Your precedence on the housing waiting list which is maintained is determined by the date you actually report on board for duty. Each eligible member ordered to report to Midway Island should request by letter to the Commanding Officer, U. S. Naval Station, Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California, 96640, specific housing information (in weeks) to determine entitlement to ship to a point of selection. Other questions you may have concerning your tour on Midway Island may be included in this same letter.

INOCULATIONS: Upon receipt of orders, you should begin the required inoculations. Because chest X-rays are good only for 30 days, they should be obtained for the entire family just prior to commencing travel. Overseas travel will not be authorized by Commandant, 12th Naval District until immunizations are completed. Be sure you have necessary immunization records in your possession upon reporting for travel. Consult the Medical Department at your present duty station for current requirements.

CHRONICLES: Although the Station Hospital is a well-equipped medical facility with a staff of three medical officers, three nurses, one medical service corps officer and eight corpsmen, it is unable to affect immediate cures of longstanding chronic ills. Facilities are not available for in-patient psychiatric treatment. In general, the Station Hospital is unable to solve medical problems that could not be cured by large naval hospitals in the Continental U. S. If you or your dependents have any chronic medical problems, it is recommended that you make it known and check on facilities when requesting entry approval for your dependents. Otherwise, special medications may not be available at all and could result in many months delay in obtaining them.

PASSPORTS: Passports are NOT required for service personnel, dependents or Civil Service personnel for entry to Midway. All dependents over 10 years must possess an identification card (DD Form 1173).

SAN FRANCISCO TO HONOLULU: Upon reporting to the Commandant, 12th Naval District, San Francisco, you and your family, if concurrent dependent travel has been authorized, will be assigned space to Honolulu via either air or surface travel. If air travel is assigned, travel will be via MAC departing Travis Air Force Base, California. Waiting time may be from one to ten days. The average is approximately four days. If surface space is assigned, date of departure is known upon assignment. Waiting time in San Francisco averages one week.

TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM MIDWAY: Midway Island is serviced for air transportation and mail by the Military Airlift Command which at the present operates two turn-around flights weekly from Hickam AFB, Hawaii. Space-available flights on MAC aircraft are available from time to time for those persons departing on leave.

ARRIVAL AT MIDWAY ISLAND: Officers arriving at Midway are met by an officer who assists them in getting settled and to answer any questions the new arrival may have at that time. The Master-at-Arms meets all planes and provides enlisted personnel with information on temporary or permanent quarters assigned, transportation, location of various departments and other pertinent information. Enlisted personnel receive an indoctrination lecture concerning duty on Midway.

LEAVE FROM MIDWAY ISLAND: Personnel on 12 months rotation may be granted 21 days annual leave. Leave commences upon departure from Midway and ends upon check-in at Midway. Personnel on 18 months rotation may be granted 30 days annual leave. Travel may be performed on a space available basis.



LIVING CONDITIONS

HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS: On Midway Island your quarters will be completely furnished with tropical type furniture and mattresses. You need ship nothing in line of furniture, nor is it wise to do so since there is no storage for undesired furniture. Most wood, leather and many fabrics are easy prey for mildew. You should however, bring furniture for small children, plus pillows and throw rugs.

For added comfort or convenience, you will probably want pictures and bric-a-brac, and possibly a few of your favorite lamps to supplement those issued. The linens you bring should be sturdy, and while you will undoubtedly want to set a fancy table occasionally, you should go easy on bringing fine linens. The climate and weather are hard on these items. You can use all of your electrical appliances on Midway since the power is same as on the mainland.

Your washing machine is desirable and a good iron is a must. (Automatic washing machines deteriorate very rapidly due to the effect of the water, and there is no facility for repairs.) Laundry facilities are available in all housing areas. Senior officer's quarters are equipped with washing machines but not dryers. Personal dryers can be installed. Approximately 1/5 of the enlisted housing also has facilities for installing personal washers and dryers. Since the assignment of individual units is not made until the man has arrived at the station, one should use his own judgment as to whether he should bring these items. One automatic washing machine is furnished for four families on a joint use basis. A refrigerator and deep freeze are furnished each set of quarters, both officers and enlisted. A good record player with sufficient records, radio and TV set will provide relaxation.

Your express shipment should be used for immediate needs upon arrival. For accurate information on authorized weight of shipment, contact your Supply Officer.

"Hospitality Kits" consisting of essential pots, pans, dishes and bedding may be obtained at Midway until arrival of your household effects. The Supply Department has a Household Goods Shipping Section. Uncrating, unpacking, packing and crating service is performed by a Household Goods Contractor having a local facility at Midway. All entitled services are performed. However, you are advised that the experience level of local employees of the Contractor is not the equal of that found in the continental U. S. Shipment time from the continental United States ranges from one month to two months. Shipments may be made in advance of dependent's entry approval provided: (1) the military member is on board, (2) a housing availability date is known and (3) the member personally applies for and receives approval from the Household Goods' Shipping Officer at Midway.

PROVIDED BY THE STATION: stove, all furniture, refrigerator, outdoor garbage cans, Venetian blinds, lamps, mattresses, group washing machine, deep freeze, fiber rugs.

DO NOT BRING: piano, ferrous metal objects, furniture for storage, air conditioners, and automobiles.

BRING IF DESIRED: drapes, television set, sewing machine, curtain rods and hooks, mattress pads, clothes dryer, lawn furniture, washing machine.

ITEMS YOU SHOULD BRING: throw rugs, pictures and picture hooks, pillows and bed spreads, glassware, artificial plants, floor fans, bicycles, wind-up clocks, flower pots, favorite lamps, kitchen utensils, towels, washcloths, etc., pots and pans, toys, record player, vacuum cleaner, silverware, sheets, pillow cases, and blankets.

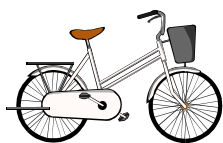


MEDICAL AND DENTAL FACILITIES: Midway has a Station Hospital which provides outpatient services for all dependents. The following facilities are available: Operating Room, Pharmacy, Laboratory, Delivery Room, Nursery, Physiotherapy Room, X-Ray Machine Eye Refraction equipment and wards. The station hospital doesn't render specialized medical care. Dental work for dependents is on an emergency basis. It is recommended that required work be performed before arrival.



UNIFORMS: Officers and Chief Petty Officers should bring with them at least one set of Blues (Bravo), Whites and Service Dress Khakis (for inspection purposes) in addition to raincoats. Aviation greens are not worn on board NavSta Midway. Tropical and Tropical Long uniforms are authorized for summer wear. Enlisted Personnel of pay grades E-6 and below will need Blues, Whites and Dungarees. Tropical White Longs are authorized. All persons are authorized civilian clothing for wear during off-duty hours.

COMMUNICATIONS: Telegraph and cable services are not available on Midway. Outside telephone service is available at commercial rates through the AT & T cable which was installed in 1964. Also, class "E" messages may be sent through the Naval Communications Unit, Midway. Midway also boasts a fine amateur radio station operated through Special Services. Through the facilities of this station and other individually-owned amateur radio stations, phone patches may be arranged for contacting friends and relatives back on the Mainland.



LOCAL TRANSPORTATION: There are no private vehicles on Midway. Transportation is via bicycle or bus. Bicycles may be purchased locally, but you are urged to bring your own if you have one, especially tricycles or bikes for the smaller children.



CLOTHING: For the most part, your family will need only washable clothes and some winter clothes. In the winter months, temperatures drop to the mid-50's. Bathing suits, shorts, rompers, dungarees, light weight suits and sweaters should be brought along. Pedal Pushers and/or Bermuda shorts are desirable for bicycle riding, Midway's prime source of individual transportation. In general, dress is informal. Lightweight raincoats are a necessity. An important item to bring is shoes for women and children. For the most part, boys wear slacks, denims, sport and aloha shirts. The girls prefer skirts and blouses. Off duty, men prefer aloha shirts and casual slacks. Washable items are preferable. The Service Clubs have a few formal occasions, in which case cocktail dresses or short formals are worn by the ladies.

BANKING: The Bank of Hawaii, Hawaii's largest bank, maintains a branch at Midway adjacent to the Navy Exchange Retail Store. Primary banking services are available, including checking and savings accounts, traveler's checks, cashier's checks, domestic drafts, personal money orders, U. S. Savings Bonds, and personal loans. Charges for services are comparable to those in Hawaii as are the interest rates on savings accounts and loans.

RADIO AND TELEVISION: Midway Island has its own radio and TV stations, both affiliates of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS). KMTN Radio operates 24 hours daily featuring the latest recordings and transcriptions of popular Mainland shows. There are local newscasts and world news programs via short-wave from both Los Angeles and the Far East Network in Tokyo, Japan. Live sportscasts via short-wave are carried on KMTN Radio. Films of popular football, baseball, basketball, golf and other major sports are carried on KMTN-TV.



KMTN-TV operates from 6:00 p.m. to slightly past midnight daily featuring most of the popular stateside shows. On weekends, KMTN-TV operates from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. on Saturdays and from 1:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. on Sunday nights. The radio and television stations serve both as a morale factor and in civil defense or other emergency situations. Volunteers for announcers are most welcomed. Anyone desiring to become an announcer is requested to contact the Public Affairs Officer for further information.



EDUCATION

Midway Island's medium-sized George Cannon School provides education comparable to any Mainland school with grades 1-6 for Elementary and 7-12 High School under qualified teachers. Subject matter for various class levels is based on the courses of study recommended by the Chief of Naval Personnel.

Students expecting to enter school after traveling from the former place of duty or home should prepare themselves before leaving with work in the basic subjects. In the lower grades, many of the children arriving are somewhat behind in reading, English and arithmetic. Parents should not withdraw children from any other school without proper transfer records or report cards. If the child is expected to enter the first grade on Midway, his birth certificate should also be brought along.



There is a tendency toward better study habits on Midway. A very close tie between home and school, a good school atmosphere, and cooperation of command and parents with the school authorities contribute to the program of better study habits. A student who wishes to succeed has every opportunity to do so because of the student-teacher ratio. In the high school, training is practically individualized with the most up-to-date textbooks and equipment available.

The Station has a nursery and kindergarten. Two-year-olds are eligible for enrollment in the nursery school. Five-year-olds may be enrolled in the kindergarten. Hours are from 9-11 a.m., five days weekly. The enrollment fee is \$13 per month for one child. Additional children of the same family may be enrolled for \$6.50 per month. The children in the nursery school are provided with a light snack each morning.

School officials feel that parents will be more than pleased with their children's progress in school here on Midway.

Courses offered at George Cannon School are: Sciences: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, General Science and Physiology. Mathematics: Modern Math, 7-8; Algebra I & II, Geometry (Plane); (Analytical); Trigonometry,



Calculus, General Mathematics, and Electronics. English: I-IV, Literature, Journalism, Creative Writing. History: World, American Government, Civics, and U. S. History. Foreign Languages: Spanish, French and Latin. Physical Education: Life saving, water skiing, skin diving, "skim boarding," tennis, golf, and regular P.E. Humanities: Music and Band, Art, Speed Reading. Clubs: Drama, Science, Music, Photo, and School Newspaper.



RELIGION

Both a Catholic and Protestant Chaplain are stationed aboard Midway Island. A new and beautiful chapel affords worship services for most of the major faiths. Jewish worship services are conducted weekly. Sunday school catechism classes and junior and senior choir are part of the Chapel activities available. A weekly Bible Study group meets at a location usually announced by the Chaplain's Office.

Navy Exchange

The Navy Exchange Retail Store carries a wide selection of merchandise normally found in a medium-sized mainland Exchange. Merchandise from the Far East is periodically on sale at the store and is normally available through the Special Order Desk.

Many U. S. products similarly are available at export prices in the store or available through special order. U. S. foreign-produced china, silver, camera equipment, electronic equipment, stemware, small and large appliances, wigs, records, sporting goods, engraved cards and invitations and gift items are available through the Special Order Desk. Persons requiring the hard-to-fit sizes should bring sufficient supplies of desired clothing items. New bicycles are available through the Retail Store. Bicycle repairs and parts are available at the Special Services Bicycle Shop.

The Navy Exchange sells Hawaiian newspapers on a limited basis which are received twice weekly. Complete film processing is available in the Retail Store. A Barber Shop and Beauty Shop are operated by the Exchange with the normal services. The Exchange Radio and TV Shop offer servicing and repair of electronic equipment in addition to a large stock of tubes and accessories. The Exchange Cornerstone Cafe provides a pleasant atmosphere for a snack. Malts, popcorn, pizza, and short order menu items are featured. The Cobbler Shop provides shoe repair services; however, repair of children's' and ladies' shoes is extremely limited. The Exchange Tailor Shop provides repair or alterations of uniforms and other men's clothing.

RECREATION



Some of the fine recreational facilities available on Midway Island are a six-lane bowling alley, softball diamonds, tennis courts, gymnasium, a well-equipped hobby shop, and a golf driving range. Bring your own fishing gear because fishing is excellent. Special Services has 60 rods and reels which can be checked out for use. A 36-foot deep sea fishing boat is available with boats available for water skiing. Fifteen "sailfish" sailboats are currently on hand.

Free movies are shown three times daily at the air-conditioned Station Theater. Times are: 1:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., and 8:105 p.m. USO Road Shows frequently appear at the theater.



Intramural athletics with teams from the various departments include basketball, softball, volleyball, men's bowling, mixed bowling and badminton. There is an active scuba diving club aboard called the Koral Kings.

A few of the other recreational facilities are an excellent library equipped with the finest equipment with approximately 6,400 volumes; a ceramic shop; bike shop; gymnasium; tennis courts; ham radio stations; picnic areas; woodshop; photo club; model aircraft field;

trap range; archery range; and a golf driving range.



Some of the finest swimming and most beautiful beaches in the world are on Midway Island and can be enjoyed for most of the year. Sailing is ideal in the waters in and around Midway and provides many hours of off-duty enjoyment for those who pursue this excellent sport. Some winter days are chilly; however, there is an Enlisted Men's Club featuring bingo, live shows, movies, and buffet suppers.

CLOSING OF MIDWAY

The phase-out of Midway really began in the late '70s and early 80s. The inevitable deterioration of older buildings and the maintenance required for upkeep were taking a budgetary toll. Although military personnel were still needed to maintain strategic defense operations, the civilian population was relocated and dependents were no longer allowed on the island. The island's status "caretaker" could perhaps better be described as "maintenance" as Midway's population dwindled to several hundred in contrast with 2,000 residents in its heyday.

Then in 1990 came a rash of military base closures and realignments. In order to slash its dwindling operational budget, the Navy initially recommended that Midway be realigned. Two years later, however, the announcement came that Midway was to be closed. The Navy was abandoning its "strategic outpost."

1991 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATIONS

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Category: | Naval Air Station/Other Unique |
| Mission: | Logistic Support |
| Cost to Close: | \$7.2 million |
| Savings: | 1992-97: \$33.8 million |
| Annual: | \$6.9 million |
| Payback: | Less than one year |

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION: Realign Naval Air Facility Midway Island. Eliminate the mission. Retain caretaker presence to support intermittent joint special operations. Naval Air Facility Midway Island was a likely candidate for realignment because the site specific mission requirements are reducing and the degradations to joint operations are acceptable.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS: The Naval Air Facility Midway Island's civilian population comprises 230 contract personnel. The community expressed no concerns with regard to the realignment.

COMMISSION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: The Commission finds that the Secretary's recommendation did not deviate from the force structure plan and the final selection criteria. Therefore, the Commission recommends realigning Naval Air Facility Midway Island. Eliminate the mission and operate under a caretaker status.

1993 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATIONS

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Category: | Operational Air Station, Midway Island |
| Mission: | Support Naval Aviation Operations |
| One-time Cost: | \$2.1 million |
| Savings: | 1994-99: \$ 32.9 million |
| Annual: | \$6.6 million Payback: 2 years |

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RECOMMENDATION: Close Naval Air Facility Midway Island.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE JUSTIFICATION: The 1991 Commission Report, pages 5-19, recommended the elimination of the mission at NAF Midway Island and its continued operation under a caretaker status. Based on the DoD Force Structure Plan, its capacity is excess to that needed to support forces in its geographic area. There is no operational need for this air facility to remain in the inventory

even in a caretaker status. Therefore, the Navy recommends that NAF Midway be closed and appropriate disposal action taken.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS: There were no formal expressions from the community.

COMMISSION FINDINGS: The Commission found no operational reason to maintain this facility, even in a caretaker status.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: The Commission finds the Secretary of Defense did not deviate substantially from the force-structure plan and final criteria. Therefore, the Commission recommends the following: Close Naval Air Facility Midway Island.

Before Midway could be closed, environmental impact studies had to be carried out. The results of these studies indicated widespread contamination from a variety of manmade materials which would require massive cleanup. Gooney birds and species were dying from ingesting lead-based paint chips, asbestos particles, contamination from underground chemical storage tanks, and ingestion of brightly colored objects left by people. The studies also indicated that, left to nature's own course, the island would soon be overgrown with vegetation, leaving no adequate nesting areas and consequently becoming hostile to bird life. In addition, non-indigenous rats and mynah birds had already exterminated two species of birds and were threatening other ground-nesting species.

The disposition of Midway fell to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which was scheduled to take over the operation of Midway from the Navy in mid-1997. The current four hundred residents left on Midway consisting of wildlife personnel, a skeleton Navy crew, cleanup contractors and workers, were costing the Navy \$7.5 million a year just to keep the lights on.



FROM THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM JANUARY 10, 1996:

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CLEANUP ACTIVITIES ON MIDWAY ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.

Closure activities at Naval Air Facility Midway Island are proceeding under the direction of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990. A Base Realignment and Closure Team consisting of DOD, EPA, FWS, and NOAA representatives have been organized. An Environmental Baseline Study and a Base Closure Plan, which recommends investigations at more than 90 sites suspected to be contaminated, have been completed. The Navy has announced an estimated closure date of June 1997.

The Navy has proposed accelerating cleanup of contaminated soils and groundwater and wants to start before completion of an ecological risk assessment. The Environmental Contaminants Branch is assisting the Navy to accelerate the cleanup, provided that all interim decisions on cleanup levels and methods are subject to change if warranted by the ecological risk assessment. A strong motivation for committing cleanup funds quickly is the possibility that Congress will reduce or eliminate environmental cleanup funds in the Department of Defense budget.

The U.S. Navy is continuing studies and remedial actions to characterize and clean up contaminants on Midway Island NWR. The Fish and Wildlife Service is participating in an advisory and oversight capacity. Navy contractors are now removing approximately 100 underground storage tanks and an estimated 10 miles of pipelines. Petroleum-contaminated soil around the tanks will be removed later. The sampling will identify additional contaminated terrestrial and marine sites and will be used to generate an ecological risk assessment.

Planning is also underway to remove debris and wildlife entrapment hazards, and remediate asbestos and lead-based paint contamination around old buildings. Disposal options for contaminants and debris are under discussion.

Navy contractors have documented two large plumes of petroleum hydrocarbons in the groundwater underlying a fuel tank farm and a former industrial area on Sand Island, the atoll's main island. The plume beneath the tank farm apparently seeps into the near shore marine area, contaminating habitat used by endangered Hawaiian monk seals, threatened green sea turtles, and various migratory seabirds. Vinyl

chloride has also been detected in the plume underlying the former industrial area. In addition, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were found in petroleum-contaminated soil beneath leaking Underground Storage Tanks (UST). The USTs were removed, but the contaminated soils remain. Remediation of contaminated soil and groundwater using steam extraction technology is just beginning.

The Site Inspection done as part of the Installation Restoration Program also identified several soil "hot spots" of PCB and DDT on both Sand and Eastern Islands. The corresponding ecological risk assessment identified cleanup levels of 0.1 ppm for DDT and 1.0 ppm for PCB based on potential exposure of burrowing seabirds to these compounds.

The Pacific Islands Office's Environmental Contaminants Branch is working with the U.S. Coast Guard to assess the ecological risk associated with more than 400 Aides-to-Navigation batteries, each containing up to 0.15 pounds of mercury, recently discovered in the Atoll lagoon. The nature and extent of problems caused by these sources has yet to be characterized, but preliminary bioassay results, using near shore marine sediments, indicate significant toxicity to laboratory test organisms.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had to decide Midway's future by April of 1996. Two options were considered: (1) near-total abandonment, in which the birds would have to fend for themselves; (2) lease the island to the Midway Phoenix Corporation (MPC), a commercial operator that was interested in keeping the island open for limited ecotourism. A real concern with this option, however, was disturbing the endangered Hawaiian monk seals which had found Midway a hospitable habitat as the human population decreased. Public input was solicited, and some former Midway residents responded with written opinions. The Honolulu Advertiser, a Hawaii newspaper, announced the decision on May 3, 1996.

"Midway Atoll is a step closer to opening to tourism, after a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finding that its proposals for the island would create no significant environmental impact. The Fish and Wildlife Service plans to turn the entire atoll into a wildlife refuge, but one with provisions for visits by the public.

The Midway Phoenix Corp. would run regular small-aircraft flights to the island, where the Georgia-based firm would maintain a low-density housing facility. Visitors would have opportunities to participate in refuge maintenance, to view seabirds and other wildlife, to take diving tours, and fish outside the lagoon.

The only thing holding up the process now is the transfer of ownership from the Navy, which has had control of Midway since 1903, to the Fish and Wildlife Service. And that isn't far off. "We cannot finalize our arrangement with...the Midway Phoenix Corp. until we have title to Midway," said Robert Smith, who is the Pacific Islands Ecoregion Manager for the fish and Wildlife Service. He said that title could be transferred within a week or two. The first visitors could be traveling there this summer.

The Navy is in the midst of an extensive cleanup of the two major islands within Midway Atoll, Sand Island and Eastern Island, under federal base closure requirements in preparation for its transfer out of military control. Over the years, the atoll, 1,100 miles west-northwest of Oahu, has served as a trans-Pacific cable station, a communications repeater station, a transoceanic airline refueling station, and a naval base. During that time, it accumulated a substantial amount of potentially hazardous materials, including oil-contaminated soil, asbestos, lead-based paint, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), and various other chemicals. There were also a lot of old buildings, landfill waste, and exposed metal.

"The Navy is in the midst of an extensive program to remove hazardous materials, clean up soil and groundwater contamination, and otherwise restore the island. It anticipates completing the cleanup by the middle of next year.

Midway Phoenix would have up to 120 people to maintain the island and manage visitors. There would be no more than 100 visitors or 250 total occupants at a time."