



Station Ship News



**DING DING . . . DING DING . . . SHIP'S CREW ARRIVING . . . ABOVE AND BELOW DECKS
IN THE AIR, AT SEA AND IN PORT . . . DING DING . . . DING DING**

Midway veterans and family members interested in joining the MVA, see the application at the end of this newsletter

Onboard, Detachment Alfa, Midway Heroes



2023 Norfolk Reunion Steve DeCata, MVA Reunion VP

The Norfolk reunion deadline is fast approaching (August 28), so we're asking that all members go to the link below and sign up to attend. We have great tours lined up (described in detail in the registration form) and fun adventures like free movies night in the meeting room.

Our reunion hotel – the Sheraton Norfolk Waterside – offers us very reasonably priced and comfortable rooms, a great view of the ocean and beach, and is close-by to all the downtown action and attractions, much of it geared to the U.S. Navy. Remember, first and foremost, Norfolk is a Navy town. In fact,

Midway was built not too far away from downtown Norfolk, at the Newport News Shipbuilding Company, in Newport News, Virginia, about 24 miles away.

So, sign up and come to the reunion and have a great time with your shipmates. Let's keep those sea stories flowing!

<https://www.events.afr-reg.com/e/USSMidway2023>

Tim Munderloh MVA President

It's the middle of Summer and no matter where in the country you are reading this, I can bet it's HOT outside. My truck temperature gauge said 107



yesterday and that's not the hottest it's been where I live.

The Midway Veterans Association reunion is going to be in Norfolk, VA, September 27th - October 1st. I just checked and the average temperature in Norfolk for September is 85 degrees. I can tell you that I am looking forward to those cooler temps, even though the humidity may be higher than I am used to. I look forward to hopefully seeing some of my old shipmates and meeting new ones at the reunion. If you haven't registered yet take a moment to do so, and I look forward to seeing you in a couple of months.

Thanks, and Best Regards



Shipmates chowing down at the 2022 Reunion

Honoring Heroes: First Combat Rescue Mission in North Vietnam

The picture on page 1 and this article are from the USS Midway Museum, which we have used with their permission. As we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, we pay tribute to the brave men who served on USS Midway. Onboard, Detachment Alfa led by LCDR Weslie Wetzel conducted search and rescue missions for downed pilots.

In a historic operation on 20 September 1965, LCDR Wetzel and his crew rescued LTJG John R. Harris, executing the first Combat SAR in North Vietnam, flying a HU-2A helicopter. Their heroic

actions earned them the Distinguished Flying Cross.

We are deeply grateful to LCDR Wetzel's son and family, who recently visited the Midway Museum and generously donated his DFC certificate. Through their contribution, we preserve the legacy of these courageous individuals. Join us in honoring their sacrifice and dedication

Editor's Note: The below article was first published in the January 2023 Atlantic Ave Magazine. It was written by Harvey Lustig, an MVA Lifetime Member.

My Experience with USS Arizona Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

Harvey Lustig, 1955-56 MM/M-Div

This past December 7th brought back memories... In 1955 I joined the U.S. Navy. My first duty assignment was aboard the USS Midway (CVA 41). After a year and a half of being off the shores of Korea, launching planes supporting troops fighting the Chinese and North Koreans, I helped put the Midway out of commission to get extensive repairs.

My next assignment was Ford Island, located in the middle of Pearl Harbor. Ford Island was a Navy seaplane base. It was also the island where all the big Navy ships were tied up because that's where the deep water was. The Japanese sunk most of the ships.

In addition to my regular duties, I was assigned to take a small boat to the small wooden dock attached to the smokestacks sticking out of the water of the sunken USS Arizona, raise the American flag every morning, lower the flag every night. We had to do this because the Navy never decommissioned the USS Arizona. They never removed the 2,403 bodies from the battleship.

Since then, the Parks Department has taken over caring for the USS Arizona. There is big monument built over the ship so people can visit and pay their respects. If you ever to Hawaii, make sure you visit the USS Arizona.

Many years after leaving the Navy, I realized what I did was something not many men could say they

did. When I got in touch with the Navy Commander in Pearl Harbor telling him what I did, he said I was the first person to come forward doing that. He asked me to write a first-person story for the USS Arizona archives. I was honored to do so.

Every year on December 7, I feel very proud to be part of the history of Pearl Harbor.



USS Arizona (BB-39) Memorial

Midway's Last WestPac Cruise

David Payson, 1963-64/RDSN, OI Division

It's been 55 years since I was discharged from the Navy and returned to civilian life. I served in the Navy for 4-1/2 years. Only 6 months of that time was on the USS Midway, during the 1963-1964 WestPac cruise to the Orient. (I found out later that it would be Midway's last "official" WestPac cruise. Cruises after this were Vietnam cruises or cruises out of Japan.) Still a young boot seaman (radar trainee) at the time, I think of that cruise to the Orient as my "coming-of-age" cruise.

Oh, I came of age, all right! Now, at age 78 and experiencing the infirmities of old age, I'd rather be back on the Midway on that WestPac cruise. Of course, I would! I was a 19-year-old kid back then, full of "vim and vinegar."

Yes, indeed, those were the days, my friends. We were in the Orient on that cruise primarily to show the American Flag. And show it we did, at sea and in all the Asian ports that we visited. A bit dicey in Japan since it had been only 18 years since those two WWII A-bombs.

Our first Far Eastern port was the Philippines – Subic Bay Naval Base and the nearby town of Olongapo – a "Wild West" town, teeming with sailors out looking for a good time. There was a lot of fun to be found in Olongapo, but a lot of trouble, too.

From Subic Bay/Olongapo, we steamed on to Hong Kong, jewel of the Orient. Hong Kong was still a British Crown Colony at that time. To me, it was a wondrous and exotic place with its scenic harbor and tall buildings that straddled the side of surrounding mountains. I took a tram up to Victoria's Peak, straight up, it seemed, which led to a glorious view of the harbor, far below. There were the Floating Gardens, Jimmy's Kitchen, the Wenchi District, the Big Buda Monument, and many other attractions. The Navy designated us as Station Ship that in-port, in charge of all the other US Navy ships in port. And why not? We were the biggest, baddest kid on the block. No doubt about that.

At sea, in-between ports, we played war games with the USS Kitty Hawk. Not surprisingly, our pilots and Airedales far outclassed Kitty Hawk's in these drills. The Hawk was a newer carrier, but Midway had the experience and "Magic" going for her. It was no coincidence that the Navy made sure that the two carriers weren't in the same port at the same time when we were over there operating together.

After six days of R&R in Hong Kong, we were off to Subic Bay/Olongapo on an unscheduled trip to have our no. 3 elevator replaced. The elevator had been literally "washed away" by a rogue wave in very rough seas while we were alongside a supply ship taking on stores in the Sea of Japan. Miraculously, none of the men on the unrep detail had been swept overboard when the elevator came free. So, the crew got a couple of "bonus days" of liberty in Olongapo while the elevator was being replaced. No one complained.

Several days later, new elevator in place, we were underway again; this time to several Japanese ports and to play more war games with Kitty Hawk, which we could be sure was out there somewhere, looking for "payback" because of the drubbing we gave them in air ops last time around. Sure

enough, she found us the next day we drubbed them again.

Over the next week and a half, we ported in Sasebo, Beppu and Iwakuni – three port cities that showed off the natural beauty of Japan. Sasebo, I remember best for its Navy EM club called “Fiddler’s Green,” which featured fabulous Vegas-style floor shows that we all enjoyed. Beppu was a city of a thousand hot springs that were the city’s biggest business and major attraction. Iwakuni was dangerously close to the city of Nagasaki, which the U.S. had A-bombed during the war, so we were viewed suspiciously by local citizens. or so it seemed to me anyhow.

Yokosuka, Japan, destined to become Midway’s permanent homeport one day, was our next three ports – that is, we returned to it three times. Besides the Asian architecture and natural beauty of the place, one of Yokosuka’s major attractions to Midway’s crew was electronics; no one did electronics better than the Japanese; most popular was the Akai M-8 reel-to-reel tape recorder. I bought one and had it shipped home and played it for years after I got out. The great songs of the 70’s and 80’s flowed through those reels. Eventually my beloved Akai M-8 broke down, couldn’t be repaired, and my wife sold it at a yard sale. Broke my heart. But Yokosuka had natural beauty and big city attractions, including easy connection to the World’s largest city, Tokyo, a place that was way out of my league; I grew up in a small town.

Commencing on Nov. 8, 1963, and ending on May 26, 1964, Midway’s whirlwind ’63- ’64 WestPac cruise was finally in the books. Then, it was time to head home for Alameda. Not much worse for wear, except for a brand-new elevator #3.

By 1965, the “Winds of War” had put an end to the Seventh Fleet’s practice of showing the flag and America’s might in the Far East, and Midway was off to Yankee Station to put into action some real might. Beyond Vietnam, the Gulf Wars, the U.S. Iranian hostage crisis, nearly 18 years being homeported in Yokosuka, and China’s continued threat to Taiwan, loomed in her future.

In total, Midway made 16 WestPac cruises to the Far East. The 1963-1964 WestPac cruise I write about here was her last.

I was proud to be on the crew of Midway’s last WestPac cruise. But I had to be on to the rest of my life. I still had four years left in the Navy. If they were as eventful as these past six months on Midway, I was in for a good time.

As the Midway docked at the pier in Alameda, a huge crowd was there to meet her and cheered madly, and a band was playing, but was mostly drowned out by the crowd noise.

But everyone seemed happy at last.

The Midway had come home.

Escape from Vietnam & the Sands of Desert Storm

Mark Nojiri, AT1, IM-3, 74-76; 78

The year 2025 will be the 50th year since Operation Frequent Wind, the actual end of the Vietnam War. For those who read this article and were involved in hostile actions during the Vietnam War and suffered mental and physical damages from that war, I do apologize if I offend you. I have met Vietnam War veterans who were involved in combat, and they were offended that I consider myself a Vietnam War veteran, as my only involvement in that conflict was Operation Frequent Wind. However, here is what I have obtained from the Internet on the subject. As a veteran of both Operation Desert Storm (the liberation of Kuwait) and Operation Frequent Wind (the evacuation of Saigon), I do, in fact, have great respect for the veterans of both wars. Vietnam War veterans may get a little more of that respect, as not only did they have to endure the hardships of that war but also, when they returned to America, how the American public reacted to their return, the scorn and shame.

According to an Internet article on Operation Frequent Wind, dated February 2, 2003, Operation Frequent Wind is listed under the Campaign-Service requirements. The article states that all personnel who participated in Operation Frequent



Wind are now automatically authorized the Vietnam Service Medal (VSM) and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry. Also automatically authorized is the Humanitarian Service Medal. Previously, individuals involved in this operation were eligible to earn the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) alone and none of the others. In addition, one can earn the Vietnam Service Medal or the AFEM, but not both.

Servicemembers qualified for the AFEM for reason of service in Vietnam between 1 July 1958 and 3 July 1965 (inclusive) will remain qualified for that medal. Upon request, any such individual may be awarded the VSM instead of the AFEM. In such instances, the AFEM will be deleted from the list of authorized medals in personnel records. No person will be entitled to both awards for Vietnam service.

Servicemembers who earned the AFEM for Operation Frequent Wind between 29 and 30 April 1975, may elect to receive the VSM instead of the AFEM.

Now, I understand that what I have said above can be confusing, and, in some cases, even controversial. However, it is in accordance with a decision reached by the U.S. Department of Defense, and it is impactful to those men aboard Midway during Operation Frequent Wind, including myself, because it means that we now qualify as Vietnam War veterans, not only in name but also in whatever benefits that group of military veterans may be entitled to. Perhaps I should put it this way: I am equally proud to be a Gulf War veteran and a Vietnam War veteran, very proud to have served my country in two wars.

I was a crewmember aboard Midway during Operation Frequent Wind, and every year, on April 29th and 30th, I remember the two days of that operation with great pride. They were just a few days before my 26th birthday. The Midway crew did incredible work during those two days, doing more than their part to help save the thousands of South Vietnamese invaders from the North.

I have been, as a tourist, to Vietnam in 2001 and 2003 and have also viewed videos on YouTube recently going as far back as 2001. Vietnam has changed considerably since the war. For those

who were there during the worst of the war, it is entirely possible that you could go back today, meet one of those individuals who you were trying to kill (just as they were trying to kill you) and sit down with him and share a beer together. To the people of Vietnam, that war is ancient history by now. For the most part, the people of Vietnam are very united with Americans today. For instance, while the city is officially Ho Chi Minh City, to many it is still Saigon. In fact, United States Navy ships have made liberal port visits to Vietnam recently, as in 2023.



Midway's flight deck full of helos from Operation Frequent Wind

Back in the Day

Marty FitzGerald, 1957-60, ABFAN, V-4 Division

Back in the Day when I was a kid onboard the Midway, I went to work one morning and LCDR Waters was in Flight Deck Control where I worked as phone talker for V-4 Division during flight ops. I told Mr. Waters that I thought there was a problem on the flight deck.

As I remember he said "What is that?" I explained that there are too many RED SHIRTS on the flight deck and a lot of confusion there is REP-8 in red shirts, V-5 Ordnance in red shirts and V-4 in red shirts. I suggested a change in color for V-4 from red to purple, because our lube oil is purple, the JP-5 has a purple tint to it and our avgas 115-145 has a purple tint. The commander said he could take

this under advisement. That was that. Never heard anything more until 1992, when Captain Larry Ernst brought the USS Midway to Seattle for Seafair. That was when I found out about my Letter of Commendation that I never received. The V-4 division officer was in Flight Deck Control when my son and I visited.

The letter was from the Director of Navy Personnel to Marty FitzGerald, 442-38-71, that's me, and a tear came to my eyes. I asked if I could get that letter or a copy of it and division officer said, no it is Navy property.

I tried to get it from Naval Archives but the one in St. Louis had a fire and the letter was destroyed. I saw the letter and I know it did exist.

And that is the rest of what happened. Purple Shirts rule!

MVA's Family Plan Gains Traction

At last year's reunion in San Diego, in a near unanimous vote of members at the business meeting, members voted to allow direct family members to join the MVA, pay dues at the same rate as veterans, and become voting members of our association. Further, those family members who choose to do so can also qualify to become officers in the MVA. Now, a year later, this new membership policy is gaining traction and increasing our numbers, with sons and daughters of MVA members joining our ranks. The goal is to preserve and build on the legacy of the USS Midway and her crewmembers.

So, we encourage MVA veterans to promote this idea to their families. For family members and MVA veterans alike, having family members active in the MVA can be rewarding and enriching up and down the generational ladder.

New Members

The following USS Midway Veterans and family members have joined the proud ranks of the USS Midway Veterans Association since our last newsletter. **Welcome aboard for our own special brand of Midway Magic!**

Reed Minton (72-78), Reno, NV

David Bourgeois (57-59), Sun City West, AZ
Tony Frost (74-77), Springfield, MO

Jim Chapman (70-73), San Antonio, TX

Valarie Salyers, daughter of Peter Craig (62-64),
Huntington, WV

Brian Martin, son of Steve Martin (72-73),
Nashville, TN

Teri Byers, daughter of Derral Henry, (64-68),
Kansa City, KS

Varnell Butler (85-89), Waldorf, MD

Celine Butler, daughter of Varnell Butler (85-89),
Waldorf, MD

In Memoriam

Shipmate Gregory Estrada, served in X
Division as an LI3, 1975-1977.





USS Midway Veterans Assoc. Website

<http://ussmidway.net>

USS Midway Veterans Assoc. Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/USSMidwayVeteransAssociation>



View of Midway's Island from the pier



View from the Midway's island looking toward two carriers at NAS North Island

*The Masthead
USS Midway
Veterans Association*

A quarterly newsletter for USN and USMC Veterans who served aboard the USS Midway, and who are friends eternal.

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mvanewslettereditor@gmail.com



This document is "fillable." Type directly in the fields. Immediate Family Members need only to complete section of this form that applies to them.

MIDWAY VETERANS ASSOCIATION
Application for Membership

I am a USS Midway Veteran and I wish to join the USS MIDWAY VETERANS ASSOCIATION, which is open to all Navy and Marine Corps veterans, regardless of department or air wing affiliation, who served on Midway at any time she was in commission. Note: Immediate family members (21 & over) of MVA members are also welcomed to join the MVA at the same dues amounts as MVA members and have the right to vote on MVA issues (see sign-up below).

MVA Veteran Name: _____ **Date** _____

Spouse/Partner Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Phone Number Home: _____

Email: _____

Actual years served aboard: _____ **to** _____

Rank/Rate/Division while aboard (e.g., RM3/CR Div.): _____

Years served in military _____ **to** _____

How Did You Hear About Our Reunion Association? _____

Immediate Family Member Name: _____		Associated with MVA Member _____	
Mailing Address _____		Email _____	
City _____	State _____	Telephone _____	

Complete this form, either online or manually, selecting one of the 3 dues amounts (pay by check or with credit card):

Check One

- [\\$20.00/yr for veteran + spouse/partner or immediate family member \(age 21 or over\)](#)
- [\\$25.00/yr for veteran and family](#)
- [\\$100.00 for Lifetime Membership including family \(one-time payment\)](#)

Follow link below to charge by credit card (**PayPal, Discover, VISA, MasterCard**); when PP site opens follow the easy instructions.

<https://ussmidway.net/index.php/paydues>

OR pay by check. Make check payable to Midway Veterans Association and mail completed form and check to address below. Completing this form will also get you added to MVA's electronic mailing list to receive your MVA newsletter online.

USS Midway Veterans Association
18940 Priceless Road
Perris, CA 92570

The USS Midway Museum supports the USS Midway Veterans Association in preserving the legacy of every Midway sailor, regardless of department or air wing affiliation. (NOTE: The USS Midway Veterans Association is a 501(c)(19) nonprofit organization; contributions (aka, dues) are tax-deductible as provided by law.

Contact: Bernard (Ray) Tillery, MVA Treasurer, at ray.tillery@yahoo.com;
Telephone 806-678-0742.
18940 Priceless Road
Perris, CA 92570

For more information on how to join the MVA as an Immediate Family Member of an MVA member contact MVA's VP of Admin. Marty FitzGerald at email: marty.fitzgerald@earthlink.net. He will fill you in on the details.