



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



Midway Honors Vietnam War POWs with New Exhibit

See article on page 4

September 2026 MVA Reunion

The countdown to our Midway Veterans Association Reunion is just around the corner. Check in at the hotel is on September 13th. Tours are on the 14th, 15th, & 16th.

A Meet & Greet (hors d'oeuvres & cocktails) is on Monday night and the Banquet is Wednesday night.

We encourage all members, to register now before time slips by. It's a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with shipmates, share stories, and honor the legacy we all hold dear.

Check out events and registration here:

<https://www.events.afr-reg.com/e/USSMidway26>

Also, be sure to take a look at the official reunion merchandise—there's some great stuff available! The sooner the order the better as they do take a few weeks for delivery. You can browse and order here:

<https://teamtime.shop/collections/midway-veterans-association>

The cutoff date for reunion registration is August 15th. Let's get the registrations sent in and see you in September!

Passing of Midway's last Commanding Officer

Captain Larry L. Ernst was born in Charleston, West Virginia, on July 19th, 1943, to his parents, Eileen and Everett Ernst. He and his two sisters, Ruann and Brenda, were raised in Beckley, West Virginia, before graduating from Woodrow Wilson High School. Throughout his many moves, he held his humble West Virginia roots in his heart. Country Roads has been sung with joy at each family event to honor this.

His lifelong love of nature began at an early age. He always felt at home in the great outdoors and a certain kinship with all of God's creatures. He was the proud caretaker of many pets over the years, including a squirrel he raised from infancy. He was awarded an NROTC scholarship to the Ohio State University, where he would meet a young girl named Bobbie from Mansfield, Ohio. The two were an instant match, marrying shortly thereafter in August of 1965.

Having received his USN commission that same year, he left the day after graduating and reported immediately for flight training in Pensacola, Florida. Larry was thrilled to receive orders to fly jets, exactly what he had requested on his "dream sheet."

In the years that followed, their young family would grow to include two beautiful daughters, Jackie and Jenni. As duty called, the family moved across the country and the world with stops in Virginia, California, England, and Japan.

In 1969, he was an early pioneer of the newly formed United States Fighter Weapons School, graduating from one of the very first classes of the program that would soon be known around the world as Top Gun. In 1977, he returned to Top Gun, where he served as an instructor before being named the Executive Officer of the school.

In 1991, he took command of the U.S.S. Midway (CV-41). He served as the last Commanding Officer of Midway before bringing the ship home on its final voyage to become a permanent museum in San Diego Harbor.

Over his 27 years of military service, he flew over 4,600 hours in jets, props, and helos. He logged 136 combat missions, 658 fixed-wing carrier landings, and 28 rotary wing landings. His awards include a Presidential Unit Citation, 6 Air Medals, and 2 Navy Commendation Medals with Combat "V". He was also selected for the West Virginia Aviation Hall of Fame and received the James Bond Stockdale award for inspirational leadership when serving as commanding officer of VF-101.

After retiring from military service in 1993, he served as the Business Development Manager at General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, developing the very first Predator UAV system. In 1999, he switched to Avnet in Phoenix, Arizona, where he would serve as Vice President of Integrated Systems before retiring in 2003 and beginning his favorite role as a full-time grandpa to his four grandchildren, Sara, Scott, Blake, and Tyler.

Even after leaving the Navy, the Navy's competitive spirit never left him. Larry excelled in nearly every hobby he pursued, whether it was skiing, shooting, chess, or especially golf. If you were ever looking for Larry, you'd be most likely to find him out on the course with a low score and a lit cigar.

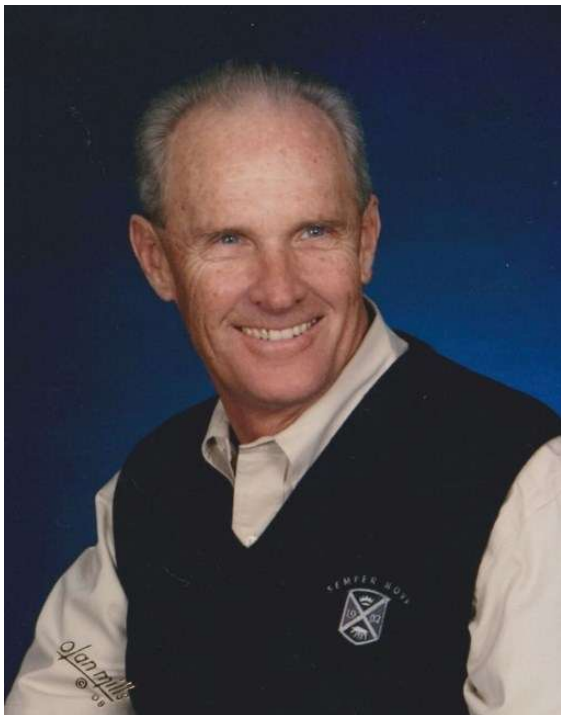
His greatest passion, however, remained his family. He and his wife Bobbie traveled the world together, often with their daughters and grandchildren by their side. They enjoyed many cruises together, only this time from the deck rather than behind the wheel.

Larry's passion for people and golf thrived within Arizona's Tonto Verde community. There, he was able to meet new lifelong friends, enjoy visits from his grandchildren, and play golf nearly every day. His final years would be spent in Austin, TX, to be closer to his daughter Jenni, her two sons, and, of course, the legendary golf courses at Barton Creek Country Club.

He made his final takeoff on May 26th, 2026.

Larry is survived by his wife Bobbie of 60 years; sister Ruann Ernst and her husband Bill Riffle; sister Brenda Lilly and her husband Pete Lilly; eldest daughter Jackie Ernst, her partner Doug George, and her two children Sara and Scott Carsanaro; and youngest daughter Jenni Fluke, her

husband Brad Fluke, and her two sons Blake and Tyler Rozas.



Remembering my first Reunion

Steve DeCata
MVA VP Reunions

I remember the phone call from my old shipmate Brad Cleveland "hey Steve, Al Lang and I are going to a Midway reunion! You got to come!!!"

That was 2014, and I've tried to make every reunion since. Missing only one (Pensacola) due to a new work assignment.

Over the years more of the guys I served with have come, renewing old friendships, remembering old sea stories, and laughing at the adventures in port. We toast to shipmates who have passed and remember them fondly.

I am a proud member of the Midway Veterans Association and can say without a doubt that becoming a member was a great decision.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to either of the following organizations: The Larry and Roberta Ernst Ohio State Navy ROTC Scholarship. To donate by check, please make checks payable to The Ohio State University and include "Navy ROTC Alumni Society Support Fund #318410" in the memo line.

Mail checks to: The Ohio State University Foundation, P.O. Box 736096, Chicago, IL 60673-6096

Online donations may be made at: <https://giveto.osu.edu/makeagift/details/312095>—or—

Honor Flight Austin

Donations may be made online at: <https://honorflightaustin.org/donate/>
A memorial service will be announced at a later date.





Midway Honors Vietnam War POWs with New Exhibit

by USS Midway Museum

With the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973, the U.S. military's involvement in the Vietnam War officially ended. As part of that agreement, 591 American prisoners of war were released from captivity during Operation Homecoming.

Included in the repatriation were 11 aviators who were assigned to squadrons based on the USS Midway (CV-41). The length of their captivities ranged from several months to several years.

As a tribute to all American POWs, and specifically the former prisoners of war assigned to Midway squadrons, the USS Midway Museum has opened a gripping new exhibit called "Captive Warriors: The Story of the Midway 11." This powerful new exhibition tells the stories of courage and honor during the Vietnam War through the eyes of those Midway aviators who endured harsh conditions, isolation, starvation and brutal treatment at the hands of their North Vietnamese captors.

"I think the exhibit is wonderful, especially considering the space the museum's exhibits team had to work with," said retired Navy Capt. Jack Enschede, a former USS Midway naval flight officer

who was a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for seven months. "I also liked that it is specifically about the USS Midway POWs."

The decision to center the exhibit around the Midway's POWs was a deliberate one.



"We made the choice to move from the broader story of POWs in Vietnam to a story that was deeply personal to this ship," said Bill Coleman, Midway's exhibits manager. "The Midway 11 gave us a way to anchor the experience in real people connected directly to Midway. It shifts the exhibit from history you read to history you feel. Visitors are not just learning about captivity, they are seeing it."

Midway's exhibits team spent months engaged in comprehensive research to ensure its accuracy.

"Our thorough research combined digging into official records, pilot reports and archival material with firsthand accounts wherever possible," said Bill. "Rudy Shappee, our content developer, with the help of Rebekah Caesar spent time cross-checking timelines, capture circumstances and lengths of captivity. Just as important, we focused on lived experience. That drove decisions about space, lighting and sound. The goal was not just to present facts but to build an environment grounded in truth."

"My role in the project was as the developer of the story line we wanted to pursue," said Rudy, who has been with the museum's organization since 2001. "I had to balance the graphic descriptions of the torture experienced by the prisoners with the heroics of both the prisoners and their wives in the small amount of space to tell their stories."



To help realize the day-to-day experiences of what life was like in the prison camps, the exhibits team turned to several former POWs.

“Former POWs and those connected to them were critical to us getting it right,” said Bill. “They helped validate details, correct assumptions and bring clarity to moments that are easy to misrepresent. In some cases, they shaped how we told the story by pushing us away from anything that felt staged or exaggerated. Their input kept the exhibit honest and grounded.”

The most challenging part of creating this exhibit was trying to strike an appropriate balance on how the exhibit would be presented to Midway’s visitors. “In this exhibit, you are dealing with real suffering, and it is easy to either soften it too much or push it too far,” said Bill. “We had to find a line where the experience is honest without being overwhelming. Translating something like isolation, uncertainty and endurance into a physical space is not straightforward. Every decision, from how confined the space feels to how much information is presented, had to be carefully considered.”

The exhibit is already receiving positive response, especially from Vietnam War-era veterans.

“The POW exhibit is very well done,” said Paul Granger, a former U.S. Air Force B-52 pilot who became a POW in December 1972. “The memorabilia on display and cell structures brought back many memories. The dark lighting was perfect for effect, and the single prison door with the small, barred window was just like the one I was in during solitary confinement.”

“This is a must see for Vietnam veterans,” said Roger Hayes, who joined the U.S. Navy in 1968 and is currently a volunteer in Midway’s safety department.

The POW story is a very difficult one to tell, however, through exhaustive research and detail and thoughtful planning, Midway’s exhibits team has put together a tremendously impactful experience for the museum’s guests.

“My favorite comment made by our visitors is ‘I had no idea,’” said Rudy, who has amassed more than 23,000 volunteer hours. “And that is the purpose of our museum; to inform by telling a good story that our guests can understand. Vietnam was a long time ago, so being able to tell the story aboard the Midway will keep the story alive for many of our future guests.

“I truly believe that this exhibit is grounded in truth and built by people invested in the story,” said Bill. “Our visitors are not just reading panels, they are stepping into a story. That was the goal from the beginning and I think we achieved it.”

Solicitation of Sponsors for the Midway Veterans Association

Ray Tillery
MVA Treasurer

The MVA board of directors now offers sponsorships for the Midway Veteran’s Association through the MVA website and the quarterly MVA newsletter.

We represent 225,000 former sailors and marines, officers and enlisted, who served aboard USS Midway over her 47 years of service to our country.

We are a non-profit organization founded in 1994 by a group of 15 veterans who served together aboard our ship. Once the word got out, more joined. We now have over 1000 former veterans of the Midway.

We gather every two years in San Diego, where our ship is now a world class museum, to remember our shipmates who have passed, to see old friends, and meet new ones. We support the Museum with

donations to the education fund by various methods of funding.

The Midway Veteran's Association is committed to the support of all who now serve, have served, and will serve to defend the Constitution of the United States of America. The overlying theme of the Association and the USS Midway Museum is "Freedom is Not Free!"

As a body of individuals who have been honored to have participated in this sacred American quest, we seek to further strengthen our participation in these ideals of Freedom!

In this regard, we seek sponsorship for the sake of this endeavor. We offer the opportunity to display your business card or logo in copies of our quarterly annual newsletter that is distributed to all members of the MVA by mail or email for \$100 per year. We also offer to place these same cards or logos in our website, USSMidway.net, for \$500 per year. In addition to placing the ad, the sponsor is welcome to utilize the Midway Veteran Association Logo in their own promotional material. And, of course, we will always welcome all and any donation.

For further information on sponsorship, contact MVA Treasurer, Ray Tillery, at ray.tillery@yahoo.com or (806) 678-0742.

MVA Donation

Frederick Burr (a MVA Member) and Carol Woods made a donation of \$500.00 to the Midway Veterans Association via our Treasurer, Ray Tillery. Ray responded saying the donation was very much appreciated and hope we can make the best possible use of it in the future. We hope you can make it to the reunion in September and to see you there!

Midway Veterans Association (MVA) Membership vs Midway Museum Membership

MVA Membership is open to any Navy or Marine veteran who served on the Midway, regardless of department or air wing affiliation, at any time she was in commission (1945-1992). Your membership

includes access to our quarterly newsletter, emails about upcoming reunions and other pertinent information. The MVA website <http://ussmidway.net> provides copies of our newsletters, contact listing for Board Members, Memories and Photos/Videos. MVA reunions are held every two years in San Diego, CA. See information about the 2026 reunion in this newsletter. The MVA Membership Application form is on the last page of our newsletters or on the MVA website.

Midway Museum Lifetime Pass for Midway Veterans

The museum offers all USS Midway Veterans, those who completed military service on the USS Midway, a complimentary Lifetime Pass. Please email midwaysailor@midway.org or call (619) 398-8272. We will then contact you to initiate the application process. To allow verification of your service history, this pass is not offered online.

Please note: You must sign up for your Midway Veteran Lifetime Pass before your visit. Midway Veteran Passes may take up to three weeks to process.

After you receive your Lifetime Pass, simply show it with a photo ID at Midway's entrance for complimentary admission for you and one (1) guest. Thank you for your service!

Long Ago and Far Away on Midway

David Payson, 1963-64, RDSN, OI Division

I fell in love with the Orient on my first Westpac cruise on Midway – in 1963-64. That's a long time ago, I know. But it left me with many lasting memories. I won't soon forget the magnificent view of Hong Kong Harbor as seen after a harrowing tram ride up Victoria's Peak overlooking the Harbor and much of the city.

Nor will I forget the magnificent sight of Tokyo at night, lit up by thousands of glowing lamps—a Mardi Gras parade on steroids, in the middle of a vast city, teeming with millions of people, all headed in different directions, but it seemed in some long-practiced, programmed order.

When we returned to Alameda, CA, from that Westpac cruise I made on Midway, and following my completion of radar school at nearby Treasure Island, I received orders to the USS Wilhoite (DER-397), a World War II-vintage radar picket ship, about one-third the size of Midway.

Fast forward a year . . . now a Radarman on the Wilhoite, with the Vietnam War well underway, I crossed paths with Midway again in the Tonkin Gulf. Midway was in full combat action at the time, her jets wreaking havoc and destruction on North Vietnamese forces. It made me proud, and I watched intently.

But, as it turned out, Midway wasn't done with me. Nor was I done with her.

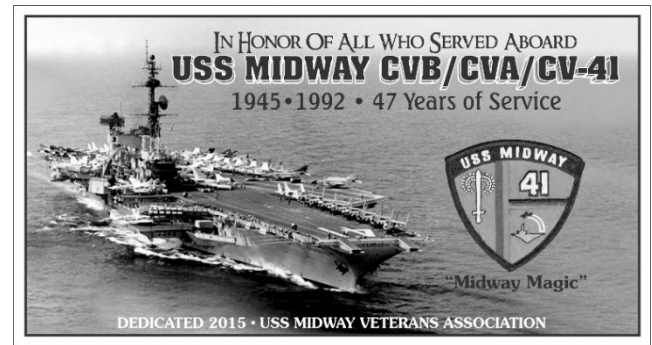
Now, all these years later, Midway still sees plenty of action, but of a different kind—as a museum ship in San Diego, CA, attracting thousands of tourists from around the country and the world. Arguably, Midway is the most popular museum ship in the retired U.S. Navy, and, quite possibly, in the world.

The longest-serving aircraft carrier of the 20th century, Midway has a way of instilling pride in those who served on her, as well as in those associated with her in any capacity, for example, civilian volunteers who help run the museum. They call this pride “Midway Magic,” a mystical force that remains with her to this day.

I enjoyed my service on Midway as a crewman, as well as a longtime member of the MVA as a civilian. I feel like I've been part of something special during all that time. With a degree in Journalism, I served as MVA's newsletter editor, “Scope Dope News,” for many years.

My active-duty days on Midway were a great experience for me, rewarding and enriching, leaving me with many positive memories of my younger days. I've visited Midway several times over the years in San Diego from my home in Washington State, some 1300 miles north, up the West Coast.

Yes, my friends and former shipmates, those were the days, on Midway. We thought they'd never end. But end they did.



USS Midway Veterans Assoc. Website

<http://ussmidway.net>

USS Midway Veterans Assoc. Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/858100554307618>

Letters to the Editor

E-mail me your comments/questions about articles that appear in this newsletter, and I will answer them. If I don't have the answer, I'll put you in touch with the author of the article/story. As editor of this newsletter, I'm all for open communication between Midway shipmates and MVA members.

Send to: mvanewseditor@gmail.com



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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Position Open

Actively seeking a volunteer for this IMPORTANT position. Contact Steve DeCata for details.

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MVA Member Application

As a USS Midway veteran, I wish to join the USS Midway Veterans Association that is shared by both Navy and Marine veterans, regardless of department or air wing affiliation, who served on the Midway at any time she was in commission (1945-1992). Immediate family members (21 & over) of MVA members are also welcome to join the MVA. Family membership provides full membership privileges, voting, office holding, newsletter/email access. As a member you will be added to our email distribution and receive emails on reunion/MVA related information.

MVA Veterans Name: _____ Date: _____

Spouse/Partner Name: _____

Rank/Rate/Division while onboard: _____

Years served aboard Midway: From: _____ to: _____

How did you learn about the MVA: _____

Mailing address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

Immediate Family Membership (21 & over)

Family member name: _____ Relationship to Veteran: _____

Name of Midway Veteran: _____

Mailing address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Email address: _____ Tel: _____

Please check one of following dues that applies to you to complete the application:

- ☐ \$20.00 yearly for member and spouse/partner. **Note:** The spouse/partner does not have membership privileges, i.e. can't vote or hold office. If a spouse/partner wants to vote or hold office they would have to join as an immediate family member and pay dues.
- ☐ \$20.00 yearly for immediate family member
- ☐ \$100.00 Lifetime membership (same for member or immediate family member)

You can pay dues on the MVA website using PayPal. Just visit <https://ussmidway.net/> (go to bottom right of the webpage). If using PayPal, email or mail the form to the MVA Treasurer (contact info is listed below).

If paying by check, make the check payable to: Midway Veterans Association and mail your completed application and check to the MVA Treasurer (contact info is listed below).

USS Midway Veterans Association, 18940 Priceless Rd, Perris, CA 92570

Contact: Bernard (Ray) Tillery, MVA Treasurer at ray.tillery@yahoo.com Tel: 806-678-0742

