

# The Wake Wig Wag



Published almost daily at Wake Island for employees of  
Contractors, Pacific Naval Air Bases  
Louis M. Cormier, Compiler & Editor

MAIL CHEDULE	Clipper mail FROM Mainland expected to arrive Saturday. Clipper mail TO Mainland EXPECTED to close Thursday at 5:00 PM.
MOVIE CHEDULE	"Windjammer", with George O'Brien & Constance Ward ) Tonight "The Hot Air Salesman", short subject ) at 8:00

Vol. I

Wake Island, Tuesday, July 15, 1941

NO. 53

## TO MY CO-WORKERS:

On January 9, 1941, the U.S.S. WILLIAM WARD BURROWS arrived at Wake Island with the first "work" party. A "survey" party had been out in 1940 and spent some months surveying this point and obtaining data for the final layout of the work to be done, but January 9th really marks the beginning of construction operations.

On July 9, 1941, we reached the half-way mark of our first year on Wake Island. Much has been accomplished during that time. The crude "rag camp" on the beach has blossomed into two main camps, Camp #1 with its tents and Camp #2 with its modern barracks, and the preliminary work which must be completed before actual construction of the permanent project commences is far ahead of schedule.

During these six months problems have arisen, many of them entirely unforeseen, which have caused us more inconvenience than most of us bargained for. However, with very few exceptions, all of you have shown an esprit de corps which is seldom found on construction jobs -- especially at such an isolated spot.

Your splendid cooperation has been appreciated by all members of the Staff here on Wake as well as by the Operating Base, and while it would be impossible for me on behalf of all concerned to thank each of you personally, I trust you will regard this as a note of thanks and appreciation addressed to each of you individually.

Sincerely yours,

N. D. TETERS  
General Superintendent

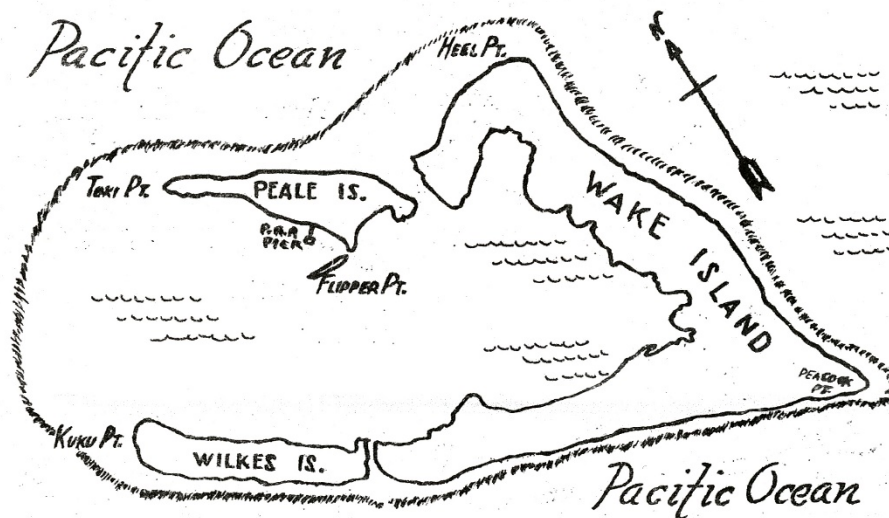
## THE FOLKS BACK HOME

This issue of THE WAKE WIG WAG is respectfully dedicated to "The Folks Back Home". For a good portion of us out here it is our first trip away from the Mainland and for a large number it is the first venture out into the world from the place we call Home. The personnel of the Pan American Clippers and the Navy ships plying between here and Honolulu could confound us with statistics on the number and weight of letters, shells, etc., that have been sent back Home by us.

So far as the shells and other souvenirs are concerned, they speak for themselves. However, the word pictures of our Island undoubtedly vary in many ways,

due both to a lack of available accurate information and the time in which to describe our Island home and the task we are engaged in. Within the limited space at its command, and without overstepping the bounds of Navy regulations, THE WAKI WIG WAG will endeavor to complement the word pictures we have already sent to The Folks Back Home.

It should be borne in mind that we are engaged in the construction of a Navy Air Base as part of the National Defense Program. The portion of the work we have had a hand in to date comprises the so-called "preliminary" work -- that is, getting the Islands ready for commencement of the permanent projects. Incidentally most persons (including ourselves up to the time we landed here) think of Wake as one island. In reality Wake Island comprises three islands -- Wake, Wilkes, and Peale -- in a V-shaped formation surrounded by a coral reef and enclosing an emerald green lagoon described by competent authorities as one of the most beautiful to be found anywhere in the wide Pacific. The following map shows the group of the islands.



An article by Homer C. Votaw, entitled "Wake Island", which appeared in the U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings for January, 1941, is included in this issue.

The members of the Contractors' personnel live in two base camps located on Wake Island. The Pan American Airways station is located on Peale Island.

No doubt you Folks Back Home would like to know how we are housed out here and what conveniences we have. In Camp #1 we live in 16 x 20 ft tents, each tent containing 6 spring beds, individual chairs, and a table. There are several conveniently located bathhouses containing showers and facilities for washing, shaving, etc. In Camp #2 we live in barracks. Each barrack comprises two wings with a center cross section -- all in the shape of a huge letter "H". The center or connecting section contains showers, washing facilities, etc. Each of the wings contains 40 beds, 20 on each side with a wide aisle down the center. There is a partition extending about two-thirds of the way up to the ceiling between each group of two beds -- making a sort of "stall" arrangement. There are three porches or lanais on each wing, one at each end and one in the center.

In both camps at the present time we have running salt water for showers, and fresh water is obtainable when we feel ambitious enough to lug a pail of it from the power house. An electric water-cooler drinking fountain is installed in each wing of the barracks. In both camps there are individual steel lockers for each man. Some of us naturally have more personal belongings than can be conveniently kept in these lockers and the conglomeration of shelves, cupboards, table

"Decision of the Pan American Airways to use the place brought quick co operation from the Navy. The U.S.S. NITRO was dispatched early in 1935 for the purpose of bringing the chart up to date and to secure other useful information. Two of her boats were lost in the heavy surf, but no one was seriously injured.

"The air base construction ship NORTH HAVEN arrived from Midway at noon the following May 5, and no time was lost starting work. One group circled the atoll in a small boat, while a second explored ashore. Both Wake Island proper and its western appendage, Wilkes, were found unusable, principally because of their lowness. Peale Island, however, slightly indented from the end of Wake's other arm, proved a welcome surprise. A rich brown loam instead of sand and rocks indicated that it was safe from submer-  
sion

"The problem then was how to get everything over to Peale, for the only safe landing place was on Wilkes. It was finally decided that a launch and lighter must be transported over the latter to the lagoon, where they could ferry material the rest of the way. This required a great deal of clearing and blasting work.

"A tractor was soon landed on Wilkes, and a temporary camp equipped with a big water still was constructed. A small railroad was next constructed to the lagoon with steel strips and wheels meant for another purpose. This successfully carried both launch and lighter, which in turn began relaying the rest of the cargo over to Peale. With everything ashore by May 29, the NORTH HAVEN proceeded to Manila. When she returned a month later the elaborate Peale air station was taking shape; some progress had even been made inclearing the lagoon of jagged coral dangerous to any landing clipper. After two months of hard work, the first clipper glided down upon the placid surface.

"Since then, like Midway, Wake has enjoyed a steadily growing resort trade. Fishing is the main attraction, and the next is undoubtedly that of just looking at the myriad of brightly colored small fish in the lagoon. But no visitor leaves without lingering memories of the natural beauty of the atoll. The coral reef and sand are pure white, the outer sea a deep blue, and the lagoon an emerald green. Moreover, the water is so clear a 60-foot bottom may be seen. Interesting and comical birds also demand attention.

"The current naval project will of course dwarf the Pan American establishment, but no details may be given. When completed, scouting air-planes, submarines, and perhaps even small surface craft will conduct routine protective maneuvers in all directions. They will arrive none too soon. Events of recent years the world over have plainly demonstrated that undefended possessions have little chance of survival, even though an aggressor nation may control more surrounding territory than it can profitably utilize. And Wake is far more than a mere possession - it lies on our route to Guam, the Philippines, and the mainland of Asia."