



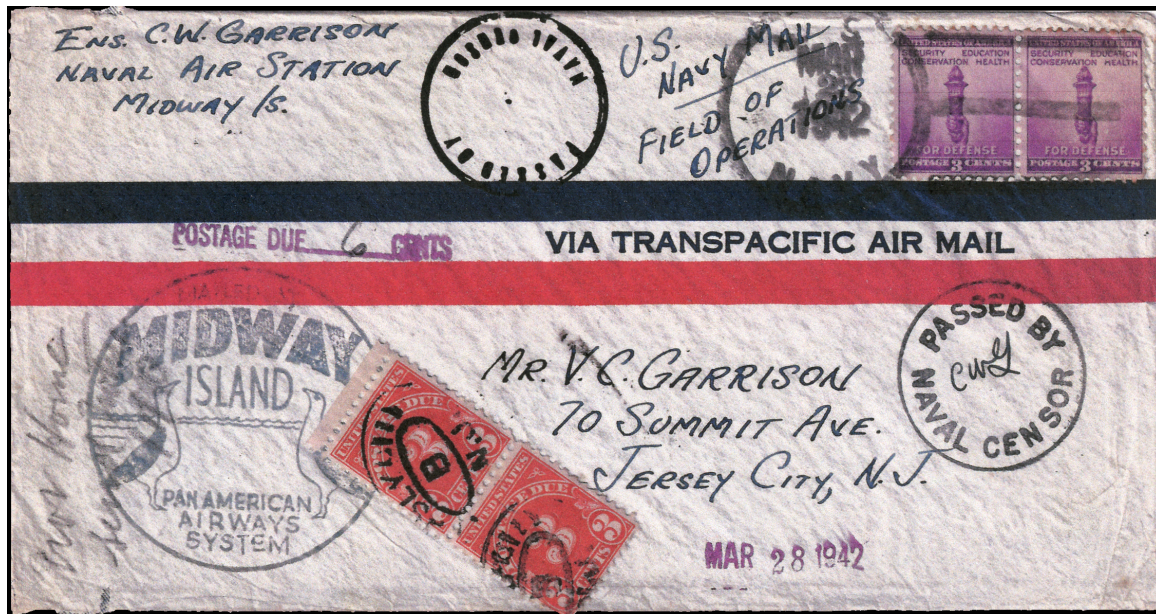
FEATURED ARTICLE Vol. 50 No. 1 Whole Number 225
February 2022

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The Journal of the
NEW JERSEY POSTAL HISTORY SOCIETY

**WAKE AND MIDWAY ISLANDS – 1940-1942:
Some Postal History and New Jersey Connection**

By Jim Walker



A 1942 cover sent from Midway Island to Jersey City via Transpacific Air

Civilian contractors at work in the Pacific before and during the early days of World War II the story and postal history of members of the SeaBees... see story below.

Read full article.....

WAKE AND MIDWAY ISLANDS – 1940-1942: Some Postal History and New Jersey Connections

By Jim Walker

Juan Trip, president of Pan American Airlines had long dreamed of a trans-Pacific service to the far east. By 1935 Pan Am service reached as far as Manila, and by the spring of 1937 to Hong Kong. The accompanying map (*Figure 1*) shows the routes of the Pan Am Clippers flying regular schedules to China and New Zealand by 1940, with refueling and rest stops at mid-Pacific islands, where small but surprisingly luxurious accommodations awaited those fortunate enough to fly the Pan Am orient route.

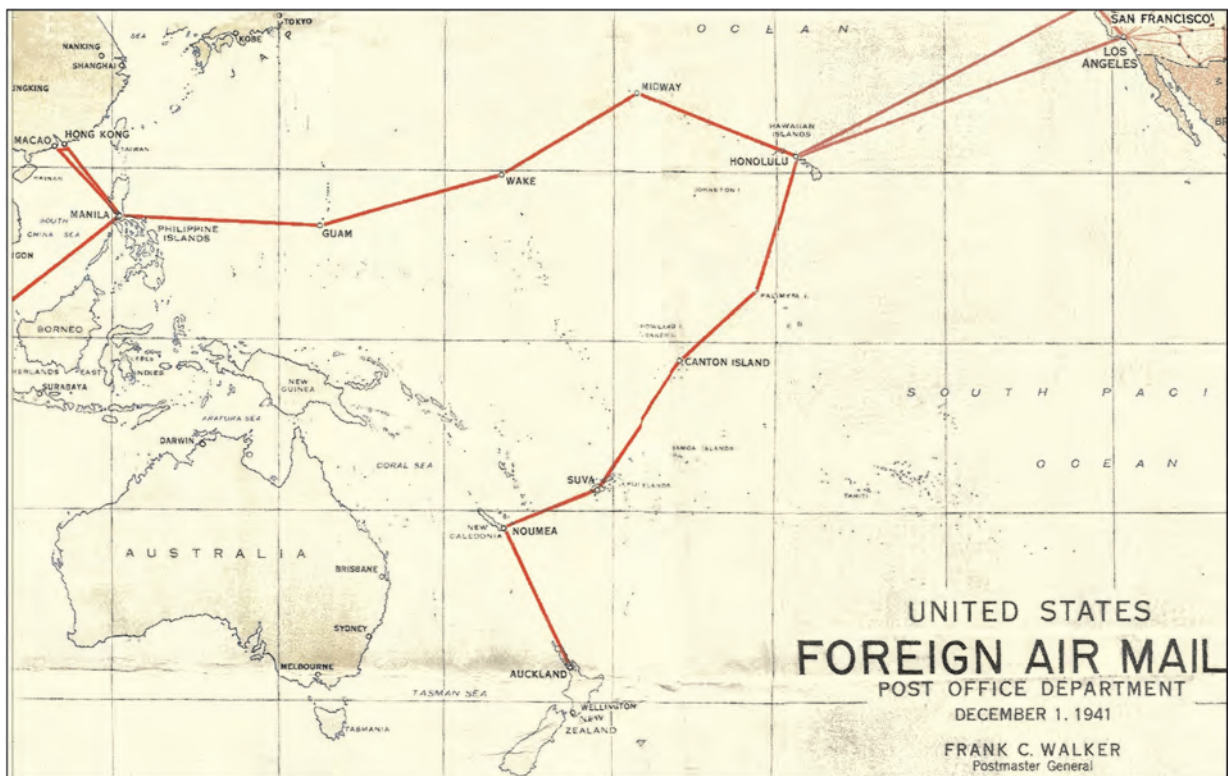


Fig. 1: This Post Office Department map of 1941 shows the two Pacific Foreign Air Mail routes: FAM #14, est. Nov. 22, 1935, San Francisco to Manila, Philippines Islands and its extension to Macao and Hong Kong, China of April 21, 1937. Also shown is the extension from Manila to Singapore, Malaya, May 2, 1941. FAM #19, also illustrated here, from San Francisco and Los Angeles to Auckland, New Zealand was established July 12, 1940, with the addition of Suva, Fiji to this route on November 5, 1941.

The U.S. Navy also had plans for these remote islands. Contracts were signed with construction companies to build and harden defensive positions, and to create barracks, and storage facilities. This article is a look at some of the postal history generated by a few men who worked on these Islands before and at the start of World War II.

One of the men to sign up for this work was Arthur Eidsoren. His draft card (*Figure 2*) shows he was born in Norway, and living in Stanton, Hunterdon County, New Jersey, 35 years old in 1940 and a carpenter by trade.

WAKE & MIDWAY ISLANDS – 1940-1942: Postal History & Jersey Connections ~ Jim Walker

The image shows two overlapping forms. The top form is a Draft Card (D. S. Form 1) for Arthur C. Eidsoren, registered on October 16, 1940. The bottom form is a Registrar's Report for the same individual, dated October 16, 1940, from the local board in Hunterdon County, New Jersey.

Draft Card Data:

- SERIAL NUMBER: 607
- NAME (Print): Arthur Cornelius Eidsoren
- ORDER NUMBER: 1063
- ADDRESS (Print): Stanton, Hunterdon, N.J.
- RELIGION: None
- AGE IN YEARS: 35
- DATE OF BIRTH: July 13, 1905
- CITY OF BIRTH: Christiansburg, Norway
- COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP: U.S.A.
- NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS: Mrs. Beatrice Elaine Eidsoren, Wife
- ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON: Stanton Hunt, N.J.
- EMPLOYER'S NAME: Self
- PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS: Stanton Hunt, N.J.
- REGISTRATION CARD: Arthur C. Eidsoren

Registrar's Report Data:

- AGE: 35
- HEIGHT (Approx.): 5 ft. 10 in.
- WEIGHT (Approx.): 165
- COMPLEXION: Fair
- EYES: Blue
- HAIR: Brown
- PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: tattoo marks on both arms
- LOCAL BOARD No. 1 For Hunterdon County, Borough Hall, High Bridge, N. J.
- Registration Date: Oct 16, 1940

Fig. 2: Draft card Oct. 16, 1940 for Arthur C. Eidsoren, of Stanton, Hunterdon County, New Jersey.

Eidsoren's name next appears on the passenger manifest of U.S.S. *William Ward Burrows*, a Navy transport ship (AP6) sailing from Honolulu to Wake Island December 26, 1940. A second passenger manifest for the same ship shows Eidsoren on the return trip from Wake Island to Pearl Harbor on October 14, 1941.

The image shows two overlapping passenger lists for the USS William Wade Burrows. The top list is for the voyage from Honolulu to Wake Island on December 26, 1940. The bottom list is for the return voyage from Wake Island to Pearl Harbor on October 14, 1941. Both lists include names, ranks, and destinations.

1. NAMES	2. RANK, TITLE, ETC.	3. DESTINATION
BUTZING, H. W.	Lieut. USN	Wake Island, T.H.
WALTERS, N.G.	Contractor	do
DUNCAN, H.	do	do
EDSOREN, A.	do	do

1. NAMES	2. RANK, TITLE, ETC.	3. DESTINATION
Lewis A. HOHN	Major, U.S.M.C.	Pearl Harbor, T. H.
ROBERT, Wilburn E.	Tech. Sgt., U.S.M.C.	do
BURN, B.C.	Contractor	do
DAVIDSON, F.C.	do	do
EDSOREN, A.C.	do	do
FESLER, M.W.	do	do

Fig. 3 and 4: Nonenlisted passenger lists showing Eidsoren (misspelled Edsoren) aboard the USS William Wade Burrows Dec. 26, 1940 to Wake Island and Oct. 16, 1941 return to Pearl Harbor.

Most of the contract workers on Wake and Midway Islands returned to Hawaii on leave after a six-month stint.

The Morrison-Knudsen Company records show Navy Contract NOy-5449, dated August 11, 1942, which lists Eidsoren as a building supervisor, with 8 foremen and a total crew of 75 workers.

The article in *Figure 5* appeared in a local newspaper (possibly the Hunterdon County Democrat) about a copy of “The Wake Wig Wag” dated July 15, 1941, a local daily newsletter produced by and for the workers on Wake Island, and sent home by Eidsoren (*Figure 6*). That issue has a history and a map of the islands.

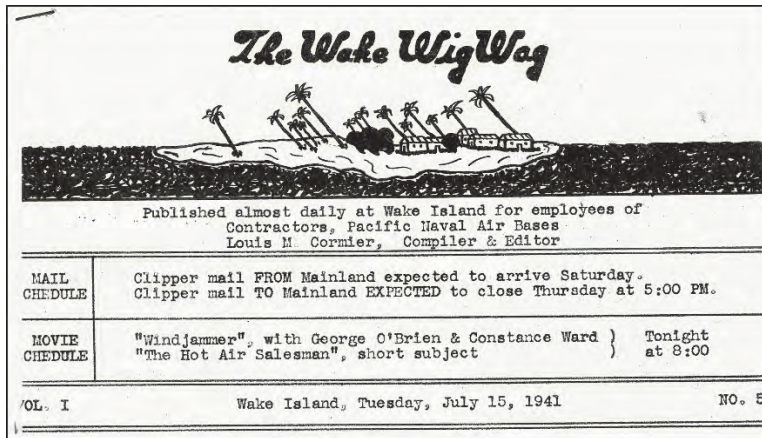


Fig. 6: Masthead of the Wake Wig Wag for July 15, 1941.

Space does not allow us to include the full document here, but for those interested in reading the description of construction on Wake Island, we have made it available online: See <https://www.njpostalhistory.org/media/journal/225-2022FebFA-Supplement.pdf>. The map is shown in *Figure 7*, and some excerpts are below.

* * *

One of the most interesting and unique publications we have seen is "The Wake Wig Wag," published on Wake Island, the new Pacific Naval Air Base.

The "Wig Wag" was sent by Arthur Eidsoren, of Stanton, who is stationed on the little dot in the Pacific which Uncle Sam is working feverishly to turn into a base for naval aircraft.

The "Wig Wag" is printed on a duplicating machine and contains 11 pages of closely typewritten material of a kind that the men there would like to send home to their wives, relatives and sweethearts.

Wake Island, it seems, is not one island but three. There is Wake Island proper, Peale Island and Wilkes Island. The three form a perfect letter "V"—which today has extra significance.

The Pan American Clippers arrive from either direction each evening, passengers spend the night in a hotel, and the next morning they depart. This activity affords one of the chief pastimes of several hundred men who are working on government contracts there. No doubt George Bushfield, who is now on the way home from a Clipper trip across the Pacific, will have some things to report about his visit on Wake Island. We hope he had an opportunity to drop in and see his

Fig. 5: Clipping from a local NJ newspaper regarding Eidsoren.

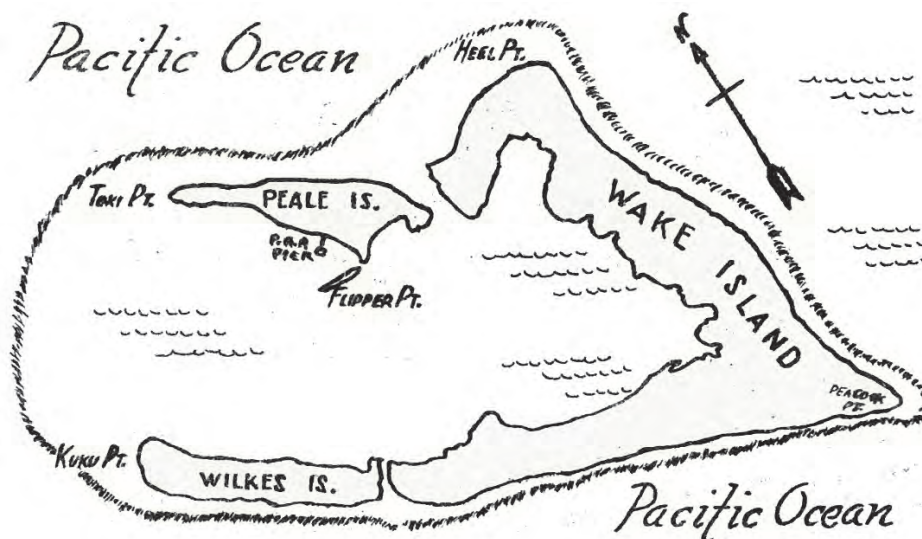


Fig. 7: Wake Island, showing the three islands that make up that atoll. As explained in the *Wig Wag*, the only suitable place for an airfield was on Peale Island – which had a higher elevation and firmer underlying substrate.

Wake Island, as explained in the Wig Wag and shown above, actually “comprises three islands, Wake, Wilkes, and Peale – in a V shaped formation surrounded by a coral reef and enclosing an emerald green lagoon...one of the most beautiful to be found in the wide Pacific.”

This letter, also included in the Wig Wag, describes the project and its progress in July 1941, as the U.S. attempted to secure and harden its bases in the Pacific:

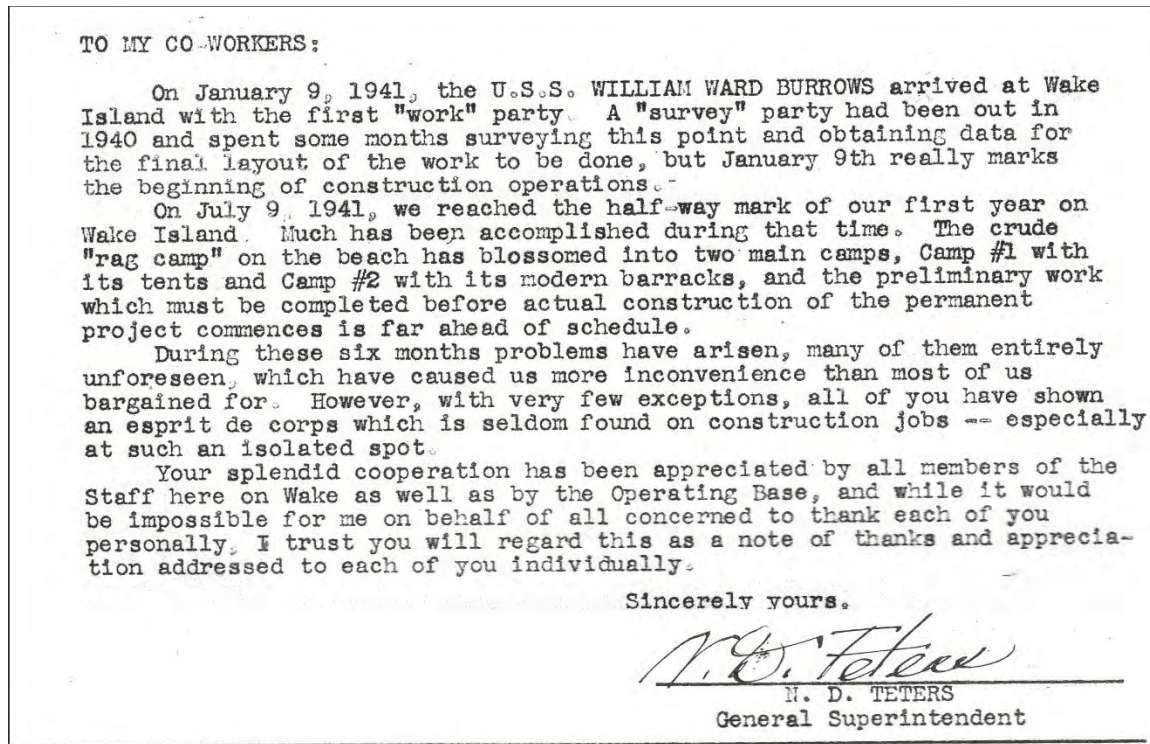


Fig. 8: Letter from General Superintendent of the Wake Island Project, describing progress to June 15, 1941.

The fact that Pan American already had a location there was instrumental for the Navy, using civilian contractors, to establish a much larger base. That airfield was on Peale Island.

Civilian construction companies were used by the U. S. Navy for all construction projects at this time. The Navy had no construction battalions before the outbreak of hostilities. A formal request was made on December 28, 1941 and the Navy Seabees were authorized on March 5, 1942. This was necessary because civilians captured in a war zone were not treated as POWs by the Japanese.

The last item from Eidsoren (*Figure 9*) is an unmailed cacheted envelope addressed to his wife in Stanton, New Jersey with his return address on the flap as “Wake Island Pacific Ocean.”



Fig. 9: An unmailed letter from Eidsoren to his wife in Stanton, NJ, with his return address on Wake Island. This cover was designed for use by Government construction employees.

The second contract worker at Midway – although not a Jersey boy – left some interesting postal history

Mark Van de Water Jr. graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in civil engineering, Class of 1933. His name appears on the Morrison-Knudsen Construction Co. contract mentioned above. He arrived in Honolulu in August of 1939 (Figure 10), and was assigned to Midway Island under contract #y-3550. Van de Water’s draft card (Figure 11) shows he registered on May 19, 1941, and shipped out again aboard the *U.S.S. Regulus* for Midway on June 16, 1941. Van de Water is listed as Chief Clerk - Personnel. His draft card lists his uncle Frank Thompson also of Honolulu as his emergency contact.

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Fig. 10: Van de Water’s scheduled arrival in Honolulu, and his later arrival on Midway Island on June 16, 1941, for work as Assistant Camp Manager.

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT				COM
RACE	HEIGHT (Approx.)	WEIGHT (Approx.)	COM	
White	5'6"	167		
EYES				Light
HAIR				Dark
EYES				Light
HAIR				Dark
EYES				Light
HAIR				Dark
EYES				Light
HAIR				Dark
EYES				Light
HAIR				Dark

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification:
Scar underneath

I certify that my answers are true that the person registered has a right to him, his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature or all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

Registrar for: Helena S. [Signature]
Date of registration: May 19, 1941

LOCAL BOARD No. 4
883 S. Boretania St.
Honolulu, T. H.
WEAPONS OF LOCAL BOARD

REGISTRATION CARD
D. S. Form 1

SERIAL NUMBER: 2823
1. NAME (Print): Mark D. Van de Water, Jr.
ORDER NUMBER: 76-13

2. ADDRESS (Print): 1559 Shurston Ave. Honolulu
3. TELEPHONE: 3509
4. AGE IN YEARS: 29
5. PLACE OF BIRTH: St. Paul
6. DATE OF BIRTH: 3/15/12
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS: Mr. Frank E. Thompson
8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON: Uncle
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON: 1559 Shurston Ave. Honolulu
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME: Pacific Naval Air Bases
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS: Honolulu, T. H.
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.
REGISTRAR'S SIGNATURE: Mark D. Van de Water, Jr.

Fig. 11: Draft card for Mark Van de Water, Jr., 29 years old in 1941, who lists his employer as Pacific Naval Air Bases in Honolulu. First shown as Personnel clerk, by August 1942 his position was that of Chief Clerk.

The following covers mailed by Van de Water from Midway show the rare concession rate for workers and military personal on these remote Pacific Islands back to Hawaii. Many covers were not charged for onward service to the Mainland. Once the war began and Pan Am abandoned these islands, the Navy took over mail handling. Figure 12 was posted Sept. 6, 1940 with a blue Pan Am Airways Midway cachet at the ten-cent rate to Sacramento, Calif., noted "Air Mail to Honolulu. Surface Craft Beyond."

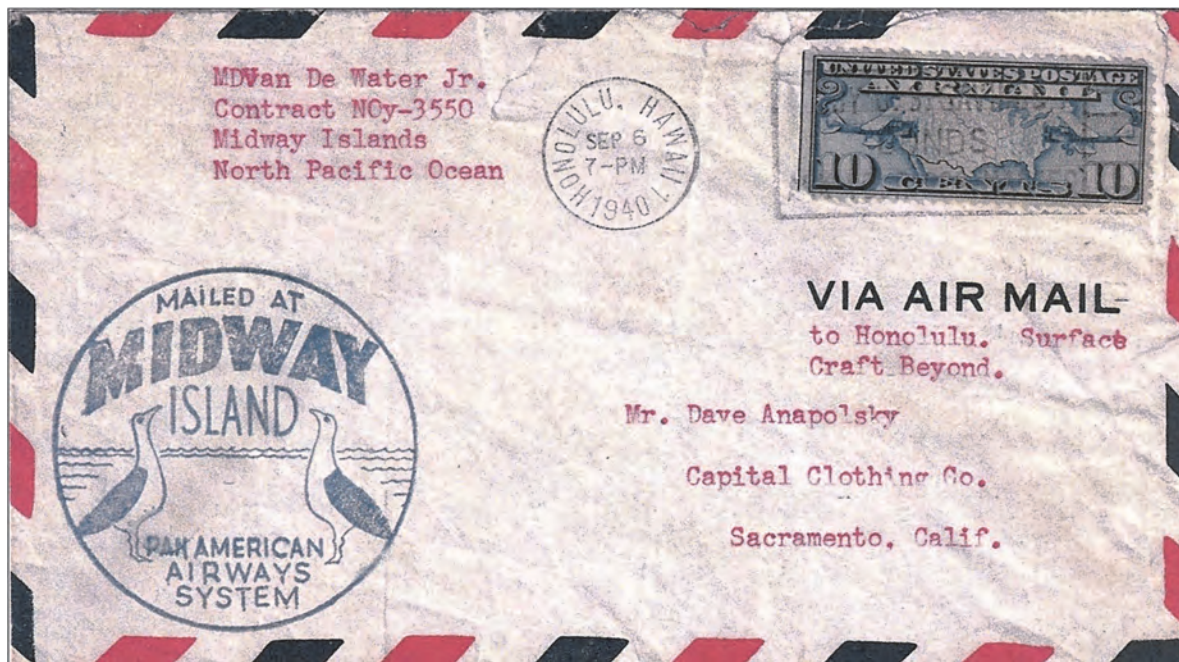


Fig. 12: Midway to Honolulu by Clipper 10c rate and unpaid surface rate to Mainland. Sept. 6, 1940.

The second cover (*Figure 13*) was also at the ten-cent rate. Posted Sept. 29, 1940 to Van de Water's uncle Frank Thompson in Honolulu, it carries both Pan Am cachets in red. These covers are not backstamped. The return address on back of both carries the contract # y-3550 Midway Islands North Pacific Ocean.

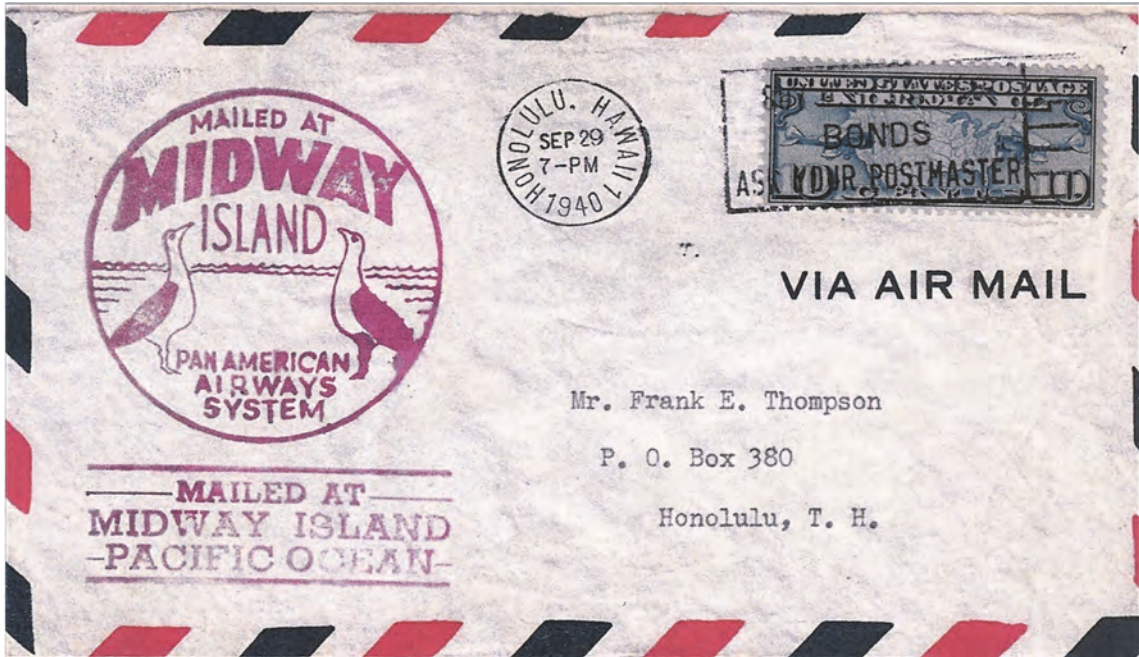


Fig. 13: Mailed Sept. 29, 1940 to Honolulu by special 10¢ rate, to Van de Water's uncle. Red cachet.

As contractors worked to finish their tasks, the islands were being staffed up with Naval and Marine personnel. The envelope in *Figure 14* was supplied by the Army & Navy YMCA at Pearl Harbor, and posted July 14, 1941 at the three cent first class rate to California. It is canceled FIRST DEFENSE BATTALION MARINE FLEET FORCE. This unit would arrive on Wake Island on August 19, 1941 and be there until the island was overrun by the Japanese on December 23rd.



Fig. 14: Cover sent July 14, 1941, with FIRST DEFENSE BATTALION MARINE FLEET FORCE cancel.

The cover in *Figure 15* was posted August 1, 1941, and marks the commissioning of the Naval Air Base on Midway Island. It was sent to Newark, N. J. from a member of the 3rd Defense Battalion Marine Fleet Force. This unit arrived on Midway Island on September 29, 1940 and would stay until June 1, 1942.



Fig. 15: Naval Air Base, Midway Island commissioning cover, dated August 1, 1941. Sent by a member of the 3rd Defense Battalion Marine Fleet Force, with their cancel.

The Battle of Midway took place in the waters around this island from June 4th – June 7th, 1942. The results were the loss for the Japanese of four main aircraft carriers and hundreds of experienced pilots and air crews. The most serious loss on the American side was the sinking of the carrier *U.S.S. Yorktown*. The U.S. Navy assumed the offensive for the rest of the war.

The covers below (*Figures 16 & 17*) are fine examples of letters caught in the mail stream at the outbreak of the war. Both covers are rubber stamped with “service suspended” markings. The first was mailed from Princeton, New Jersey on December 6, the day before Pearl Harbor – a mourning cover sent to Hong Kong, underpaid. It was received back in Princeton on March 16, 1942.



Fig. 16: A letter sent Dec. 6, 1941 to Dr. and Mrs. H. Lechmere Clift, missionaries in China, which was caught in the suspension of mail services after December 7. Received back March 16, 1942.

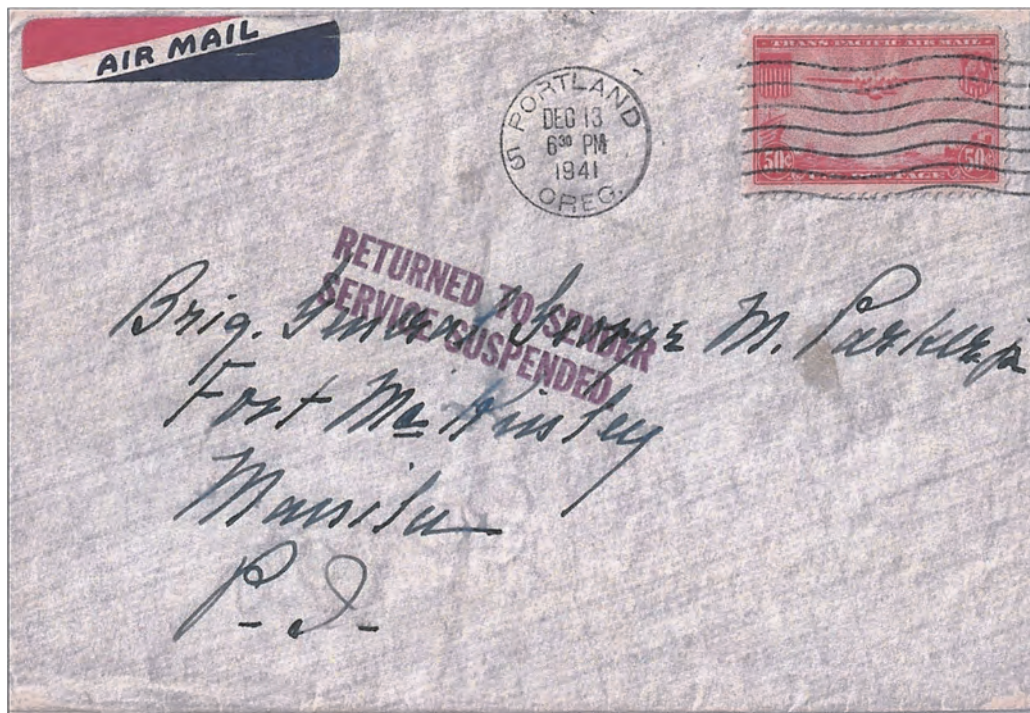


Fig. 17: C22 paying the Clipper rate to Manila, P.I. from Portland, Oregon Dec. 13, 1941, with Returned to Sender / Service Suspended." General Parker commanded the 11 Philippines Corp Eastern Sector during the Battle of Bataan, Dec. 12, 1941-April 9, 1942.

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Carman William Garrison is the last member of this group, whose papers and postal history follow, was, like Eidsoren, from New Jersey. According to his draft card dated October 16, 1940, (Figure 18) Garrison was born and raised in Newark, N.J. A member of the Naval Reserve with the rank of Ensign as of June 1941, he attended college studying civil engineering. His name appears on the passenger list of the *U.S.S. Portland* (Figure 19) sailing from Long Beach, Ca. for Pearl Harbor on August 17, 1941. He is listed as an officer with the Civilian Engineering Corps.

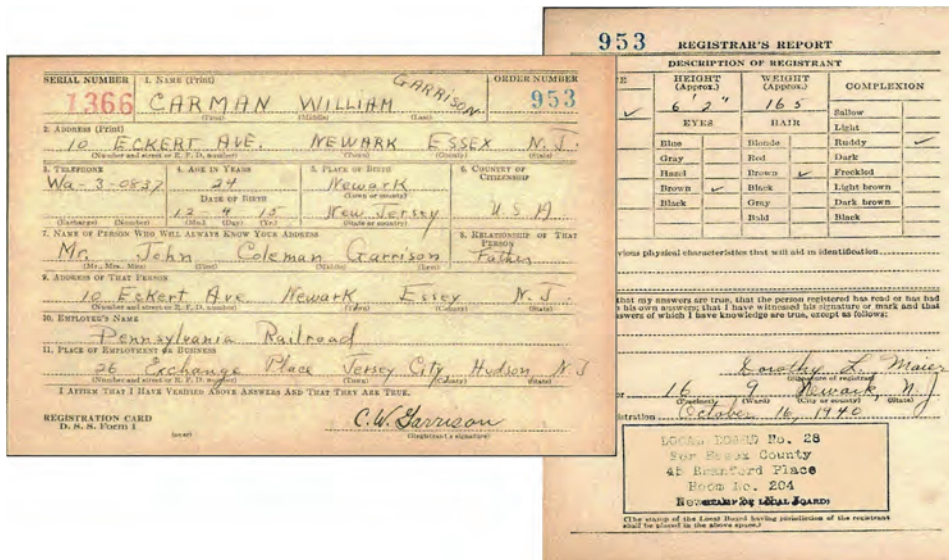


Fig. 18: Draft card for Carman William Garrison, Oct. 10, 1940, when he was 24 years old. He indicates his employer at the Pennsylvania Railroad.

LIST OF NONENLISTED PASSENGERS OF U. S. S. PORTLAND		
at date of sailing from Long Beach, California, for Pearl Harbor, T.H.		
Date August 17, 1941.		
I NAMES	II RANK, TITLE, ETC.	III DESTINATION
BOURQUARD, Everett H.	Ens. CIC-V(S) USNR	Fourteenth Naval District.
FARRAR, Robert L.	Ens. D-V(C) USNR	COMSUBRON TWO
FLEISHMAN, Jack P.	Ens. D-V(G) USNR	USS PHOENIX
FRANCIS, Hollis B.	Pic. USMC CEG-V(S)	USS PENNSYLVANIA.
GARRISON, Carman W.	Ens. USNR.	Fourteenth Naval District.

Fig. 19: Garrison arrived in Pearl Harbor Aug. 17, 1941, as an ensign in the Civil Engineering Corps, Naval Reserves.

Garrison left a lot of mail from his critical early days in the Navy. The first cover carries a Christmas card from Midway Island (Figure 20). There are two censor markings, a circular one and a three-line marking in black, dated Dec. 18, 1941. It is franked with a three-cent stamp paying the first-class surface rate, and is canceled with a Pearl Harbor postmark dated Jan. 2, 1942. Garrison is sending Seasons Greetings to his family in Jersey City, the home of his brother Vincent. The return address of Midway Island on the back flap has been penciled out.



Fig. 20: A Midway Christmas card mailed at Midway December 18, 1941, and canceled at Pearl Harbor Jan. 2, 1942. All mail was shipped to and cancelled at Hawaii.

The second cover (Figure 21) is a Pan Am envelope with cachet and a small picture of a Boeing 314 Clipper. In this letter Garrison comments on how fast his incoming mail is arriving. Of course, all civilian service was suspended as of December 7th. This letter is datelined December 26th and posted December 28, 1941. It carries a letter on U. S. Naval Air Station Midway Island stationery sent special delivery and franked with a #C30 air mail stamp.



Fig. 21: A 30¢ airmail Special Delivery cover sent on U.S. Naval Air Station, Midway stationery with a US Navy cancellation Dec. 28 to Jersey City. The purple marking (difficult to read) appears to say “*Fee claimed by office of First Address.”

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It is important to note that Midway Island was subjected to regular attacks by air and naval forces of the Empire of Japan from December 7th until June 5th.

The next cover (*Figure 22*), is a Pan Am air mail envelope with the airline blue cachet and two self-censored markings, with a pair of #901s paying the six-cent rate and posted March 23, 1942. As an officer Garrison censored his own mail and his initials can be seen in the censor marking.

The three-page letter in this cover required 6¢ more in postage, and resulted in a postage due marking of the additional six cents and a pair of #J72 postage due stamps with an indistinct oval town precancel on its arrival in New Jersey. In this letter Garrison notes a slight change of address: Civil Engineer Corps, Public Works Dept., Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. He also states he will be returning to Pearl Harbor very soon.



Fig. 22: Canceled March 23, 1942, noted U.S. Navy Mail/Field of Operations, it was overweight, requiring the precancelled postage due stamps. The censor mark carries Garrison's own initials.

The next cover (*Figure 23*) is a #10 size penalty envelope with first class postage for personal use, and was mailed by Ensign E. H. Bourquard, USNAS PALMYRA ISLAND. Located almost a thousand miles south of Hawaii, Bourquard had arrived there on March 23, 1942. He and Garrison were acquainted, having arrived together in Hawaii on the *U.S.S. Portland* in August of 1941 (see *Figure 19*).

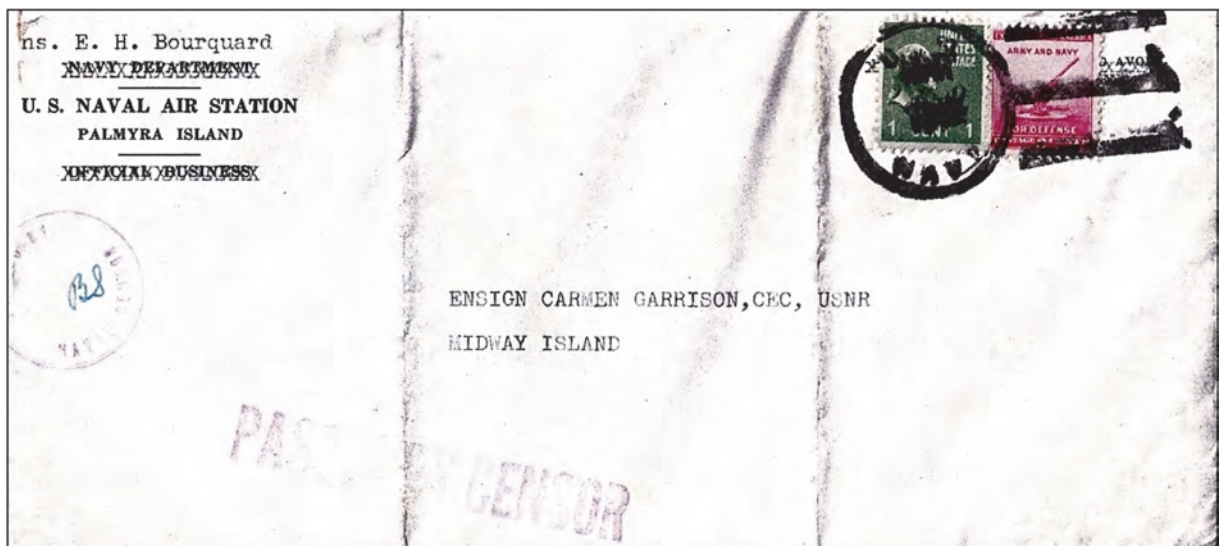


Fig. 23: Letter sent to Garrison from the US Naval Station Palmyra Island, located almost a thousand miles south of Hawaii, by fellow Ensign E. H. Bourquard.

The next cover posted April 13, 1942 finds Ensign Garrison back at Pearl Harbor after six months on Midway. He mentions the 1942 calendar has finally arrived, after going out to Midway and back to Pearl Harbor. Anything other than a first-class letter took much longer to arrive. Some time in August of '42, Lt. Garrison would be transferred to the Naval Construction Training Center at Norfolk, Virginia.

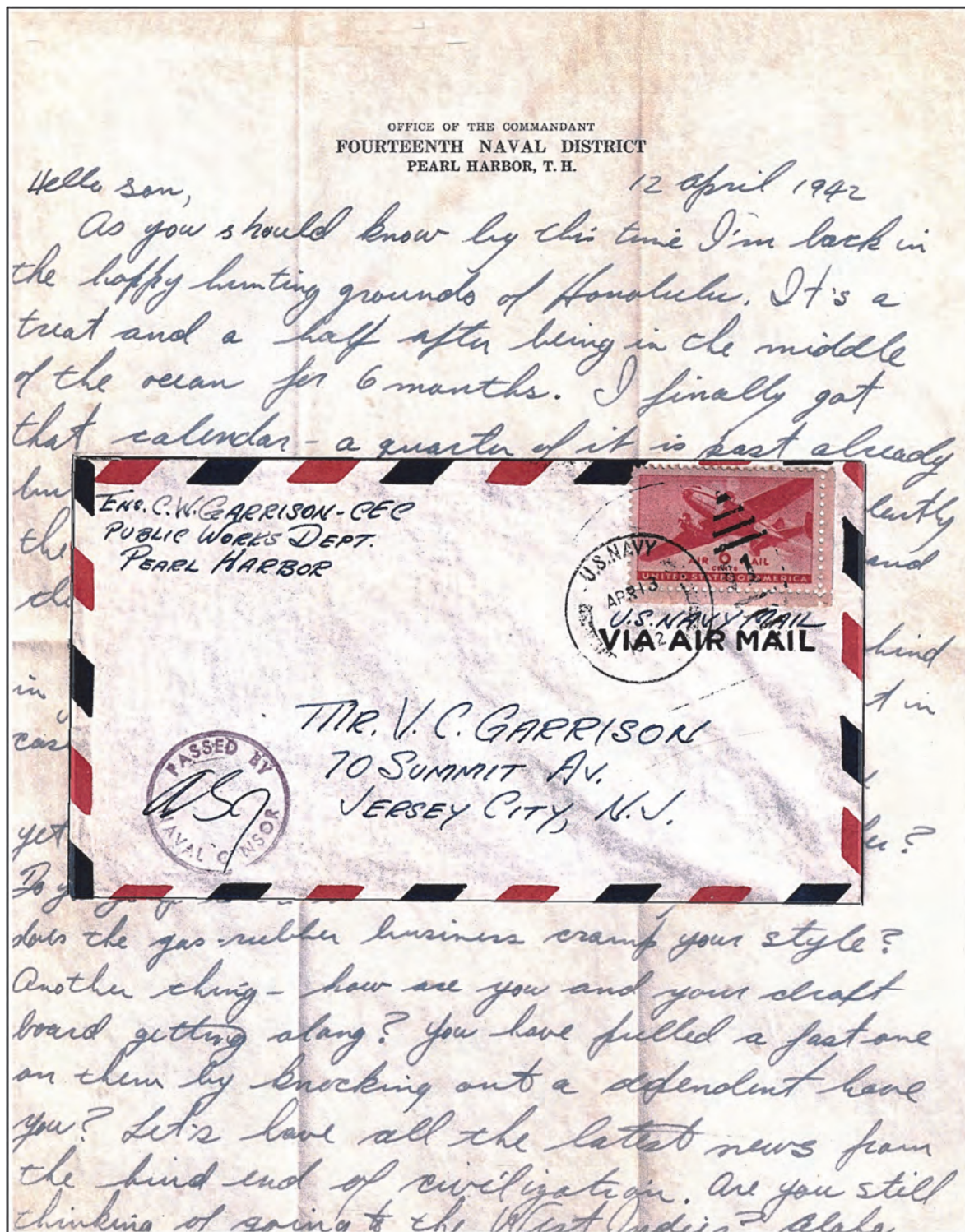


Fig. 24: Letter posted by G.W. Garrison datelined April 12, 1942, from Pearl Harbor, and canceled with a U.S. Navy cancel on April 13. On stationery of the Fourteenth Naval District, with Ensign Garrison's address now Public Works Dept., Pearl Harbor. It carries a 6¢ air mail stamp.

The last item in this group from Lt. Garrison to his brother is a V-Mail. His brother is now in the Army at APO 692, which was located on Baffin Island, Frobisher Bay, Canada.

This letter is postmarked August 30, 1943 with 26th U.S. Naval Const' Batt. in the killer bars. This unit of Lt. Garrison's was deployed to Guadalcanal in December 1942 and stayed until December 1943. Garrison made a career on the U.S. Navy and retired in 1961 with the rank of Commander. He died July 14, 1964 and is buried in the Cedar Ridge Cemetery, Blairstown, Warren County, New Jersey.



Fig. 25: One last item, showing Garrison a lieutenant in the Navy, and currently with the 26th US Naval CB unit, with a San Francisco FPO address.

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Ancestry.com for military records used.

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“United States Trans-Pacific Air Mail During World War II, Part II” by Richard W. Helbock, La Posta, March 2007

Wake Island Exhibited by Len Lukens, La Posta, March 2008.

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Unpublished Air Mail Rates for United States Pacific Island Possessions 1935-1946 Part II: American Samoa & The South Pacific by Ken Lawrence, United States Specialist, August 2012.

December 1941 Trans-Pacific U.S. Air Mail Flights After Pearl Harbor, by Ken Lawrence: “Spotlight On Philately,” Linn’s Stamp News, December 20, 2021.

United States Marine Corps Historical Monograph, Appendix III: Casualties

“Wake Island Revisited,” Wings of Gold, Association of Naval Aviation, Spring 1977.

Numerical Listing of APO’s, January 1942 to November 1947, prepared by the Army Postal Service and Strength Accounting Branches AGO, and available online at <https://www.7tharmddiv.org/docrep/Location%20of%20APOs%201942-1947.pdf>.