

Poems Written by USS Midway Sailors, 1945-1992

The Catapult Crew

When orders to the USS Midway came through,
I was asked to be part of the catapult crew.
I wanted the danger, the fend, and the fight,
to live the excitement through day and night.
On flight deck with roar from the jets and the props,
unmindful of hazards that go with Air Ops.
Watch out! Too late, you're blown by the blast,
then a torsion bar breaks, and a cable whips past.
Touch down a Crusader, grabs number two wire,
move out, surge forward for catapult fire.
We run in, set shear bar, then hook up the bridle,
tense shuttle, move out...there's no time to idle.
The flight deck is pitching, the steam head grows,
stand ready to launch, no stay on your toes.
With pilot salute and Cat Boss flair,
the pistons surge forward; the plane's in the air.
From catwalk jumps the runner, the bridle retrieved,
drags it to launch site, his task well achieved.
Comes an AD Skyraider, just stay in your lane,
that prop is pure deadly, hook up that damned plane.
Landing and launching through cold stormy day;
run in, set bridle, get out of the way.
Work 'til you drop, just tired as heck,
then the Air Boss hollers, "Last plane off the deck."
Post flight near done, look up, deep frown,
Crew Two just dragged in, their catapult's down.
Get forklift and sledge, work into the night,
we've got to be ready for first morning flight.
Because Mao is shelling Quemoy and Matsu,
and we're here to show what the Midway can do.
A formidable presence as Chiang Kai-shek's friend,
the message for Mao: we're here 'til the end.
Chiang boarded our ship that November, you know,
our air group presented one hell of a show.
Precision air launched, our pride how it grew,
it was great to be part of the catapult crew.

--Kenneth Cooper
USS Midway, 1954

"SAILORS" WILL BE --SAILORS--

Sailors are what some women marry. They have two feet, two hands and sometimes two women, but never more than one dollar or one idea at a time. Like a Turkish cigarette, all sailors are made of the same material, the only difference is that some of them are a little better disguised than others.

The lover is the one you find surrounded by women. The husband is the one who has the bank account.

Making a husband out of a sailor is one of the highest plastic arts known to civilization. It requires science, sculpture, common and uncommon sense, faith, hope and charity - mostly charity.

It requires tact, brains, "it", that, these and those. It is a psychological marvel that a soft, tender, violet-scented little thing like a woman could enjoy kissing a big, awkward, stubby chinned thing like a sailor, but they do.

If you flatter a sailor, you frighten him to death; if you don't you bore him to death. If you permit a sailor to make love to you he gets tired of you in the end. If you don't, he gets tired of you in the beginning. If you agree with him on everything, you will soon cease to charm him. If you believe in all he tells you, he thinks you are a dope, and if you don't he thinks you are a queer.

If you wear colors, rouge and a charming hat, he hesitates to take you out. If you wear a sensible outfit, he'll take you out and stares all evening at a woman in gay colors. If you join him at wild parties and smoke with him, he swears you are crazy; if you try to reform him he thinks you are treating him like a child.

If you are true to him, he doubts that you have a brain; if you aren't he longs for a playmate. If you look at other fellows he is jealous and if you don't he hesitates to marry a wallflower.

If you high-hat a sailor, he gives you the bronx cheer and goes right on having a good time. If you treat him civilly and try to cheer him up, he gets gloomy and mopey. If you invite to drink, he'll refuse; if you tell him not to drink, he will get a skullful and break up all the furniture. If you treat him politely, he will knock your teeth out, and if you're impolite, he'll call you a heathen. If you take him out to dine, he'll drink out of the finger bowl and if you take him out to a cheap restaurant he will demand his food served in courses.

Soooooo, sailors will be sailors, in their own peculiar way, and the women will shout and complain but between you and me sailor, they love it..... THE END

John Williams

Night before payda

'Twas the night before payday and all through the b
Everyone's wallets were filled with just space.
The bars were restocking their supply of beer
In hopes that the ships would soon be here.

The B-Girls all nestled atop their futons
With dreams of the sailors with money takusan.
And I in my skivies, my head feeling sore,
Had just settled down for a summer night snore.

When out on the pier there rose such a clatter,
I sprang from my rack to see what's the matter.
Away to the docks I drove like a flash,
And into the water I nearly did crash.

The light on the pier gave off such dim light
To see what was happening was straining my sight.
When what do I see approaching towards me
But the ships of our port returning from sea.

First one to come was a big CVA,
And I knew in a moment it must be Midway.
More rapid than eagles the rest of them came.
I recognized them all, and called them by name.

Now Ajax, now Parsons, now Worden and Gurke,
On Bausell, on Rowan, and can't forget Okie.
After cashing their checks, out the gate they will mal
And spend away, spend away, spend away all.

But where does the money go all in one night?
I say it's the honcho, believe me I'm right.
Some say it's heaven, some say it's earth's stern,
But either way it will take the money you earn.

There you can travel without use of flight;
Go to Texas, New York, Hawaii tonight.
Where else can you find a Texan to please
That is four-foot-three and speaks Japanese?

The bars advertise their famous strip show
And just in from sea, you decide why not go.
But once inside, there's no show to be had
So you down a few beers and forget the dumb ad.

And here you can find a sweet chickadee
That will spend two bucks for a shot of weak tea.
By eleven thirty when the bars all close down,
From right by your side, she's nowhere around.

Many men leave saying never again,
Then the next night they're out spending more yen.
Some even think the girls are so kind,
'Til they think back on yen left behind.

And the bar owners say with their smile so large:

Midway Cannonball

Deep here in the subarctic
In the north Atlantic roar
Where even icebergs make way
For the MIDWAY cannonball.

From the icy blue waters
And up to heaven's door
Her planes always drown out
The north wind's mighty roar.

When this trip is over
History will use her pen
Writing of the MIDWAY, and her
Gallant crew men.

And to prove she's not a cheapskate
When she's adding up the score
She'll warn the seven seas
Here comes the MIDWAY cannonball.

By Rusty Fancuilli
USS Midway
Appeared in Midway News, March 14, 1946

The Sailor's Life

I AM SITTING here Thinking of days gone behind
And Thinking I will put on paper, what's running through my mind
The people on the outside, think a sailor's life is swell
But let me tell you something, a sailor's life is Hell.

A sailor has a consolation, so gather close and I will tell,
When I die I will go to heaven because I've done my
Time in hell

I scrubbed a million bulk heads and chipped ten miles
of paint

A madder place this side of Hell I sweat to you there
Aren't

I've stood a million watches, and been on every sea detail
stood for endless hours, just waiting for my mail.

I've shined a million miles of brass, & scrubbed my dirty deck.
I've slung a million hammocks, and peeled a million spuds.

But when life's final taps are sounded, I'll lay aside
life's cares

I'll take my final shore leave right up those golden stairs
St. Peter there will meet me and loudly he will yell ^{in Hell}
Take your front seat in heaven sailor, because you spent your time

W Department Poem
Cruisebook, 1972, page 187

To keep a ship in an ever-ready state,
To make a ship that is powerful and great,
It is our job to do just that,
And our knowing what to do is a matter of fact.

From building bombs such as DST's
To securing our spaces for weathered seas,
To being able and ready to please,
It's our job to do each of these.

It has been proven beyond a doubt,
That W Division is here, strong and stout,
Ready and able for whatever may arise,
For the fight for peace by the seas and through the skies.

C.G. Reed

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FAREWELL TO MIDWAY

What happens to aircraft carriers, when the brass says they're too old?
Are they just put out to pasture? Are they kicked out in the cold?
Are they anchored in some river, where the mothballed fleets are found?
Are they cut up just for scrap? Or, just cruelly run aground?

Is MIDWAY destined to be chopped up, into rusty little parts,
Of a once-courageous warship, that will live on in our hearts?
What will happen to her rudder? To her helm, her log, her bell?
Will they all be called to heaven, where her stories they can tell?

Is there still a berth in heaven, for this fine ship, brave and true?
That carried us into many battles, far across the oceans blue.
MIDWAY MAGIC took us through the fight, MIDWAY MAGIC brought us home.
Save a few immortal pilots, somewhere out there left to roam.

But their spirits still are soaring, with abandon and with glee.
While their bodies now are resting, in the cold arms of the sea.
Yet, they're with us all, here on this day we lay MIDWAY to rest.
They'll forever believe as we do, that MIDWAY's one of America's best.

And her Captain's, MIDWAY's Captains, what will happen to all of them?
When they haul down MIDWAY's colors, as we sing the "Navy Hymn."
"Eternal Father, strong to save," are there Captain's chairs up there,
For these men who brought the crews back home, with honor and with care.

What will happen to her aircrews, they were the tip of MIDWAY's sword?
Will they too, be called to heaven, their to debrief with our Lord?
Will they be launched from MIDWAY's decks, for one final catapult shot?
Where the deckedge gauges tell us, that her steam cats are still hot.

When the pilots roll out in the groove, that final trap to bag,
Will the LSO's flash, "Roger Ball" or "Wave it off, foul deck?"
Is the lens still shining brightly, does her arresting gear still work?
When the tailhook grabs the 3-wire, will they feel that welcome jerk?

Now in Hollywood's war movies, they want RANGER, HAWK or a nuke.
But they'll call her back to duty, when the guns begin to shoot.
She was called to fight so many times, she answered every call.
And the enemies were vanquished, when her bombs began to fall.

MIDWAY toiled and suffered through it all, she conquered every quest.
With flying colors every time, setting standards for the rest.
When the final rollcall's taken, after forty-seven years.
And her crew, the last time goes ashore, midst accolades and tears.

When the capstan ups her anchor, and the tugs bring taut their lines.
And she's towed on out to glory, through the foam and through the brine.
We'll remember all the cruises, we sailed on her in the fleet.
And recall the traps and the catshots, we'd give anything to repeat.

So, here's to you mighty MIDWAY, valiant ruler of the seas.
May this final day of glory, bring you happiness and peace.
Keep you boilers hot, your bilges clean, your smokestacks free of soot.
For it's MIDWAY, MIDWAY, MIDWAY, when the guns begin to shoot!

CDR Gary N. Cook, USN (RET)