

# Wake the Way

## How to display without really trying

I began to wonder how I could put together a "Rotary Club" presentation/display without actually knowing anything about the subject. Taking my inspiration from recent on-line discussions, and deliberately 'tongue-in-cheek', here is a display of Wake Island compiled entirely from eBay images and text straight from Wikipedia. My only personal input relates to a Japanese cover, and this is the only item about which I have some background knowledge. As far as 'Importance' goes, it probably rates 0 to 1 point, but it does show what can be done in one afternoon sitting in front of a computer.

Wake Island (also known as Wake Atoll) is a coral atoll located in the western Pacific Ocean in the northeastern area of the Micronesia subregion, 1,501 miles east of Guam, 2,298 miles west of Honolulu and 1,991 miles southeast of Tokyo. The island is an unorganized, unincorporated territory of the United States that is also claimed by the Marshall Islands. Wake Island is one of the most isolated islands in the world and the nearest inhabited island is Utirik Atoll in the Marshall Islands, 592 miles to the southeast.

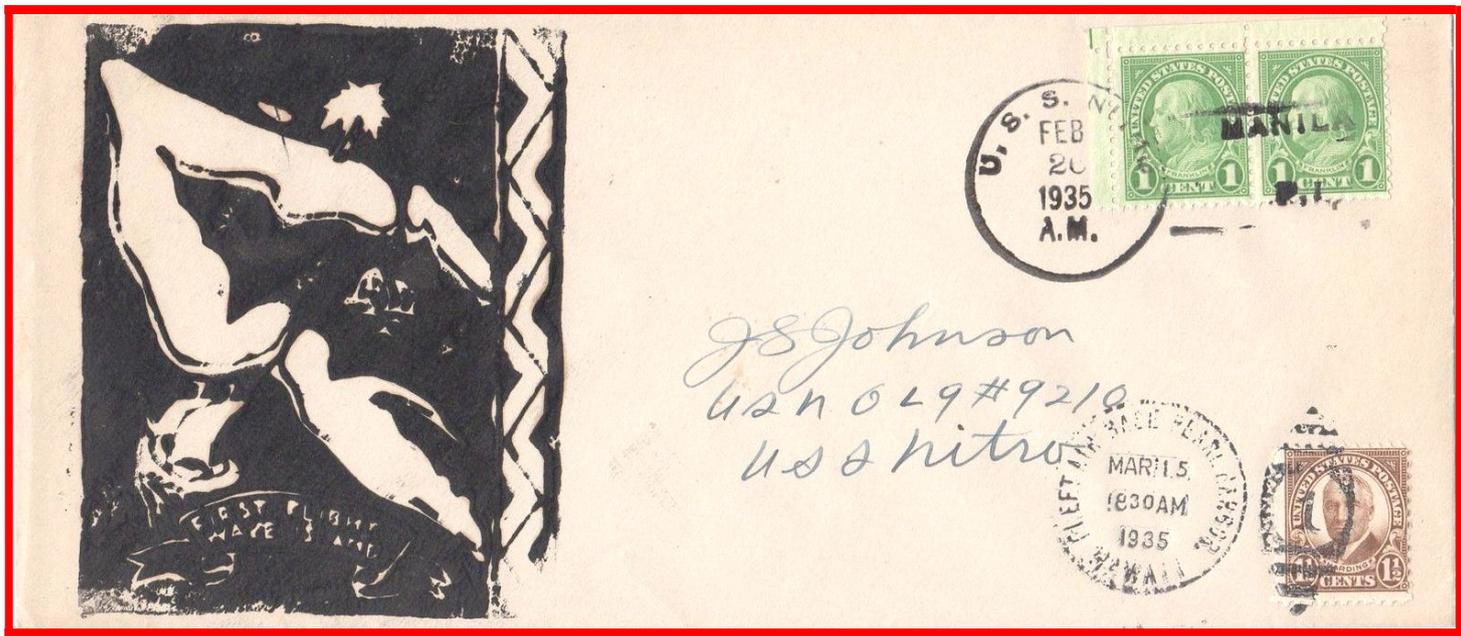
Juan Trippe, president of Pan American Airways (PAA), wanted to expand globally by offering air service between the US and China. To cross the Pacific Ocean his planes would need to island-hop, stopping at various points for refueling and maintenance. He first tried to plot the route on his globe but it showed only open sea between Midway and Guam. Next he went to the New York Public Library to study 19th century clipper ship logs and charts and he "discovered" a little-known coral atoll named Wake Island. To proceed with his plans at Wake and Midway, Trippe would need to be granted access to each island and approval to construct and operate facilities, however, the islands were not under the jurisdiction of any specific U.S. Government entity.

Meanwhile, U.S. Navy military planners and the State Department were increasingly alarmed by Japan's expansionist attitude and belligerence in the Western Pacific. Following World War I, the Council of the League of Nations had granted the South Pacific Mandate ("Nanyo") to Japan (who had joined the Allied Powers in the First World War) which included the already Japanese-held Micronesia islands north of the equator.

With Trippe's planned Pan American Airways aviation route through Wake and Midway, the U.S. Navy and the State Department saw an opportunity to project American air power across the Pacific under the guise of a commercial aviation enterprise. On October 3, 1934, Trippe wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, requesting a five-year lease on Wake Island with an option for four renewals. Given the potential military value of PAA's base development, on November 13, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral William H. Standley ordered a survey of Wake by the USS Nitro and on December 29, 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 6935 which placed Wake Island under the control of the Department of the Navy.

This information is taken directly from Wikipedia. The story continues:-

Wake the **ebay** Way  
How to display without really trying



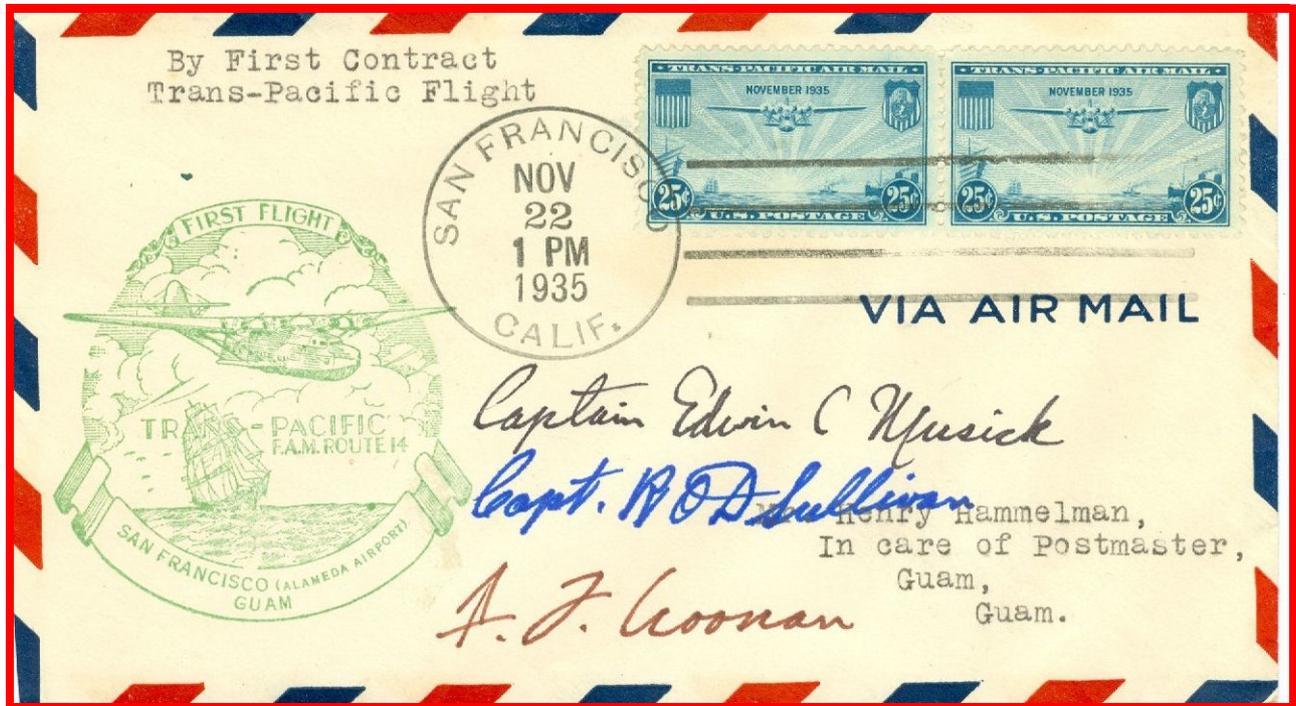
Wake Island Survey Flight, Philippine Islands, Guam and Hawaii, 1935

Wake Island Survey Flight at Philippine Islands, Guam and Hawaii, 1935. 4th Bureau 1c pair postmarked USS Nitro Feb. 26, 1935 with Manila P.I. in killer bars. 4th Bureau 1 1/2c single postmarked Fleet Air Base Pearl Harbor Hawaii, Mar. 15, 1935. Signed by Pilot J.S. Johnson, USN 029#9210, USS Nitro. Handstamped with black wood block cachet of map of Wake Island.

# Wake the **ebay** Way

## The early flights

Following a series of survey flights, the first scheduled flight of route FAM-14 left San Francisco on 22 November 1935, crewed by the best flying boat captains in the Pan American pantheon of famous pilots. Wake Island was an essential refueling base.



First scheduled flight from San Francisco using Wake Island.



First return flight 2 December 1935

# Wake the Way

## The spurious mail

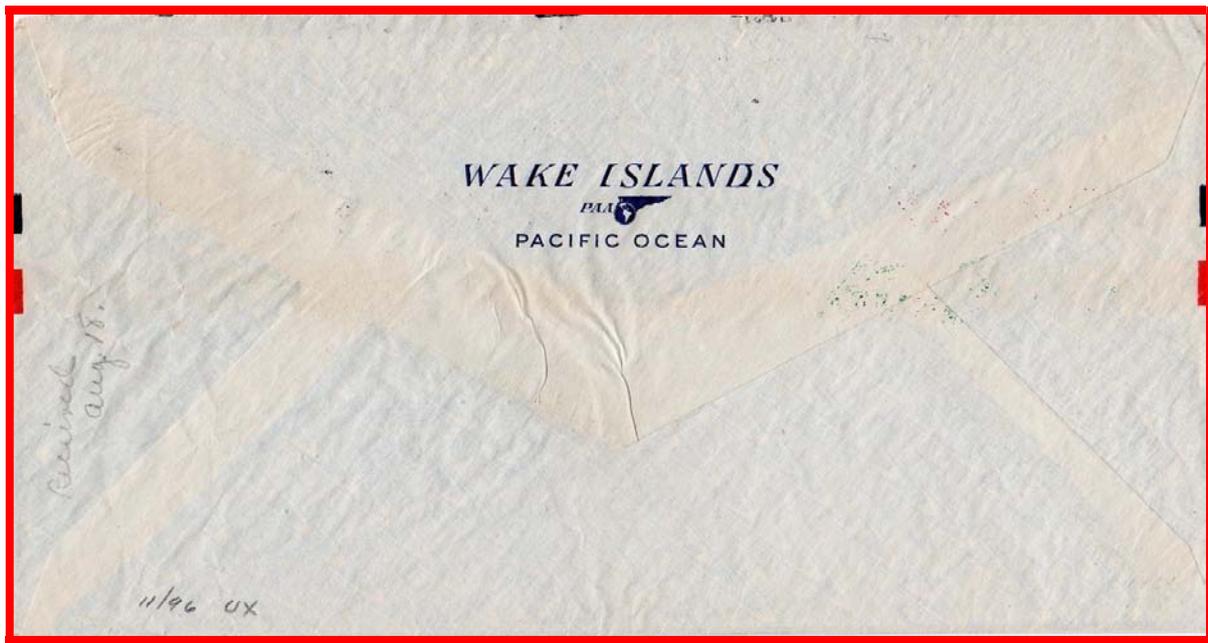
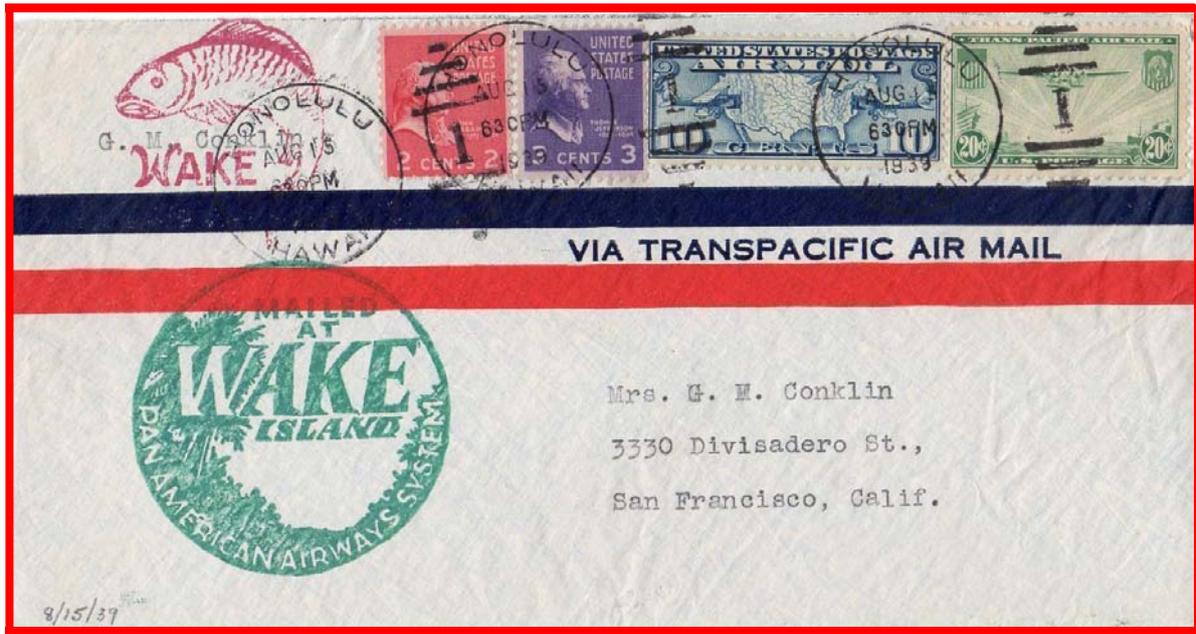
Once the Pan American service was established, and despite there being no postal facilities at Wake, souvenir mail was handled by Pan American, such mail being carried onward to the next location at which there was a regular Post Office.



Mailed at Wake Island? Or Midway? Or Guam? Finally placed into the mail system at Honolulu.  
Utterly spurious and probably generated by Pan American philatelic department.

# Wake the **ebay** Way

The spurious mail – or not?



Seemingly genuine mail from Wake Island from a Pan American worker or contractor to his wife in San Francisco. Note that the cover was finally placed in the mail at Honolulu and not at Wake, being carried along with the souvenir mail back to Hawaii. Rate paid 35 cents.

Wake the **ebay** Way  
The spurious mail

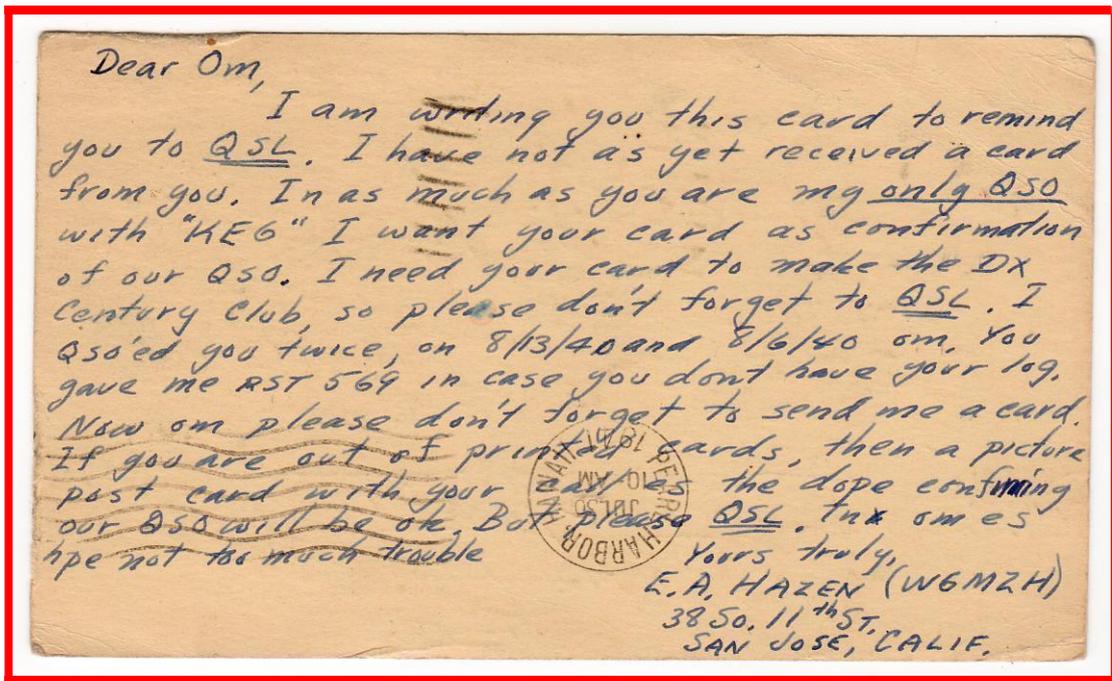
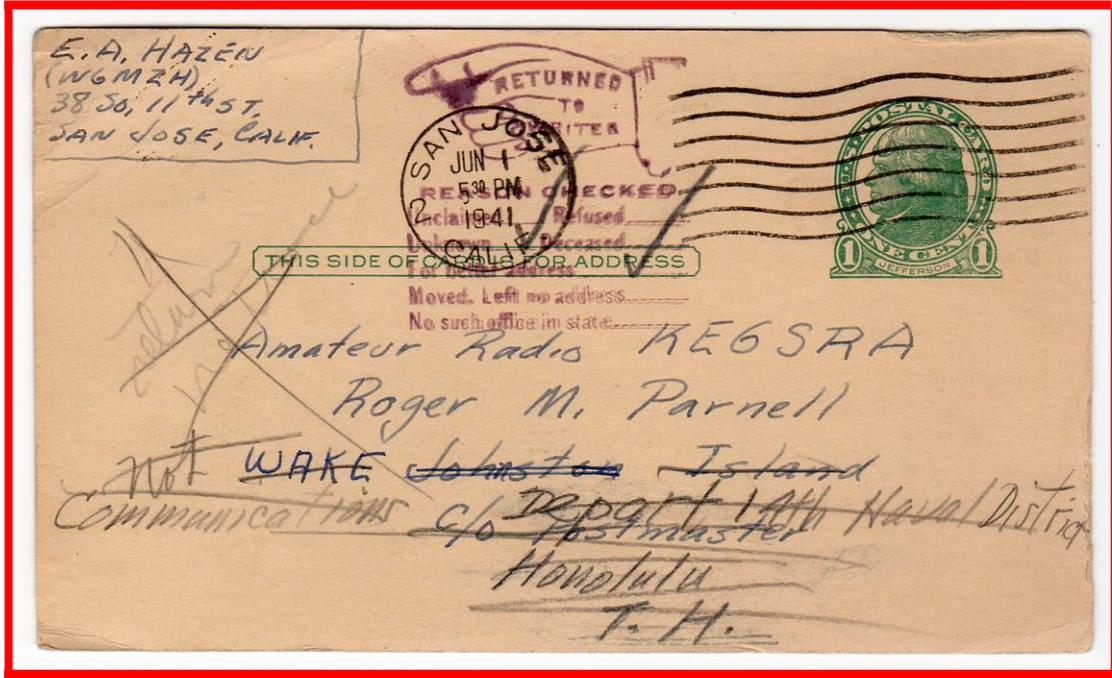


And so it goes on. Mailed at Wake Island but carried to Guam for connection to proper mail system. This is 1940 and the sunshine existence at Wake was about to undergo a massive change.

# Wake the Way

Which island was more important?

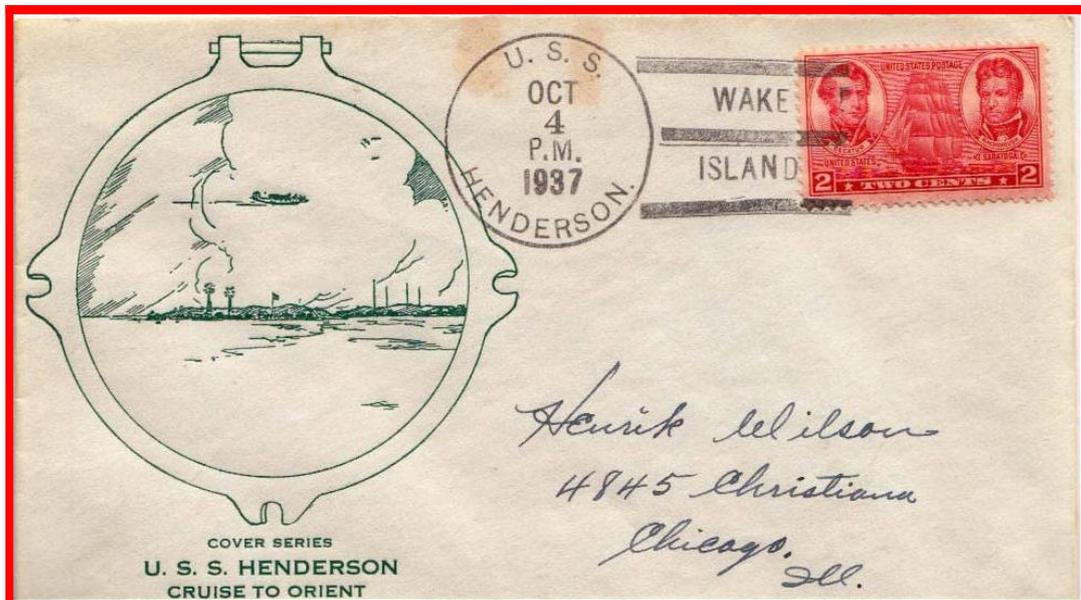
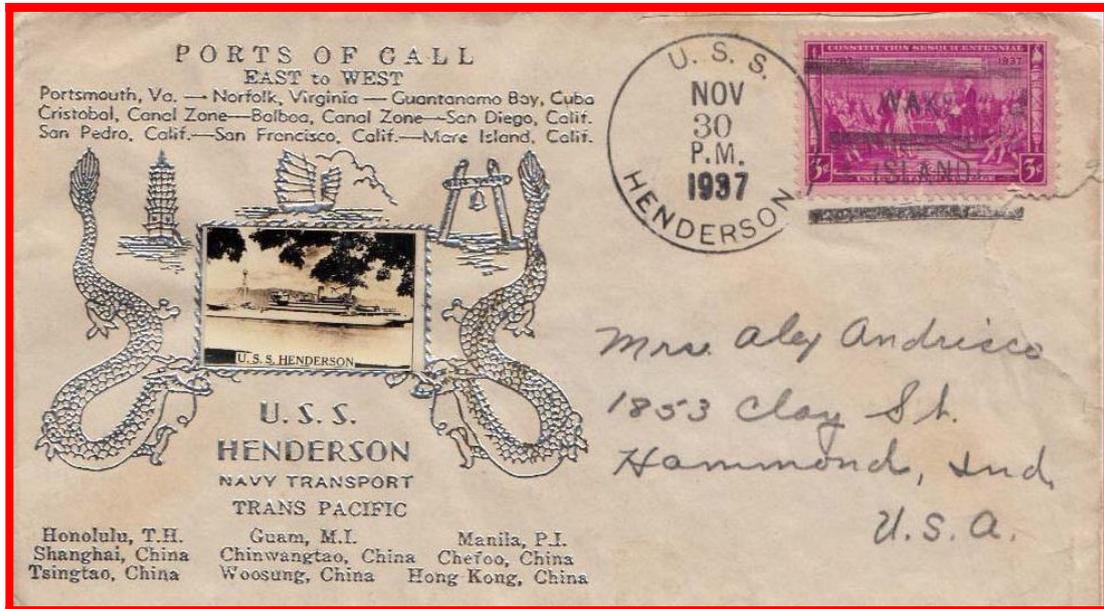
Ham radio operators become very popular when their station is located in some remote outpost. Here is a 'QSL' card request from a ham operator in San Jose, addressed to Roger M. Parnell, callsign KE6SRA thought to be at Johnston Island. Card redirected to Wake then annotated 'Not Wake' and finally returned to Honolulu. Parnell seemingly serving in the US Navy, since there is an endorsement 'Depart 14<sup>th</sup>' presumably from Wake. Readdressed to 'Communications, 14<sup>th</sup> Naval District'. Message shows desperation and rarity.



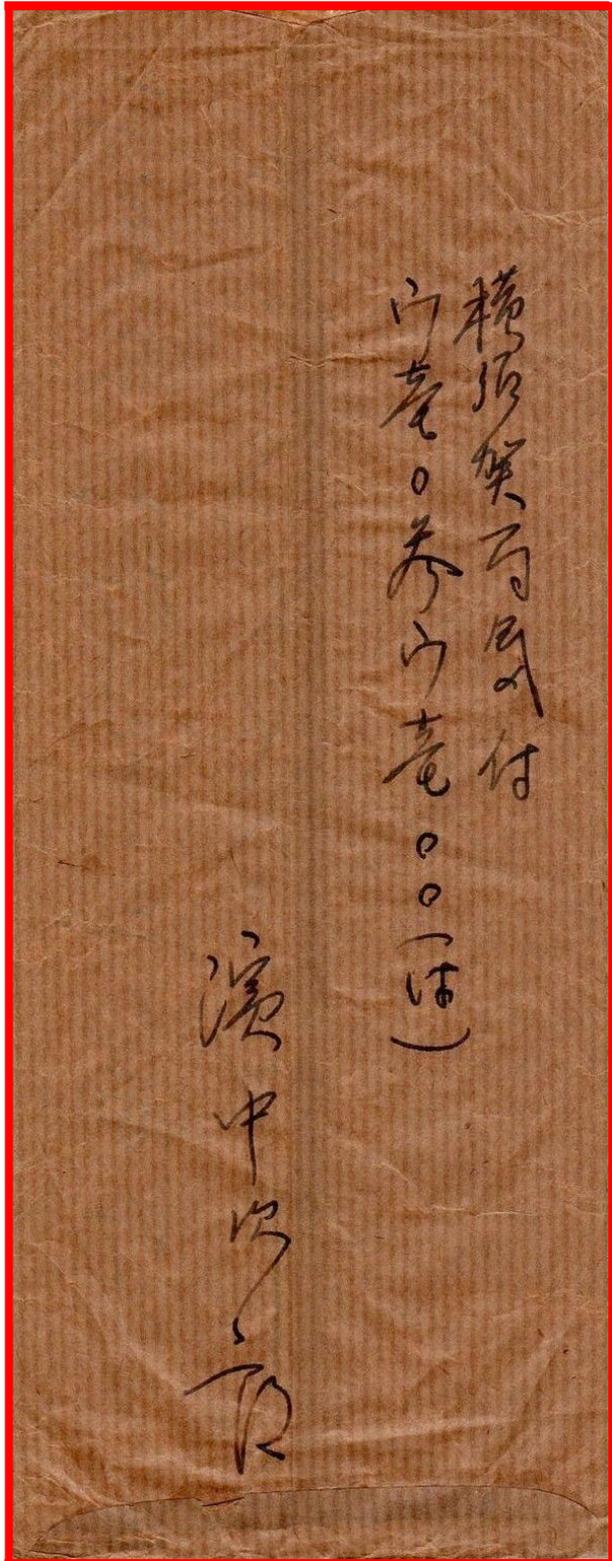
# Wake the **ebay** Way

Calls by the US Navy

Use of Wake Island was not confined to being a refuelling point for Pan American Airways. The US Navy used the island as a waypoint for Pacific crossings and also commemorated their calls by postal souvenirs. These are covers carrying the US Navy "Wake Island" canceller, when the USS 'Henderson' called on her regular trans-Pacific tours of duty to China in 1937.



Note the Boeing Clipper overhead the island



On December 11, 1941, Wake Island was the site of Japan's first military setback against American forces during World War II when Marines, Navy and some civilian personnel on the island repelled an attempted Japanese invasion, sinking two destroyers and a transport. The island subsequently fell to Japanese forces 12 days later after a successful second invasion attempt on December 23, 1941, this time with extensive support from Japanese carrier-based aircraft returning from the attack on Pearl Harbor. Wake Island remained occupied by Japanese forces until the end of the war; the garrison surrendered the island back to United States forces on September 4, 1945.

Above from Wikipedia

Cover from a Japanese soldier serving at Wake Island. Rear of cover carries the sender's address, as usual with all Japanese military mail. Wake Island confirmed by the postal code in the second vertical line from the right which reads:

'U' 103, 'U' 100. The character **ウ** is the prefix for mail handled by the Yokosuka Naval gateway, and the number 103 was the code for Wake. The 'U' 100 is the code for the actual unit. Sender must have been well educated (or elderly) since the character for the number 1 is the old Daiji style **壹**, not seen by me since examples from the occupation of Wei-Hai-Wei in 1894/5.

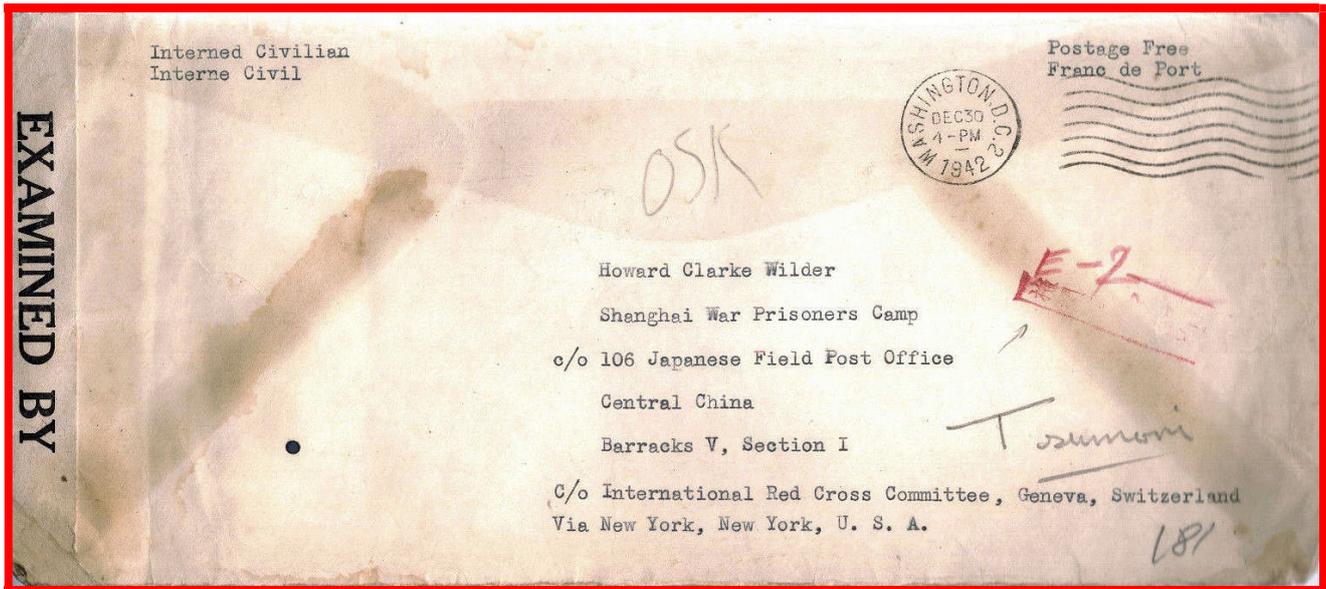
Similar code prefixes were used for the Naval gateways of Sasebo and Kure.

イ Sasebo	I	(pronounced ee)
セ Kure	Se	(pronounced say)
テ Kure	Te	(pronounced teh)

Above from my own knowledge.

# Wake the **ebay** Way

All change at Wake 1942



Cover addressed from Washington DC, USA to US Navy sailor Howard Clarke Wilder who was captured at Wake Island by the Japanese army and then interned at the POW camp in Shanghai China. Prisoner of War. Postmarked December 30, 1942.

According to his obituary in the Brookings Oregon News:

Howard Clarke Wilder, 76, Gold Beach, died May 8, 2000, at Curry General Hospital.

He was born July 9, 1923, in San Francisco to Frank and Ethel (Clarke) Wilder.

Mr. Wilder was raised and educated in San Jose, Calif., and also attended Los Gatos High School where he graduated in 1940.

He studied for the opera, played tennis and participated in the Junior Davis Cup. After graduation, he relocated to Wake Island and later entered the U.S. Navy.

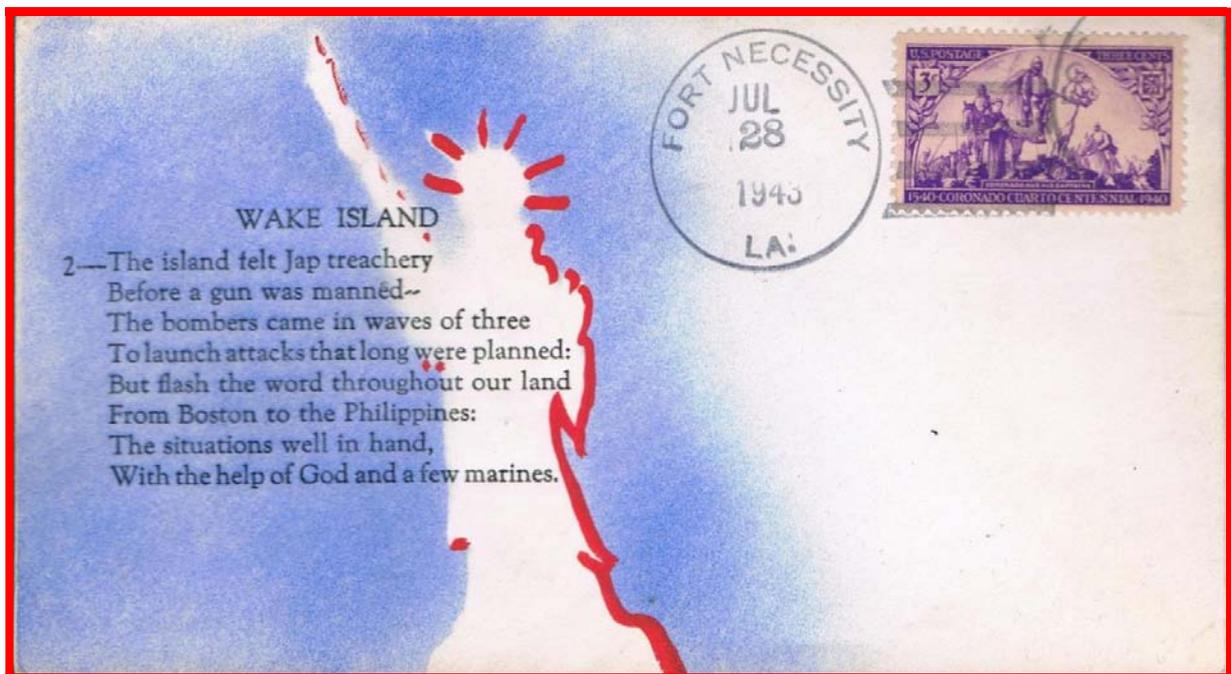
He was captured and held as a prisoner of war for approximately four years. He earned the World War II Victory Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, the American Campaign Medal and the Prisoner of War Medal.

After his discharge in 1945, he lived in various places around the United States before moving to Los Gatos, Calif.

# Wake the Way

## Outrage about Wake 1943

The capture of Wake Island caused outrage and dismay in America, and this was reflected in commemorative covers calling for vengeance. Here are just two examples.



Despite the strong sentiments expressed, it would be a long time before the prisoners were freed from Japanese captivity.

# Wake the **ebay** Way

Take back Wake 1945

The island's Japanese garrison was composed of the IJN 65th Guard Unit (2,000 men), Japan Navy Captain Shigematsu Sakaibara and the IJA units which became 13th Independent Mixed Regiment (1,939 men) under command of Colonel Shigeji Chikamori. The Japanese-occupied island (called by them Otori-Shima (大鳥島) or "Big Bird Island" for its birdlike shape) was bombed several times by American aircraft; one of these raids was the first mission for future United States President George H. W. Bush.



98 POWs were kept on site to rebuild the airstrip that had been destroyed during the battle. When their usefulness dried up and the Americans appeared to be ready to take the island back, Japanese Rear Admiral Shigematsu Sakaibara ordered every single one of them executed. Taken to a mass grave at the northern end of the island, the imprisoned civilians were blind-folded and brutally mowed down by machine gun fire.

One of the doomed captives managed to escape the slaughter, and in desperation, chiseled the words "98 US PW 5-10-43" on a coral rock before he was tracked down and beheaded by Sakaibara himself for the transgression. He was never identified.

In 1945, the Japanese garrison on Wake Island surrendered to the US, and Shigematsu Sakaibara and his Lieutenant Commander were both sentenced to die for their war crimes. Once the war had ended, a memorial stone made of granite was attached to the coral rock that still bore the cryptic carving of the anonymous prisoner, and nearby a bronze plaque was installed, listing every name of the lost 98.

All above from Wikipedia. Ain't technology great!

# Wake the **ebay** Way

A "Wake" up call 1950

HISTORY EXCERPT: On 15 October 1950 U.S. President Harry S. Truman and General Douglas MacArthur met on Wake Island (Wake Island Conference) to confer about the progress of the Korean War. They chose to meet at Wake Island because of its closer proximity to Korea so that General MacArthur would not have to be away from the troops in the field for long.



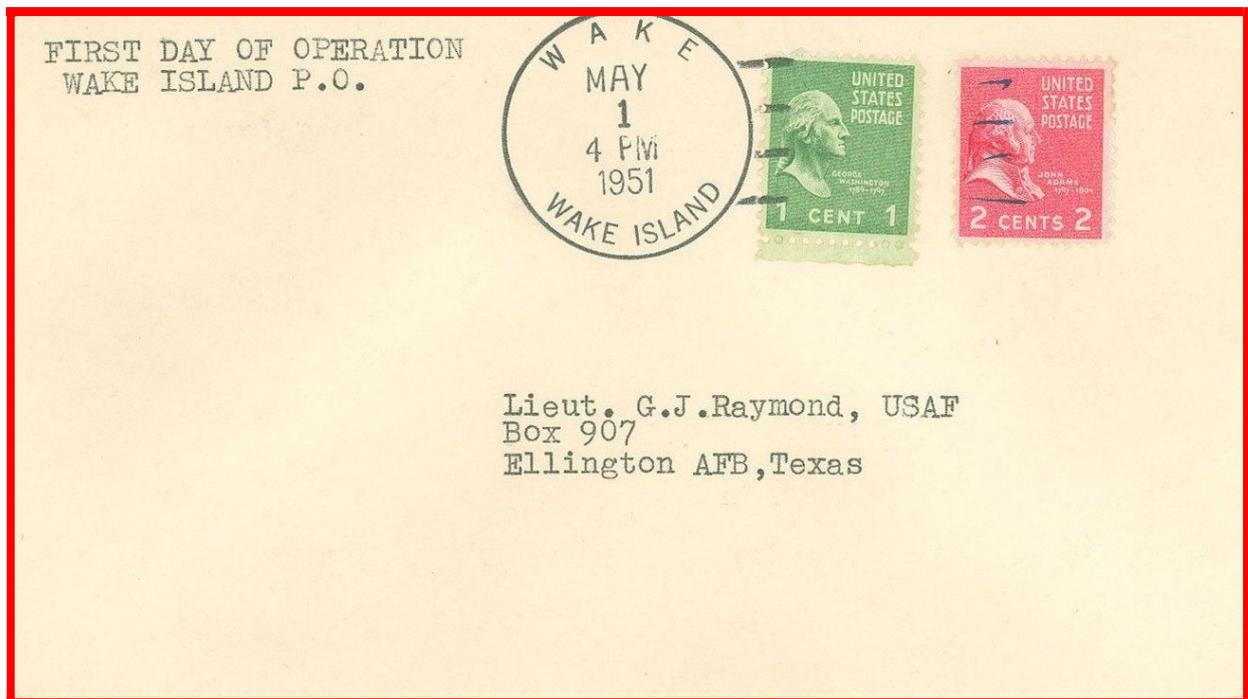
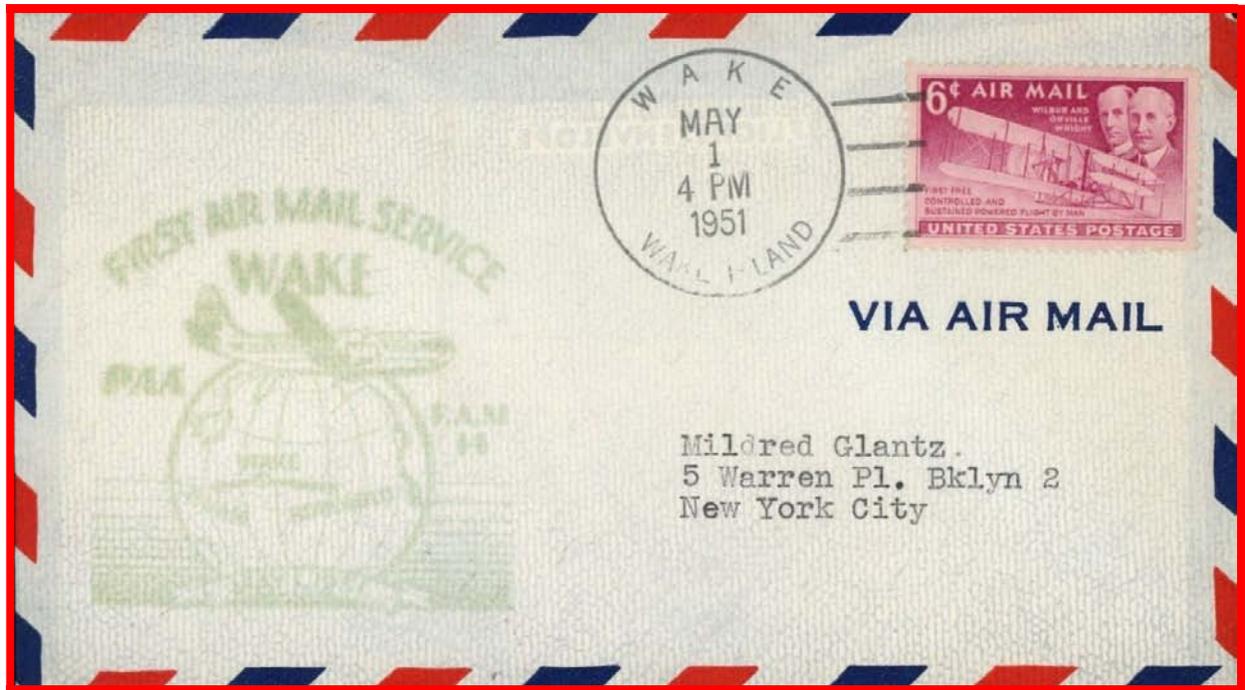
A composite graphic with a yellow background and a red border. On the left is a map of the Pacific Ocean showing flight routes from the United States to Wake Island. The routes are labeled '2,300 Air Miles' and '2,300 Sea Miles'. Text below the map reads: "ROUTES TO CONFERENCE—Arrows trace flight routes of President Truman and Gen. MacArthur to Wake Island where the two conferred today on U.S. Far East policies." In the center is a small illustration of an airplane. On the right are two portraits: the top one shows Truman and MacArthur in profile, with a caption: "General MacArthur has not conferred personally with a United States Chief Executive since he served meeting with the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt at Pearl Harbor in 1911." Below the portraits is a photograph of a small, dark, rectangular hut. A caption below the photo reads: "A LITTLE HUT WHERE HISTORY IS WRITTEN History is being written this weekend in this quarters hut on Wake Island. It is the meeting place of President Truman and General MacArthur. The little hut serves as a roadover station of Pan American Airways." At the bottom, the text "WAKE ISLAND CONFERENCE" is written in large, bold, stylized letters, with "OCTOBER 15, 1950" underneath.

Subsequently the island was used for strategic defense and operations during the Cold War. In 1952 or 1953, a young Kris Kristofferson worked for a dredging contractor on the island. It was administered by the United States Army Space and Missile Defense Command (formerly known as the United States Army Space and Strategic Defense Command). Since 1974, Wake Island has served as a launch platform for military rockets involved in testing anti-missile systems and atmospheric re-entry trials.

# Wake the **ebay** Way

PanAm never gives up

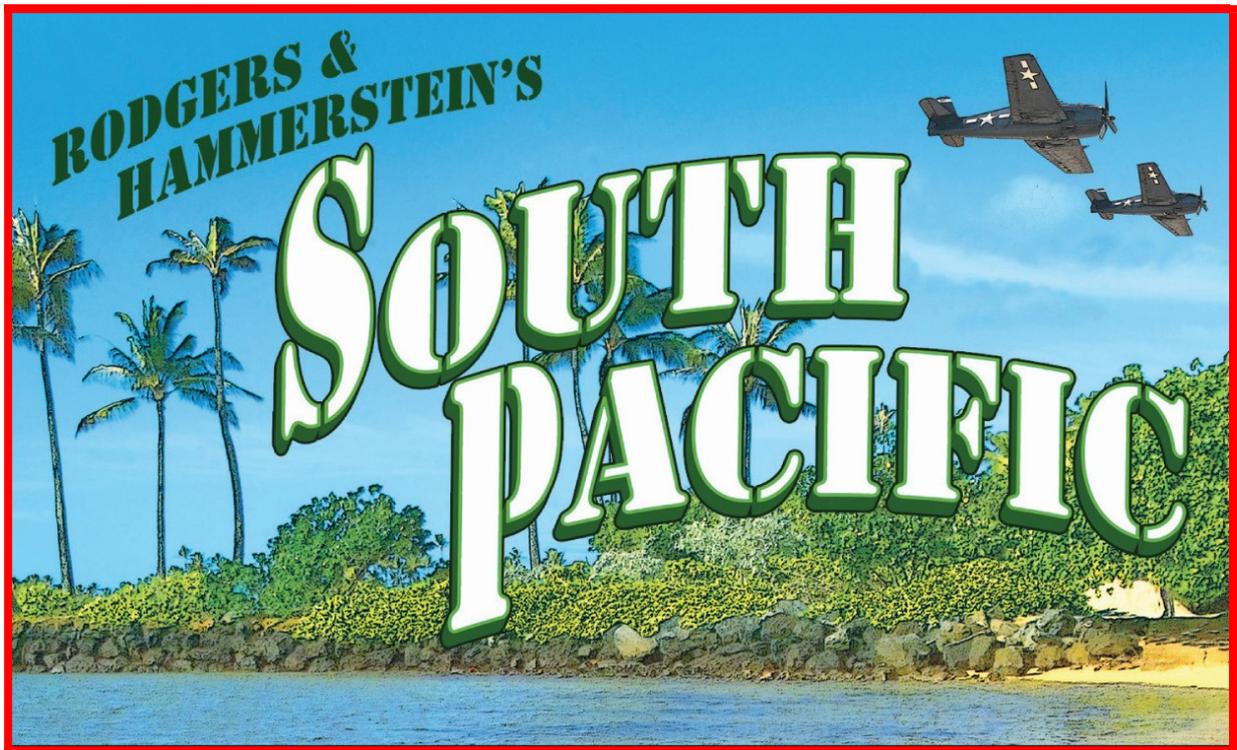
After all the spurious and tragic activities on Wake Island, a postal service was at last established in 1951. Trust Pan American to make the most of it....



Following the "great?" tradition of PanAm first flight covers, these from Wake Island carried on where FAM-14 Pacific and FAM-18 Atlantic left off.

Wake the **ebay** Way  
Epilogue

*In the great tradition of James A. Michener and as the sun sinks slowly in the west, we say farewell to this speck of tropical coral lying just six feet above the waterline in the middle of the vast Pacific. Soon, and due to global warming and the rise of the oceans, Wake Island will be lost to history, its memory only kept alive by the collectors of manufactured airmail covers and those who seek to write thousands of words constructing tales of mystery and imagination from a few old scraps of paper.*



*Sic transit Gloria Pacifica*