

Jack Kolb's Return To Midway

By Dale Wysocki
Faribault Golf & Country Club

A unique trip was enjoyed by Jack Kolb when he was privileged to return to one of the scenes and memories of his youth. Jack has had a yearning to travel after his retirement and was fortunate enough to be chosen as one of 16 WW II veterans to return to Midway Island for the 50th anniversary of the battle of Midway.

Few people know much about Midway, except that it is the site of World War II's most important U.S. naval victory—the turning point of the war in the Pacific. Midway consists of two "small" islands at the extreme north-western tip of the Hawaiian Island chain, 1300 miles from Honolulu. How small are they? Well the largest of the two islands has an east-west runway (with dredgings to make up a quarter of the distance) that measures 7800 feet. That is the long distance of the island.

Although geologically part of the Hawaiian Island chain, it is specifically excluded from the State of Hawaii. Midway today is a national wildlife refuge managed by the U.S.

Jack's curiosity was further whetted knowing the mean elevation of the island was 11 feet above sea level. There is no natural, fresh or unbrakish water available, yet he was looking at pictures of a tight-looking turf with a background of trees large enough and thick set-enough to be



An overview of Midway.

a jungle. How could they get turf to grow in a soil made of ground-up sea shells and coral which has a salt concentration toxic to most vegetation?

The eight-day return to Midway adventure began November 5, 1992 with the landing of 16 Midway veterans, two historians, two archaeologists (one of whom ironically was Jack's son Dr. Michael Kolb, an archaeologist with the state of Hawaii), two architectural historians and a six-person film crew from the U.S. Navy.

This gang boarded a U.S. Air Force C-141 cargo plane at Hickam Field in Hawaii, and four and one half hours later were set down on this speck of coral—dead center in the middle of the north Pacific. It was felt that the pilot had gotten lost and set down on the wrong island. There were fields of turf *Ammophila arenaria*. There were jungles of a tree called ironwod (unlike our native Hop Hornbeam, *Carpinus 1*, which Minnesotans call Ironwood) and looked very much like a Pine tree. It's scientific name is *Causerinus equisitifolia*, often found in the salty sands of Florida.

After several hours of trying to get oriented it was decided to find the old "Pan American" seaplane hanger. From there only three of the WW II buildings were found. Of course one of those was the torpedo shop that Jack had spent many hours preparing warheads and torpedos to be loaded aboard the Submarine Fleet that operated out of

(Continued on page 32)



Gooney Birds rule the course.

Fish and Wildlife Service for the protection of Laysan albatross (gooney birds) and other migratory seabirds.

Jack's strong urge to return to Midway was not so much the fondness of the place—actually it was a barren wasteland of white coral sand, under hot blazing sun, with 1.6 million "gooney birds" and hundreds of thousands of other species of birds. The only indigenous plant was a low growing shrub called *Scaevola sp.* His curiosity was heightened by an article in *Golf Course Management*, April issue 1984 pages 43-45, which described the 9-hole golf course that had been built on the island. Pictures accompanying the article gave him to believe that the place had been turned into an oasis.

Jack Kolb's Trip —

(Continued from Page 31)

Midway during the War.

Eventually he did locate the golf course which was hardly recognizable because of neglect. As you may or may not know, Midwas has been decommissioned, the Stars and Stripes have been lowered and a small force of six military people now occupy the island. There was a cache of fertilizer stored in one of the underground "ammo bunkers," the bags had rotted away and the deliquescent nature of the material caused it to look like so much "mush." Steve Garske would be proud to know that all the ball washers were "Par Aide."

The flags and poles were too bleached and tattered to determine the brand. Gooney birds nested on fairways, tees and greens. The bird that raised the most havoc however was a bird called the "Bulwer's Petrel." This bird is much like a pocket gopher; they burrow underground leaving mounds of coral sand. The petrel nests in this burrow come back to the nest only at dusk and leave at dawn the next day. Thus they are seldom seen but leave their mark upon the golf course.

Jack did figure out where they got the water to irrigate—he was lucky enough to be at the right place at the right time—it was a clever innovation that he had noted while walking along the runway one day, a rainstorm came up. The runway was designed with a very slight pitch — probably one inch in 25 feet, and he noticed that the water was drawn to catch basins, then pumped to huge tanks thought to be airplane fuel. That much fuel would never be that close to a runway for fear of an errant plane.

It should be said that in its day this little 9-hole golf course had to be rather unique, it was extremely short but there was limited space and it must have taken a lot of boredom off the minds of the men who occupied the island after WW II. As you can notice in the accompanying photo, the ever-present gooney bird was probably the greatest hazard. Many a golfer shot "birdies" on this course.

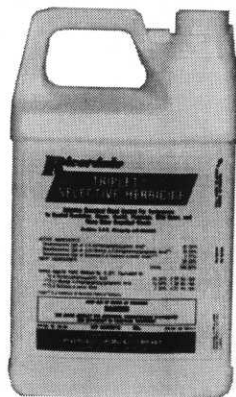
The reunion awakened long-dormant memories of a time that many veterans considered the crossroads of their lives. On video film they talked about what they did, how they felt and how it changed their lives. Jack's recorded (video) interview eventually centered on

the great changes in the ecology of the island, and how it has affected the native birds. It was his contention that the greening of the island was detrimental to the Laysan albatross (gooney bird). The thick stands of trees bar the young goonies from learning how to fly. These birds have wing spans of 6-8 feet, they learn flying much like humans in airplanes. With their awkwardness on the ground the (more mature) young birds face into the wind and practice take-offs by running into the wind. Without open "obstacle-

(Continued on Page 34)

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Budgeting —

(Continued from Page 5)

can relieve you from scheduling duties and become an integral part of on-site consultation. During our construction a waterfall was built in-house. We designed it conceptually and implemented those theories along the way to give us a striking feature to complement the new nine. The crew took pride in the project and shared credit in its success!

As with any project, feasibility studies which include budgeting and planning are essential to the fiscal success of the expansion. Architect selection, design guidelines, feature input and conceptual drawings are imperative to the success of any project, large or small.

The next area of concern is irrigation. You'll probably want to stay with your present control and head style or you may consider upgrading your system to accommodate future capital improvements. We went the latter route and upgraded our Toro VT 3 and VT 4 system to Toro Osmac. Personally, this proved to be advantageous to us because the radio control versatility made the grow-in process more efficient. We didn't have to drive onto new seed to program and operate the satellites. This is all done by hand-held radios or from the Central Computer. Your new seed bed remains undisturbed.

The excitement and daily challenges of new construction makes our chosen field more attractive to all who see our work. Keep in mind that the project will come to an end, and we are once again managers of a newly constructed golf facility. At times you will question your sanity and reason for existence. With this in mind, and addressing the heart of this article, I will present unit pricing for a variety of areas in golf course construction. I hope this article was informative, and will help you in planning a future project!

The following is the pertinent data for the 9-hole addition:

Description	Area	Budget Price
Total acreage	47 acres	
Tree clearing/grubbing	2 acres	\$2,450.00/Acre
Topsoil stripped/placed	35,000 CY	1.50/CY
Gen. Exc. includes ponds	130,000 CY	1.25/CY
Fairway Prep & Seed	16 acres	750.00/Acre
Rough Prep & Seed	30 acres	750.00/Acre
Greens Prep & Seed	1.68 acres	3,400.00/Acre
Tees Prep & Seed	1.4 acres	2,500.00/Acre
Collars	.52 acres	3,600.00/Acre
Bunkers	73,000 sq. ft.	.75/sq.ft.
Sod installed	17,000 sq. ft.	1.75/sq.ft.
8' cart paths	6,990 sq. yd.	5.00/sq.yd.
6" x 12" concrete curb	3,310 lin. ft.	4.20/ln.ft.
3' high rock wall	1,135 lin. ft.	33.00/ln.ft.
20 mil pvc liner	11,150 sq. yd.	4.50/sq.yd.

Irrigation

650 GPM Pre - Fab
Pump Station\$ 45,000.00

Pump House	8,500.00
- Gabled roof	
- Sky light	
Wet Well & Slab	2,500.00
Electrical	4,000.00
Wall to wall water	\$225,000.00
- 240 - 670 heads - Fairway & Rough	
- 153 - 650 heads - Greens & Tees	
- 7 Osmac Controllers	
- 486 IBM Central Computer	
Total Project Cost	\$900,000.00

Jack Kolb's Trip —

(Continued from Page 32)

clear" areas they do not learn to fly. Thus they never reach the sea and starve to death. Hundreds of thousands of decaying gooney-bird bodies are the result.

Michael Kolb was quoted as saying "It was absolutely fascinating to listen to my dad talk to the other veterans and to see the places where he had been." Michael was told by his father not to expect to find too much or anything in the way of archaeological artifacts of a Polynesian culture (if indeed they did stop there on their way to Hawaii), since the island was racked from one end to the other by bulldozers, by slit trenches, by bombs and by bored occupants in the past who out of sheer delight might have taken the remains of a "stone (artifact) hatchet" and tried to skip it across the lagoon.

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