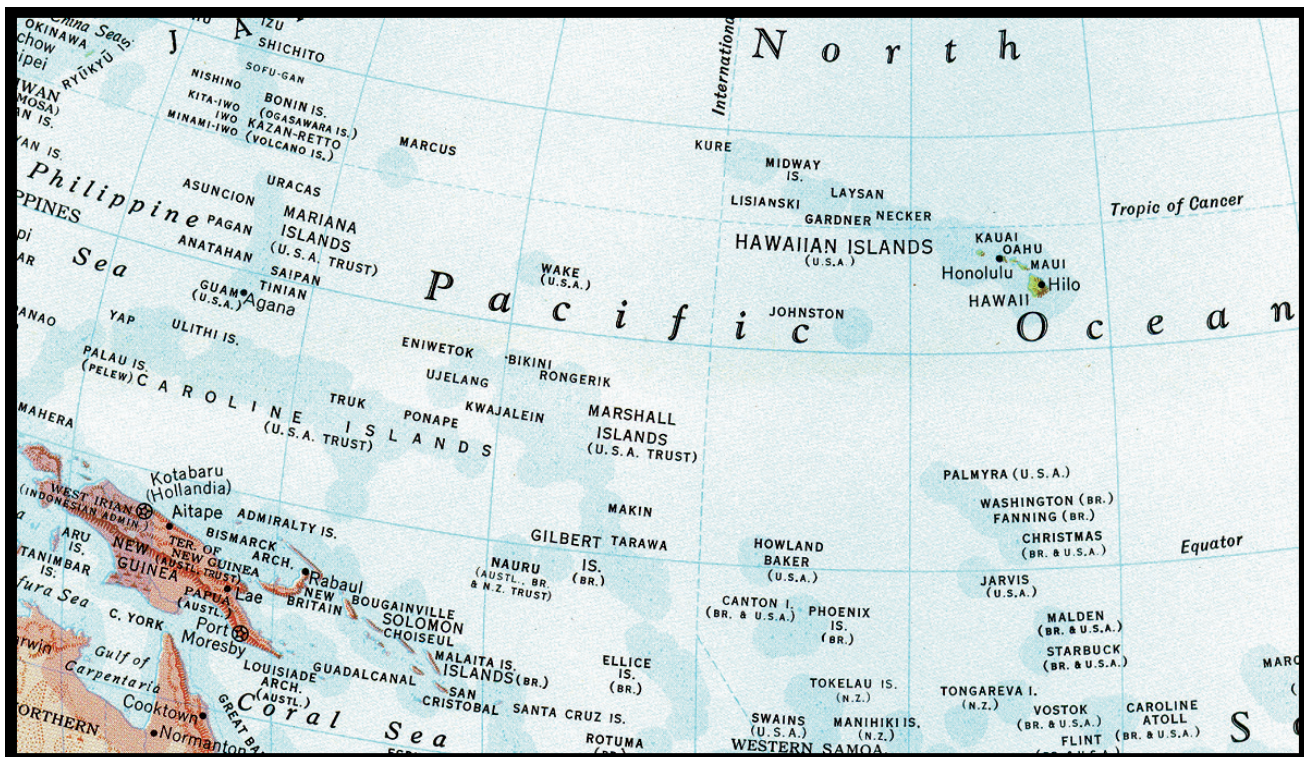


# Our Trusty Pacific Isles, Part 1

by Steve Turechek



During World War II our Pacific Ocean 'Island Hopping' campaign netted significant gains from the Japanese. Many islands came under U.S. administration as the Japanese withdrew or were forced out.

Shortly before the end of WWII, representatives of 50 nations deliberated and then signed the UN Charter. According to the preamble of the UN Charter, member nations are determined, in part, to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind...."

One of the six main organs of the UN, on par with the General Assembly and the Security Council among others, is the Trusteeship Council. This council served to guide the former colonies of the defeated Axis Powers toward self-government. The Trusteeship Council was designed as a temporary body, eventually to be disbanded once the various colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle-East, and Pacific Ocean regions achieved their independence. In the interim, the former colonies (or former League of Nations Mandates) would now be administered by individual countries acting under authority from the UN.

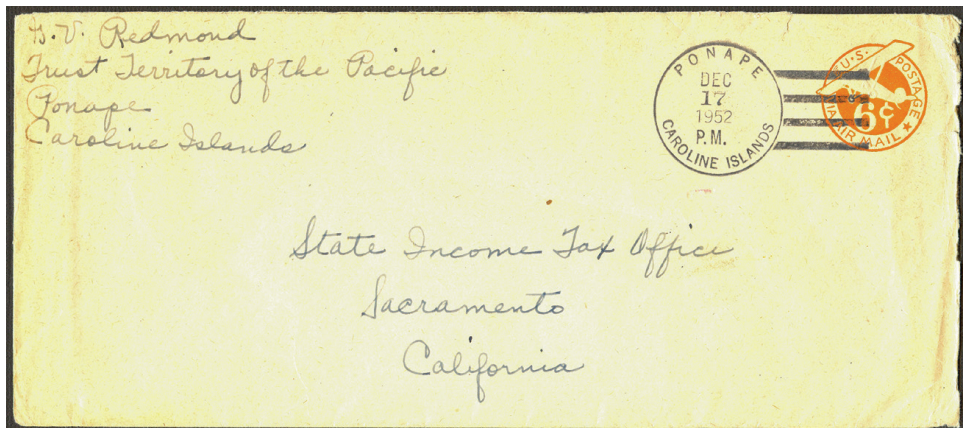
The United States was authorized to administer several archipelago island chains including the Carolines, the Marshalls, and the Marianas in the northern Pacific. (If you are as geographically challenged in this part of the world as I am, there is a map printed above.)

Collectively known as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), these island chains were further subdivided into six districts: Ponape, Truk, Yap, Palau, the Marshalls and the Marianas. Ponape was later divided and a seventh district, Kosrae, was formed. Initially administered by the U.S. Navy, responsibility was later transferred to the Department of Interior in 1951.

In the TTPI the U.S. initiated a democratic process to



Figure 1



facilitate the various islands' peaceful transition to self-rule according to the freely expressed will of the native residents. Following decades of German, then Japanese meddling, these Pacific island peoples regained their hope of one day being free again.

Collecting postal history from the TTPI can be a worthy challenge. Because we're talking about islands, when

covers can be found, they are predominantly aerophilatelic in nature. The 6¢ postal stationery cover in Figure 1 shows the Navy continued to operate the postal system after hostilities ended.

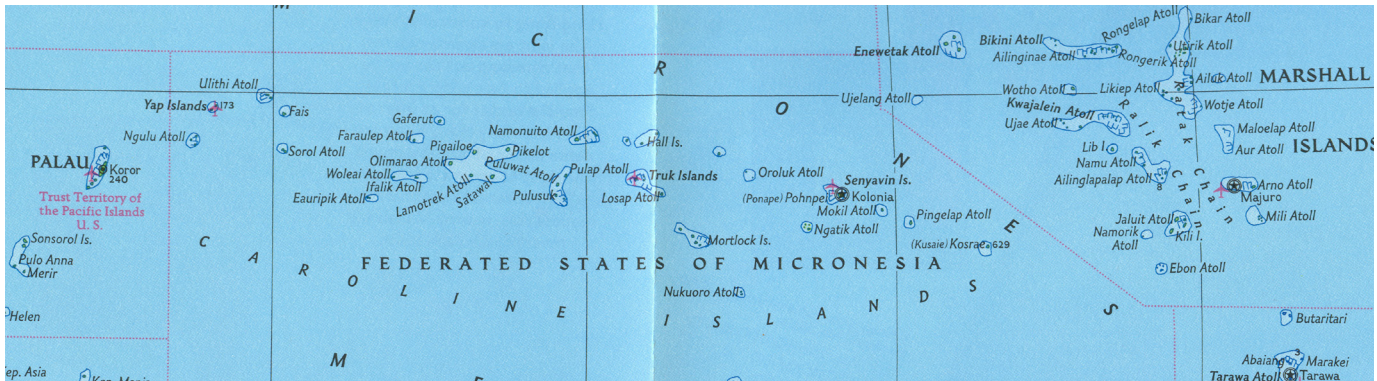
The cover has a “U.S. Navy, Mar 12, 1948, A.M., 10455 BR.” postmark, indicating the island of Truk as the cover’s origin. During WWII Truk was a major Japanese stronghold. The return address is that of anthropologist Thomas F. Gladwin, who conducted considerable research, often funded by the U.S. government, among the native island people.

Postmarks changed significantly after the war, as the military system gave way to civilian operation. The cover in Figure 2 was postmarked “Ponape, Dec 17, 1952, P.M., Caroline Islands” and bears a manuscript TTPI return address. Commercial usages from the TTPI are not common and thus remain fertile ground for modern postal historians and aerophilatelists to explore. The lack of serious market demand among collectors keeps the prices of similar covers downright affordable. Now that’s just the way I like ‘em: scarce yet cheap!

## Our Trusty Pacific Isles, Part 2

# Sweet Carolines

by Steve Turechek



The Caroline Islands were “discovered” by Spain in 1526. Following their defeat in 1898, Spain sold the Carolines to Germany. Germany lost the islands after WWI, and Japan was given a League of Nations Mandate over them in 1920. The U.S. liberated the Carolines during WWII. The larger islands were named as districts within the U.S.-administered United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). The map provides helpful orientation.



Figure 2.

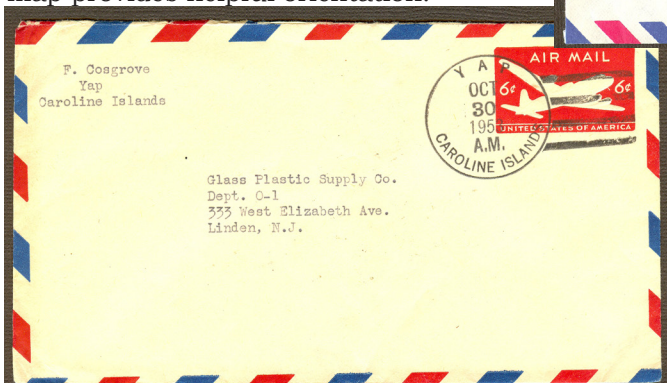


Figure 1.

Postal service within the TTPI was provided by the Army, Air Force and Navy until the TTPI was transferred to the Department of Interior in 1951. Military postmarks were soon supplemented by more familiar post office circular date stamps with the change in administrative authority in 1951. The commercial airpost cover in Figure 1 is boldly postmarked “Yap, Oct 30, 1953, A.M. Caroline Islands” and was flown to Linden, N.J.

A significant step toward self-government in the Carolines was taken in 1979 when The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) was formed by the island states of Yap, Chuuk (Truk), Kosrae and Pohnpei (Ponape). The FSM remained a UN Trustee under U.S. administration until 1986, when the FSM gained its independence. Through a Compact of Free Association, defense of the island nation is provided by the U.S.

Although commercially used airpost covers are difficult to come by, official mail covers are even more unusual. Consider the cover in Figure 2. This is postmarked “Ponape, Aug 7 AM 1975, Caroline Islands 96941”. The return address indicates Kolonia (capitol city of Ponape), E.C.I. (abbreviation of East Caroline Islands). Also note the use of Zip codes in the postmark and return address. The second line of this cover’s address, ACTION/PC, exposes a bit of Peace Corps history. Initially established by President Ken-

nedly, the Peace Corps was opposed by President Nixon as a safe haven for military draft dodgers. Nixon merged the Peace Corps and several other programs under an umbrella government agency called ACTION in 1970. But in 1979 President Carter established the Peace Corps as an independent government agency by executive order.

As you will notice, postmarks have been slow to catch up with the evolving political situation in the

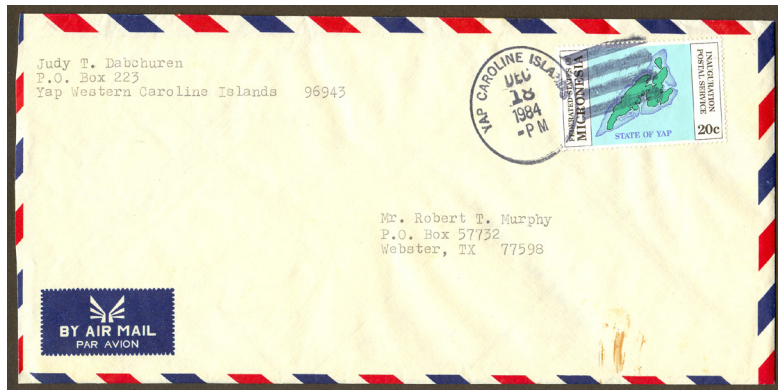
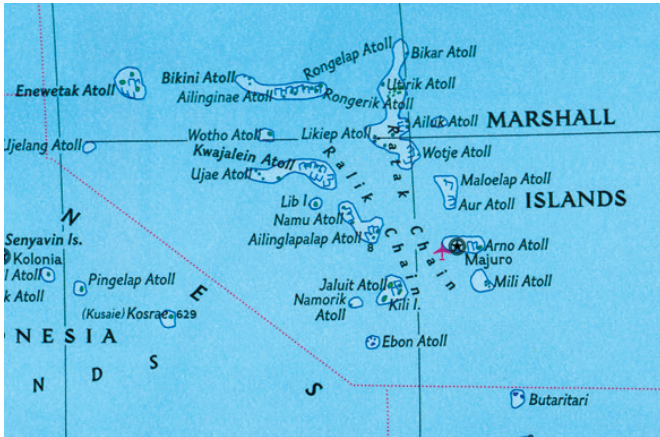


Figure 3.

Carolines. Years after formation of the FSM, and issuance of FSM stamps, “Caroline Islands” remained in the postmarks. The United States Postal Service picks up and delivers all mail to each of the island states via air service. By law, FSM international postal rates are the same as U.S. rates, though the FSM Postmaster General

has authority to establish internal rates. Figure 3 illustrates the use of FSM postage on an airpost cover at the 1984 first class U.S. domestic rate of 20¢ to Texas.

## Our Trusty Pacific Isles, Part 3: **Grand Marshalls** by Steve Turechek



The Marshall Islands include several atolls where we fought the Japanese during WWII, namely Kwajalein and Eniwetok. After WWII the Marshall Islands gained discomfiting fame as the site of U.S. atomic bomb testing (on Bikini atoll) in 1946. Known as Operation Crossroads, these tests generated considerable philatelic interest, and souvenir covers that commemorate the test events abound. Less commonly seen are items of personal correspondence that tell of that testing.

In 1979, the Government of the Marshall Islands was officially established and the country became self-governing—yet another success for the United Nations. In 1986 the Compact of Free Association with the United States entered into force, granting the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) its sovereignty. In exchange for providing aid and defense of the islands, the U.S. was permitted continued military use of the missile testing range at Kwajalein Atoll. Marshall Islands independence was formally completed under international law in 1990, when the UN officially ended the Trusteeship status.

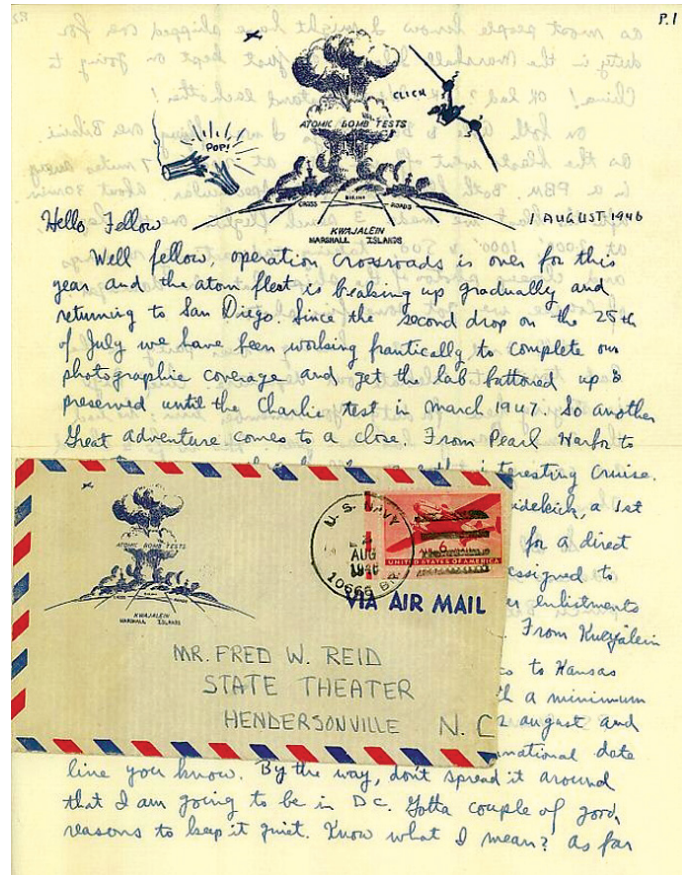


Figure 1

The cover in Figure 1, an interesting Cold War artifact, was mailed from the Navy’s post office, “10666 B.R.” at Kwajalein on August 2nd, 1946. The letterhead matches the envelope, but with a couple added sketches, including a gull-winged airplane banked over on its side and a photographer (the letter’s author?) leaning out to “click” a photo. The letter reads in part:

“Well fellow, Operation Crossroads is over for this year, and the atom fleet is breaking up gradually and returning to San Diego. Since the second drop on the 25th of July, we have been working frantically to complete our photographic coverage and get the lab buttoned up and preserved until the Charlie test in March 1947. So another great adventure comes to a close....”

In Figure 2, we see a cover with return address of a Navy sailor assigned to the *USS Deliver* (ARS 23), which was a dive, salvage and rescue ship. As this is a Korean War-era cover, the whereabouts of Navy ships at any given time are well documented. The *Deliver* was in fact known to have been near Pearl Harbor on the date this letter was postmarked; so it's likely the sailor posted it while ashore on one of the islands.

The cover in Figure 3 illustrates inter-island air-mail. Postmarked on July 2, 1975 in Majuro, the capitol of the Marshall Islands, it was transported by air to



Figure 2



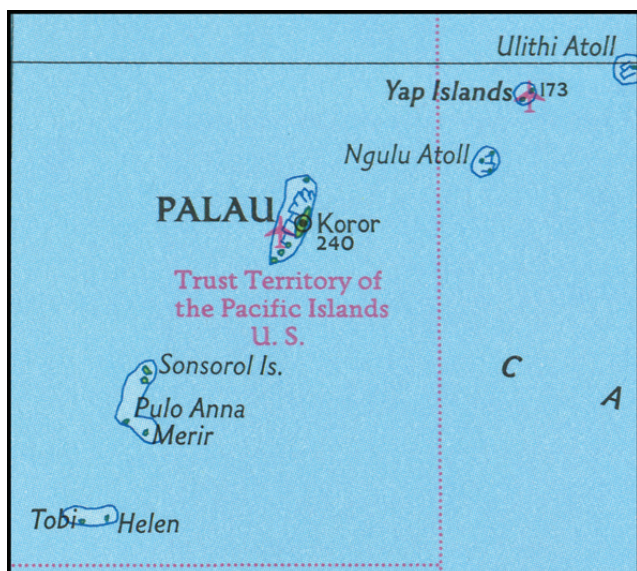
Figure 3

Ponape, one of the Caroline Islands. This usage of Scott UC47 air postal stationery from such an exotic origin to an equally exotic destination is the simple reward for hours spent searching among a dealer's Internet listings.

## Our Trusty Pacific Isles, Part 4:

# Palmy Palau

by Steve Turechek



Palau, another of the Caroline Islands, was also an original district of the U.N. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands under U.S. administration following WWII. Included within the Palau district was Peleliu, site of a savage battle in 1944 between the U.S. and Japan.

In 1979 Palau voted against joining the Federated States of Micronesia based on language and cultural dif-



Figure 1

ferences. In 1991 the Republic of Palau was established. A few years later in 1994 Palau voted to end its Trustee status under the United Nations, and became independent. The Republic of Palau then entered into a Compact of Free Association with the United States in order to provide for its military defense and receipt of U.S. aid. In exchange, the U.S. received military basing privileges. Today Palau issues its own stamps, and uses U.S. currency (the dollar).

The airmail cover in Figure 1 was posted at Peleliu (APO 265) shortly after the end of WWII while the U.S. Army still occupied the island and operated the postal ser-

vice. The sender, Corporal Detroiler, was assigned to the 111th Infantry Regiment which had arrived at Peleliu in February, 1945. He apparently wrote home in October, to his wife back in Pennsylvania, no doubt anticipating his return trip home. In fact unit records show the 111th regiment shipped back to the states in November, 1945. This cover was double-weight, so it required an additional 6¢ airmail stamp to supplement the 6¢ stationery indicia and correctly pay the 6¢ per half ounce military airmail concession rate.



Figure 2

of Spain; the state of North Carolina however was named after King Charles I of England, Scotland and Ireland.

Palau began to issue its own stamps upon achieving independence in 1991, although it remains within the U.S. domestic postal system. In Figure 3 we have a modern airpost cover franked with Palauan stamps and postmarked "KOROR REPUBLIC OF PALAU, JUN 4, 2001, 96940 PW." A two-letter abbreviation follows the ZIP code in the circular date stamp; this indicates the country (rather than one of the states that com-



Figure 3

The cover in Figure 2 was posted on the island of Koror in 1972 at the domestic U.S. first class airmail rate of 11¢ per ounce. The image of the Hawaiian tiki on the U.S. airmail stamp certainly complements the overall tropical island theme!

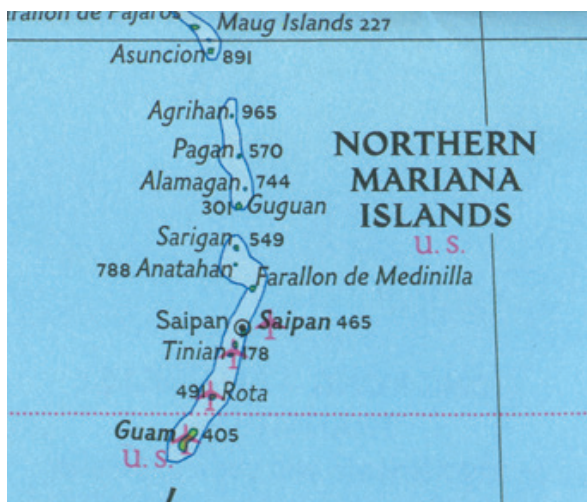
The Caroline Islands origin and North Carolina destination make for an even more interesting coincidence. The Carolines were originally named for King Charles II

(in surprise) Palau. The 34¢ franking correctly paid the U.S. domestic 1st class rate (effective January 7, 2001 until June 30, 2002). Consider the 8,600 mile distance from Palau to Scranton, Pa., and the 80¢ U.S. international airmail postage rate at the time. It certainly appears Palau's close ties with the U.S. provide tangible benefits to postal patrons of both nations!

## Our Trusty Pacific Isles, Part 5:

# Congenial Commonwealth of The Northern Marianas

by Steve Turechek



Like the Caroline Islands, the Northern Marianas were a Spanish colony until 1899 when they were sold to Germany following Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American war. Japan received a League of Nations Mandate over the Northern Marianas after Germany's defeat in WW I. The U.S. eventually captured the islands from Japan during WW II. After the United Nations (U.N.) was founded in 1945, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) was placed under U.S. administration in 1947, and included the Northern Marianas.

The largest islands, Saipan and Tinian, were sites of major battles during WW II. The American B-29 bomber that dropped the atom bomb on Nagasaki to end the war was launched from Tinian. The cover in Figure 1 has a bold "U.S. ARMY POSTAL SERVICE A.P.O., Aug 15, 1945, 183" postmark. History buffs will recognize this date as the traditionally accepted VJ-Day (though the formal Japanese surrender on the *USS Missouri* wasn't until September 2.) The cover was sent by one Sergeant Arthur Dusneu, a non-commissioned offi-

cer in the 44th Bomb Squadron, part of the 40th Bomb Group, stationed on Tinian Island. The 44th flew the B-29 bomber and was reassigned stateside in November, 1945. Notice this letter was censored before entering the mailstream, destined perhaps for the Sergeant's girlfriend back in Seattle.

Following the war, Saipan became administrative headquarters for the TTPI with the Navy in control. There was also a significant CIA presence as foreign nationals received certain training from the Naval Technical Training Unit (NTTU). Even though administrative control eventually passed from the Department of Defense to the Department of Interior in 1951, the U.S. retained its military basing and a significant naval presence through the NTTU on Saipan, as reflected in the return address of the cover in Figure 2.

Saipan naturally became host for the administrative headquarters of the TTPI. Note the printed Department of Interior corner card with "Office of the High Commissioner" and typed Zip code of the cover in Figure 3. The meter postmark reads "Saipan, Jan 29 65, Mariana Islands".

As the Northern Marianas progressed toward self-rule, citizens chose not to follow the path to independence that other TTPI island chains took. Instead the Marianas decided to forge closer ties to the U.S., and became a Commonwealth of the U.S. in 1975. Today the Northern Marianas remain within the U.S. postal system. (The Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas does not have representation in the U.S. Congress.)

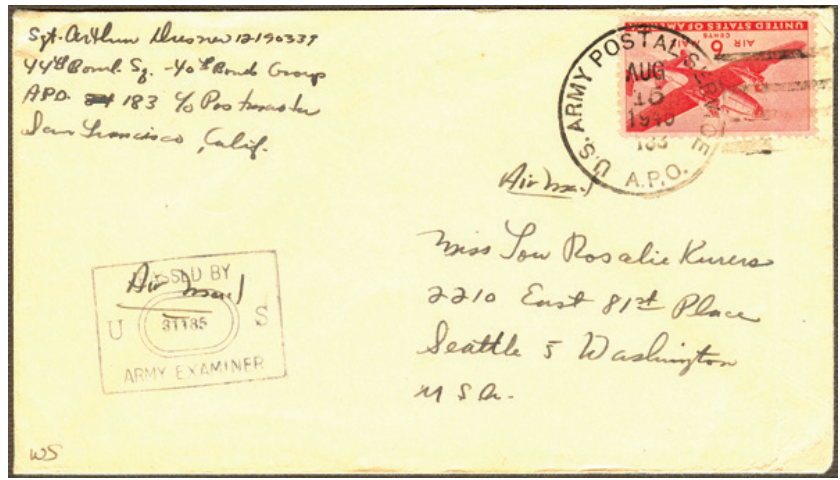


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3