



Anchor Watch

To support the preservation of historic naval vessels
and to honor those who served at sea

MAY 2024

THE JOURNAL OF THE HISTORIC NAVAL SHIPS ASSOCIATION



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President's Message

Steve Banta, CAPT, USN (Ret.), USS Lexington Museum



I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season, a productive start to 2024, and that the first part of the year has been a great success!

I'd like to start by congratulating the entire USS *Slater* team for hosting a tremendous HNSA conference in Albany, New York, back in September. The sessions were interesting and educational, the outings were fun, and the ship looked great! Most of all, it was good to see the

Association members getting together for one of the most essential functions of HNSA: sharing best practices and maintaining essential contacts for the purpose of continued preservation of these important historic vessels and the rich history they represent. As these ships continue to age, and the challenges of preservation increase, the relationships that HNSA can help facilitate become increasingly essential for success.

Along those lines, there are many success stories out there at each of your respective ships and museums. I strongly encourage you to write an article for *Anchor Watch* to brag a bit about what has worked well for your team. That valuable information may well help another organization with similar challenges.

Similarly, your story or lessons learned might be a great presentation topic for the next HNSA Conference. The 2024 Conference will be hosted by the USS *Midway* Museum in San Diego, California. Their team, and the HNSA Programs Committee, are working hard to provide relevant topics for that event. No need to wait for the inevitable Call for Papers as it's already out and hopefully you've submitted an idea. If you have a topic that you would like to hear about, something that would benefit your organization, or if you have an engaging topic that you could present to the group, please reach out with the details.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to our aging veterans, especially those who served aboard these historic vessels. Here at the USS *Lexington* Museum, we recently had our oldest volunteer pass away. Captain Bob Batterson was highlighted in the last issue of *Anchor Watch*. He was a Pearl Harbor survivor, F6F Hellcat pilot on the USS *Bennington* during World War II, served 35 years in the Navy, and served over 30 years as a *Lexington* volunteer. In fact, one month before passing away this year, at the age of 102, he still drove himself to the ship and gave a tour! These amazing veterans and their stories are why it's worth preserving these historic ships. I thank each and every one of you for honoring those important veterans by the great work you do with your organizations.

Best wishes for the rest of 2024!

Steve

Cover Photo: USS Johnston (DD-557) on the day of her commissioning, 27 October 1943.

[See page 18 of this newsletter for Part Two of the discovery of the wreck site.]

Cover Credit: Naval History & Heritage Command photo NH 63495, courtesy of Mrs. Roger Dudley (Direct link to image source: <https://www.navsource.org/archives/05/557.htm>).

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Executive Director's Message

Ryan Szimanski, Executive Director, Historic Naval Ships Association



Shipmates -

Another year is behind us and 2024 is shaping up to be a banner year. 2023 saw many of us get closer to normalcy following the pandemic closures of 2020 and the subsequent reduced visitation many of us have been experiencing over the last few

years. Congratulations to those of you who matched or exceeded your 2019 visitation numbers! Our annual conference hosted by USS *Slater* in September was great, and we are already looking forward to our 2024 conference hosted by USS *Midway* in San Diego, California, this September. All in all, things are looking up for 2024 as the year gains in momentum.

Two of the metrics for success from member museums I see as indicative of their current status include “are they hiring” and “are they starting capital projects”. Museums like Patriots Point and USS *North Carolina* have both posted high-level positions lately, other museums like USS *Kidd* and USS *New Jersey* are preparing for dry dock, USS *Texas* is nearing the end of her dry docking, and others like USS *Iowa* and USS *Midway* are doing major work pier-side. I always hesitate to call out specific museums because I am sure that I am leaving people out. If I didn't mention your organization and you're doing something exciting, please reach out and let me know so that I can include your project in future updates.

The biggest news for HNSA this past year, besides the conference of course, was our change in web hosts. The entire process came with some teething issues, but the new system has made membership renewals significantly easier. Imagine how much easier they will be next year when I am actually competent with the new system! We are still working to add everything back to the new website, but have accomplished much of the project already. If you noticed anything missing or that needs editing, please let me know.

I cannot say enough good things about the conference

in Albany. Our many sponsors, such as PPG Paints and Anode Solutions, supported HNSA more than ever before. Museum ships like *Midway*, *Lexington*, and *Bowfin* also supported the conference and our scholarship program, which allowed five emerging museum ship professionals to attend. *Slater* hosted some wonderful tours that really showed off the huge amount of work the staff and volunteers have completed. Between the crisp camouflage paint, the accurate fighting lights, and the staged interior spaces, we got to see what destroyer museums can look like after several years of battleships hosting the conference. The presentations were informative and thought provoking, as always, and my colleagues at the *New Jersey* are still discussing some of the topics, including Ivan Pancov's talk on attracting younger demographics. We appreciate the hard work the folks at *Slater* put in to make this year such a success!

We are looking forward to this year's conference in San Diego hosted by the volunteers and staff of USS *Midway*. It's been a few years since HNSA was hosted by a fighting flattop. **Save the Date:** it will be held Monday to Thursday, 16 to 19 September 2024. The Call for Papers has already been circulated, so I'll just add here the hope that presenters will submit written versions of their talk for publication in *Anchor Watch*. Make sure you save the date!

I hope to see you all in San Diego this September. I know those of us up north are dreaming of southern California already as we have weathered winter storms and are finally seeing signs that spring is easing into summer. Expect to hear more from me about this in the near future and please stay in touch. My email address is executivedirector@hnsa.org.

Please reach out whenever you need,

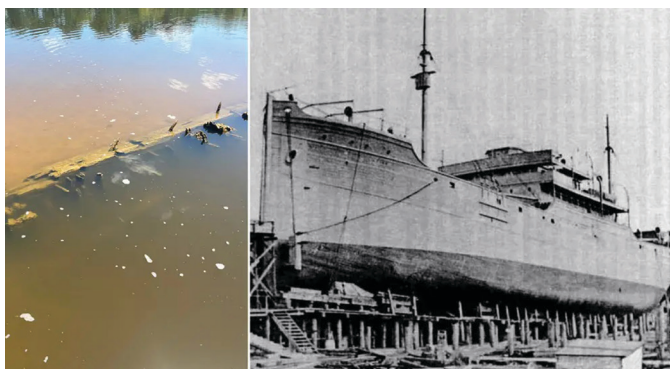
Ryan



AROUND OUR FLEET AND BEYOND

Lou Conter, the final survivor of the sinking of the battleship USS *Arizona*, passed away on 1 April 2024 at his home in Grass Valley, California, at the age of 102. One of the 93 survivors that were on board the ship during the attack on Pearl Harbor, Lieutenant Commander Conter was uninjured in the attack and was able to assist the wounded in the immediate aftermath, helping with post-casualty response. After Pearl Harbor, he attended flight school and went on to fly missions in the Pacific during World War II and served in the Korean War. After 30 years in the Navy, Lieutenant Commander Conter retired and engaged in a distinguished career in real estate and development. He is remembered as a war hero, who was devoted to preserving the memory of those lost during the Pearl Harbor attack. The following links share more details of his important story: <https://arizonafinalsalute.com/lou-conter/> and <https://tinyurl.com/msc9tayf>.

Drought conditions along the Neches River in Texas in late summer 2023 revealed possibly five World War I-era wooden ships built as part of the Emergency Fleet Corporation managed by the United States Shipping Board; the vessels were essentially 19th-century-style wooden ships, with steam-driven engines. These are just a few such vessels built in older shipyards of the period, while most modern shipyards were building 20th-century steel ships, utilizing internal combustion engines. With the end of the war, the outdated wooden ships were immediately obsolete and many were abandoned in the Neches and Sabine rivers. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) knows of 20 ships at the bottom of the Neches, and another 15 in the Sabine. Amy Borgens, state maritime archaeologist at the THC, notes that the best way to preserve the legacy of these ships is to leave them in place where they were originally deposited (<https://tinyurl.com/2z786rr8>).



Right: Ship wreckage exposed in the Neches River.
Left: Image of the type of wooden vessel built under the Emergency Fleet Corporation initiative.
Credit: Bill Milner (Ice House Museum)/<https://tinyurl.com/2z786rr8>

The wreck of the USS *Jacob Jones* (DD-61) was first identified in August 2022 near the Isles of Scilly, an archipelago off the southwestern coast of England. The ship's place in history as the only American destroyer sunk during World War I increases the risk of illegal salvage. As a result, the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defense at the request of United States Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) has completed a remotely operated vehicle survey of the vessel for long-term preservation; it also raised the ship's bell to prevent loss. Currently stored at Wessex Archaeology in England, the bell will be returned to American control in a formal hand-over ceremony later this year when it will then be transferred to the NHHC's Underwater Archaeology Branch for conservation. The intent is that it will eventually go on display at the National Museum of the United States Navy. (<https://tinyurl.com/yy8p8z2v>)



Bell raised by the MOD's Salvage and Marine Operations (SALMO) unit during a recent survey of the World War I wreck of the Tucker-class destroyer USS *Jacob Jones* (DD-61).

Credit: SALMO/ <https://tinyurl.com/yy8p8z2v>

The United States Navy's 91st *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer to be built at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Mississippi will be named the USS *Charles J. French* (DDG-142). Petty Officer French, known as the "Human Tugboat," was lauded as a World War II hero for his efforts to tow injured shipmates to safety. He first joined the Navy in 1937, where he served one tour as a mess attendant on the cruiser USS *Houston*. He left the Navy with an honorable discharge in November 1941, but rejoined after the attack on Pearl Harbor and was assigned to the high-speed transport USS *Gregory*, a former destroyer that had been refitted to carry marines and launch boats for amphibious assaults. While involved in the Guadalcanal Campaign, the *Gregory* and sister ship USS

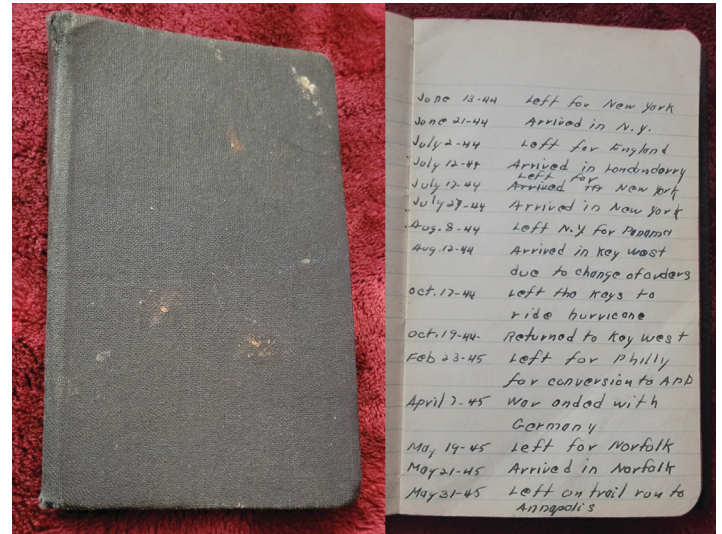
Little were attacked by Japanese destroyers on 5 September 1942, which continued bombardment after both ships were sinking and the commanding officer had ordered abandon ship. Petty Officer French found his way onto a raft of injured survivors and subsequently tied a rope around his waist, got back in the water, and swam for hours to keep the raft as far from the shelling as possible. The raft and all aboard were eventually rescued by a Marine Corps landing craft. All survived as a result of Petty Officer French's heroic efforts. He was posthumously awarded the Navy Marine Corps Medal in 2022. (<https://tinyurl.com/3mrhhy87>)



Petty Officer Charles Jackson French (U.S. Navy illustration).
Credit: United States Navy/<https://tinyurl.com/3mrhhy87>

A World War II mystery has come to light inexplicably tucked into a piece of furniture located in Massachusetts. A small military-green notebook that appears to be an informal ship log has been identified as once belonging to an unknown sailor stationed aboard the naval destroyer, USS *Amesbury*. The resident of Massachusetts that found the notebook recently contacted the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Florida Keys Marine Sanctuary. The author documented key events from 13 June 1944 into 1945, including an entry from 7 April 1945 stating “war ended with Germany,” as shown in the following photo. Some events were local, such as when the *Amesbury* left Key West to avoid a hurricane. Others are on a more global scale, such as noting the ship participating in the D-Day landings in France. On 23 February 1945, the notebook's author noted that the ship “left for Philly for conversion,” a notation documenting that the USS *Amesbury* was one of the 104 destroyer escorts that were to be converted to high-speed transports. The ship was retired from service in 1946, and subsequently stationed in Florida, eventually running aground 5-miles west of

Key West before being intentionally sunk for a deep-water artificial reef within the boundaries of the marine sanctuary. During a 1960 hurricane, the now wrecked ship was broken in two, with a 15-yard gap developing between the bow and the stern. It currently sits in 25 feet of water, with its deck guns still visible. Neither staff at the marine sanctuary nor the individual that found the notebook have been able to identify any other information about the author of the notebook. (More information can be found at the following links: <https://tinyurl.com/2dxtjy52>, <https://tinyurl.com/z3c976jn>, <https://tinyurl.com/2jbd3wu>.)



Right: Front cover of the notebook discovered in a piece of furniture..
Left: Page from the notebook, including the notation on 7 April 1945 of “war ended with Germany”.
Credit: NOAA Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Facebook Page

In April 2024, Wargaming's *World of Warships* (<https://worldofwarships.com/>), the online multiplayer naval combat video game that is part of the broader Wargaming.net site (<https://na.wargaming.net/en>), added the USS *Wisconsin* (BB-64) to its roster of more than 800 vessels to coincide with the ship's 80th anniversary and just in advance of the 80th D-Day anniversary in June. The *Iowa*-class battleship played a pivotal role in the Pacific Theatre during World War II, participating in the Philippines Campaign and the Battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Decommissioned after participating in the Korean War, the USS *Wisconsin* was reactivated in 1986 and participated in Operation Desert Storm. Within the *World of Warships* game space, players will have a chance to build a virtual USS *Wisconsin* over the course of three months, prior to having the opportunity to captain the vessel in naval battles, both independently and as a part of group missions. *World of Warships* maintains an unwavering commitment to preserving naval history through educational initiatives and museum partnerships, including its ongoing sponsorship of the annual HNSA conference for which the organization is grateful!

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has recently confirmed the identification of remains recovered from the wreck of a United States bomber that crashed near the Mediterranean island of Malta in May 1943. United States Army Air Forces Sergeant Irving R. Newman was 22-years-old when his aircraft, a B-24 Liberator based in Libya, experienced engine trouble during a bombing raid across the southern tip of Italy, where it was hit by anti-aircraft fire. The aircraft lost power as it approached Malta, which was being used as an emergency landing site for Allied aircraft. As the plane crashed into the water, nine members of the bomber crew were able to escape but Sergeant Newman was injured by the anti-aircraft fire and the plane sank too quickly for the escaping crew to extricate him from the damaged plane. As a gunner on the bomber, recovery of the remains was difficult, with the lead archaeologist on the team noting the excavation was “very challenging because of the ragged edges and the unstable nature of the site.” With the positive identification by the DPAA, Sergeant Newman can be returned to his family, providing much needed closure. (<https://tinyurl.com/53kskvyf>)

Historic England (HE) and France’s Department of Underwater Archaeological Research (DRASSM) have partnered in a new research project to locate and identify previously undocumented shipwrecks lost during Operation Dynamo, the mass evacuation of Allied soldiers off the beaches of Dunkirk, France, from 26 May to 4 June 1940. This is the first time the two organizations have partnered on such research, creating a unique opportunity to expand historical and scientific information on both sides of the English Channel about Operation Dynamo. This partnership will enrich the content for the Dunkirk War Museum, and inform discussions for a memorial devoted to the Allied soldiers and seafarers who died at sea during the mission. Over 1000 ships of various nationalities, both naval and small civilian vessels, responded to the need and were able to evacuate 338, 226 soldiers. Unfortunately, 305 vessels were lost during the mission and to date only 37 have been located in French waters. A further 32 are believed to have been lost in the general area but their location is not known or documented. The initiative to locate the lost vessels will use geophysical survey equipment (multi-beam echo sounder, side-scan sonar, and magnetometer) to investigate the seabed prior to deploying divers on site for documentation. Investigations will be undertaken from the DRASSM research vessel *André Malraux*. As noted by Duncan Wilson, the Chief Executive of HE, “The evacuation from Dunkirk marked a critical point in the history of the Second World War. We are honored to have been invited by the French marine heritage

agency, DRASSM, to join their investigation of ships sunk in those desperate days. These wrecks are a physical legacy to Operation Dynamo and all those it affected, including many who did not reach safety”. (<https://tinyurl.com/ms6x3nye>; <https://tinyurl.com/ycx795k5>)



The *André Malraux* research vessel, which will lead the search for shipwrecks lost during ‘Operation Dynamo’.
Credit: © Frédéric Osada and DRASSM/<https://tinyurl.com/ms6x3nye>

The August 2023 issue of *Anchor Watch* explored new educational resources created by the *Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum* under the auspices of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant. A recent website restructuring means that the link posted in the original article no longer works. To explore the lessons that were created, please update your bookmark to the following link: <https://intrepidmuseum.org/resources/education/learning-library>. A vast amount of knowledge on a variety of topics and themes developed for a wide range of audiences awaits!



FLEET FEATURES

Postcard from Normandy: From the Latest Generation to the Greatest Generation - An Essay

Jonathan L. Leung, Docent and Historian, USS Blueback and USS Bowfin

The breeze wasn't as salty, nor the sea as frigid as I expected on this November morning. The warm sunshine and the soft sand only served to deceive. The moniker "Bloody Omaha" seemed more apropos for the debacle following the Kansas-Nebraska Act, than for a feature of the French countryside. How could such a picturesque and peaceful beach have once been littered with lead and the stench of death? It was impossible to imagine how one of my friends shared this same view seventy years ago. Their perspective of course, was a bit different.

When hostilities first broke out, Fred Carneau was building escort carriers in the shipyard in Bremerton, Washington, but the slow mobilization for war meant that these workers sometimes waited months for steel to arrive. Finally, fed up with passing time by "welding guys' cleats to the deck and throwing welding wire at the ducks," Fred enlisted in the Navy. It was September 1942. After boot camp, Fred was assigned to a tank landing ship (LST), and dispatched across the Atlantic to Oran, Algeria. His first taste of battle soon followed, as the invasion fleet roared ashore on the Italian beaches of Sicily and Salerno in late 1943.

On my autumn morning though, there was only the sound of gently lapping waves. No guns. No planes. No explosions. No screams of agony.

A sign depicting prohibited activities on the beach ironically reminds us that firearms are no longer allowed. Two other significant man-made installations rest on this stretch of beach. A set of metallic wings rise up through the compact sand and reflect rays of sunshine back onto the fairy-tale bungalows of Saint Laurent sur Mer, a quiet town nestled adjacent to the beach. This memorial was dedicated for the 60th anniversary commemorations in 2004. The other oddity is an arrangement of decaying wooden pylons, organized in neat rows of varying size. These are remnants of the artificial harbor the Americans built after the beach was secured; they had yet to be installed when Fred made his cameo appearance in the largest invasion in history.

Approximately thirty hours after the initial wave of troops hit the beach, the carnage remained as fresh as it had been during the first hour. "Yeah... I saw the beach. It looked... terrible. They had a row of guys about four foot high, and

I bet it was a hundred feet long, and they had them just laying out, stacked up like cordwood... [soldiers] that they'd killed." Fred's LST beached at high tide, "We got up nice and fairly close to the beach. And the tide went out, and we looked... a mile in back of us... and there was the edge of the water. We were just sitting on the sand, high and dry. We unloaded a bunch of infantry that we had, and then we had to wait for the tide."

Waiting for the tide to come in, however, wasn't a routine experience either. "They were shooting at us with small arms fire...that's all there was, just small arms fire. And a bunch of it rattled on the boat, but nothing ever went through it, cause they were pretty well dispersed. You just kind of didn't feel like running around out on deck!"

And when the tide finally came back in several hours later, Fred made a decision he would never forget. Volunteering to replace another shipmate who had taken ill, Fred jumped into a small landing craft and headed back to the beach. "We went in to pick up some prisoners that they had there. Well, we got a load of them, and we started back out. That's where another small boat was coming in, one of them 36-foot ramp boats. They hit one of them deals they had—big logs with a mine under it—blew the whole boat up in the air...tore it apart."

With no other help close by, Fred's crew sprang into action. "We fished them three guys out of the water, took them up to the first LST that had a doctor. They had a flag flying if they had a doctor." But their heroic efforts were in vain. None of the three survived. It was a brutal dose of reality, even in a war saturated with them. And for Fred Carneau, he remembered this devastating experience as being "the only time I got seasick."

Following the war, Fred left active duty and transitioned into the Naval Reserves. In 1947, he joined the submarine service, with a tour of duty on the USS *Entemedor* (SS-340), and eventually qualified on the USS *Stickleback* (SS-415) in 1952. He retired from the United States Navy as a Senior Chief in February 1978.

For the last twenty years, Fred has volunteered to restore and maintain the USS *Blueback* (SS-581), a

decommissioned attack submarine that is now open to the public as a museum and memorial in Portland, Oregon. Onboard the *Blueback*, his name is etched on a plaque that greets visitors as they enter the submarine. The plaque is an award from the Historic Naval Ships Association, recognizing his “tireless efforts and thousands of hours toward the maintenance, restoration, preservation, and TLC” of the *Blueback*. It could just as easily have been referring to the service he gave his country.

Of the harrowing experiences he went through in the Navy, Fred remarked, “It’s enough to make a believer out of you.” He was younger than me when his country sent him halfway across the world to the beaches of Italy and

France—to defend the freedoms of people he would never meet. And although his generation has been openly lauded as heroes, many reject that label. The most any of them are willing to concede is a sense of pride in their duty and service. I’m just proud to call Fred my friend.

Notes: All quotations were recorded by the author during a series of personal and group interviews in 2008 and 2009. The visit to Omaha Beach followed in 2011. Fred Carneau received his HNSA award in 2006, alongside good friend and shipmate Bob Walters. This was followed by an award for 20 years of volunteer service at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in April 2014. He passed away that December.

Medway Queen Celebrates Centenary

Richard Halton, Medway Queen Preservation Society

The *Medway Queen* Centenary events kicked off on Sunday 21 April 2024, with a memorial service in Rochester Cathedral, for an invited crowd of people with family connections to the ship at all stages in her career, to remember all those involved who are no longer with us. This was well attended, and members of the cathedral’s regular congregation were joined by approximately 200 invitees representing past crew, passengers, and *Medway Queen* Preservation Society (MQPS) members. The service was led by the Dean of Rochester, The Very Reverend Philip Hesketh AKC DL. We were honored to include our one remaining Dunkirk veteran, Ron Nabarro, who was rescued by HMS *Medway Queen* in June 1940, and descendants of other evacuated personnel and the men who saved them. Notable were David Mathias whose father was drafted into the crew for Operation Dynamo and Alan Cook whose grandfather was Commanding Officer of HMS *Medway Queen* at Dunkirk. Our President, the Right Honorable Lord West of Spithead GCB DSC was there, as were the High Sheriff of Kent (Dr. Gillian Fargher); the Mayor of Medway (Councillor Nina Gurung), and her husband (Taikaji Gurung); the Leader of Medway Council (Vince Maple); the Reverend Canon Chris Dench and Dr. Sue Plummer (Director of Medway Campus, Canterbury Christ Church University). Canon Chris Dench is Canon for Worship and Spirituality at Rochester Cathedral and was a great help in organizing the service. Readings were given by Alan Cook and by Brigadier (ret’d.) Trevor Minter OBE DL, Vice Lord Lieutenant of Kent. Two Deputy Lieutenants of Kent were also present, Ann West and Rosemary Dymond.

Monday 22 April 2024 saw a steady stream of visitors taking the guided tour of the ship. Many had been at

the previous day’s service and, having traveled some considerable distance, they were keen to see the ship itself. Attendance was far higher than a normal Saturday adding to the festive occasion. The guides and the shop onboard *Medway Queen* were kept busy. A particular feature was a Dunkirk diorama featuring a model of *Medway Queen* at the East Mole taking on troops.



Medway Queen decorated to celebrate her centenary!
Credit: Elysse Ratcliff/ Medway Queen Preservation Society

Tuesday 23 April 2024 (the actual launch anniversary) saw a reception for invited guests on board HMS *Medway Queen*. Besides those at the Cathedral, we were joined by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Lady Colgrain and representatives of the emergency services. Alan Cook was joined by his son, Robin and cousin, Linda, on the Tuesday, giving us a grandson, granddaughter and great grandson together! Admiral Lord West and Philip Hesketh presided over the ceremony. Proceedings began with a march past of cadets and veterans on the quayside, followed by a

blessing of the Centenary Ensign by the Very Reverend Philip Hesketh. The Ensign was attached to the ensign staff at the stern of the ship and hoisted by two of the sea cadets under the watchful eye of Admiral Lord West. The cadets and veterans then joined the assembled guests on board for refreshments. There were the usual speeches, and a Centenary Plaque was presented to *Medway Queen* by Howard Brooks (Vice Commodore) and Heather Dennett of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships.

The week ended with the usual Saturday open day on 27 April, enhanced by a visit from a flotilla of boats from the Rochester Cruising Club, led by the Dunkirk Little Ship

Maimonde. As hoped for, this day was much busier than we would usually expect, with a good crowd of visitors and the crews from the boats. The MQPS offer a grateful note of thanks to Pam Bathurst and her subcommittee.

The fundraising possibilities have not been forgotten and a range of *Medway Queen* Centenary merchandise has been commissioned. The merchandise is now available and can be viewed and purchased from the Medway Queen Visitor Centre ME7 1RX when open to the public (Saturdays from 11am to 4pm (last admissions 3pm) and from the shop on the Medway Queen website: www.medwayqueen.co.uk.

Battleship New Jersey Dry Docked for the First Time in 32 Years

Ryan Szimanski, Executive Director, Historic Naval Ships Association

On Thursday, 21 March 2024, the Battleship *New Jersey* departed the Pat Jones Pier for a historic dry-docking to conduct preventive maintenance for the first time in over 30 years. The ship was guided by tugs from McAllister Towing. The ship was turned around, headed south under the Walt Whitman Bridge to the Paulsboro Marine Terminal, where nearly 500,000 gallons of water was added for ballast.

With ballasting complete, on Wednesday, 27 March 2024, the *New Jersey* left the Paulsboro Marine Terminal, and successfully cruised north on the Delaware River to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. The Battleship was guided by four tug boats from McAllister Towing and took about two hours to traverse the river to the Naval Shipyard, where she is now berthed in Dock #3, the same dock she was launched from on 7 December 1942.

Dock #3 is nearly empty of water as pumps have been pumping water back into the Delaware River so crews can begin preventive maintenance on the ship's hull. The dock is expected to be dry and free of mud soon.

The dry-dock project is vital for the Battleship's longevity. The ship is expected to be in dry dock for 60 days for preventive maintenance. If all goes well, we hope to have the Battleship back at her pier at the Camden Waterfront in late May/early June.



Battleship *New Jersey* in dry dock.
Credit: Battleship *New Jersey*, <https://www.battleshipnewjersey.org/drydock/>



Reflections on the 2023 HNSA Annual Conference

Ryan Szimanski, Executive Director, Historic Naval Ships Association

The following is a quick recap of the September 2023 conference, a reminder for those who attended, and a teaser for those considering attending the upcoming September 2024 conference. The folks at the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum, home to USS *Slater*, put on a fantastic show and were incredibly hospitable. Not to undersell the work of the staff, I think we all gained an appreciation for the tasks accomplished by their wonderful volunteers. We had some top-notch speakers, a productive board meeting, and a great trade show, with many thanks to our sponsors.

Attendance was better than any of us could have hoped for. Tim spoke disparagingly about who would want to come to Albany between Honolulu and San Diego. I am happy to report attendance was the highest of any purely HNSA conference. I believe some conferences in the past where HNSA partnered with other maritime organizations may have had higher attendance, but that was before my time. Not only was in-person attendance up compared to the last several years in both Fleet members and sponsors at our trade show, but we also continued to have a strong showing from virtual attendees. More importantly, attendance was more diverse than I have ever seen before, and that can only strengthen our field by bringing in new ideas and viewpoints.

Speaking of the presentations, I would like to thank our many great speakers; we could not have had such an impressive program without them and their hard work in preparing presentations. I learned a tremendous amount thanks to timely presentations on underwater work in lieu of dry docking, insurance, and volunteer management. Be sure to email me and tell me which presentations were most helpful to you so that we can have more information on those subjects at future conferences.

Congratulations to the various organizations and individuals who earned awards this year. HNSA gave out a record number of awards and many of our members earned awards for their contributions to their museums and to the whole field. We were joined for a second year by Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC), who also recognized several HNSA member museums and individuals for their work telling the Navy's story. We all look forward to working closely with NHHC on our shared mission in the future. NHHC's application window for this year's awards program is live so be sure to reach out with any questions. The window for submissions covering the 2024 calendar year will open 1 March and close 1 June.

HNSA will be putting out a call for awards in the near future for the 2024 conference. You can apply for awards from both organizations.

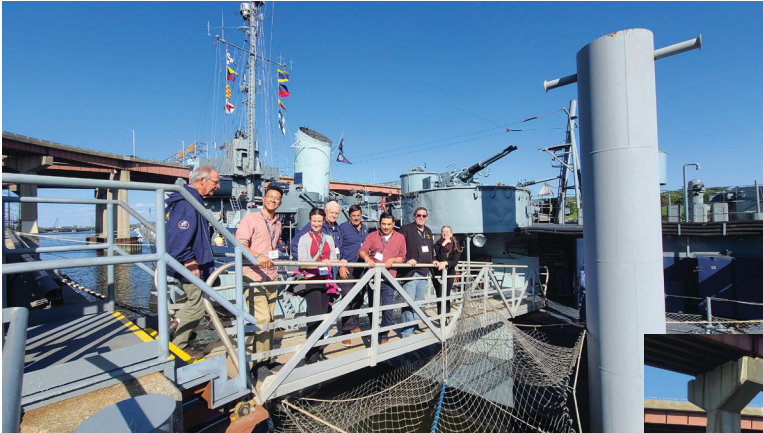
I would be remiss if I didn't thank our generous sponsors for their support. HNSA received more support for the conference than ever before. In particular, I need to thank Anode Solutions and PPG Paints for their generous support, and fleet members *Missouri*, *Midway*, *Bowfin*, *Lucid*, *Missouri*, *Lexington*, and *Cod*. These member museums stepped up and helped support the rest of the Fleet, either by donating to the conference or to our scholarship program, which allowed five HNSA members to join us.

Some of the highlights of this conference were the various after-hours receptions and events put on by our hosts. Shanna's idea to hold a museum ship specific pub trivia night is probably my favorite after-hours event ever, even if Frank Thompson needs to be banned from participating in the future. The folks at *Midway* will have their work cut out for them topping this at the 2024 conference. Join me virtually or in person in San Diego this September to see how they do.



Highlights From The 2023 HNSA Conference

The following pages include a selection of photos from the 2023 Annual Conference aboard USS *Slater*. In lieu of supplying all the details, we thought it might be fun to have a caption contest! Look closely, find yourself/your friends/your coworkers, and submit your chosen photo with a fun, clever, or silly caption. Send submissions to the editor (editor@hnsa.org) and the best/funniest will be chosen and published with the photo in the next issue of Anchor Watch. We've included as many images as the allotted pages would allow to give you plenty to choose from!



Highlights From The 2023 HNSA Conference



Highlights From The 2023 HNSA Conference



Highlights From The 2023 HNSA Conference



Award Winners From The 2023 HNSA Conference

2023 Casper J. Knight, Jr. Award

Presented to Charles Hinman

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made at the Pacific Fleet Submarine Museum. You have dedicated decades to sharing the stories of those who served on submarines, especially those “On Eternal Patrol”.

2023 William J. Diffley Award For Departing Executive Directors

Presented to Captain Terry Bragg

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made at Battleship *North Carolina* and in HNSA, which have poised both organizations for success, now and into the future. *Fair winds and following seas.*

2023 William J. Diffley Award For Departing Executive Directors

Presented to the Rear Admiral John “Mac” McLaughlin

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made at USS *Midway* Museum and in HNSA, which have poised both organizations for success now and into the future. *Fair winds and following seas.*

2023 Russell Booth Award

Presented to the Shanna Schuster

In recognition of the significant contributions made at USS *Slater* over the last year. Your efforts contributed to construction of the museum’s new Visitor’s Center and strengthened your local area through community partnerships.

2023 Henry A. Vadnais Award

Presented to Shane Stephenson

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made as Curator of The Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park. Your work saved countless objects from a near-catastrophic flooding incident under extremely challenging circumstances.

2023 Henry A. Vadnais Award

Presented to Franklin Clay

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made as the Curator of Battleship *Missouri* Memorial. Your work acquiring new artifacts and creating new exhibits has touched and educated countless visitors to the Memorial.

2023 Educator Award

Presented to Travis Pickens

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made as Senior Coordinator of the Camp LEX program on board USS *Lexington*. You have excelled in the areas of education and public engagement.

2023 Educator Award

Presented to Jonathan Milard

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made as Manager of School and Teacher Engagement at the *Intrepid* Sea, Air, and Space Museum. Your work, with other museums, telling underrepresented histories benefits our entire community has excelled.

2023 Bos’n Marvin Curry Award

Presented to Ernie Trevino

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made as a volunteer at USS *Lexington* Museum. Your expertise has been critical to the aircraft restoration team, especially your work on the SBD *Dauntless*.

2023 Maintenance/Preservation/Exhibition Award

Presented to Fred Enters, United States Navy (retired)

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made as a volunteer at USS *Kidd*, including as a leader of other volunteers. You have excelled in restoring areas of the ship and cataloging the navigational charts. .

2023 Maintenance/Preservation/Exhibition Award

Presented to Chief Mario Roy

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made as a volunteer at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park. You have been a significant resource to the team in the effort to recover from the near sinking of USS *The Sullivans* and to relight the ship.

2023 Dr. John C. Fakan Communications Award

Presented to Warren D. “Buzz” Smith

In recognition of the significant contributions you have made to The Friends of the *Cassin Young*. You have excelled in the areas of digital media, outreach, community building, and fund raising.

2023 President’s Special Award

Presented to Chuck Merkel

Wise Counselor, Common Sense Advocate, Selfless Servant. Your behind-the-scenes Board contributions have strengthened HNSA and its Fleet Members. You truly exemplify “Mission First - People Always”!

2023 President’s Special Award

Presented to Vanessa Lewis

For the extra hours and heavy lifting to transition HNSA’s business model, membership management, and registration to a new website. You went above and beyond to accomplish this mission

High Honors for Commander (Ret'd) Rowland Marshall and Lieutenant-Commander (Ret'd) Sherry Richardson

In November 2023, the Government of Canada paid tribute to Commander (Ret'd) Rowland Marshall and Lieutenant-Commander (Ret'd) Sherry Richardson through Parks Canada's Hometown Heroes program on behalf of the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister responsible for Parks Canada. The ceremony was held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in the presence of dignitaries and family members. Full details at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/mtttd4wbc>.

Congratulations to Hometown Heroes Commander (Ret'd) Marshall and Lieutenant-Commander (Ret'd) Richardson!



Credit: Parks Canada Facebook Page, <https://tinyurl.com/57c8yw7x>

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SPECIAL FEATURES

Efforts to Save Famed Dunkirk ‘Little Ship’ Motor Yacht Sundowner Underway

Melissa Ratliff

Motor Yacht (MY) *Sundowner* is possibly the most well-known of the ‘little ships’ that served during the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Forces in Dunkirk, France. MY *Sundowner*, an Admiralty steam pinnace, was requisitioned on 31 May 1940 to make the trek from Ramsgate. Though its performance was beyond admirable, carrying 130 men back to England from the shores of France, it is her owner’s story that has helped cement her legacy.

Before his time aboard MY *Sundowner*, Commander Charles Herbert Lightoller held a somewhat mythical presence in nautical history of the period. By the time he sailed *Sundowner* to France, he had already racked up an impressive list of near-death experiences. In an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1936, the Chorley-born Lightoller recalled that he had collectively survived “four shipwrecks and a fire.” These disasters included a shipwreck on St. Paul Island, a coal-fire, and the sinking of the HMS *Falcon*.

For better or worse, however, Lightoller knew his legacy would most likely be tied to the sinking of RMS *Titanic*. Lightoller was brought on as the ship’s First Officer in Belfast. A last-minute shuffle of the crew in Southampton, England, resulted in his demotion to Second Officer. His last bridge watch ended at 2200 the night of the collision with the iceberg in the North Atlantic. His repeated luck followed him throughout the overnight hours of 14–15 April 1912.

An attempt to launch one of the collapsible lifeboats on port was met with gravity, the Englehardt lifeboat landing on its top as *Titanic* began to founder. Lightoller was also thrown in the water and in the dark and confusion, he began swimming toward the crow’s nest, becoming pinned against a grate under the front funnel.

Assuming death was imminent, Lightoller recalled that he was becoming “quite tired of things” when some type of explosion, likely caused by a boiler, propelled him up to the surface where he managed to hold on to the overturned Collapsible B. As RMS *Titanic* began its final descent, he kept roughly 25 men on top of the lifeboat by balancing

and adjusting to the swells in the ocean caused by the ship and those who were thrashing around in the water. He was the most senior surviving officer of the disaster and the last person to board *Carpathia*.

In 1929, Lightoller’s wife Sylvia found the hull of *Sundowner* in a junk yard in Conyer. Once the hull was examined and determined to be in relatively good shape, Lightoller paid his friend Charles Cooper to handle the conversion of the hull. The Lightollers were actively involved in the design and construction of the ship, living with “ruler in hand” as he noted in his logs. *Sundowner* underwent her trials in 1930, and spent her days visiting the coasts of Belgium, France, and Spain.

Commander Lightoller was well known to the admiralty before they called him to requisition *Sundowner* on 31 May 1940. He had spent a good portion of World War I in the Dover Patrol, guiding ships from Ramsgate to Dunkirk. His middle son, Richard Trevor, was somewhere on the beaches of Dunkirk awaiting rescue as Germany’s Panzer line advanced, pushing the British Expeditionary Forces (BEF) to the sea. Lightoller agreed to give the Navy the use of *Sundowner*, but insisted he would be the one to take her. Accompanying him was his eldest son, Frederic Roger Lightoller, and a sea scout, Gerald Ashcroft.

Lightoller had every intention of going right up to the beaches, but he was stopped twice along the way. They stopped to help the crew of *Westerly*, which was on fire. After transporting the occupants to safety, the second mission became repatriating BEF members onboard HMS *Worcester* (D-96).

When asked about the capacity of *Sundowner*, which was 21, Lightoller lied and said, “About a 100.” In total, 127 service members were placed on board as she returned home. The crew were met with a Stuka dive-bomber on the route, but Lightoller used the knowledge provided by his son Brian to avoid being hit with bombs. Eventually, the Stuka gave up its buzzing of *Sundowner*, instead focusing its attentions on the HMS *Worcester* (D-96).

Upon arrival back in Ramsgate, a member of the admiralty

counted the number of service men disembarking and asked Lightoller, “My God, mate. Where did you put them all?”

Realizing the count was wrong, Lightoller returned back inside and woke up one man who had fallen asleep on the toilet. In the years after Lightoller’s death, *Sundowner* was sold, but eventually made its way to the Ramsgate Maritime Museum in Kent in 1986. Renovation work began and there the Little Ship sat. Time was not kind to *Sundowner*, but a deal was brokered as financial issues began to plague the museum.

Sundowner was sold into possession of John Moolenschot and the ship remains dry docked at the Michael Dennett Shipbuilders in Chertsey awaiting repair. The damage of time was far greater than many anticipated, with her nearly sinking on the way to Chertsey. Thankfully, the ship appeared to have the plucky luck of Lightoller as the engine managed to start one last time to get her to the dock after nearly stopping altogether. Though no longer held

in a trust, a crowd-sourcing campaign is ongoing to help with the costs of restoration. The ultimate goal is to have her prepared for the 85th Anniversary of Dunkirk, to have *Sundowner* return to France once more. You can keep up with ongoing efforts on the Sundowner website: <https://www.sundowner.online/>.



MY Sundowner.

Credit: Courtesy of John Moolenschot/SundownerOnline

The Wreck of the USS Johnston (DD-557) - Part 2

Parks Stephenson, LCDR USN (Ret.), Executive Director, USS Kidd Veterans Museum

Part I of this story (*Anchor Watch*, August 2023) described the effort to find the wreck of USS *Johnston* (DD-557). Part II describes the story that the wreck itself tells of *Johnston*’s last battle.

The analysis of the wreck was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the author built two computer-generated (CG) models: one of USS *Johnston* in her 1944 configuration; the other, of the main body of the wreck as observed in 2021. The 1944 model was built from plans and detailed with the help of a group of *Fletcher*-class destroyer experts who supplied valuable insight and resource materials. The 2021 model was a clone of the 1944 model, brought forward in time by replicating every detail that could be discerned from the underwater imagery of the wreck. With the wreck’s CG model built, the *Johnston* survivors’ personal accounts (provided by the *Johnston-Hoel* Association) and Japanese ship war diaries (provided by Robert Lundgren) were matched in a 3D environment with the observed condition of the wreck. The details of the analysis and justification for conclusions, much too extensive to recount here, were written in a forensic analysis report and submitted to the Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) for their approval and archive. In summary, the analysis yielded the following story.

The last battle for *Johnston* began at 0650 on 25 October 1944 when large-caliber shells began falling amongst the carriers that *Johnston* was escorting. Commander Ernest E. Evans came “barreling out of his sea cabin ordering all hands to general quarters, the engine room to light off all boilers and to make smoke.” While the rest of Taffy 3 struggled to come to grips with the sudden and unexpected sight of Japanese “pagoda” masts and big guns on the horizon, “GQ Johnny” was already springing into action.

The Japanese heavy cruiser *Kumano* was leading the charge of the all-out Japanese attack on the Taffy 3 carriers. Fully aware that his run directly into the teeth of the Japanese big guns might be suicidal, but determined to loose his lethal torpedoes before his ship went down, Evans pointed *Johnston* into an intercept course with *Kumano*, chasing dye-colored shell splashes along the way in a desperate bid to stay operational until he could hit the enemy with *Johnston*’s most powerful punch.

By 0727, *Johnston* had closed within 9000 yards of *Kumano*, virtually unscathed, and fired all 10 of her torpedoes. At that range, Evans couldn’t miss. *Kumano*’s bow was blown off and her fantail was set afire. With *Kumano* crippled, the cruiser *Suzuya* was soon ordered alongside to assist. In one stroke, *Johnston* had effectively taken the lead ships of the

Japanese attack out of the fight for the time being, buying precious time for Taffy 3. With his torpedoes successfully expended, Evans ordered *Johnston* into a hard right turn to clear the area and resume her escort station with the carriers.

It was during that turn when shells from *Yamato*—not battleship *Kongou* as has been generally assumed—hit their mark. A salvo of three 18-inch armor-piercing (AP) shells ripped through the decks of *Johnston's* aft port quarter and exploded in her aft engine and fire rooms. A few seconds later, three 6-inch high-explosive (HE) shells from *Yamato's* secondary batteries hit the forward port 40-mm mount and the bridge, killing or maiming several and wounding Commander Evans. With the port engine and main generator out, and electrical lines feeding power throughout the ship cut, the interior of the ship was plunged into darkness. Electrical fires broke out and steerage from the bridge was lost. Flooding began in spaces where the explosions had opened up seams in the hull plating. The shock of the explosions from the 18-inch salvo alone threw men into the air, shoved the ship sideways, snapped the SG radar off the top of the foremast, jammed the ammunition hoists for all gun mounts and fractured the gyro's frame in CIC. In the Mark 37 gun director atop the pilot house, *Johnston's* gunnery officer, Lieutenant Robert Hagen, lost contact with all his gun mounts. The upper handling room for the amidships 5-inch gun mount (#53) had to be temporarily evacuated due to steam escaping from the ruptured boilers underneath.

Providentially, *Johnston* at that moment limped into a rain squall that provided a respite, while she recovered from the devastating first two salvos. Repair parties rigged emergency power cables that restored steering and full control of the starboard engine. Torn human remains were cleared off the bridge. Hagen established some semblance of control over the 5-inch gun mounts, with the exception of Mount 54. Mount 54 permanently lost all communications. For the remainder of the battle, Mount 54 would fight under manual control. *Johnston* continued her return back to formation at half speed (17 knots), while her surviving radar sought out new targets among the Japanese cruisers around her.

At 0750, an order from the Screen Commander went out over the radio: "Form one eight for torpedo attack." Even though *Johnston* was damaged and had already expended her torpedoes, Evans nonetheless and without complaint or hesitation, ordered his ship turned about to follow USS *Herrmann* (DD-532), USS *Hoel* (DD-533) and USS *Samuel B. Roberts* (DE-413) during their torpedo

runs against the Japanese line. His first thought was that he might not be able to fire any torpedoes, but he could support the "small boy" attack with his 5-inch guns and hopefully distract the enemy gunners. After initiating the turn, however, Evans fought back his initial impulse and rationally reconsidered, deciding that *Johnston* would be more useful resuming her station alongside the unprotected carriers. *Johnston* completed the reversal and steadied on a course back to Taffy 3.

Immediately thereafter, *Johnston* found herself in a running duel with the battleship *Haruna*. To make a lopsided battle even worse, power was lost to steering during her attack and a phone relay had to be established between the bridge and a hastily assembled crew in After Steering to—with great difficulty—turn the rudder by hand. *Johnston* closed to within 5000 yards of *Haruna* before her crew managed to turn the ship around, so close that the Japanese ship couldn't depress her guns low enough to hit the charging destroyer. Luckily, *Haruna's* 14-inch shells failed to find *Johnston* during this duel. In return, *Johnston's* guns caused only slight damage to *Haruna's* superstructure.

Meanwhile, the Taffy 3 carriers were fleeing at best speed to the southwest, desperately trying to escape the faster Japanese fleet. At half speed, *Johnston* found herself falling farther behind the fleeing task unit, with enemy cruisers and battleships closing on her port quarter and destroyers on her starboard. Evans, though, remained focused on his ship's mission of protecting the carriers...he could see ahead that the USS *Gambier Bay* was taking serious fire from a line of four enemy cruisers. He ordered the Officer of the Deck, Lieutenant Junior Grade Edward Digardi, to lean on *Johnston's* starboard engine in order to intercept the cruiser line and told his gunnery officer: "Commence firing on that cruiser, Hagen. Draw her fire on us and away from *Gambier Bay*." *Johnston* scored hits on cruiser *Tone's* superstructure, but the latter remained focused on *Gambier Bay*, closing to point-blank range and pumping shells into the carrier until she rolled over and sank at 0911.

All this time, *Johnston* was hit intermittently by various small-to-medium sized shells from various ships chasing her, causing some damage and casualties, but not seriously impacting the ship's ability to fight.

Evans eventually could see that his attempt to attract fire away from the carriers was proving unsuccessful. At the same time, he saw a new threat developing that was escaping others' attention. The remaining Taffy 3 destroyer escorts had been directed to intercept the approaching enemy cruisers; as a result, the entire starboard flank of

the carrier formation was left unguarded. Setting up for a torpedo attack on that side were the Japanese light cruisers *Yabagi* and *Noshiro*, each followed by three destroyers. Once again without orders and entirely under his own initiative, at 0840 Evans ordered “check fire” on *Tone* and executed a hard turn to cut off this new threat before the enemy destroyers could get into range of the American carriers with their torpedoes.

Suddenly, the starboard lookout spotted the bow of a ship coming out of the smoke screen, headed straight for *Johnston*. It was *Herrmann*, rushing to join the formation after having completed her torpedo run. Digardi had to order *Johnston*’s single operating engine full astern to avoid a collision. As soon as *Herrmann* and *Johnston* untangled themselves, Evans ordered Hagen to open fire on the cruiser leading the first line of destroyers, *Yabagi*. *Johnston* hit *Yabagi* several times as she closed to within 7000 yards, close enough for *Yabagi* to record the hull number of her attacker—557—in her log. *Johnston* took her hits, as well, along her starboard side.

Because of the fierceness of *Johnston*’s attack, *Yabagi* fired her torpedoes early, then turned away to let the next ship fire. Hagen shifted his fire to that ship, scoring more hits. Before the rest of the destroyers could get their turn, though, they all unexpectedly turned away, breaking off the attack. Evans couldn’t believe it. . . .”Now I’ve seen everything!” he exclaimed. It appeared that *Johnston* alone had forced two lines of Japanese destroyers to fire their torpedoes early—or break off their attack entirely—causing them to completely miss their targets. The Japanese were unable to take advantage of Taffy 3’s unguarded right flank, thanks to the aggressiveness of a damaged, yet determined, single destroyer. Doggedly, *Johnston* turned from the destroyer threat back to the cruiser threat.

What had actually happened was that Admiral Kurita Takeo, the Japanese force commander aboard *Yamato*, had recalled his entire force at the time of *Yabagi*’s run. *Johnston* did, in fact, successfully disrupt the enemy destroyers’ torpedo attack, but Kurita’s recall order brought a halt to the remainder of the action. Although the destroyers had broken off their attack on the carriers, they were not in such a hurry to regroup that they couldn’t deal with the troublesome enemy in their midst. At around 0910, *Johnston* was hit by *Yabagi*, *Noshiro*, and even a long-distant shot by *Suzuya*. Those hits knocked out *Johnston*’s forward two 5-inch mounts and started a fire in the forward 40-mm magazine that forced the permanent evacuation of the bridge. Now, Evans had only three guns left to fight with, and was quickly being surrounded by the enemy ships

retiring to the north. He was forced by 0920 to command the ship from the fantail, shouting steering orders down a scuttle to the men in After Steering, who continued to move the rudder by hand. Moving sluggishly at something less than 17 knots, *Johnston* started to receive accurate fire from both destroyers close on her starboard quarter and cruisers on her port.

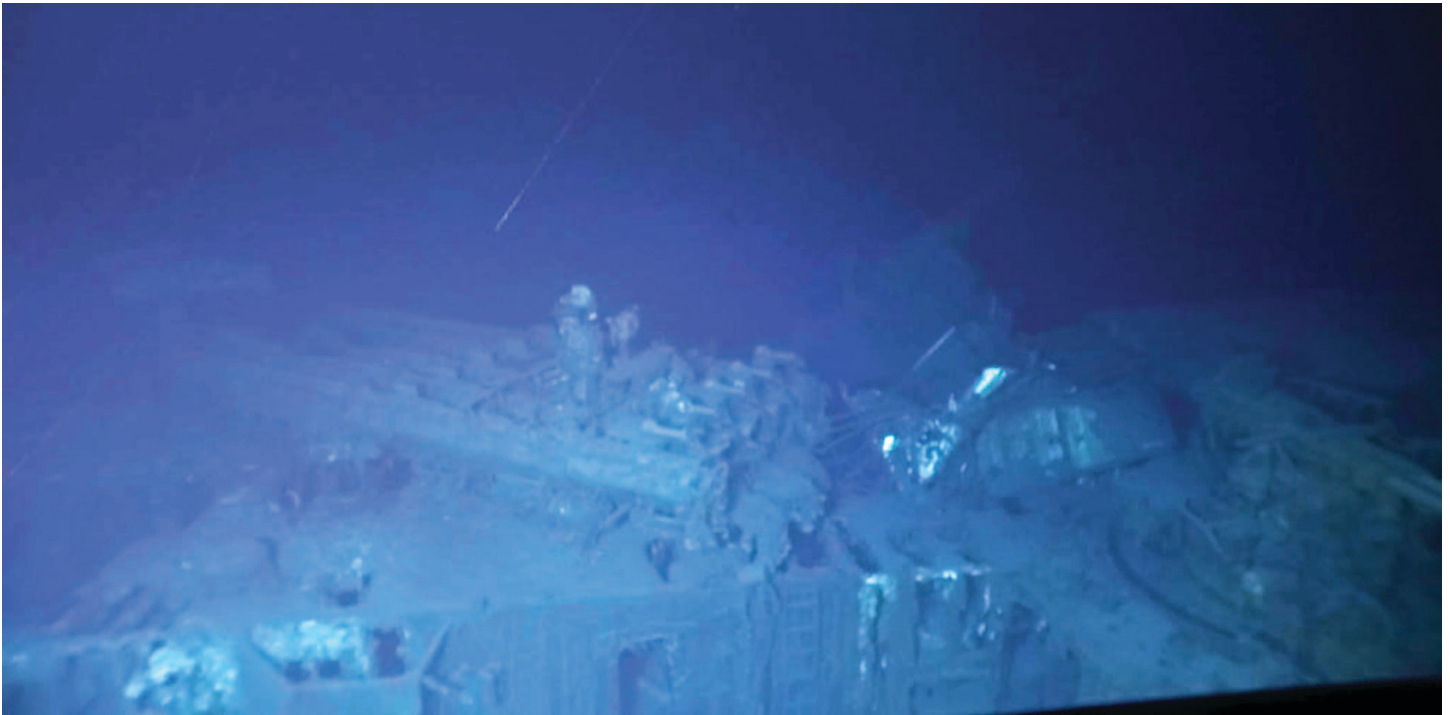


Mount 41 on USS *Johnston*. Starboard-side forward dual 40-mm mount, largely undamaged and not used during the battle because of the lack of an enemy air threat.

Credit: Caladan Oceanic, with permission

In addition to the cruisers and destroyers surrounding *Johnston*, battleship *Kongou* also fired a few shells *Johnston*’s way from a distance, the red dye of her AP shells leaving a lasting impression on survivors. Most missed *Johnston*, but two very important ones did not: the first went into the base of the No. 1 stack at around 0940 and exploded the No. 1 boiler in the forward fire room, killing *Johnston*’s remaining engine. Power and communications were lost throughout the ship. Director and plot for the guns was lost. Without power or guns, Commander Evans was forced to concede that *Johnston* had given it her all and could fight no more.

He reluctantly gave the order to abandon ship. At about the same time, another 14-inch shell from *Kongou* hit near



The forward Mk14 torpedo launcher, as seen from the port side. The launcher was left angled to starboard, with significant shrapnel damage evident on the launcher tubes. Commander Evans declared that he would never allow his ship to be sunk with "fish" (torpedoes) aboard, and this damage wrought after *Johnston* fired all 10 torpedoes underscores his point.
Credit: Caladan Oceanic, with permission



The forward starboard quarter of the *Johnston's* superstructure. Mount 41 is seen closest to the camera, Mount 52 to the right. Mount 52 was disabled by a shell fired by a Japanese destroyer at a shallow angle. According to *Johnston's* after-action report, this happened at approximately 0910, an hour before the ship sank. The entry hole is seen at the forward starboard corner of the mount, right at the trainer's seat. The trainer would have been killed instantly. The shell evidently hit the main body of the 5-inch gun and deflected downward before exploding, blowing out the rear port corner of the mount. One man was blown out of the forward port access door, which is seen missing. All 11 men inside Mount 52 were killed, and the mount remains frozen in that fatal instant.
Credit: Caladan Oceanic, with permission

the No. 2 stack, going into the No. 3 boiler (which had only a few burners lit) and blowing the middle of the Midship Deck House apart. Meanwhile, the Japanese destroyers and cruisers surrounding *Johnston* continued pumping shells into the ship, trying to force her to go down. Even as the crew abandoned ship, *Johnston* —motionless and toothless—continued to tie up several Japanese ships that otherwise should have been regrouping or expending their ordnance at the fleeing carriers. Commander Evans had proven himself from start to finish to be the greatest foil to the Japanese attack plan. Having personally prevented Kurita from striking hard and fast for a quick victory, he forced the Japanese admiral into a running, stern-chase battle...a battle that the Japanese could never win against the Americans. Lack of time and logistical support was more a threat to the Japanese than *Yamato's* 18-inch guns could ever be to the Americans. David had defeated Goliath, but not without sacrifice.

The surviving crew gone, *Johnston's* port list increased until she rolled over on that side and slid gracefully under, bow first. Commander Evans successfully left the ship, but was never seen again. The Japanese destroyer *Yukikaze* closed to within 1000 yards of *Johnston* to pump some final rounds into her, but her Captain checked fire and saluted the ship as she went under. *Johnston* was a fighting ship that put up one hell of a fight, and even in frustration, the Japanese paid tribute to her tenacity.

Her hull integrity compromised by numerous shell holes and explosions, *Johnston* equalized quickly after she went under. There were no implosions. The heavier weight of the ship's power-plant machinery low in her hull caused the ship to right herself as she fell to the bottom. Her rudder, abandoned in the hard right position, sent the

wreck into a spiraling path all the way down. The stresses on her hull girder by the hydrodynamic flow during her fall concentrated in the area where *Yamato's* shells had weakened the structure. Within 6 minutes, she was nearing the ocean floor when her hull broke between her Midship and After Deck House structures. At about the same time, a depth charge on her fantail inadvertently detonated, followed quickly by the detonation of one of the depth charges held in the K-gun racks on the starboard side. The two detonations tore the stern section to pieces and propelled the bow section off on a separate trajectory. The shattered pieces of the stern section would be strewn for several hundreds of meters in a south-easterly direction, while the bow section would hit the bottom at a shallow angle moving due east, sliding backward down a slope leading to the edge of the Philippine Trench, her main deck folding under and braking the wreck until it finally came to rest 300 meters below the scattered remains of her stern. *Johnston* had gone well beyond her duty in protecting her charges and now laid down for her eternal rest.

At her commissioning almost a year before to the day, then-Lieutenant Commander Evans had promised *Johnston's* crew, "This is going to be a fighting ship, I intend to go in harm's way...I will never retreat from an enemy force." The remains of *Johnston*, battered and torn, but proudly standing upright and looking forbiddingly and eternally fierce on the deep ocean floor, is physical proof of the determination in Evans's words and, in so doing, keeps his essence and the fighting spirit of the United States Navy alive.

The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions and support of the following: Victor Vescovo, CDR, USN, (Ret.), Samuel Cox, RADM, USN (Ret.), Robert Lundgren, Tim NesSmith (USS Kidd Veterans Museum), Tim Rizzuto (USS Slater Museum), Ed Zajkowski, Rick Davis and Barry Witte. This article was derived from the "Wreck Report for USS Johnston (DD-557)," a draft copy of which has been submitted for review, approval, and archiving by the NHHHC.

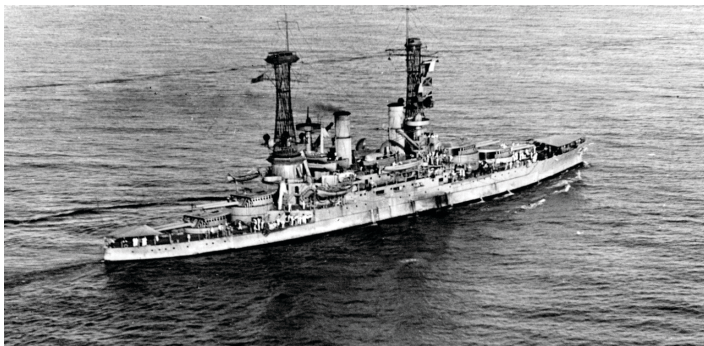
Nautical Challenge Answers

1. It was the USS Michigan (BB-27), commissioned in 1910. She was the first to use superimposed turrets, which enabled all eight of the ship's twelve-inch guns to be trained to either side.
2. The USS Pensacola (CA-24).
3. It was the USS Caberra (LCS-30), an Independence-class variant.
4. The Trieste. Swiss designed and built in Italy, she was bought by the United States Navy in 1958 and then modified for deep submergence exploration. Piloted by Lieutenant Don Walsh and Jacques Piccard, the Trieste reached a depth of 35,814 feet on 23 January 1960.
5. The unfortunate honor goes to the USS Pennsylvania (BB-38), which was struck by a Japanese aerial torpedo in Buckner Bay, Okinawa, on 12 August 1945. A 30-foot diameter hole was blasted open in her stern; 20 sailors were killed in this attack.
6. It was the SS George Washington, a former German cruise liner.
7. The USS Gravelly (DDG-107), an Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer. She used her Close in Weapons System (CIWS) to bring down the missile.
8. It was the Endurance. An expedition team led by marine archaeologist Mennun Bound found the ship on 5 March 2022 in 10,000 feet of water using a submersible unmanned craft deployed from the South African ice breaker S. A. Alughas II.
9. The USS Roe (DD-24) served as plane guard for Eugene Ely's first launch from the USS Birmingham (CL-2) on 14 November 1910.
10. The honor goes to the USS Yorktown (CV-5). Commissioned in 1937, she was lost during the Battle of Midway on 7 June 1942.

NAUTICAL CHALLENGE

Captain Rich Abele, USNR (Ret.)

1. Can you name the Navy's first dreadnaught shown below?



2. What was the first of the United States' post-Washington Naval Treaty heavy cruisers?

3. On 22 July 2023, the United States Navy commissioned a warship in Sydney Harbor, Australia. Can you name this ship?

4. This bathyscaphe was the first submersible to reach the Challenger Deep in the Marianas Trench. Can you name this unique research vessel?

5. Can you identify the last major United States Navy warship damaged in the South Pacific before the end of World War II?

6. On 13 December 1918, President Woodrow Wilson landed in Europe in a converted troopship. What was the name of that ship?

7. What is the name of the United States Navy warship that shot down a Houthi missile seconds before impact on 31 January 2024?

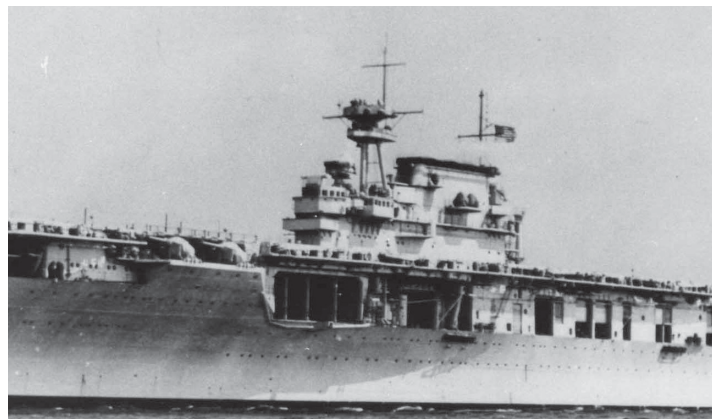
8. Sir Ernest Shackleton's expedition ship was sunk in the Weddell Sea in 1915 and found in 2022. Can you

name this famous sailing ship?

9. What was the name of the first destroyer to serve as a plane guard?



10. What United States aircraft carrier launched the first aircraft by a hangar deck catapult on 7 November 1938?



(Answers on page 22)

*Did you present at the September 2023 HNSA Conference? Are you planning to present at the upcoming September 2024 Conference? Has your ship completed an interesting or innovative project recently? Are your conservation staff developing new methods for preserving a particular portion of your ship or a particular museum artifact type? Are your outreach staff developing new approaches to engaging with the public? Whatever the topic, I'd love for you to submit an article for an upcoming issue of Anchor Watch. **The deadline to submit articles for the next issue is 31 July 2024, but you can submit at any time for future issues!** I hope to hear from you soon! Sarah E. Holland, Editor (editor@hnsa.org).*



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Please return completed form to:
John Elliker, HNSA Treasurer
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Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456-4800

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