



# SCUTTLEBUTT

March 2022

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## What's Happening on the Showboat

**Mast Repair Effort Progresses** – With the top two sections of the foremast removed from the ship, work has focused on restoring the integrity of the mast sections as well as the platforms on which they are located on the forward superstructure. Additionally, workers on the upper areas of the superstructure are removing, repairing, or restoring various fittings, attachment points, and equipment with an eye toward reducing the amount of maintenance that will be required in the future.



Photos by Alan Cradick – For more of Alan's images, [click here](#)

# C B D R\*

## Upcoming events on *The Showboat*

### 6 for 60 Tours

April 1  
May 7  
June 4

### Raise the Flag

May 28

### Battleship 101

June 11

### Celebrate the Legacy

June 24-25

You can now book tours  
in advance by  
[clicking here.](#)

\*Constant Bearing, Decreasing Range

**Looking for New Friends** – With the arrival of spring in the Cape Fear, along with an improving public health environment, thousands of festival-goers will begin to attend many of the special events and festivals that have been missing from our lives over the past two years.

The Friends of the Battleship will be taking advantage of the opportunity at some of the local events to encourage attendees to visit the Showboat as well as to promote membership in the Friends as a way to “Help Preserve the Legacy” that is Battleship *North Carolina*.

Watch for the Friends tent at the Azalea Festival (April 9-10), Southport’s Spring Festival (April 15-16), and Belville Founders Day (May 7), and be sure to stop by to say, “Hello.”

**It All Ended With a Big Bang!** – Over the past several months, the Friends’ guided tour coordinators have been developing a new tour they believe will be popular with many Showboat visitors as well as Friends members. Dubbed “The Big Bang Tour” participants will receive a 90-minute overview focusing on the Battleship’s 16-inch and 5-inch gun batteries.

Visitors will have the opportunity to follow the general procedure for firing the guns, from target identification and acquisition in the Combat Information Center and fire control directors, to the development of the fire control solution in Main and Secondary Plot. A visit to the powder magazines, projectile handling space, and the gun house completes the process that ended with a “Big Bang.”



From April through June, The Big Bang Tour will only be available on Saturdays and will require advance purchase online. The price for the tour will be \$18 per person in addition to the regular admission fee.

**The Return of Battleship 101** – Museum Services Director Kim Sincox recently announced plans to resume a favorite event of both volunteers and visitors alike – Battleship 101.

The popular program stations knowledgeable volunteers throughout the ship to talk to visitors about daily shipboard life as well as specific subjects including gunnery, radar, sickbay, the galley, and engineering.

The first Battleship 101 of the year will be June 11 from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Future dates include July 9 and August 13. Battleship 101 is free with regular admission to the Showboat.

**New Ambassadors** – To assist with programs like Battleship 101 and the Friends guided tours, 15 Showboat volunteers recently marked their successful completion of the battleship training course by passing their final exam.

Headed by retired Navy Rear Admiral Ron Henderson, the six-week training course is one of the requirements volunteers must complete before they can serve as docents, ambassadors, or tour guides onboard the Showboat. Congratulations to the new Ambassadors!





**March 23** – Showboat volunteers (l to r) Dan Nofziger, Larry Balan, and Pete McWilliams install some of the 16 new signs recently received for displays on board the ship. Battleship *North Carolina* Curator Mary Ames Booker provided the funding for the development and design of the signs, while the Friends of the Battleship contributed the \$4,600 needed to have the signs printed and shipped to the Showboat.

## This Month in Showboat History



The lagoon at Majuro Atoll.

On **March 22, 1944**, USS *North Carolina* got underway from the lagoon of the recently captured Majuro Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Assigned as part of Task Group 58.9, the Showboat accompanied the carriers *Lexington* (CV 16) and *Cowpens* (CVL 25) and was joined by four other battleships, three cruisers, and a host of destroyers as they steamed to rendezvous with the rest of Task Force 58.

The mission of the task force was to conduct air strikes on Palau, Yap, and Woleai Islands, part of the effort to deny use of islands in the region by the Japanese. The two days of air strikes on **March 30-31** resulted in 110 Japanese planes being shot down, 41 aircraft destroyed on the ground, 29 enemy ships along with a number of their small craft sunk, and 18 other Japanese ships damaged. U.S. losses were limited to 25 aircraft.

Early in **1945** the American fleet was conducting strikes on air fields, shipping, and support infrastructure throughout southern Japan. The Japanese responded as best they could with air strikes against the advancing fleet. The Japanese attacks included an increasing number of kamikazes that were difficult to defend against.

In the early morning hours of **March 19**, with American aircraft returning to their carriers from their first strikes of the day on port facilities in Japan's Inland Sea, a lone Japanese aircraft broke out of the low overcast directly over the carrier *Franklin* (CV 13)

who was in the process of launching her second strike of the day. The enemy plane had used the returning U.S. aircraft as cover on radar, along with the cloudy sky, to mask its approach to the fleet.

USS *North Carolina*, steaming just 1,500 yards astern of the *Franklin*, saw the Japanese plane drop two bombs on the crowded carrier flight deck. Two huge explosions were followed closely by a number of secondary explosions as munitions and fuel ignited on *Franklin's* flight deck, signaling that the Japanese bombs had hit their mark.



As the attacking plane cleared *Franklin*, it was immediately taken under fire by *North Carolina*. Over the following two minutes, the Showboat fired 428 20mm, 413 40mm, and 142 5-inch projectiles at the aircraft before it escaped, flying out of range at 18,000 yards.

Within minutes the water behind the carrier was littered with *Franklin* sailors who had either blown over the side by the explosions or who had jumped overboard to escape the flames.



"I never saw so many sailors in the water, some dead, some alive and hollering," recalled Robert Palomaris, a gunner's mate on board *North Carolina*, "and we

started throwing everything we could get our hands on: life jackets and rafts, shark repellents.”

By the end of the day, USS *Franklin* had lost over 700 of her crew, but had survived the attack and



would eventually return to the United States for repair though the war would end before she would return to service.

As for the crew of the Showboat, they had observed what Captain Ben Blee, author of the book “*Battleship North Carolina*,” described as “the single worst combat disaster witnessed during the entire war from the decks of *North Carolina*.”

## Did You Know?



**Let’s Have a Light Conversation** – Like signal flags, lights could also be used for communicating between ships when radio silence was being observed or if there was the possibility of intercept by the enemy. The type of light used for signaling depended on three factors: the message, who the message was meant for, and the time of day. Regardless of which of those factors applied, the message was transmitted utilizing Morse code – a series of dots and dashes representing the letters of the alphabet.

The types of lights available to transmit messages between Navy ships were search lights fitted with a shutter system that Signalman could open and close with a hand lever; yardarm blinker lights that were omni-directional with the Morse code message being keyed in similar to a telegraph key or a simple on/off switch; and an infrared light system that could transmit the signal via infrared light that was invisible to the naked eye but was visible with the aid of a special filter used on the receiving side.

## Talk Like a Sailor

**Nancy Hanks** – A ship in a formation may receive the signal, "Nancy Hanks" by TBS which meant, "Stand by for message by infrared signal light".

**TBS (Talk-Between-Ships)** – A very high frequency, medium power radio signal used by ships for tactical communication.

## Support the Showboat

**We’re Always Looking for New Friends** – Do you know someone who has shown an interest in *Battleship North Carolina*? Why not make them a new Friend? Memberships start as low as \$45 per year and help to increase the impact of all of the Battleship’s programs – its artifact acquisition, support of exhibits, research, restoration projects, and commitment to education.

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