

Memorial Day 2022

Remember and Honor



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What's Happening on the Showboat?

Remembering the Fallen – Battleship *North Carolina* was dedicated as the State of North Carolina's Memorial to its World War II veterans and the over 11,000 North Carolinians who made the ultimate sacrifice during the war, on April 29, 1962. Today, the Battleship remains a visible reminder of the great sacrifices made by those who have served and those who continue to serve.

During World War II, USS *North Carolina* suffered ten combat casualties. As we commemorate Memorial Day at the end of this month, let us remember the ten men who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving aboard the Showboat.

George E. Conlon
August 24, 1942
Aircraft Strafing

Oscar Callaway Stone
September 15, 1942
Torpedo Attack

William Osborne Skelton
September 15, 1942
Torpedo Attack

Eldon Emmet Means
April 6, 1945
Kingfisher Recovery Accident

John Malcolm Watson
April 6, 1945
Friendly Fire Sky II

Albert Speers Geary
September 15, 1942
Torpedo Attack

Ingwald Nels Nelson
September 15, 1942,
Torpedo Attack

Leonard Edward Pone
September 15, 1942
Torpedo Attack

Edward Emil Brenn
April 6, 1945
Friendly Fire Sky II

Carl Elmer Karam Jr.
April 6, 1945
Friendly Fire Sky II



Friends Honor Captain Ben Blee

The Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* recently recognized the many contributions of one of the Showboat's former officers during a March 28 gathering of family and friends of the late Captain Ben Blee. Following remarks in the wardroom by Battleship *North Carolina*'s Executive Director, retired Navy Captain Terry Bragg, and Kim Sincox, the Battleship's Museum Services Director, Friends Vice-Chair, retired Rear Admiral Ron Henderson provided a short presentation recounting Blee's service to the Navy and USS *North Carolina* and his efforts to preserve the legacy of the Showboat.



"It should then come as no surprise that we who volunteer on the ship today come to view ourselves as the current crew of this warship," remarked Henderson, "and we have Ben Blee to thank for showing us the way to keep the memory alive."



Betsy Blee receives the proclamation from Friends Chair, Michael Zalob.

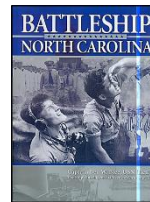
Henderson closed out his presentation by reading a proclamation of tribute in honor of Captain Blee, announcing that the course conducted by the Friends to train ship docents, ambassadors, and tour guides would be called the *Captain Ben Blee Memorial Volunteer Training Program*. Friends Chair, Michael Zalob, presented Betsy Blee, daughter of Captain Blee,

a framed copy of the proclamation marking the occasion.

Blee was assigned to USS *North Carolina* as a lieutenant, serving as the battleship's combat intelligence officer and assistant officer-in-charge of the combat information center. Before his 16-month assignment to the Showboat, Blee had served in USS *Pensacola* (CA 24) where he had witnessed *North Carolina*'s dramatic arrival at Pearl Harbor in July of 1942, and then, just two months later, he watched in disbelief as *North Carolina* and two other ships were torpedoed while operating in the Eastern Solomon Islands.

Retiring in 1967 with 27 years of service, Blee continued his association with the battleship, serving two terms as Chairman of the USS *North Carolina* Battleship Commission.

Blee was dedicated to ensuring the legacy of Battleship *North Carolina* was properly preserved for future generations, establishing a repository of archival material, oral histories, and photographs, as well as producing an exhibit and television documentary.



Blee also authored the book "Battleship *North Carolina*," considered the authoritative source of information regarding Battleship *North Carolina*. His book continues to be the principal resource used for the training of Showboat volunteers.

"I tell our tour guides and docents," Henderson said, "if my facts are different from what it says in the Blee book, then the Blee book is correct."

Betsy Blee closed out the lunchtime program with a heartfelt tribute to her father, his naval career, and the experiences and lessons learned by her and her two sisters. You can read Betsy's remarks by [clicking here](#).

Friends' Fireworks Celebration Approaching – On July 4th, members of the Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* will have the opportunity to watch the City of Wilmington's annual fireworks display from the deck of the impressive warship.

Tickets to this popular, members-only event are limited and will go quickly. Only current members of the Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* will be eligible to order tickets. The number of tickets allowed will be based on membership level. Expired membership must be renewed at least seven (7) days before being able to download tickets.

Tickets for this year's fireworks celebration will be available through the Friends website beginning June 1.

In addition to the pyrotechnic show, this year's celebration will also include a special pre-fireworks reception in the *North Carolina*'s Wardroom for Friends members at the Commander, Captain, and Commodore levels. Invitations to the reception will be sent to eligible members via email in the coming weeks.



CBDR*

Upcoming events on *The Showboat*

6 for 60 Tours

June 4
July 2

Raise the Flag

May 28
June 11

Battleship 101

June 11

Celebrate the Legacy

June 24-25

July 4th Fireworks

Book your tours in
advance by clicking [here](#).



*Constant Bearing, Decreasing Range

Finding New Friends – If you attended the recent Azalea Festival Street Fair, Southport Spring Festival, or Belville Founders' Day you might have seen some familiar faces as you walked among the dozens of tents and booths set up by a variety of organizations, artisans and, food vendors.



The Friends were there to remind festival attendees of the rich history of the Showboat and to encourage them to discover (or in some cases, rediscover) the legacy that is Battleship *North Carolina*. In addition, visitors to the Friends' tent had an opportunity to learn the value of membership and the role our organization plays to "Help Preserve the Legacy."



Mast Repair Progresses –

Work continues to restore the integrity of the mast sections and the platforms on the upper forward superstructure. In the past month, the yardarms were

removed for refurbishment with preparations and plans being made to return the foremast to its rightful place atop the Showboat in the coming weeks.



Photos © Alan Cradick

This Month in Showboat History



May 19, 1941 – Just a month after officially joining the fleet, USS *North Carolina* got underway for her "Builders 1st Trial Run." Assisted by ten tugs, America's newest battleship pulled away from the Navy Yard's Pier C at 5:15 a.m. and steamed down the East River escorted by a pair of destroyers and Coast Guard cutters. The ship proceeded out past Ambrose Light and turned south toward Delaware Bay. *North Carolina* returned to the Navy Yard on **May 21**.

The crew spent the next several months training and running the ship through its paces, ensuring the equipment and systems of the new ship worked properly.

May 1942 – USS *North Carolina*, along with several other ships, was assigned to a task force operating in the eastern North Atlantic. The ships were there to guard shipping lanes against a possible sortie by the German battleship Tirpitz, sister ship of the Bismarck, which had deployed to Norway. However, by the end of May the threat Tirpitz posed to shipping had not materialized and the Showboat received orders to deploy to the Pacific to bolster the strength of the American fleet.

Getting underway from Casco Bay, Maine on **May 28**, USS *North Carolina* steamed to Hampton Roads to prepare for her transit to the Panama Canal and into the Pacific.

Did You Know?

Burial at Sea – The tradition of burial at sea has been in practice for as long as people have gone to sea. In earlier times, the body was sewn into a weighted shroud made of sailcloth. The body was then sent over the side, usually with an appropriate religious ceremony. It was not uncommon to conduct a burial at sea during World War II when naval forces operated at sea for weeks and months at a time.

Of the ten *North Carolina* sailors killed in action during the war, four were buried at sea, four were buried ashore on the Tongan island of Tongatabu, and two were lost at sea.

Today, active-duty service members, honorably discharged retirees, veterans, U.S. civilian marine personnel of the Military Sealift Command, and dependent family members of active duty, retirees, and veterans are eligible for a burial at sea.

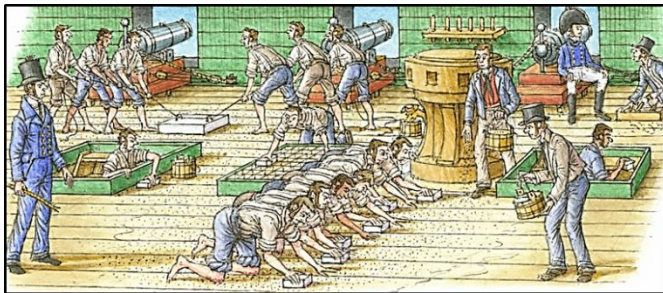
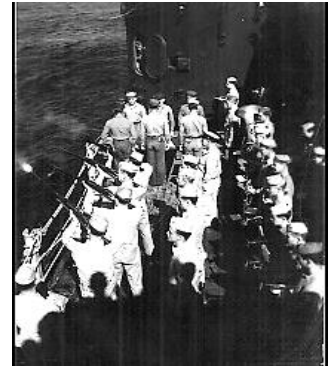


Illustration © Stephen Biesty, 2010 via <http://asailorslifeforme.org>

Holystone – In days past, wooden decks like the teak decks of Battleship *North Carolina*, were maintained by sailors on their hands and knees with a piece of soft sandstone known as a “holystone.” The most common explanation for the nickname “holystone” was because its use always brought a sailor to his knees as if in prayer, therefore it must be holy!

However, the use of holystones was banned by the Navy by General Order Number 215 of 5 March 1931 because they wore down the expensive teak decks too fast. In announcing the ban, then-Secretary of the Navy Charles F. Adams noted, “The use of

holystones wears down the decks so rapidly that their repair or replacement has become an item of expense which cannot be met under limited appropriations.”

Though the practice of holystoning disappeared slowly (there is evidence the use of holystones continued for several years after the ban), there remains the need to maintain wood decks.

Today the teak decks are cleaned using stiff bristle brooms and brushes combined with a mixture of water and cleaning agents. Aboard *North Carolina* that task is largely accomplished by a variety of volunteers like the group of Navy personnel stationed at Camp Lejeune who cleaned the deck adjacent to the aft 16-inch gun house in mid-April, and a group of students enrolled in the JROTC program at Wilmington’s Hoggard High School who took to the brooms in early May.



Sailors holystoning the deck on the fantail.

Talk Like a Sailor



The Smoking Lamp is Out – The exact date and origin of the smoking lamp have been lost. However, it probably came into use during the 16th Century when seamen began smoking onboard vessels. The smoking lamp was a safety measure. It was devised mainly to keep the fire hazard away from highly combustible woodwork and gunpowder. Most navies established regulations restricting smoking to certain areas. Usually, the lamp was located in the forecabin or the area directly surrounding the galley indicating that smoking was permitted in this area.

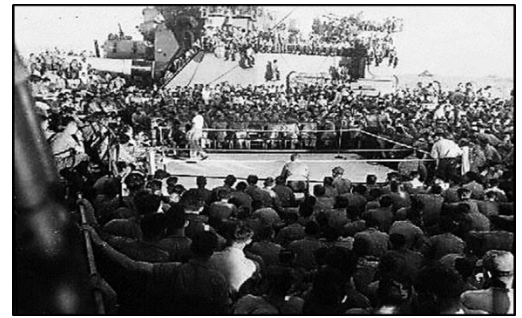
Even after the invention of matches in the 1830s, the lamp was an item of convenience to the smoker. When particularly hazardous operations or work required that smoking be curtailed, the unlighted lamp relayed the message. “The smoking lamp is lighted” or “the smoking lamp is out” were the expressions indicating that smoking was permitted or forbidden.

The smoking lamp has survived only as a figure of speech. When the officer of the deck says “the smoking lamp is out” before drills, refueling, or taking ammunition, that is the Navy’s way of saying “cease smoking.”

Source: *Naval History and Heritage Command*

So, How About a Smoke(r) – During World War II, boxing was not just a sport, but an important form of entertainment for sailors. An organized activity on the ship commonly referred to as a “Smoker” or “Happy Hour” was especially popular when the ship was in port or at anchor.

Smokers would consist of not only a full card of fights, but would also often include wrestling and other entertainment. Many of the boxing matches at the Smokers were not just between shipmates but were between boxers from other ships present in that particular port.



February 1945 - Showboat sailors gather on the fantail for a Smoker while at anchor in Ulithi.

Support the Showboat

Need to Renew Your Friends Membership? – Just a reminder that your Friends membership provides year-long access to the Showboat for you and your guests (the number of guests dependent on your membership level). In addition, you receive a 25% discount in the Gift Shop, 25% discount on Friends VIP Guided Tours, a subscription to the *Scuttlebutt* e-newsletter, and discounts on the Showboat’s Lifelong Learning Programs and tours such as Hidden Battleship, Firepower!, Power Plant, and Systems & Design.



If it's time to renew your Friends membership, consider upgrading to the next level. Not only will you be increasing your commitment to the Showboat, but you may also have the opportunity to bring additional guests with you when you visit the Battleship or attend special events like the upcoming July 4th Fireworks Celebration.

Most importantly, your membership and donations “Help Preserve the Legacy” and make it possible for the Friends to promote and enhance the visitors’ experience by helping to fund programs, acquisitions, and restoration of Battleship *North Carolina*.

Visit the Friends [renewal page](#) for details.

Scuttlebutt is published monthly by
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