

60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition



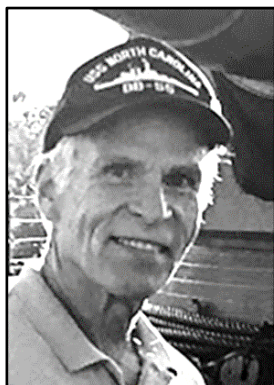
# SCUTTLEBUTT

October 2021

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D O N A T E

## From the Chairman



The USS *North Carolina* Battleship Commission met on September 10 for one of their regular meetings. In addition to hearing from the Battleship's Executive Director Terry Bragg, Friends Chairman, Michael Zalob had the opportunity to brief the commissioners on recent Friends activities. Following is the Chair's brief to the Commission:

Good afternoon. Last fall, the Friends decided to look forward. I trust you saw our banner when you came aboard, "Celebrating 60 Years in the Cape Fear".

Expecting COVID restrictions to ease, we raised the banner in April to kick off a celebration of the ship's 60 years in Wilmington.

In keeping with the ship's COVID protocols, we created a special "6 for 60" tour. This was an above deck, 60-minute tour for \$6 that was offered one weekend each month.

On a separate weekend, and with the assistance of various local veteran organizations and scouting groups, we flew, folded, and sold American flags that had been flown over the battleship.

We were also able to host our membership on the fantail to celebrate the July 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks.

The results (as of Sept.10):

- An all-time high membership of over 600 households;
- Over 160 flags flown;
- Over 900 "6 for 60" tours were provided.

Besides enhancing the visitor's experience, the Friends continue to support ship programming and exhibits.

As an example, we underwrote the refurbishment of both Ship's Stores 1 and 2, as well as hosted the annual volunteer luncheon.

This can only happen by having wonderful cooperation with the ship's staff. From the Captain on down, there is a synergistic effort to execute the Battleship's mission.



The latest example is the display of Friends posters covering the old ticket windows at the entrance of the Visitor's Center.

Our effort to excel will continue. We thank you, the Battleship Commission, for supporting the Friends.

October 2021

# What's Happening on the Showboat?

**C B D R\***

## Upcoming events on *The Showboat*

### 6 for 60 Tours

Veterans Tour Free  
(with paid admission)  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
November 6

### Raise the Flag

9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
November 6

### Battleship 101: Topside Edition

1 p.m. to 3 p.m.  
November 6

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

\*Constant Bearing, Decreasing Range



**Annual Meeting** – The Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* conducted their Annual Meeting on September 18. Most board members gathered in the Showboat's Wardroom, though some of them, along with Friends membership joined the meeting via Zoom.

Michael Zalob, Chairman of the Board of Directors, presided over the meeting and provided the membership with an overview of the past year's events and the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has created for the organization. He also offered a look ahead to the coming year.

The membership elected Jim Buell and John Munn to 2-year terms as new members of the Board of Directors. They also reelected Joe Calla, Nancie Giacalone, Ron Henderson, Gordon Hume, Ronnie Rhodes, Bruce Tingle, and Richard Turner to serve an additional 2 years on the board.

Also included in the proceedings was a short presentation by board member Alex Dydula who discussed the process he uses for researching and determining details associated with various aspects of ship design and equipment by using the ship's archives.

**October 2 Event Postponed** – The "60 for 55" Anniversary Celebration that had been planned for October 2, was postponed due to the challenges of holding an event of that type in the current public health environment brought on by COVID-19. Organizers of the event hope to celebrate the Showboat's arrival and longevity in the Cape Fear sometime in the future once public health concerns have abated.

The Friends' event organizing committee would like to acknowledge the following merchants and organizations who had provided their support of the planned event and look forward to working with them in the future:

<b>Gourmet to Go</b>	<b>Tito's Vodka</b>
<b>Brunswick Big Band</b>	
<b>Front Street Brewery</b>	<b>Ironclad Brewery</b>

Even though the October event was postponed, the Friends didn't want the date to pass without some recognition of the anniversary. So, the evening of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the organizing committee gathered on the fantail with many of the volunteers who had assisted with the various activities over the past six months to mark the occasion.

At the gathering, Friends chairman, Michael Zalob, presented a commemorative plaque to Battleship *North Carolina's* executive director Terry Bragg. The plaque presented to Bragg had been crafted with wood from the battleship's original teak deck with a silhouette of the ship, cut from the steel of the battleship's hull that had been replaced earlier in the year, displayed as part of the Friends logo.



**Want to Learn More About the Showboat?** – The Friends Tour Guide Training Coordinator, retired Rear Admiral Ron Henderson, is making preparations to offer his free, six-week course about USS *North Carolina* early in 2022. Designed to prepare individuals for becoming ship ambassadors and tour guides, the course is also ideal for those who just want to learn more about the Showboat, her systems, history, and the men who served aboard her.

Henderson hopes to conduct the once-a-week sessions on board the battleship after the first of the year. However, he will be prepared to conduct the course via Zoom if the public health environment precludes gatherings in a classroom-type setting.

If you are interested in participating in the next program, send an email to: [Scuttlebutt1@battleshipncfriends.com](mailto:Scuttlebutt1@battleshipncfriends.com). Your email only indicates interest and does not commit you to participate. Details for the future offering will be forwarded once plans are solidified.

**Special Veterans Day Events November 6** – In honor of those who have served, the Friends will provide veterans with a free (with paid admission) “6 for 60 Tour” from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on November 6.

Then, from 1 to 3 p.m. a special “Battleship 101: Topside Edition” will be held for all those visiting. Volunteer docents will be available at various stations along the main deck of the ship to answer questions and explain various aspects of the ship and ship life. Battleship 101 is free with paid admission.

Throughout the day, American flags flown over the Showboat will be available for a \$40 donation.

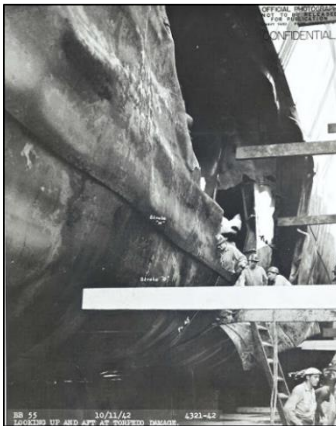


## This Month in Showboat History



**Badger Assumes Command** – On **October 23, 1941**, Captain Oscar Badger became the second commanding officer of USS *North Carolina* when he relieved Captain Olaf Hustvedt. Badger was a graduate of the Naval Academy’s Class of 1911 and was awarded the Medal of Honor as an Ensign in 1914. He would command the Showboat until just before the ship departed for the Pacific in June 1942.

**Do You Know a Good Repair Shop?** – Having made the transit from Tongatabu, where temporary repairs were made to the damage caused by the **September 15, 1942** torpedo hit, *North Carolina* arrived at Pearl Harbor on **September 30** and entered dry dock on **October 10**. The Showboat would remain in dry dock for 30 days while hull repairs were made, as well as having work done on all four propellers and shafts.



While *North Carolina* was in dry dock, a fist-sized fragment of the Japanese torpedo was found and removed from the crumpled steel hull. Years later, the fragment was mounted onto a framed plaque and presented to four former members of the I-19 crew

who had been assigned to the Japanese submarine when the six-torpedo spread was launched in 1942. The presentation was made during a joint reunion held on board *North Carolina* in June of 1986. A brass plate on the plaque read:

**FRAGMENT OF A STRAY TORPEDO  
Fired by I-19, retrieved by BB-55, Sept. 15, 1942.**

**Returned to I-19 June 24, 1986, with apologies for  
damage done to it when we hit it.**

**USS North Carolina Battleship Association**

The plaque is now on permanent display at the Japanese Naval Academy in Etajima, Japan.

**A Rejuvenated Showboat Gets a New C.O.** – USS *North Carolina* completed a 60-day overhaul at Puget Sound Navy Yard in Bremerton, Washington on **October 1, 1944**, and immediately started making preparations for returning to the fight in the South Pacific. On **October 6**, with the Showboat conducting gunnery practice off the Southern California coast, Captain Frank Fahrion became the Showboat’s sixth Commanding Officer having relieved Captain Frank Thomas.

**Homeward Bound!** – With the war over, USS *North Carolina* headed back to the United States, transiting the Panama Canal on **October 11, 1945**. Boston was the Showboat’s first stop. As she entered Boston Harbor on **October 17** she was greeted by a symphony of whistles, sirens, and bells from the scores of workboats, transports, and freighters.



## Did You Know?

**Bringing the Showboat to Wilmington** – Since early April we have been celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Battleship *North Carolina*'s October 2, 1961, arrival in the Port City, and her opening to visitors on October 14.

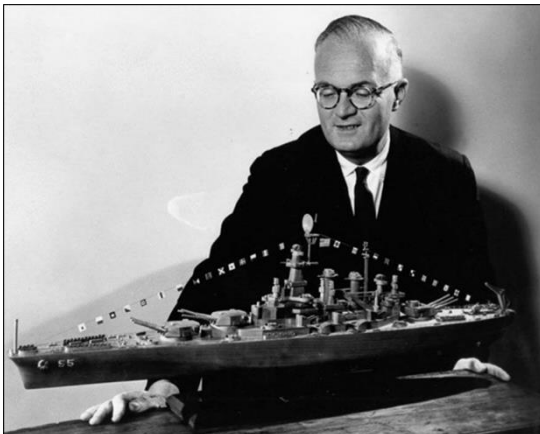
The effort to bring the battleship to Wilmington was no small feat and began in 1958 when Wilmington resident James Storm Craig Jr, read a short report in the newspaper that the state's namesake was on the list of ships to be scrapped by the Navy. An advertising executive at WECT-TV and member of Wilmington's American Legion Post 10, Craig was incensed by the thought of *North Carolina* being unceremoniously reduced to junk by a ship-breaker's torch. He decided he would save the battleship and bring it to Wilmington. But there was a lot that would have to fall into place before that could happen.

Upon hearing of the Showboat's impending demise, Craig contacted the North Carolina Department of Archives and History in Raleigh to find out if there was something the state could do to save the battleship and bring it to Wilmington. Craig was informed it was "impossible" to bring a ship the size of *North Carolina* to Wilmington because the Cape Fear River could not accommodate it. Not satisfied with the answer he was provided, Craig continued to move his quest forward.



Wilmington resident James S. Craig.

By January of 1959, Craig had convinced his American Legion Post to set up a battleship committee made up of veterans and community leaders. He had also enlisted the help of Wilmington businessman and fellow veteran, Hugh Morton. In addition to being the first president of the North Carolina Azalea Festival, Morton had been instrumental in the campaign of Governor Luther Hodges when Hodges ran for governor in 1956.



Hugh Morton admires a model of USS *North Carolina*.

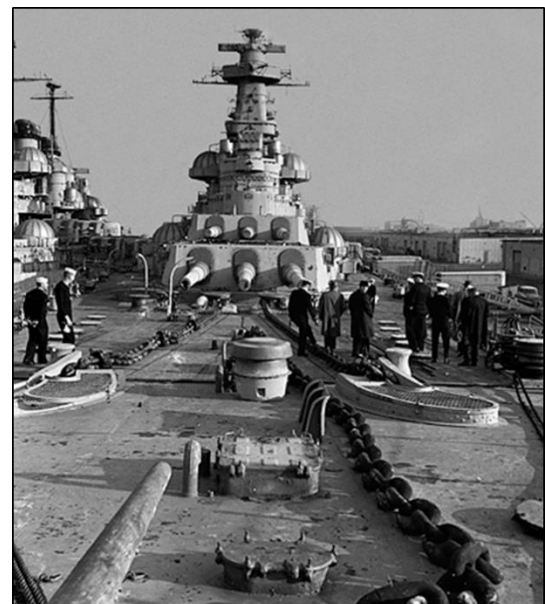
Craig knew that Morton had the governor's ear and was confident Morton could persuade Hodges to do something about bringing *North Carolina* to Wilmington. Craig was right. After listening to Morton's plea, Gov. Hodges agreed the *North Carolina* should be saved. Recognizing the tight timeline the effort was operating on, Hodges sent a request to the Navy asking that disposition of the battleship be postponed while the state investigated the possibility of establishing the Showboat as a memorial.

In November of 1960, five months after *North Carolina* was officially stricken from the Navy List,

Gov. Hodges appointed an advisory committee to investigate both the feasibility of saving the battleship as well as possible locations for the ship's final port call. Not wanting to appear favoring any one of the communities being considered, the governor did not appoint Morton as committee chairman, however did appoint him to serve on the committee.

Even though both Craig and Morton were from the Port City, Wilmington was not the only location under consideration. Three communities were on the final list of sites competing to be *North Carolina*'s final berth: Morehead City, Southport, and Wilmington.

Though both Morehead City and Southport provided scenic views along the Atlantic Coast, it was felt berthing *North Carolina* in



U.S. Navy and state officials survey Battleship *North Carolina* as it sits at a pier in Bayonne, N.J.

either of the two locations would make the ship more vulnerable to ocean storms, especially hurricanes. Wilmington had an advantage in that its location on the Cape Fear River provided some protection from the fury ocean storms could bring.

However, one big question remained. Could the Showboat make it up the Cape Fear River?

The advisory committee sought the assistance and recommendation of Cyril Adams, an engineer who had been responsible for berthing the battleship *Texas* near Houston. Based on Adams' review of Cape Fear River Channel charts and discussions with the U.S Army Corps of Engineers, Adams determined that *North Carolina* could make the transit up the Cape Fear River to Wilmington.

Additionally, the advisory committee had determined that the battleship would be self-supporting, therefore it had to be located where there was sufficient traffic to support the enterprise. Again, Wilmington had an advantage over the other two candidates since there were five major access routes into the Wilmington area.

The final analysis made Wilmington the obvious choice as the site for Battleship *North Carolina*. A decision, Morton said, had been made for economic reasons, not based on political pull.

The final task the advisory committee was responsible for completing was to determine what it would cost to establish the battleship as a memorial. Based on their research, the advisory committee reported to Gov. Hodges that preparing a site for the ship, towing the battleship from Bayonne, New Jersey, to Wilmington, and readying the battleship for visitors would cost approximately \$250,000. According to Morton, the governor told the committee that they could go to the legislature and with the political pull some of the committee members had, they would likely get the money needed. However, Hodges added, if the money was raised in a statewide public campaign, everyone in the state would have a hand in the effort and it would keep the ship in the public's mind for ten years, "and that would be a whole lot smarter." Morton recalled looking around the room at all the members of the committee who had promotional blood in their veins, and he could see the sparkle in their eyes, with not a single one of them wanting to go to the legislature.



Aerial view of the area on Eagle's Island designated to berth Battleship *North Carolina*.

In April of 1961, North Carolina's newly installed governor, Terry Sanford, who like his predecessor was in support of the battleship effort, signed legislation establishing the USS *North Carolina* Battleship Commission. The commission, with Morton appointed as chairman, immediately went to work drafting the legislation necessary to ensure the battleship would be self-sufficient with no taxpayer funds required to operate the memorial.

Fundraising was the other major task the commission would have to undertake. With the decision made to involve the public in raising the required funding, the commission needed to develop a plan to solicit the funds.

"Let's Bring the USS *North Carolina* Home" was the rallying cry of the "Save Our Ship" campaign established by Morton and the commission to raise the necessary funds with several strategies developed to engage the public.

One of those strategies involved establishing the "North Carolina Navy." Each of North Carolina's 100 counties would have an "admiral" who would be responsible for raising funds in their county. Additionally, individuals who donated at least \$100 to the battleship campaign would be designated as an admiral in the North Carolina Navy.





Gov. Terry Sanford designates President John F. Kennedy as the first Admiral in the North Carolina Navy.

had always been a champion of education. The commission decided that any school child donating at least ten cents would be given a certificate allowing them free admission to the battleship as long as Sanford was governor. Morton, while recording his oral history some 40 years later would recall what a smart idea this was since parents would accompany their children to the ship and would have to pay the full price of admission. Of the 1.1 million school children in North Carolina, over 700,000 donated at least ten cents to save “their” battleship.

Over the five months of the fundraising campaign, nearly \$330,000 was raised to bring the Showboat to Wilmington. A similar campaign today would have to raise nearly \$2.9 million to match the 1961 effort.



Sept. 6, 1961 - Adm. James Russell turns the battleship over to Gov. Sanford.

Not only had engineer Cyril Adams been enlisted to determine the feasibility of *North Carolina* making the transit up the Cape Fear River, he was also hired to draw up the plans for dredging the berth the Showboat would occupy.

Adams’ plan had the ship being moored perpendicular rather than parallel to the shore. According to Adams, mooring parallel to the shore would only allow you to secure the ship on one side while if mooring perpendicular to the shore, you could secure from both sides of the ship. Adams also noted that with the Cape Fear being a tidal river, mooring *North Carolina* parallel to the shore could create challenges as the ship could be subject to a list to the

To jump-start the fundraising effort, Morton took advantage of a scheduled late April visit to the White House that Gov. Sanford and former Gov. Hodges, now Secretary of Commerce, were going to promote an upcoming trade show being held in Charlotte later in the year. During a short ceremony in the Rose Garden, Sanford and Morton presented President John F. Kennedy with a certificate and designated him as the first Admiral of the North Carolina Navy. The visible support of the president for the battleship effort also spurred the Navy to move the process along a bit more swiftly.

Getting the school children of North Carolina involved in the fundraising effort was also a goal of Gov. Sanford, who

On September 6, 1961, with the fundraising campaign exceeding its \$250,000 goal and a berth for the battleship being prepared on the Cape Fear River across from downtown Wilmington, a pier-side gathering in Bayonne, New Jersey, signaled the culmination of Craig and Morton’s nearly three-year effort. In a short ceremony emceed by noted journalist Lowell Thomas, Adm. James Russell, the vice chief of naval operations, officially turned the battleship over to Gov. Sanford and the state of North Carolina. Battleship *North Carolina* had been saved!

Over the next two weeks, final preparations were made to tow the 729-foot *North Carolina* down the east coast to the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Final preparations were also taking place in Wilmington to berth the battleship in its new home.



Dredging the site that will berth Battleship *North Carolina*.

secured side as the river level changed with the tidal cycles. Based on Adams' recommendations and plans, the battleship's berth was prepared perpendicular to the shore.

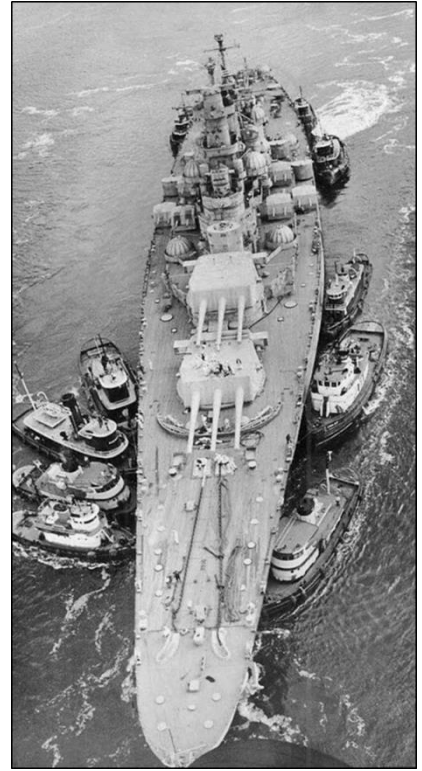
On September 26, after a one-day delay to allow the final remnants of Hurricane Esther to pass, Battleship *North Carolina* slipped away from her pier in Bayonne with the assistance of seven tugs. Over the next four days, two ocean-going tugs guided the battleship along a course down the east coast of the United States to the mouth of the Cape Fear River, arriving off Frying Pan Shoal on September 30.



The original plan was for the Showboat to make a grand entrance to her new home on Sunday, October 1. But a quick-moving storm blew through the area causing the final leg of the voyage, the 27-mile transit from the waters off Southport up the river to Wilmington, to be delayed until the following

day. *North Carolina* dropped her anchor with the hope the wind and rain would cease and visibility would be better in the morning.

On the morning of October 2, with Cape Fear River pilot Captain Bertram Burris guiding the efforts of the tugs controlling *North Carolina's* progress up the river, the Showboat made its way toward her new home. Thousands of residents came out to greet "our" battleship, lining the shore from Southport to the Wilmington waterfront.



With the channel narrowing and water beneath the keel decreasing, as many as 11 tugboats strained to move the 35,000-ton giant safely up the river, past the Port of Wilmington, and to the downtown Wilmington waterfront. As the battleship advanced toward the newly dredged berth across from downtown, the most difficult maneuver Burris would have to execute was approaching.

In his book, *Sixty Years With a Camera*, Morton recalled how acutely aware he was of the challenge in getting *North Carolina* into place. "The berthing at

Wilmington was one of the most tense moments in my life," he would write. "If it didn't work, we knew we had a mighty big ship that would make a formidable dam on the Cape Fear River."

Adams was confident that the research and calculations he had done in planning *North Carolina's* arrival and berth, however, he knew there were always unforeseen events and circumstances that could make the effort more challenging. The final positioning of the Showboat was no different.

In the weeks prior to the battleship arriving, Morton had talked to his friend Eldridge Fergus about moving his floating restaurant, *The Ark*, moored on the Wilmington waterfront directly across from the battleship's future home. Fergus agreed to move the concrete-hulled boat provided that tugs were on hand to make the move. Morton assured Fergus the tugs would be made available.





North Carolina's starboard quarter hits *The Ark*.

On the day the Showboat arrived, tugs were sent to *The Ark* as promised. However, Fergus had decided against moving since his customers had such a close view of the activities taking place on the river. (There are some who questioned Fergus' real motive for not moving.)

As the tugs strained to swing the battleship into her berth, the starboard gun tub of the aft quad-40mm mount struck the upper deck of *The Ark*. Other than breaking out some windows and some of the galley equipment being knocked around, no major damage was done to the restaurant and it reopened

to customers within weeks. (Editor's note: *The Ark*, now known as *The Boat*, remains afloat today and provides office spaces at the Emerald Coast Boatyard in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.)

After hitting *The Ark*, *North Carolina* made her final swing around and was slowly eased into her new berth. Shortly before 6 p.m. on October 2, retired Rear Admiral William Maxwell, Jr., superintendent of the Battleship North Carolina Memorial, declared that the battleship was home.

For Morton and the thousands of North Carolinians who had contributed to "Save Our Ship", seeing the Showboat tied up at her new berth was the culmination of months of meetings, planning, and fundraising. However, James Craig, the man who had the vision of a grand battleship memorial in Wilmington, was absent from the final days of the effort and would never see *North Carolina* make her final port call.



Oct. 2, 1961 - Battleship *North Carolina* eases into her berth in Wilmington.

Two days before *North Carolina* began her journey from New Jersey, Craig had been provided an opportunity to fly with the Army's Golden Knights parachute team during an air show at Wilmington's airport. Craig wanted to take aerial photos of the berth that would be the home of the battleship that would be arriving the following week.

As the Air Force C-123 attempted a jet-assisted takeoff it stalled and crashed to the ground at the airport. Three of the aircrew were killed in the crash and Craig was severely burned. Craig was flown to the burn center at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas where he died from his injuries on October 14, the day Battleship *North Carolina* welcomed aboard the first members of the public since arriving at her Wilmington home.

Sixty years later the legacy of USS *North Carolina* perseveres as she stands in quiet dignity as a memorial to the more than 10,000 North Carolinians who made the ultimate sacrifice during World War II. Every visitor who walks the decks helps to fulfill the dream of a man who refused to accept that a welder's torch would determine the fate of the Showboat.

*Editor's note: Material for this article was gathered from a variety of sources including Hugh Morton's oral history recorded April 4, 2001, Battleship North Carolina archives, The Wilmington Star-News, Our State Magazine, the University of North Carolina, and the Associated Press.*





## Help Preserve the Legacy

Like the thousands of dimes collected by North Carolina's school children in 1961, every donation made to the Friends of the Battleship helps to preserve the legacy of the majestic ship and the men who served in her. Whether a dime or a dollar, your continued support allows the Friends to provide funding to assist, promote, and perpetuate educational and restoration efforts of the ship.



**It's Easy to Make Friends Smile** – Don't forget, if you regularly shop online through Amazon.com, you can designate the Friends of the Battleship North Carolina as the recipient of an AmazonSmile donation. For all eligible Amazon purchases, AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your purchases – at no cost to you. In the second quarter of 2021, a total donation of \$132.32 was made to the Friends by AmazonSmile.

It's easy to sign up. Find out how by clicking the button below.



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Friends Chairman – Michael Zalob      **Scuttlebutt** Editor – Gordon Hume  
1 Battleship Road, Wilmington, NC 28401  
[Scuttlebutt1@battleshipncfriends.com](mailto:Scuttlebutt1@battleshipncfriends.com)  
[info@battleshipncfriends.com](mailto:info@battleshipncfriends.com)  
[battleshipncfriends.com](http://battleshipncfriends.com)  
(910)399-9117

