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What's Happening on the Showboat?

Happy Holidays! – With the Holiday Season well underway and a new year quickly approaching, the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* would like to thank you, our members, for helping make 2022 a great year for both the Showboat and the Friends. Your continued membership, donations, and patronage have made it possible for the Friends to carry out its mission of enhancing the visitor experience and supporting the Battleship through funding that assists, promotes, and perpetuates educational and restoration efforts aboard the ship.

This past year we were successful in increasing the visibility of both the Battleship and the Friends through our presence at several community festivals in the local region, our annual July 4th celebration to watch the fireworks, and our “Raise the Flag” events. Additionally, hundreds of Showboat visitors enhanced their battleship experience by taking advantage of either the Friends sponsored “6 for 60” tours on the first Saturday of each month, or one of our daily guided tour offerings.



Board members Karen Marzilli and Pat Cummings prepare wreaths for display.

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Your support of new endeavors like our first “Wreaths of Honor” program also helps us to better

support the Battleship. This year’s inaugural effort resulted in nearly 200 wreaths being purchased for display on the lifelines of the Battleship from December 7 to January 7 this holiday season.

What we have been able to accomplish in 2022 is directly tied to your continued support and generosity, and for that we are profoundly grateful.

We are already well into planning our efforts for 2023 and are looking forward to another banner year.

From Showboat Student to Battleship Ambassador – Congratulations to the 13 new Battleship *North Carolina* Ambassadors who recently completed the six-week Fall session of the Battleship Ambassador and Tour Guide Training Course led by Friends Board Chair and retired Navy Rear Admiral Ron Henderson.



Ron Henderson provides instruction to the latest class of Battleship Ambassador candidates.

CBDR*

Upcoming events on *The Showboat*

Wreaths of Honor

On Display
December 7 – January 7

6 for 60 Tours

January 7
February 4

Hidden Battleship

January 14
40 participant limit
[Get your tickets](#)

Battleship 101

January 21
February 18



*Constant Bearing, Decreasing Range

The course, part of The Captain Ben Blee Memorial Volunteer Training Program, teaches candidates about the USS *North Carolina*, her systems, history, and the men who served aboard her. Successful completion of the course is the first step for those interested in becoming Ambassadors/Docents and Tour Guides. The next step for those wanting to go on to be tour guides is several weeks of shadowing qualified guides and developing their technique for telling *North Carolina's* story.

Congratulations to Fernando Avalos, Barry Brown, Eric Blaesing, Jim Cannon, Kathy Circelli, Charles Ewell, Bob Gorman, Karl Hess, John Pilli, Daymon Powell, Jarvis Simmons, Steve Weingart, and Mike Wroblewski.

Have a Houseful for the Holidays? – If you have family and friends spending the holidays with you this year, and you're looking for something to keep them occupied for an afternoon, how about bringing them to explore Battleship *North Carolina*.

The Showboat is open every day of the year from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with the entire self-guided, public tour route open for visitors to explore. And if you would like to enrich the experience, consider booking a guided tour for your visitors. Guided tours are available on most days when booked in advance and can be purchased online by [clicking here](#).



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This Month in USS North Carolina History

The World Changes in a New York Minute – Only eight months into her Navy career and still working through her initial shakedown training, America's newest battleship was tied up at the New York Navy Yard the first weekend of December 1941. Seaman William Taylor, one of many young sailors who happened to have duty aboard USS *North Carolina* that weekend, recalled being awakened from an early Sunday afternoon nap by a startling announcement over the 1MC speaker in the berthing compartment.



"This is not a drill. The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor. We are in a state of war!"

Several years later Boatswain's Mate First Class Paul Wieser would write about the trepidation felt by the crew standing duty that Sunday in December.

"We soon got the word, 'bogies [unidentified aircraft] approaching,' and we went to General Quarters," Wieser recalled. "We had ammunition in the 5-inch mounts. We got the word to 'Stand by'. We'd heard that many times before in our drills. Our next order would have been 'Commence firing!' Just then, we got the word to rest easy; the plane was a 'friendly'."

December 2022

The crew of *North Carolina* was recalled from liberty immediately and wasted no time preparing for what might be ahead for them. On **December 8** the ship took on provisions and by **December 11**, was headed out of the harbor to prepare for her transit to Hampton Roads, Virginia.



Where did Santa find USS *North Carolina* on Christmas Day during the war?

- 1941 – Anchored at Hampton Roads, Virginia
- 1942 – Moored at Dumbea Bay, Noumea, New Caledonia
- 1943 – Got underway from Havannah Harbor, Efate, New Hebrides
- 1944 – Anchored at Ulithi, Caroline Islands

Editor's Note: You can read an article by Kevin Maurer about *North Carolina's* Christmas dinner in 1943, in the December issue of [Our State magazine](#).

Bombardment of Nauru Island – Operating south of Tarawa in early **December 1943**, USS *North Carolina* was operating as part of a task group made up of all six of America's fast battleships. On **December 8**, Rear Admiral Willis Lee, the task group commander, ordered the battleships into a column formation in preparation for the bombardment the Nauru Island, a Japanese-occupied island some 400 miles southwest of Tarawa.



North Carolina fires the first salvo at Nauru.

North Carolina, steaming at the rear of the column formation, misunderstood the flag signals being relayed through the formation and prematurely fired the first salvos of what was meant to be a simultaneous barrage by all six battleships on the tiny island. Following *North Carolina's* false start, the rest of the formation commenced bombardment of the Japanese airfield and support facilities, part of an ongoing campaign to neutralize Japan's ability to use the island in support of their campaign in the Gilbert Islands.



A column of battleships prepare for action.

Typhoon Cobra Wrecks Havoc on the Fleet – Having been supporting the air strikes on the Philippine island of Luzon from **December 14-16, 1944**, USS *North Carolina* withdrew from the area for refueling on **December 17**. By early afternoon, orders were received to discontinue the refueling operations because of heavy seas associated with an approaching storm. During the morning hours of **December 18**, it was clear that the nearly 100 ships of Task Force 38 had found their way into the center of the fierce storm that would become known as Typhoon Cobra (also referred to it as Halsey's Typhoon.)



A light carrier rolls in the rough seas of Typhoon Cobra.

The task force, made up of seven fleet carriers, six light carriers, eight battleships, 15 cruisers, 50 destroyers, and several auxiliary ships (oilers, ammunition ships), experienced swells of well over 70 feet and sustained winds of 120 m.p.h. At the height of the storm, some of the destroyers were experiencing 70-degree rolls. Though much heavier than the destroyers, *North Carolina* still found herself rolling as much as 43 degrees.

The crew of *North Carolina* experienced the fierceness of the storm and the sheer power of the sea those two days in December. Marine Private First Class George Kietzman, one of the Marines assigned to *North Carolina*, chronicled his experiences aboard the ship during the typhoon.

"[The] sea was even rougher today and we had to postpone fueling again," Kietzman wrote on **December 18**. "Three cans 'ran dry' and are now dead in the water. The *Independence* caught fire and practically all her planes were pushed overboard. Soon after, a similar accident happened to the *Monterey*. Both carriers may have to go back to States. The [*South Dakota*] and the *Langlely* lost steerage control. The winds reached 72 knots and some of the swells were 100 ft. high. The *Hull* is presumed lost. We picked up 41 of her crew. All day today we have been traversing debris filled waters. We lost 100 crates of potatoes and I'm not the least bit sorry, either! We only missed the center of the storm by 19 miles."

George Suggs was an Electrician's Mate who worked in the interior communications space on the second platform.

"I thought the ship would break apart," the Belhaven, N.C. native remembered during a discussion with Battleship *North Carolina* volunteers via Zoom in June 2020.

"It was really the only time I was truly afraid during my time on the ship," Suggs said as he recalled how the entire ship shook as waves broke over the main deck during the storm.

Task Force 38 emerged from the storm to find that three destroyers, USS *Hull* (DD-350), USS *Monaghan* (DD-354), and USS *Spence* (DD-512), had been lost along with nearly 800 men. At least 30 other ships sustained damage to some extent with nine requiring significant repairs before returning to the war effort. *North Carolina* made it through the storm with relatively minor damage and the loss of her Kingfisher aircraft which were washed over the side.



USS *North Carolina* still battling rough seas as she steams off the port quarter of USS *Essex* (CV 9) in the aftermath of Typhoon Cobra.

Did You Know?

Ford Built Tough – During Typhoon Cobra, the light aircraft carrier USS *Monterey* (CVL 26) was damaged by a fire that was started when several of the ship's aircraft tore loose from their tie-down cables and collided during the storm. In the early morning hours of December 18, a 30-year-old lieutenant aboard the *Monterey* narrowly missed becoming a casualty of the storm himself.

As the lieutenant, who was serving as the carrier's assistant navigator, headed for his battle station on the bridge, the ship rolled twenty-five degrees causing the young lieutenant to lose his footing and slide toward the edge of the deck. A two-inch steel ridge around the edge of the carrier slowed him enough so he could roll and twist into the catwalk below the deck.

"I was lucky; I could have easily gone overboard" Lieutenant Gerald R. Ford would recall later.

Source: Naval History and Heritage Command



Support the Showboat

Consider an End-of-the-Year Donation – With the final month of 2022 quickly winding down to its end, we would like to remind our members that the Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with your donation to help preserve *North Carolina's* legacy being tax-deductible to the extent that is allowed by law. Several of you made donations during the recent Giving Tuesday event, and for that we thank you.

Please consider an end-of-the-year donation to Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* and Help Preserve the Legacy of this magnificent memorial.

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Still Trying to Cross Items Off Your Gift List? – Determining the perfect gift for that special someone is always a challenge. This year why not consider



something different and purchase a Friends membership for your favorite Battleship enthusiast? Membership provides unlimited access to the Battleship *North Carolina* for a year, free tickets to watch the City of Wilmington's July 4th Fireworks Display from the decks of the Showboat, as well as discounts on tours, programs, and merchandise in the Visitor Center Ship Store. Simply [click here](#) to buy the perfect gift for your Battleship enthusiast.



If it's a unique clothing item you are looking for, what about a Friends of the Battleship shirt or sweatshirt. You can purchase Friends gear through our e-store by [clicking here](#).

Proceeds from the purchase of Friends merchandise go to support Battleship *North Carolina*.

And don't forget, Friends members receive a 25% discount on most merchandise purchased in the Visitors Center Ship Store. Just show the cashier your membership card when you make your purchase.



Regardless of the gift, know that your purchases *Help Preserve the Legacy* of USS *North Carolina* for future generations.

AmazonSmile – Even with your holiday shopping in full swing, you can still designate Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* as the charitable organization to receive donations through AmazonSmile for all your shopping on Amazon.com. For all eligible purchases, AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your purchases to the Friends – at no cost to you.

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



Finally, a shout out to our first Friends Business Member



Thank you for supporting Battleship *North Carolina* and the Friends.

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Friends Chair – Ron Henderson **Scuttlebutt** Editor – Gordon Hume

1 Battleship Road, Wilmington, NC 28401

Scuttlebutt1@battleshipncfriends.com

info@battleshipncfriends.com

battleshipncfriends.com

(910)399-9117

