



## February 2021

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### What's Happening on the Showboat?

These first few weeks of 2021 have seen Battleship *North Carolina* continue to host visitors on a regular basis. Though the numbers remain below pre-pandemic levels, those who have visited have found there is plenty to see and experience as they explore the Showboat's self-guided public tour route. Visitors are required to wear masks and maintain social distancing while onboard *North Carolina*. Open hours remain 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

With the Showboat's regular programs (e.g., Battleship 101, Hidden Battleship, etc.) and guided tours not being available because of current COVID-19 restrictions, the Battleship's staff has developed several virtual programs to allow enthusiasts to enjoy Battleship *North Carolina*.



The first of those programs, ***The Showboat Podcast*** was introduced in November. Since then, several additional podcasts have been added including the latest episode providing information and details about the OS2U Kingfisher that sits on *North Carolina*'s fantail and the role of the Kingfisher during the Showboat's duty in the Pacific. [Click here](#) to access *The Showboat Podcast*.



Additionally, two fresh episodes in the new, ***Discover the Showboat: A City at Sea*** video series are now available. Battleship volunteer Cecil Ard takes a look at two areas of the ship that played an important role in the quality of life of sailors assigned to USS *North Carolina* -- the Vegetable Locker and the Soda Fountain. You can access *Discover the Showboat* by [clicking here](#).



And if you would like to get a bit more in-depth about different aspects of Battleship *North Carolina*, there is still time to sign up for the remaining sessions of the ***Meet the Showboat*** presentation series. Upcoming sessions include a discussion about the Marines who served aboard the Showboat, a look at what it took to fire *North Carolina*'s massive 16-inch guns, and a two-part presentation about the other ships named *North Carolina*. Find out more and register for any of the remaining sessions by [clicking here](#).

### Hull Work Continues



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## This Month in Showboat History

USS *North Carolina* spent the early part of **February 1945** at anchorage at Ulithi Atoll in the western Caroline Islands. While there, the Showboat made a significant change to her loadout of 16-inch projectiles in preparation for the impending operations at Iwo Jima.

Anticipating a lower probability of engaging Japanese battleships, *North Carolina* changed the loadout of her 16-inch projectiles so over 70 percent (873) of her 1,200 rounds were high capacity and only 315 armor piercing. Normally the loadout would have been made up with two-thirds of the projectiles being the armor piercing variant. The other battleships in the fleet made similar adjustments.



Sailors on an American battleship prepare to lower a 16-inch projectile to the magazine.

*North Carolina's* sailors sensed the change might be significant. In a **February 3** journal entry, Seaman First Class Joseph Halas noted, "We have started to take off 16-inch armor piercing shells and have been working all night on them and we are bringing on 16-inch bombardment shells so I guess the [enemy is] really going to catch hell the next time we go to sea."

Indeed, on **February 10**, USS *North Carolina* did go back to sea, this time assigned to Admiral Mitscher's Task Force 58.

The Showboat was part of a battle force made up of nearly 120 combat-ready ships, including 16 carriers, 8 battleships, 15 cruisers, 77 destroyers, and over 1,000 aircraft. The task force, now divided into five task groups, steamed toward Japan in mid-February.

Aircraft from the task force's 16 aircraft carriers conducted air strikes on several airfields in the vicinity of Tokyo from **February 16-17**, to reduce the Japanese ability to use their air assets to counter the upcoming invasion at Iwo Jima. The air strikes were successful in eliminating over 500 aircraft from the Japanese inventory.

Following the Tokyo strikes, the task force turned its attention to Iwo Jima. Military leaders felt the small island, some 650 miles south of Tokyo, was critical real estate to have under control if operations in and around Japan were to be successful.

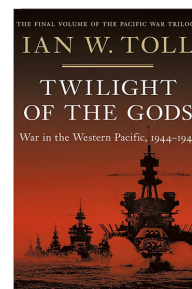


Aerial view of Iwo Jima from one of USS *North Carolina's* Kingfisher aircraft as the amphibious landing commences on Feb. 19, 1945.

For four days, from **February 19-22**, eight battleships, eight cruisers, and ten destroyers conducted the heaviest naval bombardment in history in support of the amphibious landing of over 70,000 Marines on the beaches of Iwo Jima. By the time *North Carolina's* time on the firing line was complete, she had expended 855 of her 16-inch rounds, and 2,753 rounds had been fired from her 5-inch guns.

Thousands of pages have been written about the men and events of Iwo Jima. Retired Rear Admiral Ron Henderson, a member of the Friends Board of Directors,

recommends the book [Twilight of the Gods: War in the Western Pacific 1944-1945](#), by Ian Toll, as a great source to learn more about Iwo Jima. The book, the third volume in Toll's, *Pacific War Trilogy*, covers the conquest of the Marianas, Leyte Gulf, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and Japan's final surrender.



## Did You Know?

**How about another round?** - The 855 rounds fired from *North Carolina's* main battery during the bombardment of Iwo Jima accounted for 36 percent of the total number of 16-inch rounds (2,396) the Showboat expended during the entire war. The 2,753 rounds fired from her secondary battery were 23 percent of the nearly 12,000 total 5-inch rounds fired by the Showboat in all engagements (air and shore) and 36 percent of the 5-inch rounds fired in all her shore bombardment operations (7,736) during the war.



USS *North Carolina* refuels a Sumner-class destroyer.

**Fill 'er up!** - Because of her tremendous fuel capacity (1.9 million gallons of bunker C fuel oil), it was not uncommon for *North Carolina* to have one of the many smaller ships of the task force alongside receiving fuel. During the period from February 10, when the Showboat departed Ulithi Atoll, to her return from the Iwo Jima operations on March 1, USS *North Carolina* conducted at least 27 refueling operations - providing other ships with fuel on 24 of those occasions, and receiving fuel from oilers the other three times.

## Talk Like a Sailor

**Gedunk (also Geedunk)** - Term broadly refers to candy, ice cream, potato chips, and other snacks. Also, the place that sells snacks can be referred to as the gedunk, gedunk bar, or gedunk machine.

**Head** - Term used for a ship's bathroom originating from the days of sail. Because wind would generally blow from the rear of the ship to the front, the bathroom would be located at the front, or "head" of the ship to carry any foul odors away from the crew.



## Support the Showboat

**Time to Renew?** - 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 more guests with you when you visit. Visit the [Friends Renewal page](#) for details.

**It's Tax Time!** - Remember, Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* is a 501(c)(3) organization and your donation to help preserve *North Carolina's* legacy is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

As part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, you may deduct up to \$300 of a cash donation that you made to qualifying organizations prior to December 31, 2020, even if you do not itemize deductions. Consult your tax professional for details.

**D O N A T E**

Consider donating to Friends.

**AmazonSmile** - 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 to the Friends - at no cost to you. It's easy to sign up. Find out how by clicking below.

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