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Scuttlebutt



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Message from the Chair

Friends,

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who also served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, once noted, "A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor".

The sentiment of his words certainly applies to the year the Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* is having. Our mission, to support improvements to the ship and to enhance the visitors' experience with tours and docents, has been experiencing what no one could ever consider a "smooth sea". With the COVID-19 pandemic restricting access to the Showboat for over three months, we have had to find new ways of navigating the environment in which we find ourselves.

Weekly refresher sessions for tour guides and ambassadors now take place on Zoom, as does training for new guides. The board of directors, also conducting business via Zoom, continues to support *North Carolina* and has recently authorized funding for the restoration of the ship's bell (\$2,880), updating the ship's store area (\$1,280) in partnership with the Living History Crew, and have provided nearly \$900 to the museum's curator to continue moving crew memories to the cloud.

Additionally, we purchased material for the Shelmore Stitchers to make 80 masks that will be available for tour guides and volunteers to use once they are able to return to the ship. And we have been working to improve our website and to enhance the way we communicate and interact with our membership.

Finally, two major projects supported by your donations to the Generations Campaign continue to move forward. The process of replacing sections of the hull of the ship steel began June 15 and is scheduled to continue into December. And the Living with Water project has moved to the formal design phase to determine the best way of mitigating the impact of future storms, coastal storm surges, tidal floods and storm water run-off.

The seas have indeed been rough, but in the end we will be more "skillful sailors" in helping to preserve this precious memorial and the legacy of those who served and symbolize everything that is great about our Nation.

With your continued support through donations and the renewal of your membership, we will navigate these challenging times.

We thank you for your support and look forward to your next visit to the Showboat.

Michael Zalob

What's Happening on the Showboat?

It's been great to see activity at the Battleship *North Carolina* over the past month. Since the May 26 reopening of the ship, there has been a steady stream of visitors exploring the Showboat. Even with a limitation on the number of guests allowed on the ship, and access being restricted to topside, open-air spaces, feedback has generally been positive. There remain challenges, and the number of visitors certainly is not what it normally would be without the restrictions. However, with the continued support of the Friends membership, volunteers and the general public, Battleship *North Carolina* will fight her way through this current predicament.

In addition to visitors returning to the decks of the battleship, a limited number of volunteers have also been allowed back onboard to assist in ongoing maintenance and restoration. The efforts are scheduled through the battleship's Museum Services Director, Kim Sincox, with volunteer Ken Rittenmeyer coordinating with ship's staff for work requirements and assignments. Volunteers are required to comply with mask and social distancing requirements, and cannot work in areas that would cause them to come into contact with the visiting public.

Two groups of volunteers have been formed into Blue and Gold teams, each team working on an assortment of tasks on alternating Wednesdays. Members of the teams have been working on projects ranging from painting decks, bulkheads, mess deck benches, and gun barrels; stenciling projectiles and refinishing butcher blocks; assembling benches that will eventually be placed in the parking lot; and performing maintenance in the turrets and gun mounts.



In addition to the Wednesday Blue and Gold teams, there is also a dedicated cadre of volunteers who form the cleaning crew. The group, under the leadership of David Holloway, Jay Eipper, and Paul Veres, is currently gathering every Thursday to ensure the Showboat is "ship shape" and ready for guests.

With tour guides, docents, and ambassadors still not able to participate in activities aboard the ship, Joe Calla's Saturday Morning Tour Guide/Ambassador Coffee Hour group continues to meet, via Zoom, to stay up-to-date and share information. On June 13 the group was treated to a virtual visit by Mr. George Sugg, a former *North Carolina* crew member from Belhaven, N.C. Sugg was an Electricians Mate who worked in the interior communications space on the second platform.

Sugg related stories about life aboard *North Carolina* during the war, including *North Carolina's* support of the Marine landing at Iwo Jima in February 1945 and the friendly fire incident that occurred during an attack by kamikazes on April 6, killing three *North Carolina* sailors.

During the discussion with Sugg it was observed that one of the other participants in the meeting was also at Iwo Jima. Louis Bourgault, a former Marine and current *North Carolina* ambassador, was among the thousands of Marines who landed on the beaches of Iwo Jima while *North Carolina* bombarded targets ashore with its 16-inch and 5-inch guns.



GEORGE G. SUGG.
George G. Sugg of Grifton, electrician's mate third class, served on the USS North Carolina (BB-55) from 1942 to 1946. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. George C. Sugg of Grifton. His service record is available at the Naval History and Heritage Command. Young Sugg attended The Citadel.

Sugg was also onboard *North Carolina* in December 1944 when Task Force 38 was battered by Typhoon Cobra. Several ships sank in the 70-foot seas of the typhoon including, USS *Hull* (DD-350) whose crew included one of Sugg's hometown friends.

Sugg recalled waves breaking over the main deck and the entire ship shaking.

"I thought the ship would break apart," said Sugg, adding that it was really the only time he was truly afraid during his time on *North Carolina*.

On July 11, two more former crew members, Mr. Fred Cuddy, a Boatswain's Mate who worked with the *Kingfisher*, and Mr. Bill Venuti, who was assigned to L Division as a lookout just below Sky Control, will be sharing their experiences with volunteers during the Saturday morning virtual gathering.

Several Friends, including members of the Board of Directors, dropped by Trolley Stop on June 14 to support the annual Flag Day fundraiser. There was a steady stream of patrons at Trolley Stop with many stopping to talk with Friends representatives. At the end of the day, approximately \$1,300 had been raised through a combination of proceeds from Trolley Stop sales and the selling of American flags that had been flown over the Showboat.



On June 17, nine members of the Shelmore Stitchers visited the Showboat to present Friends Board Chairman, Michael Zalob, with 80 personal protection masks the group made for use by volunteers when they are able to return to the ship. The masks were made with a star-laden red, white and blue material that was selected and purchased by the Friends. The sewing group from the Brunswick Forest community in Leland had previously delivered 25 masks to the ship for use by staff and Ship's Store employees.

As noted in the Chair's message, there has been significant progress on two of the major projects on which we have been focused over the past several years. Wilmington- based Atlantic Coast Industrial Marine Construction, LLC, is onsite and will begin replacing sections of the hull with steel donated by NUCOR Steel, a North Carolina company. Visitors will notice a crane near the bow and work barges are in place within the cofferdam. The actual replacement of steel will begin once all preparations have been completed and is expected to be completed near the end of the year.



And the Living with Water project has moved to the formal design phase. The effort is intended to restore shoreline and create wetlands in the immediate vicinity of the ship to reduce regular flooding, improve water quality in runoff to the Cape Fear River, enhance wildlife habitat and beautify Battleship Park.

Additionally, Friends recently authorized the funding needed for the conservation of the ship's forward bell. The bronze bell, located behind Turret II just below the bridge, was issued to the ship in 1941. The restoration began June 29 and is expected to be completed in July.

This Month in Showboat History

Initially assigned to duties on the East Coast to counter the threat the German battleship *Tripitz* posed to the shipping lanes in the Atlantic, USS *North Carolina* was transferred to the Pacific to help bolster the strength of the American fleet. **The Showboat's arrival in Pearl Harbor on July 11, 1942**, provided a much needed boost in morale to the gathered crowds who watched America's newest battleship move through the devastated harbor to her berth at Pier 12.

Getting underway from Pearl Harbor on July 15, *North Carolina* joined USS *Enterprise* (CV 6), two cruisers and eight destroyers and headed south toward Tongatabu in the South Pacific. At about noon **on July 19, the Showboat crossed the Equator** for the first time. An event normally marked with a "crossing the line" ceremony, no celebration was observed due to the gravity of times. A little more than two weeks later, *North Carolina* would see her first action of the war with

Into the Breach

The Showboat Heads to War

By Roger Weigold

Seaman William Taylor was just one of many young sailors who happened to have duty onboard USS *North Carolina* the first weekend of December 1941. The ship was tied up at the New York Navy Yard and Taylor was in his bunk getting some rest when he was awakened 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!"

Guard posts were set up throughout the ship and Taylor was issued a duty belt and a .45-caliber automatic pistol and took up his duty station standing watch outside a lower 5-inch handling room. Taylor, along with a majority of the men aboard the Showboat that day, knew little to nothing about Pearl Harbor, or the Japanese.



Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941

"I soon learned," Taylor would later recall.

The crew of *North Carolina* wasted no time preparing for what might be ahead for them. On December 8 the ship took on provisions and by December 11, the Showboat was headed down the harbor to Gravesend Bay preparing for her transit to Hampton Roads, Virginia.

Over the next several months, *North Carolina* continued its training and preparation for war, operating along the East Coast, from the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico off the southern tip of Florida to the colder waters of the North Atlantic off the New England coast. Much of the training involved intensive main and secondary battery firing exercises as well as testing to ensure *North Carolina's* engineering systems were operating properly and efficiently.

In mid-March, *North Carolina* along with her sister ship, USS *Washington* (BB 56), and several other ships, transited to Casco Bay, Maine. The ships were assigned to a task force operating in the eastern North Atlantic to guard shipping lanes against a possible sortie by the German battleship *Tirpitz*, sister ship of the *Bismarck*, which had deployed to Norway. 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.



North Carolina anchored off Norfolk, June 1942.

Getting underway from Casco Bay on May 28, *North Carolina* transited to Hampton Roads to prepare for her voyage to the Pacific. The Showboat departed Hampton Roads on June 5, and transited the Panama Canal June 9-10 in company with the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp* (CV 7), two cruisers and six destroyers.

From Panama, *North Carolina* sailed up the West Coast of Mexico and California, transiting first to San Pedro (Long Beach), and then to San Francisco, arriving the morning of June 24 for a 10 day port call. After celebrating Independence Day in San Francisco, the Showboat transited under the Golden Gate Bridge on July 5, steaming west toward Pearl Harbor. Few of the crew were prepared for what they would witness a short six days later.

On the afternoon of July 11, USS *North Carolina* entered the channel at Pearl Harbor. It didn't take long for word to get around the waterfront that help was arriving in the form of America's newest battleship.

Captain Ben Blee, USN (Ret), a lieutenant (jg) aboard the heavy cruiser USS *Pensacola* (CA 24) at the time, would later recall, "We watched it move slowly around the island until the whole gorgeous thing finally came into full view, and boy what a sight! A great new battleship flying the Stars and Stripes, bristling with guns, her new paintwork and brass glistening in the sunlight,

signal flags flapping at her yardarms, her proud crew in whites at quarters."

Kenneth Dews, former chairman of the USS *North Carolina* Battleship Commission, was 19 years old serving on a fleet tug when *North Carolina* arrived in Pearl Harbor.



North Carolina arrives Pearl Harbor

"After the devastation of Pearl Harbor and our losses at Coral Sea and Midway, *North Carolina* was a godsend," he recounted years later. "As I stood there on that small tug with 16 other members watching *North Carolina* come down the channel, this beautiful ship and hundreds of men aboard her brought a ray of hope that we were going to come back. As *North Carolina* sailors and officers on the bridge looked down at us and around the harbor, they saw devastation they had never expected. Pictures had been very limited in the news as to what had happened in Pearl. But as we looked up at them, we saw hope."

The moment was not lost on the crewmen of the *North Carolina* either.

Years later, Chuck Paty, another one of the young sailors assigned to *North Carolina*, described the scene as they transited the harbor to their berth.

"We entered the channel at 1800 to behold a sight that we knew nothing about. We entered the harbor with some apprehension. As we came through the entrance channel, the crew was called to quarters. We stood at attention at quarters as we progressed around the back side of Ford Island passing the capsized hulk of the USS *Utah* (AG 16) progressing through the East Loch, the sunken body of the USS *Arizona* (BB 39). We moored at 1955 to berth B12. It was a very sobering several hours."



USS *Arizona* (BB 39) July 1942

"Even with all the movies and pictures you saw, you couldn't appreciate the devastation that had taken place there," said Larry Resen, an 18-year-old Fire Controlman who recalled the scene after the war.

"As we arrived and I looked at the oil-covered harbor and the broken rows of ships, I choked up. There were all the sailors who had seen nothing but the damage that the Japanese caused here, who had gotten a very sharp kick in the teeth at Pearl Harbor and who had, in the months that followed, lost other ships in battle," Resen remembered. "And these crews, they cheered and cheered us.

"I couldn't help saying to myself, 'They're cheering us for nothing.' We hadn't done anything. We had not fired a shot yet. But to them, we were the symbol of help finally arriving in force. It broke me up. I admit being a misty-eyed 18-year-old."

In his book "Battleship *North Carolina*," Blee, who would join the Showboat crew in 1944, noted, "What those men saw gliding majestically into the ravaged harbor, around Ford Island, past the charred wreckage of battleship *Arizona*, to her berth in the navy yard, was to them the most beautiful battleship in the world -- evidence that America, the sleeping giant, had at last awakened. Morale in the fleet soared."



Admiral Chester Nimitz

Indeed, there were many who were inspired as *North Carolina* joined the fleet at Pearl Harbor, including Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet.

"I well remember the great thrill when she arrived in Pearl Harbor during the early stages of the war - at a time when our strength and fortunes were at low ebb," Nimitz wrote. "She was the first of the great new battleships to join the Pacific Fleet, and her mere presence in a task force was enough to keep morale at a peak. Before the war's end she had built for herself a magnificent record of accomplishment."

North Carolina would leave Pearl Harbor on July 15, 1942, and

would be in the fight within a month's time. However, the simple act of USS *North Carolina* entering Pearl Harbor on that July afternoon, and her presence in the fleet, helped to set the foundation for what would become America's victory in the Pacific.

Did You Know?

There were two types of projectiles used by *North Carolina's* 16-inch main battery. Armor Piercing (AP) weighing 2,700 pounds, including 40 pounds of high explosives, with a range of 20 miles; and High Capacity (HC) weighing in at 1,900 pounds with 140 pounds of high explosives and a range of 23 miles. *North Carolina* had the capacity to carry a total of 1256 of the 16-inch projectiles and expended 2396 while operating in the Pacific.

The projectiles for the 5-inch secondary battery came in four variations. Anti-aircraft Common (AAC), Common (COM), White Phosphorus (WP), and Illumination (Illum) or "star shells." The average weight of a projectile was 55 pounds and had a range of up to 10 miles when being fired for shore bombardment, or a maximum altitude of about 37,000 feet when being used in an anti-aircraft role. *North Carolina's* magazines had a 14,225 round capacity and she fired over 12,000 rounds during the war.

Originally outfitted with 12 water-cooled Browning .50-caliber machine guns and four 1.1-inch quadruple gun mounts to make up her automatic anti-aircraft battery, *North Carolina* began the



North Carolina eventually had 15 quadruple Bofor mounts like these on USS *Hornet*.

process of updating her configuration immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. By the time the ship headed for the Pacific in 1942, there were 40 Oerlikon 20mm anti-aircraft cannons installed. By the end of the year all the .50-caliber and 1.1-inch guns would be removed from the *Showboat* and would be replaced with a total of 46 of the Oerlikons and 10 Bofor quadruple-barrel 40mm gun mounts. Eventually, *North Carolina* would have 15 of the 40mm quadruple mounts and as many as 53 of the 20mm cannons.

Talk Like a Sailor

Pollywogs - The lowest of lowly, slimy sea creatures who have never crossed the Equator.

Shellbacks - Those most trusted and honorable sea creatures who have crossed the Equator and been found worthy and entrusted by King Neptune with knowledge of the "Solemn Mysteries of the Ancient Order of the Deep".

Pollywogs make the transition to Shellback during a "**Crossing the Line**" ceremony as their ship crosses the Equator. The ritual is a time-honored tradition dating back hundreds of years and is normally presided over by King Neptune with the assistance of Davy Jones. All of the lowly Pollywogs aboard the ship, ranging from the most senior officers to the most junior sailor, participate in the ceremony. Even President Franklin Roosevelt became a Shellback when he crossed the Equator while transiting to South America aboard the cruiser USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35) in 1936. In a letter to the First Lady, the president described his experience as an "intensive initiation lasting two days, but we have all survived and are now full-fledged Shellbacks".

Door Knockers - Nickname given to the Oerlikon 20mm anti-aircraft cannons. With an effective range of about 2,000 yards, sailors knew if they heard the 20mm guns firing, the attacking aircraft were close and "knocking at the door".

Renew and Smile

As we've noted over the past couple of months, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent limitations on access and activities aboard Battleship *North Carolina*, have caused a significant

disruption to the Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina*'s revenue stream. However, there are ways you can help make sure we are able to continue our support of the Showboat.

Keeping your membership up-to-date maintains our ability to provide funding for conservation and restoration activities, educational programming, and artifact acquisition. It's easy to renew by logging on to the Friends website [HERE](#).

And don't forget, AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* every time you shop at Amazon. In the first quarter of 2020, Friends members bought over \$18,000 worth of merchandise through the Amazon Smile program, resulting in just over \$90 in donations.

That may not seem like a large amount, but with enough of you participating, the pennies start adding up. In fact, as of May, those pennies have added up to a total of \$1078 that Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* has received through AmazonSmile.

Find out how you can participate by clicking on the AmazonSmile button below.



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