



October 2020

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Message From the Chair

Dear Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina*,

I hope this issue finds each and every one of our Friends members safe and doing well.

October begins a new fiscal year for the Friends. And while we are all looking forward to a return to "normalcy", I would like to take a quick look back at this past year.

Despite the difficult environment we find ourselves in this year, our Friends membership base remains relatively stable. We are grateful to see you renewing your memberships as they come due and we find it encouraging that many of you have decided to increase your commitment by upgrading your membership level when renewing.

I would like to congratulate the Board of Directors for their performance and diligence during this difficult time. Tight budgeting, resourcefulness, and a lot of flexibility allowed us to fulfill our mission while maintaining a sound financial balance sheet.

Some of our highlights for the year include:

- Restoration and preservation of the ship's forward bell
- Underwrote the cost of refurbishing the Ship's Store
- Revised volunteer recognition to additionally highlight 5 and 10 years of service
- Improved our *Scuttlebutt* e-newsletter
- Presented "Honorary" Friends shirts to five original crew members
- Established a ship employee recognition award program

With the entire public tour route now open, we turn our sights to the future and the opportunity to resume our guided tour, docent, and ambassador programs.

I would be remiss if I failed to extend my appreciation to the two departing members of the Friends Board of Directors. Both Doug Kesling and Bob Rossi served the Friends over the past several years, lending their time and energy to our mission of supporting the Showboat. We thank both for their commitment.

I would also like to welcome our two new board members, Alex Dydula and Karen Marzilli. We're looking forward to benefiting from their knowledge, energy, and ideas.

Finally, as we begin our journey into a new fiscal year, I want to assure you that your membership

and continued financial support is valued and will continue to improve the Battleship *North Carolina* and our efforts to enhance the experience of every visitor who walks her decks.

Thank you,

Michael Zalob

Chairman

Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina*

What's Happening on the Showboat?

Annual Meeting - The Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* conducted their Annual Meeting via Zoom on September 19. The meeting was attended by the Board of Directors and about two dozen Friends members.

Michael Zalob, Chairman of the Board of Directors, presided over the meeting and provided 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 voted to reelect Pat Cummings, Tom Finley, Geoff Kirby, Jeff Mixon, Richard Rogers, and Michael Zalob to another 2-year term on the Board of Directors. They also voted Alex Dydula and Karen Marzilli as new members to the board, also to 2-year terms.

The proceedings also included a presentation by Ken Rittenmeyer, coordinator of the "Wednesday Crew", the group of volunteers who do maintenance and preservation on the Showboat. Rittenmeyer provided a look at some of the work projects done by the group over the past several years and especially during the last few months while access to the ship was limited because of COVID-19.



Ken Rittenmeyer briefs Annual Meeting.



Christmas decorations in the Admiral's cabin for the filming of Hallmark movie.

Volunteer Activities

- While we're on the subject of the Wednesday Crew, they remained busy during the month of September. They continued their preservation projects, painting the decks, bulkheads and overheads in various compartments and passageways. They also assisted in preparing and restoring several spaces used by the production company that spent some time aboard the Showboat filming scenes for the upcoming Hallmark movie, "*USS Christmas*". The movie is set to air Saturday, Nov. 28, on Hallmark Movies & Mysteries.



Hull work continues - Plating replaced on the starboard bow received a new coat of paint on September 30. Additional sections of the hull plating will be replaced over the next several months as work progresses.

Ship Store #2 Receives Makeover - For over a year, longtime volunteer and Living History Crew member Charlie Jones, has had his sights set on the restoration and reinterpretation of Ship Store #2. Thanks to his efforts, along with the assistance of his wife Sue, *North Carolina's* Curator MaryAmes Booker, a host of other volunteers, and with nearly \$1,300 in project funding provided by the Friends, the restoration project came to fruition this past month.

Jones, who resides in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, has been involved with the Showboat for years. His research and attention to detail associated with the restoration and interpretation of the Sick Bay, has been key in providing visitors a more authentic experience when exploring the medical spaces. So, when he proposed the ship store project, there was little doubt the final product would be anything but "right".

MaryAmes Booker provided *Scuttlebutt* with the following summary of the Ship Store project:

This project began with a simple question from Charlie Jones, "Where did the sailors buy stationary for writing letters home?" We know they wrote letters and mailed them through the ship's post office. We also know they bought their supplies onboard. But where? Ship Store #2 had been outfitted with officer clothing based on an oral history interview, but was that accurate?

Historical research provided a glimpse of what was stocked in the store for the crew to buy on the ship during wartime. Based on original store inventories found in *North Carolina's* archives, we chose to stock the store as it could have looked in 1942 and 1943. Those original inventories listed pens and pencils, writing paper, shoe polish, playing cards, rating badges, work gloves, handkerchiefs, caps, and more.

In the Fall of 2019, Battleship restoration volunteers (the Wednesday Crew) scraped and painted the compartment and the adjoining office. They cut and installed acrylic windows replacing the metal mesh. (It was difficult to view the shelves through the mesh. During the battleship's active years the metal mesh barrier would have been simply opened and closed.) They built and installed metal shelving that was missing, and the ship's electrician, Steve Lewis, replaced the old lighting.

Thanks to the information Charlie had found out about the inventory while researching the store, the Jones' acquired original

packaging and, with the help of Sue's talents as a graphics designer, began making reproductions. In addition, several original items were purchased for display, along with suitable, modern day substitutions.

When COVID-19 struck, project activity on the ship halted. However, by the end of September Charlie and Sue were able to visit, bringing with them the remainder of their creations to finish outfitting Store #2.



Charlie and Sue Jones completed the fitting out of Ship Store #2.

Before leaving, Charlie and Sue studied Store #1 (candy, etc.). Perhaps a future restoration?

"I think visitors trust us to show them how the ship looked while in service," Booker said upon completion of the project, "and the Store is yet another example of the care we take to make sure it's 'right!'"

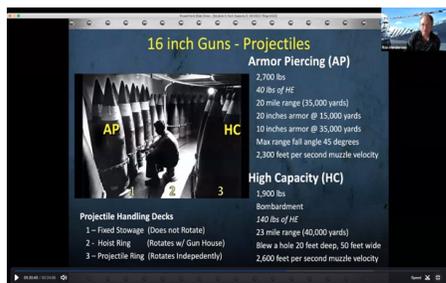
Learn About the War in the Pacific at UNCW - Rear Admiral Ron Henderson, USN(Ret) will be teaching a course this fall entitled "*Key Battles of World War II in the Pacific*" as part of the Osher Life Long Learning Institute (OLLI) at UNCW.

Conducted via Zoom in six weekly sessions beginning October 27, the course will provide a "chronological narrative of the dramatic clash between the United States and Japan, from the first bombs dropped at Pearl Harbor to the surrender in Tokyo Bay."

The sessions are free to OLLI members. You can become an OLLI member for as little as \$30 a semester.

More information about OLLI membership, registration, and a catalog of other course offerings can be found at <https://uncw.edu/olli/>.

Want to Know More About the Showboat? - Henderson also provides a free, Friends sponsored, six-week course about USS *North Carolina*. Designed to prepare individuals for becoming ship ambassadors and tour guides, the course is also ideal for those who want to learn more about the Showboat, her systems, history, and the men who served aboard her.



About 20 Battleship *North Carolina* enthusiasts recently completed the curriculum via Zoom and Henderson is prepared to conduct another a course in the coming weeks if there is sufficient interest. If you are interested in participating in the next program, send an email to: 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.

From the Leland VFW Post 12196 - November 11 is Veterans Day. The VFW would like you to share some before and after pictures of yourself or your loved ones from their time in the service - a service picture and a recent picture.

The caption should provide the name, where they served, what conflict, any service-related awards, and what they did after the service.

The photos will be published in the November edition of *Cape Fear Voices*. Some photos may not be published because of space, however they will be retained for future editions.

Please submit your pictures to editorcfv@gmail.com. Deadline for the November edition is October 15.

Your submission will be considered your consent to publish as submitted.

This Month in Showboat History

October 13, 1775 - The United States Navy is born as the Continental Congress passes a resolution creating the Continental Navy.

October 27, 1938 - Construction of the first battleship to be built in 16 years begins when the keel of future USS *North Carolina* is laid down between the building ways at the Navy Yard, Brooklyn, New York. It would only take 32 months before Battleship *North Carolina* would be christened and launched, sliding down the ways into the East River on June 13, 1940.

After her commissioning in April of 1941, USS *North Carolina* spent most of her Octobers either in training or in a repair/maintenance availability.

October 1941 found the Showboat deep into her initial training cycle, operating off the East Coast conducting drills, firing exercises, and system tests.



Workers survey torpedo damage on North Carolina's port side.

The shipyard in Pearl Harbor is where *North Carolina* spent the **Octobers** of both **1942 and 1943**.

Repairing the damage caused by the September 15 torpedo hit was at the top of the list for the yard period in **1942**. Also accomplished during the repair period was removal of the four quadruple mount 1.1-inch guns and the 28 Browning .50-caliber machine guns, all being replaced by six Oerlikon 20-mm guns and 10 Bofors quadruple barreled 40-mm gun mounts.

The Showboat's stay in Pearl Harbor in **October 1943** was principally an opportunity for ship maintenance as well as crew rest and relaxation. Significant changes to the ship's configuration included the installation of five

additional quadruple barreled 40-mm gun mounts and fabrication of a platform around Batt Two that would become known as "Stryker's Bridge."

On **October 1, 1944**, USS *North Carolina* completed a 60-day overhaul at the Puget Sound Navy Yard in Bremerton, Washington. In addition to the basic overhaul of engineering, fire control, and other shipboard systems, a new Combat Information Center was installed on the 03 level below the Navigation Bridge (CIC had been collocated within Main Battery Plot on the 1st Platform prior to the move to the 03 level.)

Also during the overhaul period, the Showboat's crew had the opportunity to take leave for the first time since leaving in June of 1942. All members of the crew were granted 25 days of leave, with only half the crew being allowed to be gone at any one time.

Upon completion of the overhaul, *North Carolina* spent ten days training in the Southern California operations area and then making the transit to Pearl Harbor and eventually returning to Eniwetok in the South Pacific on **October 30**.



Showboat sailors prepare to depart on leave while in the shipyard in Puget Sound.

With the war over, the Showboat was headed home in **October 1945**, passing through the Panama Canal on **October 11** and arriving to a hero's welcome in Boston on **October 17**.



Battleship *North Carolina* arrives in Wilmington.

October 2, 1961 - Thanks largely to the efforts of James S. Craig and Hugh Morton, along with the contributions of thousands of school children and citizens, the Battleship *North Carolina* arrives in Wilmington, North Carolina, to become a permanent memorial to not only the men who served on her, but to all the men and women who served in the Armed Forces during World War II and to the 10,000 North Carolinians who gave their life during the war. USS *North Carolina* welcomed her first visitors on October 14.

Did You Know?

Stryker's Bridge - As Executive Officer, Commander Joe Stryker's battle station was in Batt Two, an alternate ship control station located on the 07 level in the foremast. Visibility from that station was limited to what could be seen out the small portholes, a condition Stryker found to be unsatisfactory. So, while in the shipyard at Pearl Harbor in 1943, Stryker was able to convince shipyard workers to install a platform around the foremast, providing him greater visibility while occupying Batt Two during battle situations.

November India Bravo Kilo - The signal flags that fly on either side of North Carolina's mast is her call sign, NIBK. A unique call sign is assigned to every ship and was originally meant for use as identifying the origin or destination of a radio transmission. All U.S. Navy ships have call signs that begin with the letter 'N'.



Who You Gonna Call? - With Halloween creeping up on us at the end of the month, we asked Living History Crew member Michael Resser to provide a response to a question often asked of the Showboat tour guides. "Are there ghosts on the ship?"

Battleship North Carolina Paranormal Activity

By Michael ResserRMC, USNR (ret.)Member, USSNCLHC

Around the United States, a number of historic warships now serve proudly as museum ships recounting the efforts of Sailors and Marines in, most notably, the Second World War. On many of these ships there are documented instances of paranormal activities. Our beloved battleship is no exception for such a phenomenon. I have served as a member of the USS *North Carolina* Living History Crew (LHC) for 22 years and was asked to relate my personal experiences along with those of fellow LHC members, for *Scuttlebutt*. What follows are my experiences as well as accounts from individuals I consider as truthful.

My direct experiences involve two areas of the ship, the superstructure, specifically the port ladders between the 03 and 04 levels, and the deck and passageway area adjacent to the Executive Officer's Office (XOO).

With regard to the first area, it was during a Battleship Alive weekend in April 1998 that I was walking around the ship and decided to climb the superstructure to the 04 level using the port side ladders. After walking through the pilothouse I started to descend the port ladder from the 04 to the 03 level. I had gone four or five steps down the ladder when I felt a very strong presence directly behind me. I turned, looked, but saw nothing. I sensed this presence for only a few seconds then it was gone. I did not feel threatened, only a feeling that it was briefly there.

The location of my experience is notable. In April of 1945, while *North Carolina* operated off Okinawa, three crewmembers were killed in a friendly fire incident, including Chief Fire Controllman Edward Emil Brenn. It is also notable that at the time of my experience I was wearing my World War II Chief Petty Officer khaki uniform. Perhaps Chief Brenn's spirit wanted me to know that a fellow Chief was nearby.

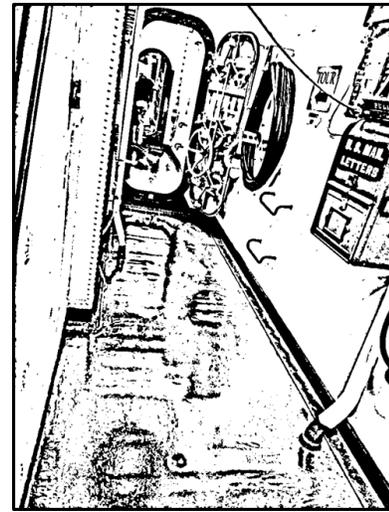
In the area around the XOO, I have seen a shadow-like figure on several occasions, as have some of my shipmates in the LHC. The apparition has sometimes been seen only as a shadow, and other times more akin to a full-body apparition.

My first encounter was about 10 years ago. I had returned to the ship from dinner ashore one Saturday evening at dusk and was walking on the main deck, port side toward the XOO. I was about 15 feet from the hatch leading to the XOO passageway and briefly saw a figure stepping through the hatch into the ship. I was only a few seconds from the doorway and expected to see someone in the passageway as I stepped inside the ship. However, no one was there. The XOO was empty and the door locked. I looked down the midships passageway and saw no one.

I have seen the apparition on several other occasions.

On pleasant evenings I like to sit on one of the port side deck bits near the Wardroom, looking out across the river. On three different occasions over the years, I have seen a figure, always just a shadow, moving forward along the external bulkhead of the XOO. The figure turns and goes into the hatch by the XOO. The third time I saw it, I called out, "Evening Shipmate. How are you doing?" There was no response, but I really did not expect one.

In addition to my experiences near the XOO, a weekend night watchman told me of an instance when a private group was holding an evening function in the Wardroom. Sometime during the evening, a woman attending the function approached him and asked how many of the battleship staff was aboard that night. He told her he was the only one. She then told him that as she was walking past an office (XOO) toward the Wardroom, she saw a man in uniform standing in the middle of the room reading some papers. The watchman said he walked back to the office and looked in the windows, but saw no one. He checked the door and it was padlocked.



During Battleship Alive weekends, Living History Crew members often sleep aboard the ship. For the safety of those onboard, the ship requires the LHC to stand a fire watch from midnight to 6 a.m. The watch bill consists of three, two-hour watches stood by two crew members. The fire watch is based in the XOO and at least every 30 minutes, one of the watchstanders walks a specific patrol route through the ship. Several who have stood these watches have related various experiences including one specific experience in Sick Bay.

The patrol route goes through Sick Bay, including the ward. Near the ward attendant's desk, watchstanders have occasionally reported encountering a phenomenon known as a cold spot. They have reported they have felt a sudden drop in temperature as they approach the desk, while the ambient temperature in the rest of the space and the passageway outside Sick Bay remain unchanged.

Additionally, one LHC member who was sleeping in one of the ward bunks during a Battleship Alive weekend recalled being awakened one night by what he described as an overwhelming feeling of sadness around him, and the odor of burnt flesh. Late in the war, *North Carolina* received wounded from another warship that had been bombed and caught fire. Among the wounded was a sailor so severely burned nothing could be done by the ship's medical staff other than the administration of morphine to knock back his pain. He eventually succumbed to his wounds while in Sick Bay.



Another LHC member recalled an experience that occurred while he was aboard the ship on a work project. Having not completed his project, he elected to stay aboard overnight so he could complete his tasks the following day. At the time there were two comfortable chairs in the Warrant Officer's Mess so he decided to sleep in one of them. As he was about to fall asleep, he heard footsteps walking forward in the port side passageway. The footsteps went past the passageway to the Mess and continued forward through the locked gate at the front of the passageway, though he did not hear the gate being unlocked or swing open. After a few minutes, he heard the footsteps coming aft, turn inboard into the passageway leading to the Mess, stopping just outside it and out of sight. He called out, "If you want to show yourself, do so. Otherwise, I would like quiet, so I can sleep." At that, the footsteps were heard moving outboard and forward, and again through the locked gate. Nothing else was heard the remainder of the night.

The ship's library (aka the Bullpen), located on the main deck, starboard side, was the site of at least two experiences. In the first, a LHC volunteer had been aboard for the day working on a restoration project. He knocked off at about 1 a.m. At the time, there was a large leather couch in the library so he decided to sleep there. The couch backed up against the bulkhead that runs alongside the starboard side passageway. As he was about to fall asleep he heard three loud bangs, as if someone had taken their fist and delivered hammer blows to the bulkhead just opposite where his head lay on the couch. He yelled out, "Knock it off shipmate, I'm trying to get some sleep!" He said he slept undisturbed from that point on.

The other Bullpen story occurred in December of 2008, during the weekend of the LHC's Battleship Alive program. Since December 7 occurred on Sunday that year, the LHC was going to participate in a memorial ceremony on the fantail. One of the LHC members brought his World War II Army field organ, which can be played without electricity, to provide appropriate hymnal music at the ceremony. At the time, one of the LHC members was an accomplished organist and had volunteered to play for the ceremony. The organ had been placed in the library so "Doc", as he was known, could practice in private. At about 10 p.m. Saturday, Doc came into the XOO, his face devoid of color. I asked him if anything was wrong. He told me he had practiced the hymns for Sunday's service, finishing with the Navy Hymn playing it with great feeling, knowing how significant it would be to play in such a way for the memorial ceremony. He said he finished the hymn with a flourish, holding the final chord extra long. As the chord faded he said he distinctly felt a hand gently rest on his right shoulder as if someone was saying "Great job". There was no one else in the space.

There have been instances of disembodied voices being heard in various areas of the ship. Some LHC crewmembers who sleep in the restored berthing area on the port side, third deck adjacent to barrette #2, have reported hearing the sounds of several voices talking very low - the way sailors might converse after lights out. Witnesses have said the voices are too low to discern what is being said. In some cases, the voices seem to be coming from beyond the forward bulkhead of the space, in the direction of the area damaged by the 1942 torpedo hit. I will add that I heard these voices on one occasion, but it was while sleeping in the Marine compartment. The sound emanated from the forward part of the compartment. As with the activity in the berthing space, the voices were too low and indistinct for me to understand what was being said.

What are they doing and why are they doing it? Several years ago a daytime volunteer, an Iowa Class battleship sailor, told me he felt these spirits have a connection to the ship and do not want to leave. He said he felt that when they sense the presence of volunteers, particularly the Living History Crew in World War II uniforms, they may feel that, because of our demonstrated love for the ship, her history, and preserving their memories, they may just want to let us know they are around and are, in their own way, giving us a "Bravo Zulu!"

Talk Like a Sailor

Liberty - Free time away from the ship, normally after working hours. Sailors usually have to remain close enough to their duty station in order to be recalled quickly if required. Cinderella Liberty is a variation of regular liberty and is normally associated with foreign port calls, where Sailors are required to return to their ship by midnight. ("Nothing good ever happens after midnight.")

Leave - Time away from the ship, normally out of the vicinity of the duty station. Similar to vacation time in the civilian world, leave is often used to visit family and friends for periods exceeding 72 hours.

Shift Colors - As a ship gets underway, the Nation's flag is lowered from the staff located on the fantail and is unfurled on the main mast. The phrase "Underway, shift colors!" is announced throughout the ship to alert the crew. The phrase, "shift colors" is also used by Sailors to indicate that it is time to go change into civilian clothes and go ashore (i.e., "Let's shift colors and hit the beach!")

Every
Thursday
is


BATTLESHIP
THURSDAY

Show your support.
Wear your
"Showboat" gear.

Supporting the Showboat

Wear your Support - The Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* have established an e-store through Queensboro for the purchase of Friends merchandise. Profits from the purchase of Friends merchandise will go to support the Battleship *North Carolina*. You can access the Friends store at <https://battleshipncfriends.com/friends-store>.

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.

Don't forget, you to choose Friends of the Battleship *North Carolina* to benefit from your Amazon purchases. Find out more at:



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