



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

April 16, 2019



Compiled by Brent Hunt, Naval History and Heritage Command's Communication and Outreach Division

Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website (history.navy.mil), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ When Heritage Meets Initiative—The Story of *Samuel B. Roberts*

On April 14, 1988, *USS Samuel B. Roberts* was fighting for her life. The ship struck a deliberately-laid Iranian mine in the central Arabian Gulf. The damage was grave, breaking her keel, starting a severe fire, and flooding two main spaces. By all accounts, the ship should have sunk, but the skipper, Capt. Paul X. Rinn, was obsessive about damage control. He had drilled the crew over and over through every conceivable scenario, and the effort was recognized with high marks by evaluators during predeployment workups. Although the crew was well-prepared, they “faced a completely unique set of circumstances that required the highest ability to adapt and innovate in ways that could only be accomplished by a highly trained crew that wasn't afraid to act on initiative.” To learn more, [read the blog](#) by NHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) at [The Sextant](#). Also, check out the new [USS Samuel B. Roberts \(FFG-59\)](#) page on NHHC's [notable ships](#) pages.



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/04/12/when-heritage-meets-initiative-the-story-of-samuel-b-roberts-ffg-58/>

★ Dick Cole, Last of the Doolittle Raiders, Dies at 103

With his daughter and son by his side, the last of the famed [Doolittle Raiders](#) passed away in San Antonio, TX, April 9. Retired Lt. Col. Dick Cole was 103. He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery on an undisclosed date. On April 18, 1942, 77 years ago, the first strike by U.S. forces against the Japanese mainland was launched using 16 modified [Army Air Force B-25B Mitchell bombers](#) off U.S. Navy carrier [USS Hornet](#). Although the strikes caused very little damage to Japan and all the aircraft were lost, the bombing raid was a psychological blow to Japan just four months after the [attack on Pearl Harbor](#). It sent a signal to the people of Japan that the United States was ready to fight, and we could strike them at home. The leaders of the operation were Lt. Col. [James H. Doolittle](#) and Vice Adm. [William F. Halsey](#). Cole was Doolittle's co-pilot. After the bombing raid, Doolittle's crew flew until they ran out of gas and then bailed out of the aircraft. Cole's parachute got stuck in a tree, 12 feet above the ground. After freeing himself, he walked to a Chinese village where he rejoined the rest of the crew. To learn more about Cole's life, [read the article](#) in the *Air Force Times*. To learn more about the [Doolittle Raid](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-97000/NH-97502.html>

★ Moran Nominated for Chief of Naval Operations

On April 10, Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick M. Shanahan announced that President Donald Trump has nominated Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. [Bill Moran](#) as the next [Chief of Naval Operations](#). “Adm. Moran is an extraordinary leader who has been a stalwart partner and advisor,” said Secretary of the Navy [Richard V. Spencer](#). “I look forward to working with him in the years ahead when he is confirmed.” CNO Adm. [John Richardson](#) was also quick to praise the selection. “He has been central to the Navy adopting a fighting stance in this great power competition. As I turn over and go ashore, I will rest easy knowing that, pending confirmation, Adm. Moran has the watch.” To learn more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



Photo Link: https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=217258&t=1

★ WWII@75: Reckless and Persecution Operations

On April 21, 1944, 75 years ago during [World War II](#), Task Force 58 began bombing Japanese airfields and defensive positions at Hollandia, Wakde, Sawar, and Sarmi, New Guinea, in preparation for the U.S. Army landing operations Reckless and Persecution. The operations were the result of the [January 1943 Casablanca Conference](#) of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and exiled members of the French government. Operation Reckless was to take Hollandia and nearby airfields, and Persecution's goal was to take the landing strips near Aitape. The operations were part of a wider effort to weaken the Japanese by diverting their attention to the southwest Pacific, eliminate their headquarters at Rabaul, and retake the Philippines that had been under Japanese control since 1942. To learn more, read Adam Bisno's essay [Securing New Guinea: The U.S. Navy in Operations Reckless and Persecution](#) at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/80-G-251000/80-G-251419.html>

★ Citizen Sailors: A History of the U.S. Navy Reserve

The United States has long been a country where citizens have the opportunity to serve. Volunteers have “swelled the ranks” from colonial militias to the Reserves of today. Maintaining a well-trained, equipped army can be very expensive, and navies are not cheap either. Although the U.S. Army has had a reserve force in place since the beginnings, a naval reserve wasn't considered essential or even fiscally responsible. It wasn't until May 17, 1888, when the first naval militia was established by Massachusetts. The state provided manpower—typically, men who were not considered ideal candidates for the active fleet—and the Federal government provided equipment—usually obsolete ships and old equipment. When the United States knew involvement in [World War I](#) was inevitable, the U.S. Naval Reserve was officially established on March 3, 1915. To learn more, [read the blog](#) by Dan Garas at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/multimedia-gallery/infographics/history/history-of-the-u-s--navy-reserve.html>

★ Konetzni Hall: A Cornerstone of 21st Century Pacific War Fighting Readiness

The [Commander, Submarine Squadron 15 \(CSS-15\)](#) headquarters building is scheduled to be named in honor of a forward-thinking submarine leader, Vice Adm. Albert H. Konetzni Jr., during a ceremony in Guam, April 19. One of Konetzni's many accomplishments was that he saw to the squadron's reactivation in 2001. “Vice Adm. Konetzni has been a mentor of mine for decades,” said Adm. [John Richardson](#), the Chief of Naval Operations. “He taught me in clear terms that the three most important things about leading in our Navy were the people, the people, and the people. His focus on our Sailors—loving them, inspiring them to perform, and holding them to high standards—changed my thinking forever.” To learn more, [read the blog](#) at [The Sextant](#). To learn more about the [Submarine Force](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/files/2019/04/Deckplate_01.jpg

★ Sixty Years Ago: The Mercury Seven's Navy Connections

On April 9, 1959, 60 years ago, NASA introduced its first astronauts for Project Mercury. Of the seven, four were initially naval aviators—one was a U.S. Marine named [John Glenn](#). The Navy pilots were [Walter “Wally” Schirra](#), [Scott Carpenter](#), and [Alan Shepard](#). Schirra was the only astronaut to participate in the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions. He would become the fifth American in space and the third to orbit the Earth. Carpenter, who served as a fighter pilot during the [Korean War](#), is credited with being the first human to enter both outer- and inner- space as an aquanaut in the U.S. Navy's [SEALAB Program](#). Shepard was America's first astronaut, making a brief 15-minute space flight on May 5, 1961. He would go on to be the commander of the *Apollo XIV* mission that included the third manned lunar landing, where the crew spent 33 hours collecting samples. To learn more, [read the post](#) at the [Hampton Roads Naval Museum's blog](#). To learn more about the [Navy's role in space exploration](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <http://hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com/2019/04/sixty-years-ago-mercury-sevens-navy.html>

★ **Stockdale Commissioned 10 Years Ago**

On April 18, 2009, 10 years ago, [USS Stockdale](#) was commissioned at the Naval Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA. The Arleigh Burke-class destroyer was named after Vice Adm. James B. Stockdale. Stockdale received the [Medal of Honor](#) for his heroic actions at great peril to himself while a [prisoner of war](#) during the [Vietnam War](#). Recognized by the North Vietnam captors as the leader of the POWs, Stockdale was subjected to intense interrogation sessions that included cruel and agonizing punishment. His resistance, regardless of the personal sacrifice, ended the employment of excessive harassment and torture toward all the POWs in the camp.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/s/stockdale--ddg-106-.html>

★ **Purple Hearts to be Awarded to Tampa Crew Killed During WWI**

On Sept. 26, 1918, the largest loss of life during [World War I](#) for the Navy occurred when [U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Tampa](#) was torpedoed and sunk by German submarine *UB-91* in the Bristol Channel. All on board the cutter—111 Coast Guard officers and men, 4 Navy Sailors, and 14 British passengers—were lost. Next month, grandson Wallace Bonaparte will travel to Washington, DC, to receive the Purple Heart in honor of his grandfather James Wilkie. When Wilkie was killed more than 100 years ago, his daughter, Anna Bonaparte, was just four years old. Although she didn't have many memories of him, she constantly spoke about him and his service in the Coast Guard. Anna died in 2012, and Wallace can only imagine how proud she would have been to see her father recognized for his service. To learn more, [read the article](#) in *Stars & Stripes*. Also, read "Semper Paratus: Sinking of USS/USGC *Tampa*, 26 September 1918" by NHHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) in [H-Gram 021-3](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.stripes.com/coast-guard-looks-to-award-purple-hearts-to-uss-tampa-crew-killed-during-wwi-1.576741>

★ **Preservation Week**

This year, April 21–27 is [Preservation Week](#). Preservation Week is intended to promote the role of libraries and other institutions in preserving personal and public collections and treasures. Some 630 million items in collecting institutions require immediate attention and care. Eighty percent of these institutions have no paid staff assigned responsibility for collections care; 22 percent have no collections care personnel at all. Some 2.6 billion items are not protected by an emergency plan. As natural disasters of recent years have taught us, these resources are in jeopardy should a disaster strike. Personal, family, and community collections are equally at risk. The [American Library Association](#) encourages libraries and other institutions to use Preservation Week to connect our communities through events, activities, and resources that highlight what we can do, individually and together, to preserve our personal and shared collections. Learn about [Our Collections](#) at [NHHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <http://www.ala.org/alcts/preservationweek>

★ **NHHHC Webpage of the Week**

This week's Webpage of the Week is new to NHHHC's [communities](#) pages. [Naval Aviation](#) provides a collection of historical information from the beginnings more than 100 years ago when pioneer Glenn Curtiss contracted with the U.S. Navy to demonstrate that airplanes could take off from and land aboard ships at sea to today's force that has supported global security missions. Additionally, there are pages that provide information on [notable aviators](#), [notable aircraft](#), and [notable squadrons](#). Check out the extraordinary amount of history and imagery that this page provides and learn about the Navy's flying force.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/Other/K-130740.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On April 16, 1944, 75 years ago today, USS *Wisconsin* was commissioned at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. *Wisconsin* would join the Pacific Fleet shortly thereafter and provide gunfire support for the Battle for Iwo Jima and the Okinawa Campaign. During her brief career during World War II, *Wisconsin* steamed 105,831 miles, shot down three enemy planes, claimed assists four times, and had fueled her screening destroyers on some 250 occasions. *Wisconsin* would go on to serve with distinction in the Korean War and Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The ship was decommissioned on Sept. 30, 1991, and officially transferred to the city of Norfolk, VA, on Dec. 14, 2009. *Wisconsin* was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 28, 2012. She is berthed adjacent to the Nauticus National Maritime Center in Norfolk.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/w/wisconsin-ii.html>