



# NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

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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](http://history.navy.mil)), your authoritative source for Navy history.

## ★ Good Conduct Medal Authorized 150 Years Ago

On April 26, 1869, 150 years ago, the [Navy Good Conduct Medal](#), then called the Good Conduct Badge, was authorized by Secretary of the Navy [Adolphus E. Borie](#). The badge was authorized in an effort to push reenlistments after the [Civil War](#). The Good Conduct Medal is the nation's third-oldest continuously presented award and the Navy's second-oldest after, respectively, the [Navy Medal of Honor](#) and the [Army Medal of Honor](#). The first requisition was placed on April 19, 1870, for 102 badges for Sailors on board [USS Iroquois](#) returning to the United States. Initially, the badge was awarded to "... any man holding a Continuous Service Certificate who is distinguished for obedience, sobriety, and cleanliness, and is proficient in seamanship and gunnery...." To learn more, [read the essay](#) by COD's Adam Bisno at [NHHC's website](#). Also, check out the [U.S. Navy Good Conduct Medal, Type I \(1870–1884\)](#) in NHHC's collections.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/artifacts/uniforms-and-personal-equipment/awards/medals/good-conduct-medal-type-i.html>

## ★ Bud Elliott and USS Wasp

On Sept. 15, 1942, 21-year-old Aviation Ordnanceman Arles Edward "Bud" Elliott was descending a ladder on the starboard stern of [USS Wasp](#) when three torpedoes hit the aircraft carrier in rapid succession. It would be just 35 minutes later when the captain ordered abandon ship, and Elliott slid down a fire hose into the warm water of the Coral Sea. According to Elliott, the men didn't panic, entered the water in orderly fashion, and swam away. He admitted that he wasn't scared at first, but after being in the water for six hours, he believed he was "done for." His lifejacket was getting water logged, and the depth charges other ships were dropping in an effort to hunt for the Japanese submarine were painful. Finally, though, he was picked up by [USS Lansdowne](#). That night, *Lansdowne* was ordered to scuttle *Wasp*. It took three torpedoes, but by 9 p.m. *Wasp* was on her way to her final resting place. To learn more of Elliott's story, [read the blog](#) by his son D. Kevin Elliott at [The Sextant](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/files/2019/04/Elliott3.jpg>

## ★ WWII@75: Exercise Tiger

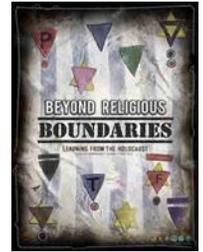
In the early hours of April 28, 1944, 75 years ago, nine German S-boats attacked a U.S. Navy LST convoy in the English Channel participating in [Exercise Tiger](#)—an Allied rehearsal for the upcoming [Invasion of Normandy](#)—killing more than 700 Sailors and Soldiers. [LST-507](#) and [LST-531](#) were sunk. [LST-289](#) was damaged. German S-boats were high-speed torpedo boats capable of operating at speeds of 34–36 knots, and they sometimes patrolled the channel at night. On the morning of April 28, the German torpedo boats managed to evade the Allied patrols, attack the convoy, and escape using smoke and high speed. The exercise was so secret that casualty information was not released until after the invasion. To learn more, read the [oral history by Lt. Eugene E. Eckstam](#) and [Slapton Sands: The Cover-up that Never Was](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Next week, we'll share a new essay that combines what we know about Exercise Tiger with an analysis of German naval documents seized by U.S. forces at the end of World War II. These sources reveal underlying causes of the disaster as well as how Allied commanders managed to eliminate the S-boat threat in the English Channel just a week into Operation Neptune, the Normandy invasion.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/80-G-257000/80-G-257909.html>

### ★ Holocaust Days of Remembrance

This year, Holocaust Days of Remembrance Week will be observed April 28–May 5, and [Holocaust Remembrance Day](#) (Yom Hashoah) is May 2. This year’s theme is “Learning from the Holocaust: Beyond Religious Boundaries.” This year’s [poster](#) depicts an alternating blue and white vertically striped cloth typically worn by holocaust prisoners. There are also symbols used by the Nazis to categorize the prisoners. Beginning in 1938, Jews were identified by a yellow star sewn onto their uniforms. After 1939, all prisoners were easily identified by the [marking system](#) that enabled the SS guards to quickly identify prisoners based on their background. Other categories included criminals, political prisoners, “asocials,” homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and non-German prisoners. According to the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#), six-million Jews along with millions of non-Jewish people were persecuted and murdered by the Nazi regime.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.deomi.org/human-relations/special-observances.cfm?tab=5>

### ★ WWII@75: Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox Died

On April 28, 1944, 75 years ago, Secretary of the Navy [Frank Knox](#) died at his home in Washington, DC, following continuation of a heart attack first suffered while attending the funeral of his friend and former newspaper partner. Knox is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. A veteran of the [Spanish-American War](#) and [World War I](#), Knox was the publisher and part owner of the *Chicago Daily News* before becoming [Secretary of the Navy](#) in July 1940. During his time as secretary, Knox expanded the Navy into a force capable of fighting in the Atlantic and the Pacific during the early years of [World War II](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/k/knox-frank/80-g-399009.html>

### ★ First Curator of the Navy Appointed 89 Years Ago

On April 28, 1930, 89 years ago, the Secretary of the Navy appointed Capt. [Dudley Knox](#) as the first curator of the Department of the Navy. Originally appointed as the Officer in Charge, Office of Naval Records and Library, Knox’s position as curator was a collateral duty. As curator, Knox was responsible for the collection and preservation of art objects, trophies, and relics of historical or inspirational value to the Navy. According to [History of the Dudley Knox Center for Naval History](#), it was anticipated that the collection of historical relics of the nation’s sea heritage would soon be seen in Washington in a long-envisioned naval museum. More than 30 years passed before the museum became a reality. In 1961, Chief of Naval Operations [Adm. Arleigh Burke](#) established the U.S. Naval Historical Display Center (now the [National Museum of the U.S. Navy](#)), which opened on the Washington Navy Yard. To learn more, check out the [history of Naval History and Heritage Command](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-00001/NH-407.html>

### ★ BB-64@75: *Wisconsin* at War

Commissioned 75 years ago, [USS \*Wisconsin\*](#), now the iconic Norfolk, VA, landmark, was a powerful battleship that participated in [World War II](#), the [Korean War](#), and [Desert Shield/Desert Storm](#) before she was decommissioned on Sept. 30, 1991, and officially transferred to the city nearly two decades later. Commissioned on April 16, 1944, at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, *Wisconsin* steamed toward the Pacific theatre, participating in the [Battle for Iwo Jima](#) and the [Okinawa Campaign](#), and earning her five battle stars for her WWII service. In remembrance of the “greatest generation,” writer Susan Dorsey Boland talked with *Wisconsin* veterans about their experiences during the war. In [part 1](#), she spoke to Irwin Watson “Bill” Carpenter, a quartermaster, whose job was to navigate the ship. In



[part 2](#), Boland spoke to Marshall Pearson, a deck seaman, whose battle station was at turret #1. To read what they had to say, go to the [Hampton Roads Naval Museum's blog](#).

**Photo Link:** <http://hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com/2019/04/bb-64-75-wisconsin-at-war-part-1.html>

### ★ In the Offing: Pictures for an Exhibition

For the past two years, the [Hampton Roads Naval Museum's](#) staff have been planning a museum display that highlights the contributions of the U.S. Navy during the [Vietnam War](#). Long overdue, the exhibit will honor the heroics of Sailors and Marines that coincide with the [50th anniversary](#) of the conflict. In the process of researching for the exhibit, the staff collected hundreds of photographs that have never been published—more than can be displayed at a traditional exhibit. In an effort to share, HRNM is posting selected imagery via a new Facebook page entitled [The U.S. Navy in the Vietnam War](#). The museum's exhibit "The Ten Thousand-Day War at Sea: The U.S. Navy in Vietnam, 1950–1975" is scheduled to open in October. To learn more, [read the post](#) by Joseph Miechle and Elijah Palmer at the [HRNM blog](#).



**Photo Link:** <http://hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com/2019/04/in-offing-pictures-for-exhibition.html>

### ★ P8-A Poseidon Makes First Flight 10 Years Ago

On April 25, 2009, Boeing's new P8-A Poseidon test jet, a 737 airframe that replaced the [P3-C Orion](#), [flew for the first time](#) from Renton, VA, to Boeing Field in Seattle, WA. The P-8A Poseidon is a state-of-the-art patrol plane used for maritime surveillance, reconnaissance, antisurface warfare, antisubmarine warfare, and shipping interdiction. It has the ability to control unmanned aerial vehicles, and to deploy sonobuoys, antisubmarine torpedoes and antiship missiles. The plane can also fly up to 4,500 miles without refueling, according to the [Boeing fact page](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/090425-0-0000X-002.jpg>

### ★ Truxtun Commissioned 10 Years Ago

On April 25, 2009, destroyer [USS Truxtun](#) was commissioned at Naval Weapons Station Charleston, SC, before cruising to her homeport at Naval Station Norfolk, VA. The ship is named in honor of Thomas Truxtun—one of the first six captains appointed to the U.S. Navy after the [Naval Act of 1794](#) was signed by President George Washington. *Truxtun* is the sixth U.S. naval ship to bear his name. In June 2012, a film crew shot scenes for the motion picture "[Captain Phillips](#)" on board *Truxtun*. The ship substituted for [USS Bainbridge](#) that participated in a battle against the pirates who captured cargo ship *Maersk Alabama* and her master Richard Phillips off Somalia in April 2009.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/t/truxtun-vi--ddg-103-.html>

### ★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

This week's Webpage of the Week is new to NHHC's [communities](#) pages. [Surface Navy](#) provides a vast amount of information on the backbone of America's Navy, including blogs, articles, resources, art exhibits, and a whole lot more. Beginning with the six original wood-hulled, three-masted heavy frigates, the Surface Navy has utilized a myriad of platforms with propulsion from sails to nuclear power. Explore the eras of the Surface Navy—[Age of Sail](#), [Sail to Steam Propulsion](#), and [Modern Surface Warfare](#)—and learn how it all began and has evolved over the force's storied history.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/art/artists/morgan-ian-wilbur-/under-a-pacific-moon.html>

### ★ Today in Naval History

On April 23, 1945, Navy Patrol Bomber PB4Y Liberators (VPB-109) employed [Bat missiles](#) against Japanese shipping off Balikpapan, Borneo, in the first combat use of the only automatic homing missile to be used during [World War II](#). Considered to be one of the most sophisticated U.S. missiles of the war, the Bat was released from an aircraft within 15- to 20-miles of its target. It carried a 1,000-pound bomb and was designed to destroy ships and off-shore enemy targets.



The Bat wasn't used again after the war was over. In 1950, the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics donated a Bat to the Smithsonian where it is currently on display at the [Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center](#) in Chantilly, VA.

**Photo Link:** <https://airandspace.si.edu/sites/default/files/images/collection-objects/record-images/A19500104000cp07.jpg>