



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

April 30, 2019



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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), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ H-Gram 029: "April is the Cruellest Month"

T.S. Eliot once wrote, "April is the cruellest month." Although upcoming H-Grams will be chockfull of U.S. Navy victories—Great Marianas Turkey Shoot, Battle of the Philippine Sea, Operation Neptune ([Invasion of Normandy](#)), and the [capture of U-505](#)—this H-Gram covers a litany of disaster. In his latest H-Gram, Director [Sam Cox](#) discusses Exercise Tiger (the deadly rehearsal for the Utah Beach D-Day landings in April 1944); U.S. Navy aircraft losses during the Cold War; the turret explosion on USS *Iowa* in 1989; and a history of previous U.S. Navy gun, ammunition, and powder accidents. If there is a moral to these incidents, it's that peace or war, training or operation, the Navy is always an inherently dangerous business. To learn more, [read H-Gram 029](#) at the [Director's Corner](#). Also, as promised in last week's edition of Navy History Matters, we've published [Exercise Tiger: Disaster at Slapton Sands](#), an essay by COD's Adam Bisno, at NHHC's [World War II: 1944](#) pages.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/80-G-K-02000/80-G-K-2054.html>

★ Union Victory in New Orleans Disrupts Confederate Sea Lines of Communication

In the latest installment of CNO Adm. [John Richardson](#)'s initiative "Why We Do What We Do," NHHC Historian Peter C. Luebke writes about [David Glasgow Farragut](#) and the capture of New Orleans. During the [Civil War](#) (April 1862), Farragut's Union Navy force was low on supplies, and initial efforts to bomb into submission the Confederate force holding New Orleans had failed. Having heard opinions expressed by different commanders on the next course of action, Farragut realized he had to act quickly. He decided to force the issue by using his entire fleet in a no-holds barred assault to capture the city. It worked. The victory secured the mouth of the Mississippi River and disrupted Confederate sea lines of communication. It also deprived the Confederates access to their largest city and enabled further Union advances up the Mississippi. Although Farragut was responsible for the victory as the commander, he praised his Sailors. "Their steadiness, courage, and intrepidity could not have been surpassed, and, I apprehend, have rarely been equaled." To learn more, read [Union Victory in New Orleans Disrupts Confederate Sea Lines of Communication](#) at [The Sextant](#). It's also published at NHHC's [U.S. Navy History Lessons Learned](#) page.



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/files/2019/04/NH-49602.jpg>

★ Navy Christens *Lyndon B. Johnson*, *Guam*

On April 27, the U.S. Navy christened its newest Zumwalt-class guided missile destroyer, the future [USS *Lyndon B. Johnson*](#), and its newest high-speed transport vessel, the future [USS *Guam*](#). *Lyndon B. Johnson* was christened at General Dynamics–Bath Iron Works shipyard in Bath, ME, and *Guam* in Okinawa, Japan. *Lyndon B. Johnson* is the third Zumwalt-class ship and is the first ship to be named in honor of the 36th American president, [Lyndon B. Johnson](#), who served in the Navy stateside and in the Pacific during [World War II](#). His daughters, Lynda Johnson Robb and Luci Johnson, serve as the ship's sponsors. *Guam* is named in honor of the long-standing historical and military relationship between Guam and the United States. She will be the fourth ship to bear the island's name. To learn more, read the articles on [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) and [Guam](#).



Photo Link: https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=275360&t=1

★ Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

In 1992, Congress designated May as the month to recognize the personal achievements and contributions to the United States by [Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders](#) (AAPI). May was selected to commemorate the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad, May 10, 1869, which was laid by a majority of Chinese workers, and the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843. The theme for this year's celebration is, "Unite Our Mission by Engaging Each Other." AAPI Month honors Americans who represent all of the Asian continent and Pacific islands of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. To learn more, visit [Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. Navy](#) at [NHHC's website](#).

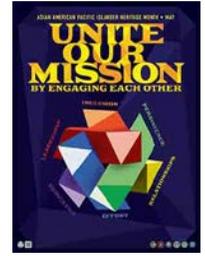


Photo Link: <https://www.deomi.org/human-relations/special-observances.cfm?tab=5>

★ WWII@75: *Comfort* Commissioned

On May 5, 1944, 75 years ago, hospital ship [USS *Comfort*](#) was commissioned at San Pedro, CA, with Cmdr. H.F. Fultz in command. *Comfort* was the first ship to be manned jointly by U.S. Army and U.S. Navy personnel. After commissioning, *Comfort* steamed to Brisbane, Australia, and Hollandia, New Guinea. In Hollandia, ship personnel evacuated wounded from Leyte on two voyages in October and November and then brought them back to San Pedro. Following a voyage to Subic Bay and Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, in March, the hospital ship stood by off [Okinawa](#) April 2–9, receiving wounded for evacuation to Guam. Returning to Okinawa on April 23, six days later, she was struck by a Japanese suicide plane that killed 28 people (including six nurses), wounded 48 others, and caused considerable damage. *Comfort* received two battle stars for her [World War II](#) service.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/80-G-180000/80-G-180765.html>

★ Forty Years Ago: "Emily," the Last of Her Kind, Returned to Japan

On April 23, 1979, 40 years ago, a heavily armed flying boat—code named "Emily"—was officially returned to Japan during a ceremony on Naval Air Station Norfolk. The huge aircraft had resided in Hampton Roads for more than three decades. After the [Japanese surrender](#) that ended [World War II](#) in 1945, "Emily" was discovered in Yokohama. The [Kawanishi H8K2](#) was the last intact example of Japan's largest operational wartime aircraft. It was larger and faster than any American flying boat, which made "Emily" a high priority for Navy teams sent to Japan to gather technical information. The aircraft was crated and shipped to Norfolk where personnel from the then-Overhaul and Repair Facility had the challenge of restoring the 38,000-pound flying boat to flyable shape. To learn more, [read the post](#) at [Hampton Roads Naval Museum's blog](#).



Photo Link: <http://hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com/2019/04/forty-years-ago-emily-last-of-her-kind.html>

★ End of an Era: Navy's P-3C Orion Embarked on its Final Deployment

The aircraft has flown missions during the [Vietnam War](#), [Desert Shield/Desert Storm](#), countless search and rescue missions, and has created an invaluable network of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance data, but after more than 50 years of service, the [P-3C Orion's](#) days are numbered. In March, the "Fighting Marlins" of [Patrol Squadron 40](#) began the sundown deployment for the Navy's longtime workhorse. "We intend to honor the platform's final deployment by living the legacy of all those that have gone before us and continuing to fight to the finish," said Cmdr. Patrick O'Reilly, VP-40's commanding officer. The aircraft first entered the Navy in 1962 and was designed to replace the [P-2 Neptune](#). The P-3s are being replaced by the P-8A Poseidon planes. To learn more, [read the article](#) in the *Navy Times*. To learn more about [naval aviation](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/140813-N-QR600-174.JPG>

✦ **BB-64@75: Wisconsin at War, Part 3**

After he graduated from high school, John Cummisk was drafted on July 30, 1943, into the Navy during [World War II](#). Cummisk always wanted to serve in the Navy, as his father had served during [World War I](#). After boot camp and radarman school, he was assigned to [USS Franklin](#) and participated in the invasion of the Philippines. On Oct. 30, 1944, the ship was attacked by a kamikaze, killing 54 men. During a March 19, 1945, attack, Cummisk was in the water for two hours and later rescued after the Japanese dropped two bombs on the ship, killing 724 men. In 1946, he reenlisted and was eventually assigned to [Wisconsin](#). On the battleship, he would travel through the Panama Canal, cross the equator, travel to far off places, and experience the [Korean War](#). In remembrance of the Sailors who brought *Wisconsin* to life, writer Susan Dorsey Boland talked with *Wisconsin* veterans about their experiences. To learn more about Cummisk's time on the ship, [read the blog](#) at [Hampton Roads Naval Museum's blog](#).



Photo Link: <http://hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com/2019/04/bb-64-75-wisconsin-at-war-part-3.html>

✦ **National EOD Day—May 4**

The first Saturday in May honors members of the U.S. military who risk their lives disposing of explosives; this year's observance is May 4. Prior to [World War II](#), the Navy had no formal explosive ordnance disposal program. Because of the high casualty rate, it became obvious that skilled technicians were needed. Before the U.S. entry into WWII, an agreement was reached with the British whereby U.S. naval officers and enlisted personnel would work with British units in the field. In June 1941, the first mine disposal class was conducted at the Naval Gun Factory in Washington, DC, and in December of the same year, the Bomb Disposal School was established at the same location. To learn more, read [EOD History](#) at the [Naval School Explosive Ordnance Disposal's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/121112-N-PF210-270.jpg>

✦ **National Nurses Day—May 6**

National Nurses Day is celebrated annually on May 6 to raise awareness on the important role nurses play in society. The day marks the beginning of National Nurses Week, which ends on May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale (1820–1910). On May 13, 1908, 111 years ago, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Naval Appropriations Bill authorizing the [establishment of the Navy Nurse Corps](#). The original cadre of women to serve in the U.S. Navy as nurses were known as the “sacred twenty.” The group included [Lenah Sutcliff Higbee](#), the first female to be awarded the [Navy Cross](#). To learn more about nurses and [Navy medicine](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/s/sutcliffe-lenah-h/nh-52960.html>

✦ **NHHC Webpage of the Week**

This week's Webpage of the Week is new to NHHC's [customs and traditions](#) pages. [Sailors' Tattoos: A Basic Primer](#) provides information on this form of body art that has graced many Sailors' bodies for hundreds of years. By the late 18th century, about a third of British and a fifth of American Sailors had at least one tattoo. During the [Civil War](#), tattoos commemorating the clash of the ironclads—[USS Monitor](#) and *CSS Virginia*—was popular and, in 1898, the slogan “[Remember the Maine](#)” made its way to many Sailors' chests. Although the choice in tattoos has changed over the years, the reasons why many Sailors enjoy displaying their “ink” has remained the same—pride in their Navy and the adventures the sea service provides. Check out this page today and learn more.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/dam/nhhc/browse-by-topic/heritage/Customs%20and%20Traditions/Tattoo%20Kit%20-%20Contents.JPG>

* Today in Naval History

On April 30, 1798, Congress [established the Department of the Navy](#) (DON) as a separate cabinet department. Previously, naval matters were under the cognizance of the War Department. Congress established the DON to meet the need for an executive department responsible solely for, and staffed with persons expert in, naval affairs. [Benjamin Stoddert](#), a Maryland merchant who had served as secretary of the Continental Board of War during the [American Revolution](#), was named the first [Secretary of the Navy](#). To learn more about the [Origins of the Navy](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/s/stoddert-benjamin/nh-54797-kn.html>

