



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

May 14, 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.

★ Apollo 10 Launched

On May 18, 1969, 50 years ago, [Apollo 10](#) was launched with Cmdr. Thomas Stafford, ship commander; Navy Cmdr. [John W. Young](#), command module pilot; and Navy Cmdr. [Eugene Cernan](#), lunar module pilot, as the crew for the mission. The mission of Apollo 10 was to conduct all aspects of an actual crewed lunar landing—except actually landing on the moon. It was a dress rehearsal for the first moon landing that occurred two months later when Cmdr. [Neil Armstrong](#) and his Apollo 11 crew touched down on the moon's surface. The Apollo 10 mission was the second to orbit the moon and the first to travel to the moon with the entire Apollo spacecraft configuration. To learn more, [read the essay](#) by COD's Adam Bisno at NHHC's [Navy's role in space exploration](#) webpage.



Photo Link: https://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/thumbnails/image/9457395355_be31a443a8_o.jpg

★ 100th Anniversary of the World's First Transatlantic Flight

On May 8, 1919, Seaplane Division One took off from Naval Air Station Rockaway, NY, in what would become [the first transatlantic flight](#). On May 8, 2019, 100 years later, Rear Adm. [John B. Mustin](#), deputy commander of U.S. Second Fleet and Naval Surface Force Atlantic, spoke at an event to commemorate the flight and rename a street in New York City to "U.S. Navy Seaplane Division One Way." Mustin was asked to speak because he has a special connection to the men who made the journey; his great-grandfather, Capt. [Henry Mustin](#), was a friend and colleague of the men of Seaplane Division One. To learn more, [read the blog](#) at [The Sextant](#). To learn more about [naval aviation](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/files/2019/05/image3-e1557339353796.jpeg>

★ 50 Years Ago: *Guitarro* Accident

On May 15, 1969, 50 years ago, the precommissioned submarine [USS *Guitarro*](#) accidentally sank while moored at U.S. Mare Island Naval Shipyard, CA. Workmen, who had been assigned to calibrate instruments on board *Guitarro*, filled her aft ballast tanks with approximately five tons of water. A half hour later, another construction crew, unaware of their counterparts' actions, filled the ballast tanks at the bow to bring the boat to within half a degree of trim. Despite warnings from the security watch that the boat was riding low, the workmen continued, unaware of what was happening on the other side of the vessel. Both teams were shocked when the ship began to sink at 8:30 p.m. They scrambled to keep her afloat, but it was too late. *Guitarro* sank at the pier 25 minutes later. The boat's commissioning would be delayed until September 1972 due to \$15.2–\$21.85 million in estimated repairs. To learn more, read the report on the [sinking of USS *Guitarro*](#) at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/g/guitarro-ii--ssn-665-.html>

★ “Deeds Gave This Crown:” The Cup of the Savior of Monticello

Commodore [Uriah Phillips Levy](#), the first Jewish commodore, was instrumental in dismantling antisemitism, promoting the abolition of flogging, and preserving Thomas Jefferson’s home at Monticello. Born on April 22, 1792, in Philadelphia, Levy always dreamed of a life at sea. By the age of ten, he had left home to be a cabin boy aboard *New Jerusalem*. He would fight in the [Barbary Wars](#) and was assigned to the 18-gun sloop of war *Argus* during the [War of 1812](#) as a supernumerary sailing master. Although *Argus* destroyed several British ships, it was captured. Levy would spend 16 months in a British prison until he was released at the end of the war. Upon his return to the United States, he was presented a silver cup that bore the inscription *Dant Facta Hanc Coronam* (deeds gave this crown). The phrase is believed to have been created by Levy to celebrate his release from prison. The cup is now in the [Hampton Roads Naval Museum](#) collection. To learn more, [read the post](#) by HRNM Educator Alicia Pullen at [HRNM’s blog](#).



Photo Link: <http://hamptonroadsnavalmuseum.blogspot.com/2019/05/deeds-gave-this-crown-cup-of-savior-of.html>

★ Inside the MacMillan Arctic Expedition of 1925

During the early part of the 20th century, a competition between nations existed to see whose flag would first fly at the North and, later, South Poles. In 1909, [Robert E. Peary](#) had done what no other human had ever accomplished. He was the first to the North Pole, although the accomplishment is still a subject of dispute. The next great competition was to [fly over the pole](#). In 1925, the United States’ attempt was a venture known as the MacMillan Arctic Expedition—named for leader Donald B. MacMillan. One of the men to go on the venture would become perhaps the most famous aviator-explorer of the era—[Richard E. Byrd](#). The expedition was significant in that it marked the first productive use of aircraft in Arctic exploration, and it thrust Byrd into the limelight of [naval aviation](#). To learn more, [read the article](#) in *Navy Times*. Also, check out the [polar exploration](#) page 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/NH-44000/NH-44243.html>

★ Ted Williams: American Hero

Born on Aug. 30, 1918, in San Diego, CA, Theodore Samuel Williams grew up in a family that loved baseball. Coming out of high school, he was heavily recruited by the New York Yankees and the St. Louis Cardinals, but he decided to stay in San Diego and play for the then-minor league club Padres. In 1939, he joined the Boston Red Sox, and that was the beginning of his [Hall of Fame career](#). In 1941, Williams batted .406—a record that to this day has not been broken. In 1942, he enlisted in the military after the United States entered [World War II](#) and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps as a [naval aviator](#). After the war, he returned to baseball, but in 1952 he was recalled back into the Marine Corps to participate in the [Korean War](#) where he flew 39 missions and was shot down once over Kyomipo, Korea. To learn more, [read the blog](#) at [Vantage Point](#). Watch [Outfield to Airfield: Ted Williams’ Service in the Marine Corps](#) as well. Also, check out the [Navy athletics](#) page at [NHHC’s website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Ted-Williams-AVS.jpg>

★ A Third U-boat Visits Newport

Fans of Newport’s naval history are acquainted with stories of German submarines appearing in Narragansett Bay. In 1916, when the United States was still neutral, *U-53* paid a visit in an attempt to convince it to stay out of the war in Europe. Then, during [World War II](#), *U-853* was sunk near Point Judith just days before Germany surrendered. Although lesser known, a third U-boat came to Newport 100 years ago. The United States had spent approximately \$32 billion fighting [World War I](#), and efforts to pay off the massive bill continued for many years. Organizers of the Liberty Loan campaign launched a war bond drive in 1919 where they used captured German military equipment to drum up sales. One of the pieces was German sub *U-111*. Following visits to other ports, the boat made her appearance in Newport on May 5, 1919. To learn more, [read the post](#) at the [Naval War College Museum blog](#).



Photo Link: <http://navalwarcollegemuseum.blogspot.com/2019/05/a-third-u-boat-visits-newport.html>

★ **Yes, the Navy Actually Kept Bears Onboard Ships**

Goats, dogs, and cats have long been associated as mascots on Navy ships, but in the early 20th century bears onboard naval vessels became somewhat of a thing. In 1929, Sailors onboard USS Gannet requested a mascot for their Alaska deployment. The commanding officer of the ship agreed, but only if the crew took full responsibility. One machinist's mate volunteered, so the CO requested information from the Alaskan Department of Fish and Wildlife about adopting a black bear. Turns out they had one that they had recently seized during a raid. The cub had already been exposed to humans, and there was some apprehension about returning the animal back into the wild. So, the department agreed to turn the bear over to the ship's crew. To learn more, [read the article](#) at Connecting Vets.



Photo Link: <https://connectingvets.radio.com/articles/bears-other-animals-kept-mascots-onboard-us-navy-ships>

★ **Armed Forces Day—May 18**

On Aug. 31, 1949, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced the creation of Armed Forces Day—celebrated every third Saturday of May. This year's Armed Forces Day falls on May 18. The day replaced separate Army, Navy, and Air Force days. Armed Forces Day was created to “praise the work of the military services at home and across the seas.” According to a *New York Times* article published on May 17, 1952: “This is the day on which we have the welcome opportunity to pay special tribute to the men and women of the Armed Forces ... to all the individuals who are in the service of their country all over the world. Armed Forces Day won't be a matter of parades and receptions for a good many of them. They will all be in line of duty and some of them may give their lives in that duty.”



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/NH-114000/NH-114363.html>

★ **International Museum Day—May 18**

On May 18, International Museum Day will be celebrated to raise awareness of the fact that “museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures and development of mutual understanding, cooperation and peace among peoples,” according to an International Council of Museums’ release on the annual event. Originally organized in 1977 by the ICOM, the events and activities can be celebrated a day, a weekend, or an entire week. This year's focus is the new role museums play as active participants in the community. The theme for International Museum Day 2019 is “Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition.” Celebrate International Museum Day by visiting a U.S. Navy museum near you.



Photo Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/IcomOfficiel/photos/a.501737943303505/1579801332163822/?type=3&theater>

★ **NHHC Webpage of the Week**

On May 18, 1775, Col. Benedict Arnold captured a British sloop at St. Johns in Quebec, Canada, and renamed her *Enterprise*—the first of many famous ships with that name. To commemorate the event, this week's Webpage of the Week is Enterprise: The “Big E” under NHHC's notable ships pages. Explore all this page has to offer, including highlights of World War II's most decorated warship earning 20 Battle Stars, the Presidential Unit Citation, and the Navy Unit Commendation. The “Big E” is also the only ship to be awarded the British Admiralty Pennant. Notable battles include Battle of the Eastern Solomons, Battle of Santa Cruz Islands, Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, Battle of Midway, Battle of Leyte Gulf, and Battle of the Philippine Sea. Check out this page today and learn more about one of the most famous ships in U.S. Navy history.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/80-g/80-G-330000/80-G-333207.html>

* Today in Naval History

On May 14, 1945, German submarine *U-858* arrived at Cape May, DE, after the ship's crew surrendered at sea four days earlier. [USS Pillsbury](#) and [USS Pope](#) arrived later that day, took over the boat, placed a USN crew on board, and removed half of her crew, including three of her four officers. *U-858* was the [first Nazi U-boat to surrender](#), after hostilities with Germany ended, in American waters. The German submarine did not sink any Allied vessels during [World War II](#) and was scuttled by [USS Sirago](#) during torpedo trials in November 1947 off the coast of New England.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/museums/nmusn/explore/photography/wwii/wwii-atlantic/battle-of-the-atlantic/surrender-german-uboats/1945-may-14-u-858/80-g-320321.html>