



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), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ Purple Heart Day

On Aug. 7, 1782, President George Washington ordered the establishment of the Badge of Military Merit, which was to be presented to Soldiers for “any singularly meritorious action.” Washington’s Badge of Military Merit was awarded to only three known Soldiers during the [American Revolution](#) and was mostly forgotten until Gen. [Douglas MacArthur](#) revived the award when he served as the Army’s chief of staff. On Feb. 22, 1932—Washington’s 200th birthday—the U.S. War Department announced the creation of the Purple Heart, a revival of Washington’s Badge of Military Merit. The Purple Heart is the oldest American military decoration for military merit and is awarded to members of the U.S. armed forces who have been killed or wounded in action against an enemy of the United States. To learn more, read [The Purple Heart](#), an essay by COD’s Adam Bisno, 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-K-14000/80-G-K-14495.html>

★ Bow of WWII U.S. Submarine Discovered Near Remote Alaskan Island

The bow of [USS Grunion](#) has been discovered more than 77 years after the submarine went missing off the [Aleutian Islands](#). The bow, discovered by the [Lost 52 Project](#) on July 30, was located in 2,713 feet of water near Kiska by underwater drones and sophisticated photogrammetry imaging. The main wreckage was found in August 2007, thanks to the efforts of the sons of *Grunion*’s captain, [Mannert Abele](#). The bow was just a short distance from the main wreckage, resting on a volcanic slope on the seabed. The work of the Lost 52 Project is carefully coordinated with NHHC. “Our mission at the [Naval History and Heritage Command](#) is to make certain the memory of our Sailors’ service will always be remembered, honored and valued,” Robert Neyland, [NHHC's Underwater Archaeology Branch](#) head, said in the statement. “As Tim Taylor, and others like him, discover the final resting place for our lost Sailors, they help to carry out that mission.” *Grunion* was on her first war patrol when she was lost with all hands. To learn more, [read the article](#) at Fox News.



Photo Link: <https://www.foxnews.com/science/bow-of-ww-ii-us-submarine-discovered>

★ Navy Commissions Littoral Combat Ship *Billings*

The Navy commissioned its newest Freedom-variant littoral combat ship during a ceremony in Key West, FL, Aug. 3. “The future [USS Billings](#) and her crew will play an important role in the defense of our nation and maritime freedom,” said Secretary of the Navy [Richard V. Spencer](#). “She stands as proof of what teamwork—from civilian to contractor to military—can accomplish. This fast, agile platform will deliver her motto, ‘Big Sky over Troubled Waters’ worldwide thanks to their efforts.” The ship is named in honor of [Montana](#)’s largest city, and it will be the first ship of its name in naval service. *Billings* is designed for operation in near-shore environments yet capable of open-ocean operation. It can defeat threats such as mines, quiet diesel submarines, and fast surface craft. To learn more, read the [U.S. Navy release](#) and [watch the ceremony](#) at Navy Live.



Photo Link: <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/08/04/lcs-billings-reports-to-the-fleet/>

★ Navy Department Library Formally Established

On Aug. 7, 1882, Public Act No. 21 officially established the Navy's Library as a departmental institution; however, the library's roots extend back to 1794 when the Naval Bureau was part of the War Department in Philadelphia. Although it was formally [established in 1882](#), a March 31, 1800, letter from President John Adams to [Benjamin Stoddert](#), the first [Secretary of the Navy](#), documents the establishment of the Navy Department Library. The library, which was attached to the office of the Secretary of the Navy and located near the White House, was in continuous existence until it was formally named the Navy Department Library in 1882. To learn more, read [History of the Navy Department Library](#) at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhmc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhmc-series/nh-series/NH-02000/NH-2374.html>

★ H. L. Hunley Raised 19 Years Ago

On Aug. 8, 2000, at 8:37 a.m., the Confederate submarine *H. L. Hunley* broke the surface of the ocean for the first time in more than 136 years near the mouth of the harbor at Charleston, SC. Once safely secured for transporting, *H. L. Hunley* was shipped to the [Warren Lasch Conservation Center](#), now part of the Clemson University Restoration Institute, for conservation inside a [specially designed tank](#). The Confederate submarine has the distinction of being the first submarine to sink an enemy warship in wartime. In the summer of 2000, a team of professionals from the [Naval History and Heritage Command](#), the [National Park Service](#), and the [South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology](#) made the decision to excavate the site due to concerns that the historic vessel could be disturbed or damaged since its location was known. To learn more, check out [Underwater Archaeology Branch's H. L. Hunley](#) page.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhmc-series/nh-series/NH-97000/NH-97356-12-KN.html>

★ F8F Bearcat Found in Chesapeake Bay?

On March 18, 1945, Lt. j.g. David L. Mandt took off on an experimental fighter plane—the XF8F-1 Bearcat—from Maryland's Patuxent River Naval Air Station. His plane never returned. Fast forward to 2010, when diver Dan Lynberg descended to the bottom of the Chesapeake Bay to examine an object seen on his solar survey. He remembers it was an unusually clear day and said he "got a really good view" of the object. Lynberg said he could tell it was a single-engine airplane, but he could not get a picture of it. Then about three years ago, the [Naval History and Heritage Command](#) asked volunteers to conduct a search for lost aircraft near the air station. "So we went back," Lynberg said. "And with detailed drawings of an F8F, we could go down and say, 'Yeah. This it. This is a hit. This is an F8F Bearcat.'" To learn what happened next, [read the article](#) in *Stars & Stripes*. To learn more about [naval aviation](#) and [underwater archaeology](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.stripes.com/lifestyle/military-history/in-1945-a-pilot-vanished-over-the-chesapeake-bay-the-navy-hopes-it-has-found-his-plane-1.592695>

★ Representative Files Bill to Name Post Office After Pioneering Navy Chief

Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-WA) introduced a bill recently to rename the Bremerton Post Office to the [John Henry Turpin](#) Post Office Building in commemoration of the [trailblazing](#) Navy [chief petty officer](#). During Turpin's 29-year career, he served during the [Spanish-American War](#), the Boxer Rebellion, and [World War I](#). Turpin—one of the Navy's first master divers—is also credited for his work in the use of underwater cutting torches. "He has quite a legacy, starting at the beginning of his Navy career," said Megan Churchwell, [Puget Sound Naval Museum](#) historian. Turpin was on board [USS Maine](#) when it exploded in 1898 and survived the boiler explosion of [USS Bennington](#) in 1905. He is credited with saving the lives of multiple Sailors during the *Bennington* explosion. To learn more, [read the article](#) in the *Kitsap Sun*.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhmc/our-collections/photography/us-people/t/turpin-john-henry-Dick/nh-89471.html>

★ Dutch Art Collector Donates D-Day Flag

Renowned Dutch art collector Bert Kreuk recently donated a 48-star U.S. flag—flown on LCC-60 during the [invasion of Normandy](#)—to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. The flag is currently on display at the [National Museum of American History](#) and is scheduled to remain there for roughly a year. Kreuk bought the flag at an auction for about \$514,000 in 2016. “I thought, ‘This belongs in a museum,’ and immediately knew I wanted to be the guardian of this flag and give it back to the United States.” Kreuk presented the flag to President Donald Trump at a handover ceremony with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte present, July 18. Kreuk said his family owed the servicemen on that boat [LCC-60] a great debt since he lost relatives in Nazi bombing raids. “This flag is about freedom and those people who fought and died on the beaches,” Kreuk added. To learn more, [read the article](#) at *artnet news*. To learn more about [Operation Neptune—the Amphibious Assault on Normandy](#), go to [NHHC’s website](#).



Photo Link: <https://news.artnet.com/app/news-upload/2019/07/D-Day-Flag-Display-JN2019-01148.jpg>

★ Guam Servicemembers, Local Community Remember WWII Massacre Victims

More than 200 Guam residents and military servicemembers gathered at the Fena Cave Memorial on U.S. Naval Base Guam to pay their respects to those massacred at the cave during [World War II](#). Just two days before the [liberation of Guam](#)—July 19, 1944—Japanese soldiers massacred more than 30 young men and women from the villages of Agat and Sumay. They were working under forced labor conditions while their parents were held at a concentration camp when the enemy soldiers committed the unspeakable atrocity. “It’s the perfect time to remember the anniversary of the liberation of Guam—one to look back and understand the turmoil that happened throughout the world but definitely here on Guam,” said NBG Commanding Officer Capt. Jeffrey Grimes. “To look back is always something we must do, but I think it also for us in uniform reminds us that we’re here to fight for peace, so that we never have to fight in war.” To learn more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/5592936/fena-cave-memorial>

★ “Top Gun: Maverick” is Navy Approved

What has Capt. Pete “Maverick” Mitchell been up to since he first expressed a “need for speed” more than 30 years ago in 1986’s highest-grossing film, “[Top Gun?](#)” Why is he a captain and not a [naval aviation](#) admiral after all this time? “We’ll probably have to see the movie to see what he’s been doing,” said Cmdr. Ron Flanders, spokesman for Naval Air Forces in San Diego. Chances are, though, it won’t be anything awful. “The Navy did review the script so that A, it was accurate and B, was consistent with the ideals of the Navy,” Flanders said. The [Department of Defense](#) has considerable influence over a movie script if the filmmakers enlist DOD support. If the filmmakers decline to make changes desired by the military, support—such as access to bases—equipment, and troops can be withdrawn. Luckily, the much-anticipated sequel’s film crew is onboard with the Navy. To learn more, [read the article](#) in *Stars & Stripes*.



Photo Link: <https://www.stripes.com/news/top-gun-maverick-is-navy-approved-down-to-the-plot-details-1.592757>

★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

This week’s Webpage of the Week is the newly revamped [pirate interdiction and the U.S. Navy](#) page under NHHC’s [war, conflicts, and operations](#). Pirate interdiction and the United States have a long history that dates back to the early years of the nation when President Thomas Jefferson found himself dealing with Algerine pirates who were committing atrocities against American merchant ships and sailors. In the summer of 2007, modern day piracy off the coast of Somalia became a real issue for the United States and, in April 2009, the Navy conducted a daring rescue when M/V *Maersk-Alabama*, under Capt. Richard Phillips, was hijacked. Check this page out today. On it, you will find links to articles, resources, exhibits, and selected imagery associated with the Navy’s mission of protecting American interests on the open sea and ensuring the free flow of commerce.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/art/exhibits/conflicts-and-operations/scenes-from-our-navy--combat-art-of-the-twenty-first-century/the-watch-stander.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On Aug. 6, 1943, just before midnight, Task Force 31.2—a group of six U.S. Navy destroyers led by Cmdr. [Frederick Moosbrugger](#)—waited in Vella Gulf for the Japanese who were planning to land troops and supplies. Not giving away their position until they fired their torpedoes, the task force hit all four Japanese destroyers. *Hagikaze*, *Arashi*, and *Kawakaze* burst into flames and subsequently sank. More than 1,500 Japanese sailors were killed. The last Japanese destroyer, *Shigure*, was hit by a dud and escaped. The action during the [Battle of Vella Gulf](#) was notable for being the first engagement where U.S. Navy destroyers were authorized to operate independently from a cruiser force in the Pacific theater. Of note, *Shigure* did not escape the war unscathed. On Jan. 25, 1945, [USS Blackfin](#) sent *Shigure* to the bottom of the Gulf of Siam.



For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance at NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/80-G-84000/80-G-84005.html>