



# 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.

## ★ H-Gram 035

In his latest H-Gram, NHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) covers future President of the United States [George H. W. Bush](#), whose plane was shot down Sept. 2, 1944, over Chichi Jima. In addition, the heroism of Ensign "[Kay](#)" [Vesole](#) during the Great Bari Air Raid in December 1943, during which a U.S. Liberty ship with a secret cargo of chemical weapons exploded, is reviewed. Also included is the ill-conceived and costly Allied [amphibious assault at Anzio, Italy](#), in January 1944, which was bogged down for months at the cost of numerous Allied ships. To wrap up this edition, Director Cox tells the stories of the convoy battles along the northern coast of Algeria in April/May 1944, the Liberty ship SS *Paul Hamilton*, which was lost with all 580 aboard, and [World War I](#) German U-boat [UC-97](#) that ended her career at the bottom of Lake Michigan. For more on these events, [read H-Gram 035](#) at the [Director's Corner](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/alphabetical---donations0/w/ua-41-06-o-e--wightman-collection.html>

## ★ WWII@75: The Battle of Peleliu

By the summer of 1944, Gen. [Douglas MacArthur](#)'s forces were advancing beyond New Guinea toward the Philippines. Concurrently, Adm. [Chester W. Nimitz](#)'s naval and ground forces had broken through the Gilberts and Marshalls chains and were engaged in the capture of [Saipan](#), [Guam and Tinian](#) in the Marianas. By June 1944, Japanese carrier forces and their aviation assets were soundly defeated during the [Battle of the Philippine Sea](#). The logical next step was to break into Japan's second line of defense by capturing the Palaus group. Occupation of the Palaus was considered a prerequisite for the planned [Leyte Gulf landings](#). Although the original operation had to be rescheduled due to tougher than expected fighting on Saipan, Operation Stalemate II was scheduled to begin Sept. 15 with landings on Peleliu by the 1st Marine Division and backed by the U.S. Army's 81st Infantry Division. Operation Stalemate II was to be the largest amphibious operation in the Pacific to date, with more than 1,600 ships and craft and more than 800 aircraft engaged. For more on the operation, [read the essay](#) by COD's Carsten Fries at [NHHC's website](#). Also see "[Peleliu: Heroism and Grit](#)" by NHHC historian Thomas Sheppard.



**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-2056.html>

## ★ Today's Midshipman Must Be Tomorrow's Jack Crawford

The U.S. Naval Academy recently hosted a true American hero to help him celebrate his 100th birthday. Back in December 1941, Midshipman First Class [John "Jack" W. Crawford](#) may have wondered if he would see his next birthday, let alone live long enough to be a century old. Following the [Pearl Harbor attack](#), Crawford and his classmates graduated from USNA, class of 1942. Graduation and commissioning ceremonies were accelerated to meet the demands of [World War II](#). Originally, Crawford was to report to [USS Oklahoma](#), but those orders were cancelled. Although Crawford's ship was out of the war, he was determined to join the fight as soon as possible. Crawford set his sights on joining [USS Yorktown](#) and fighting in the [Battle of Midway](#). To learn what happened next, [read the blog](#) by Vice Adm. Sean Buck, superintendent, USNA, at [The Sextant](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/09/06/todays-midshipman-must-be-tomorrows-jack-crawford/>

## ★ Patriot Day

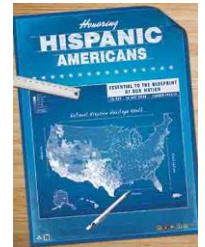
In memory of those killed in the [Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks](#), Patriot Day is observed annually to mourn their loss and never forget the tragedy. President George W. Bush signed [Patriot Day](#) into law Dec. 18, 2001, with Sept. 11, 2002, being the first Patriot Day observed. A national moment of silence will be observed beginning at 8:46 a.m., corresponding with the exact time that American Airlines Flight 11 struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center—the initial attack. The subsequent Global War on Terrorism, which included the worldwide manhunt for Osama bin Laden and destruction of the al Qaeda terrorist network, followed. For more on the Navy's continuing role in the GWOT, view the [Operation Enduring Freedom](#), [Operation Iraqi Freedom](#), and [Operation Inherent Resolve](#) pages at [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/sept-11-attack.html>

## ★ National Hispanic Heritage Month

During [National Hispanic Heritage Month](#)—observed annually Sept. 15–Oct. 15—the Navy joins the nation in celebrating the contributions of Hispanic Americans. This year's theme is “Honoring Hispanic Americans: Essential to the Blueprint of Our Nation.” Hispanic Americans have served in the Navy throughout our nation's history—as seamen, four-star admirals, boatswain's mates, corpsmen, fighter pilots, physicians, nuclear engineers, and policymakers. The community has had a profound impact on our Navy and our nation through hard work, strong commitment to family, and service to the nation. For more on [Hispanic Americans in the U.S. Navy](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.deomi.org/human-relations/special-observances.cfm?tab=10>

## ★ USS Olympia and the Russian Civil War

In 1917, a group of radical Russian revolutionaries—known as the Bolsheviks—seized power in the country and pulled out of [World War I](#). The United States and her Allies were shocked and dismayed. The Allies needed Russia's help fighting the Central Powers, especially Germany. The best option, at the time, was to send the navies of Britain, France, and the United States to Russian ports to help protect Allied supplies and materiel and, if possible, assist in the overthrow of the new regime. Ultimately, the goal was to get Russia back in the war against Germany. Not everyone agreed with the plan at first, including Adm. [William S. Benson](#), chief of naval operations, but eventually he changed his mind and authorized the mission. On April 28, 1918, [USS Olympia](#) departed from Charleston, SC, under orders to proceed to Scotland and then to Murmansk, Russia, to assist in the Russian Civil War. To find out what happened next, [read the 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/NH-43000/NH-43271.html>

## ★ Osprey's Bell to be Handed Over to U.S. Navy

More than 75 years after [USS Osprey](#) struck an enemy mine and sank en route to the [Normandy invasion](#), the ship's bell was returned anonymously to British authorities after pictures of it surfaced online earlier this year. The bell's return was the result of an investigation by the UK's [Maritime and Coastguard Agency](#) after U.S. authorities alerted the agency that photos of the bell were on the internet. The MCA “put the word out” that it was searching for the bell, and that is when it made its mysterious appearance. [Historic England](#) conservators confirmed the bell as genuine, and it will be returned to the U.S. Navy. *Osprey's* bell falls under the [Sunken Military Craft Act](#) that states, “The Navy's sunken military craft remain property of the U.S. government regardless of their location or the passage of time and may not be disturbed without permission from the U.S. Navy.” NHHC's [Underwater Archaeology Branch](#) manages sunken military craft and their associated contents on behalf of the Department of the Navy. For more, [read the article](#) at BBC News.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-hampshire-49562897>

## ★ **Charlotte Commissioned**

On Sept. 16, 1994, 25 years ago, [USS Charlotte](#) was commissioned at Naval Station Norfolk, VA, with Cmdr. Michael J. Matthews in command. The nuclear-powered submarine is the fourth U.S. Navy ship named in honor of the [North Carolina](#) city. In late 2005, *Charlotte* steamed from Pearl Harbor, HI, to Norfolk, VA, reaching port on Nov. 29. During the voyage, the boat passed beneath the Arctic ice cap, breaking through 61 inches of ice while surfacing at the North Pole. Despite a wind chill reaching as low as -50°F and a complete lack of sunlight, Sailors filmed a “Spirit Spot” for the annual [Army/Navy football game](#), and a handful played a game of football on the ice. As part of the trip, Sailors received their “Blue Noses” for crossing the Arctic Circle. For more on the U.S. Navy [submarine force](#) and [unofficial Navy certificates](#), go to [NHHC’s website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/c/charlotte-iv--ssn-766-.html>

## ★ **The Story of WWII’s PBY Flying Boat**

In 1935, the arrival of three “before-their-time” aircraft marked a vintage year for aviation that would later play a significant role during [World War II](#): the Boeing B-17, Douglas DC-3/C-47, and Consolidated [PBY flying boat](#), which would later become an amphibian as well. Although not as well-known as the B-17 or C-47, PBYs were rugged wartime patrol bombers built with an air of absolute purposefulness—the fuel-fat wing gave it more range and endurance, and the towering, fishtail vertical fin helped with steering on the water and in the air. Although some pilots complained it was brutally heavy on the controls, others who had flown earlier open-cockpit biplane boats attested the PBY was light and responsive. At the time, the “Catalina”—as it is also known—was the cleanest flying boat ever designed and, surprisingly, an effective bomber. Of all the Axis submarines sunk by the Navy during the war, 25 went down under bombs from PBYs, and [PB4Ys](#) sank another 13. For more on the PBYs of WWII, [read the article](#) in the *Navy Times*. For more on [naval aviation](#), go to [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-71000/NH-71941.html>

## ★ **SECNAV Names Navy’s Newest EPF Ship *Cody***

On Sept. 5, Secretary of the Navy [Richard V. Spencer](#) announced the newest expeditionary fast transport (EPF) ship will be named USNS *Cody*. This is the first ship named in honor of the [Wyoming](#) city founded in the mid-1890s by Col. William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody. “The people of Cody are staunch supporters of a strong [Navy and Marine Corps team](#), and it is fitting to name a ship in honor of this great city,” Spencer said. “I am pleased that the spirit of Cody will live on in the future USNS *Cody* (T-EPF-14).” EPFs transport personnel, equipment, and supplies at speeds capable of 35-plus knots. The ship can transport 600 short tons of cargo with its crew of 26 civilian mariners. For more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/multimedia-gallery/infographics/state-infographics/wyoming-s-naval-history.html>

## ★ **NHHC Webpage of the Week**

On Sept. 12, 1966, Gemini XI was launched with U.S. Navy Cmdr. [Charles Conrad Jr.](#) as the command pilot. Navy Lt. Cmdr. [Richard F. Gordon](#) also served on the mission as a pilot. The mission lasted nearly three days and included 44 orbits of the Earth at an altitude of 1,368.9 km. On Sept. 14, the Agena engine fired for 26 seconds, taking Gemini XI to 850 miles above the Earth and breaking the 475-mile altitude record set by Gemini X. In commemoration of this significant milestone, this week’s webpage of the week is [Gemini XI Mission](#) located on the recently revamped [Navy’s role in space exploration](#) page. Once on the page, explore the multitude of photographs associated with the mission, and click on NASA’s [Gemini Program: Bridge to the Moon](#) link.



**Photo Link:** [https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/browse-by-topic/exploration-and-innovation/navy-and-space-exploration/Gemini\\_11\\_NASA.html](https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/browse-by-topic/exploration-and-innovation/navy-and-space-exploration/Gemini_11_NASA.html)

## \* Today in Naval History

On Sept. 10, 1945, [USS Midway](#) was commissioned as the lead ship of its class of large carriers featuring an armored flight deck and an air group of 120 planes. Named after the June 1942 [Battle of Midway](#) that changed the tide of [World War II](#) in favor of the United States and her Allies, *Midway* served 47 years, participating in the [Cold War](#), [Vietnam War](#), and [Desert Shield/Desert Storm](#). On April 11, 1992, *Midway* was decommissioned and then stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on March 17, 1997. On Aug. 29, 2003, the ship was donated to the San Diego Aircraft Museum, and in 2004, it began operation as a [museum ship](#).



*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/NH-97000/NH-97631.html>