



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

March 24, 2020



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.

★ H-Gram 043

In his latest H-Gram, NHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) recounts the ordeal of the carrier [USS Franklin](#) which, on March 19, 1945, suffered the greatest damage and highest casualties of any U.S. ship that did not subsequently sink. For their valor in saving their ship, the crew of *Franklin* and personnel of Air Group Five received a total of two [Medals of Honor](#), 19 [Navy Crosses](#), 22 [Silver Stars](#), 116 [Bronze Stars](#), and 235 Letters of Commendation, along with 808 posthumous [Purple Hearts](#) and an additional 347 Purple Hearts to survivors. Director Cox also includes an update on the 50th anniversary of the [Vietnam War](#) and, in light of the current pandemic crisis, a reprise of his 2018 H-gram article on the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918–19. For more, [read H-Gram 043](#) at the [Director's Corner](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/80-G-273000/80-G-273882.html>

★ National Vietnam War Veterans Day

On March 29, the nation will observe [National Vietnam War Veterans Day](#) as we continue to commemorate the [50th anniversary](#) of the [Vietnam War](#). Every facet of the Navy we know today supported the Vietnam War effort. Navy Sailors were on the sea, along the rivers and coastal waters, in the air, and on land. Modern carrier battle groups launched air strikes from Yankee and Dixie stations in the South China Sea, destroyers and cruisers provided gunfire support, and the Navy was crucial in maintaining the U.S. logistical chain across the Pacific. In addition to combat operations, Navy personnel were involved in multiple training, advisory, infrastructure, and civil affairs programs. Today, our bilateral relationship with Vietnam demonstrates our support for a strong, prosperous, and independent Vietnam. Through hard work and mutual respect, we are now close partners. NHHC has developed a [commemoration toolkit](#) for Vietnam War Veterans Day to help honor the heroes of the war.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/commemorations-toolkits/Vietnam-War-Veterans-Day.html>

★ National Medal of Honor Day

On Nov. 15, 1990, Congress approved [Public Law 101-564](#), designating March 25, 1991, as National Medal of Honor Day. The date is significant, as it is the day the first Medals of Honor were presented in 1863 to six of the 22 men known as [Andrews' Raiders](#) for their participation in the Great Locomotive Chase during the [Civil War](#). The [Navy and Marine Corps Medal of Honor](#) is our country's oldest continuously awarded decoration, even though its appearance and award criteria have changed since it was created for enlisted men by Secretary of the Navy [Gideon Welles](#) on Dec. 16, 1861. Legislation in 1915 made naval officers eligible for the award. Although originally awarded for combat and noncombat heroism, the Medal of Honor today is presented for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty during combat operations against an enemy of the United States. Medal of Honor Day was established to honor the recipients of the Medal of Honor and to raise public awareness of the importance of the nation's highest honor.



Photo Link: <https://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/060930-N-0696M-027.jpg>

★ **An Interview with Ima Black, a WWII-era WAVES Sailor**

In September 2019, Ima Black, widow of the Navy's first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy [Delbert Black](#) stopped by the [National Museum of the U.S. Navy](#) for a tour. [During the visit](#), she had the opportunity to view pieces from NHHC's expansive collection, including uniforms and memorabilia from her husband's service as well as her own time in service with the Navy Women Accepted for Emergency Service ([WAVES](#)). During [World War II](#), President [Franklin Roosevelt](#) signed into law the establishment of the WAVES. By July 1943, about 27,000 [women](#) wore the WAVES uniform. Black's visit also provided NHHC the opportunity to sit down with her and learn more about her experience in the Navy. To learn what Black had to say, [watch the interview](#) at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/news-and-events/news/2019/mcpon-widow-visit.html>

★ **Comfort Deploying to New York in Wake of Coronavirus Outbreak**

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced recently hospital ship *Comfort* is being deployed to New York due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Navy's 1,000-bed hospital ship has a long history of providing aid during natural disasters and health crises around the world. *Comfort* is expected to arrive in April. "The deployment of the USS *Comfort* to New York is an extraordinary but necessary step to help ensure our state has the capacity to handle an influx of patients with COVID-19 and continue our efforts to contain the virus," Cuomo said in a statement. New York has about 50,000 hospital beds and 3,000 intensive care unit beds. *Comfort* is being deployed to mitigate concerns over the decreasing number of available hospital beds. For more, [read the article](#) in *Business Insider*. Hospital ship *Mercy* is [deploying to Los Angeles](#). For more on [Navy medicine](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.navy.mil/management/photodb/photos/191115-N-HG846-1040.JPG>

★ **Medical Improvements Saved Many Lives During WWII**

From the [Pearl Harbor attack](#) to the [Japanese surrender](#), more than 400,000 U.S. servicemembers were killed during [World War II](#). About 70 percent were combat related, and the rest were due to illness or accidents. More than 670,000 were wounded. Only the [Civil War](#) resulted in more deaths with about 750,000 for both the North and South. Providing aid to Marines and Sailors fighting in combat on the front lines were the Navy corpsmen. Doctors and nurses were also forward deployed at U.S. installations worldwide. Throughout the war, battlefield medicine continually improved. At the beginning of WWII, only plasma was available as a substitute for blood loss, but by the wars end, serum albumin had been developed, which is whole blood that is considered more effective than just plasma alone. For more on this topic, [read the article](#). For more on [Navy medicine](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/Features/Story/Article/2115192/medical-improvements-saved-many-lives-during-world-war-ii/>

★ **First Commissioned Submarine Lost**

On March 15, 1915, 105 years ago, [F-4](#) sank near Hawaii in 300 feet of water due to an acid leak that caused corrosion of the lead lining of the battery, resulting in hull compromise and battery failure. All 21 of her crew were lost. This was the [first loss](#) of a manned, commissioned [U.S. Navy submarine](#) at sea. The boat was subsequently raised on Aug. 29, 1915. One of the divers involved was [John Henry Turpin](#), probably the first African-American to qualify as a [U.S. Navy master diver](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-74000/NH-74732.html>

★ The Colonial Wars

In the [latest naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, Grant Walker, a curator at the [U.S. Naval Academy Museum](#), discusses five wars that took place a century before the [American Revolution](#) by the great powers of Europe in the Western Hemisphere and how they are represented in an exhibit. The [Preble Hall podcast](#), conducted by personnel at the U.S. Naval Academy Museum in Annapolis, MD, interviews historians, practitioners, military personnel, and other experts on a variety of naval history topics from ancient history to more current events.

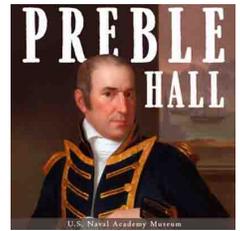


Photo Link: <https://www.usna.edu/Museum/PrebleHall/>

★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

As we continue to celebrate Women's History Month throughout the month of March, one notable woman who had a significant impact on the Navy was Rear Adm. [Grace Hopper](#). In honor of her service, this week's Webpage of the Week is the [Rear Admiral Grace Hopper namesakes](#) page at [NHHC's website](#). Guided-missile destroyer USS *Hopper* (DDG-70) proudly bears the name of Hopper, who was a pioneer in the field of computer science. In December 1943, Hopper entered the U.S. Naval Reserve and attended the USNR Midshipman's School-W at Northampton, MA. Upon graduation, she was commissioned a lieutenant (j.g.) and was ordered to the Bureau of Ordnance Computation Project at Harvard University. There she learned to program the first large-scale digital computer—the Mark I. Hopper received numerous awards and held many distinguished positions during her lifetime. She retired from the Navy in 1986 at the age of 79. Check this page out today.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/people/namesakes/grace-hopper.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On March 24, 1903, Adm. [George Dewey](#) was commissioned Admiral of the Navy, the only person to hold the rank. Upon his death on Jan. 16, 1917, Congress deactivated the rank. Over the course of his illustrious career, Dewey earned the Civil War Medal; the Spanish Campaign Medal; the Philippine Campaign Medal; and the Dewey Medal (commemorating the Battle of Manila Bay). A destroyer, [USS Dewey](#), was named to honor him. Built by the Bath Iron Works Corporation of Bath, ME, the ship was launched on July 28, 1934, under the sponsorship of Ann M. Dewey, great-grandniece of Dewey. *Dewey* was placed in commission at the Boston Navy Yard on Oct. 4, 1934, and earned thirteen battle stars for operations in the Pacific War Area during [World War II](#).



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/wars-and-events/spanish-american-war/spanish-american-war-in-glass/admiral-george-dewey.html>