



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

November 3, 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.

★ The Maritime Strategy: Oral History of Capt. Peter M. Swartz

An oral history interview with retired Navy Capt. [Peter M. Swartz](#) conducted on July 24, 2019, by NHHC historians Ryan Peeks and Joshua Blanton, was recently published to [NHHC's website](#). The wide-ranging, candid conversation covered Swartz's antecedents, his two combat tours in [Vietnam](#) as a junior officer; his assignments to key policy directorates of the Office of Naval Operations staff; his final tour as an executive assistant to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin L. Powell; and his post-retirement career with the Center for Naval Analyses. Of particular interest and significance are Swartz's account of the genesis and application of the Navy's Maritime Strategy under Secretary of the Navy [John F. Lehman](#) during the 1980s. Also discussed is his grandstand view of the Navy's conversion to a joint-warfighting branch of service after [Desert Shield/Desert Storm](#) and his thoughts about the perceived lack of an overarching service-specific strategy in the post-Cold War and post-[9-11](#) environments. For more, read [The Maritime Strategy: Oral History of Peter M. Swartz](#).



Photo Link: https://www.cna.org/experts/Swartz_P

★ Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and Freedom of the Seas

When President Woodrow Wilson was formulating his Fourteen Points—the conditions for ending [World War I](#)—he also laid out justification for U.S. entry into the “Great War.” The *casus belli*, Wilson suggested, was the “belligerents’” repeated disregard for the principle of freedom of the seas. “The modern concept of freedom of the seas originated in the struggle between the Dutch and Habsburg Spain in the 17th century. Defending Dutch merchants’ right to ply the lucrative East Indies trade routes, still largely under the control of the navies of Spain and Portugal, the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius published his book *Mare Librum* in 1609. In it, he provided the legal justification for keeping the world’s waterways open to the free transit of people, raw materials, and goods. Some 40 years later, the Peace of Westphalia (1648) effectively limited European states’ sovereignty to territories and coastal waters, ensuring that Grotius’s concept of freedom of the seas would become a doctrine that has lasted to the present day—but not without challenges.” For more, [read the essay](#) by NHHC historian Christopher Havern at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/browse-by-topic/wars-conflicts-and-operations/world-war-i/history/ww1-freedom-of-seas.html>

★ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dedicates Gold Star Families' Exhibit

On Oct. 29, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. [Mark A. Milley](#) dedicated the Gold Star Families display at its permanent home at the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes. “The gold star is a symbol of your loved one, a symbol of the one that you lost—and they were children, fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters; and they were friends, and coaches, and mentors, and so much more. But most of all, they're American heroes.” Gold Star Families dates back to [World War I](#) when military families would display a blue star for every family member serving in the war. The star would be changed to gold if a loved one was killed in action. A portion of the display honors the [Sullivan brothers](#) who were killed in action Nov. 3, 1942, while serving onboard [USS Juneau](#) (CL-52) during the [Naval Battle of Guadalcanal](#). It was the single largest loss of life in American history suffered by one family. For more, [read the article](#).



Photo Link: <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Oct/29/2002526477/-1/-1/0/201026-D-WD757-2225.JPG>

★ NHHC Biography Collection

Accessioned from the Chief of Information in 1974, NHHC's biography collection is one of the larger collections in the archives. The collection contains biographical sheets, service transcripts, casualty reports, obituaries, career biographies, and news articles about Navy personnel. The collection was originally compiled to promote the Navy, but it also serves as a valuable source of information into the past for researchers and reference archivists. "The collection is comprised of 1,499 boxes (or 605 linear feet as archivists like to measure by) and contains the records of famous and nonfamous people. Among many others, NHHC has records from Michelle Howard, Neil Armstrong, [Grace Brewster Murray Hopper](#), David Crockett, [Richard Halsey Best](#), and [Jesse LeRoy Brown](#). You never know what or who you will find in the biography collection." For more, [read the blog](#) by NHHC archivist Malwina Bardoni at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/10/29/nhhc-biography-collection/>

★ First Jet Landing on Aircraft Carrier—75 Years Ago

On Nov. 5, 1945, Ensign Jake C. West, embarked with VF-51 onboard [USS Wake Island](#) for carrier qualifications with the [FR-1 "Fireball" fighter](#), lost power on the forward radial engine shortly after taking off, forcing him to start his rear engine. Returning to his ship, he made a successful landing, thus becoming the first jet landing onboard an aircraft carrier. The Fireball was an odd plane for the time. Although it had a familiar radial piston engine in the nose, it also had a turbojet engine in the rear fuselage. At the time, the turbojet was not mature enough for sustained flight because it consumed too much fuel; it was intended to give the aircraft a high-speed boost. For more, [read the article](#). For more on [naval aviation](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/36750/the-forgotten-fireball-made-the-first-jet-powered-carrier-landing-by-accident>

★ Fleet Weather Center San Diego Established—10 Years Ago

On Nov. 5, 2010, [Fleet Weather Center San Diego](#) was established at Naval Air Station North Island, CA. The establishment completed the relocation of Naval Aviation Forecasting Detachment San Diego, Strike Group Oceanography Team San Diego, and Naval Maritime Forecast Center to the command. The Navy consolidated weather services in an effort to streamline operations, gain workforce efficiencies, and establish a larger footprint in a fleet concentration area while maintaining the quality of service. "Relocating and consolidating our weather support activities into the major west coast fleet concentration area will enhance our focus on fleet safety, while improving our collaboration and alignment with operational support requirements," said Rear Adm. Jonathan White, who was then the commander of Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command. For more, [read the U.S. Pacific Fleet release](#). For more on [weather-related incidents](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/915345/fleet-weather-center-san-diego>

★ Finding the Needle in the Haystack, aka Processing 101

You probably have heard that [NHHC's Archives](#) recently received documents related to [Operation Deep Freeze](#). Although the documents are in the custody of Archives, they are not available yet because they still need to be processed. "After collections are accessioned, or legally transferred to the Archives, they must first be processed before they are made available. The Society of American Archivists defines processing as 'the arrangement, description, and housing of archival materials for storage and use by patrons.' Collections arrive at the U.S. Navy Archives in a variety of conditions. Some are neat and tidy while others seem to have no order whatsoever. The amount of time it takes to process a collection depends on the size of the collection and its condition. Every processing job is different; however, most collections go through a five-step process." For more on the process, [read the blog](#) by NHHC archivist Elysia Hamelin at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/10/29/finding-the-needle-in-the-haystack-aka-processing-101/>

✦ Carrier Battle Groups Doubled for Desert Shield

On Nov. 8, 1990, 30 years ago, President [George H. W. Bush](#) announced the decision to double the number of carrier battle groups deployed in support of [Operation Desert Shield](#). By Jan. 15, 1991, [USS Ranger](#), [USS America](#), and [USS Theodore Roosevelt](#) were to join [USS Midway](#), [USS Saratoga](#), and [USS John F. Kennedy](#). When the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990, the United States deployed a major joint force as part of a multination coalition to stop President Saddam Hussein's brutal aggression. The U.S. Navy provided sea control and maritime superiority, which paved the way for the introduction of U.S. and allied air and ground forces. Hussein's repeated rejection to abandon the invasion and leave Kuwait led to the commencement of combat operations on Jan. 18, 1991. After a 38-day air campaign, ground troops began sweeping through Kuwait in blitzkrieg fashion. In a mere 100 hours, the Iraqi army was crushed. Iraqi soldiers surrendered by the thousands, and Kuwait was free again.



Photo Link: <https://catalog.archives.gov/OpaAPI/media/6510995/content/arcmedia/stillpix/330-cfd/2000/DN-ST-00-03640.jpeg>

✦ First Navy Pilot to Shoot Down Jet Aircraft

On Nov. 9, 1950, 70 years ago, Task Force 77 made its first attack on Yalu River bridges during the [Korean War](#). In the first engagement between MiG-15 and F9F jets, Lt. Cmdr. [William T. Amen](#), commanding officer of VF-111 based onboard [USS Philippine Sea](#), shot down a MiG, becoming the first Navy pilot to shoot down a jet aircraft. Amen received the [Distinguished Flying Cross](#) for his heroic actions. The citation stated that as squadron commander, he participated in 35 strike missions over enemy territory. Gold Stars in lieu of four additional Air Medals were also presented to him for participation in five missions, each against North Korean and Chinese forces. For more [naval aviation](#) firsts, go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/80-g/80-G-420000/80-G-420960.html>

✦ Preble Hall Podcast

In a recent [naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, Dr. Steven Lubar, professor of history at Brown University, discusses the Brooklyn Naval Lyceum of the 19th century and its impact on the U.S. Navy and Naval Academy. 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.

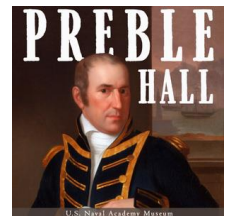


Photo Link: <https://www.usna.edu/Museum/PrebleHall/>

✦ Webpage of the Week

This week's Webpage of the Week is new to NHHC's [notable ships](#) pages. [USS Tang](#) was commissioned on Oct. 15, 1943, at the Mare Island Navy Yard with Lt. Cmdr. [Richard H. O'Kane](#) in command. *Tang* would go on to be one of the most lethal American submarines of the war, sinking 24 enemy vessels, earning four battle stars, and receiving two Presidential Citations. Lt. Cmdr. O'Kane received the [Medal of Honor](#). On the evening of Oct. 23–24, 1944, *Tang* made contact with a large Leyte-bound convoy of three tankers, a transport, a freighter, and numerous escorts. *Tang* broke into the formation, firing a barrage of torpedoes. Soon the targets were on fire or sinking. As *Tang* prepared to fire at a tanker, a transport was spotted bearing down on her in an attempt to ram the [submarine](#). *Tang* had no room to dive, so she whipped around, causing the transport to swing to avoid hitting another tanker that was also trying to ram *Tang*, and the enemy vessels collided. Shortly thereafter, *Tang* fired four [torpedoes](#) into the tanker, sending it to the ocean's floor. For more on the enemy engagement, check out the page. It contains a short history, suggested reading, interviews, and selected imagery.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-42000/nh-42273-uss-tang--ss-306-.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On Nov. 3, 1943, the battleship [USS Oklahoma](#) was refloated following months of laborious effort after being sunk during the Japanese [attack on Pearl Harbor](#). The refloating of the capsized battleship was the largest of the Pearl Harbor salvage jobs—and the most difficult. Returning the elderly and badly damaged warship to active service was never seriously contemplated. The purpose of the salvage was mainly to clear an important mooring berth for further use, and secondarily to recover some of *Oklahoma's* weapons and equipment. Once *Oklahoma* was refloated, the ship was moored elsewhere in Pearl Harbor. The ship was sold to a scrapping firm in 1946, but sank in May 1947 in a storm while under tow from Hawaii to the west coast.



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/world-war-ii/pearl-harbor-raid/post-attack-ship-salvage/salvage-of-uss-oklahoma--1942-1944/NH-64496.html>