



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

November 17, 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.

★ Indiana Commissioned—125 Years Ago

On Nov. 20, 1895, [Indiana](#) was commissioned as the first American, first-class (42 guns) battleship. As *Indiana* was being fitted at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, events in Cuba began to unfold that would influence the ship's future. A Cuban insurrection broke out against the Spanish, but the American public largely supported the Cubans. As part of a goodwill tour in 1898, [Maine](#) stood in the Havana Harbor when an explosion rocked the ship, killing 266 of the crew. The incident led to the eventual commencement of the [Spanish-American War](#). *Indiana* participated in the Battle of Santiago de Cuba and the destruction of Spanish ships *Plutón* and *Furor*. After the war, *Indiana* returned to conducting training exercises and fleet maneuvers with several stints at the [U.S. Naval Academy](#). Throughout [World War I](#), *Indiana* served as a training ship for gun crews off Tompkinsville and in the York River, VA. She was decommissioned at Philadelphia, PA, on Jan. 31, 1919.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-73000/NH-73974.html>

★ Navy's Newest Ship to be Named for Marine Sgt. Maj. John Canley, Vietnam War Hero

The Navy recently announced that its newest expeditionary sea base would honor U.S. Marine Sgt. Maj. [John Canley](#), who received the [Medal of Honor](#) for saving many lives during one of the deadliest battles of the [Vietnam War](#). "ESB-6 will be named USS *John L. Canley* to honor a man who has exemplified all that has made our service strong, and our nation thrive," Secretary of the Navy [Kenneth J. Braithwaite](#) said. "Then-Gunnery Sergeant Canley led his men through the Battle of Hue City, going above and beyond the call of duty as he carried wounded Marines to safety and drove the enemy from a fortified position." Canley said he was surprised to hear a ship would be named for him. He noted he was grateful for what it would mean for the troops who fought beside him during the battle that took place five decades ago. For more, [read the article](#). For more [ship namesake](#) stories, go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/11/11/navys-newest-ship-be-named-marine-sgt-maj-john-canley-vietnam-war-hero.html>

★ Body of Unknown Soldier Returned 99 Years Ago

On Nov. 9, 1921, the body of the Unknown Soldier arrived at the [Washington Navy Yard](#) in Washington, DC. [Olympia](#) brought the body that rests at the [Tomb of the Unknown Soldier](#) in [Arlington National Cemetery](#) to the United States from France where the Soldier died fighting in [World War I](#). *Olympia* set sail on Oct. 3 and arrived in France on Oct. 24. On that day, U.S. Army Sgt. Edward F. Younger, who himself was twice wounded during the war, was tasked with selecting one of four identical caskets to become America's Unknown Soldier. Younger selected the third from the left by laying a bouquet of white roses on the casket. The Soldier represents all of America's unidentified war dead. Following his arrival, the Unknown Soldier was brought to lay in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda until Nov. 11 where about 90,000 visitors came to pay their respects. That same day he was interred in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. For more, [read the article](#).



Photo Link: <https://americanmilitarynews.com/2020/11/body-of-the-unknown-soldier-returned-to-the-us-99-years-ago-after-wwi/>

★ Granddaughter Honors Pearl Harbor Survivor through USS *Arizona* Sponsorship

During the town of Gilbert's Veterans Day ceremony, Nikki Stratton continued to fulfill her grandfather's dying wish—tell his story and of his ship, [USS *Arizona*](#). [Donald Stratton](#) was one of the last living survivors who had been aboard *Arizona* during the [Pearl Harbor attack](#). The people of the small [Arizona](#) town are scheduled to sponsor the new [submarine](#), USS *Arizona*, which is currently under construction in Groton, CT. The boat is named to honor the Grand Canyon state and the famed battleship that was lost on Dec. 7, 1941. "For him, his dying wish was that nobody would forget *Arizona* and this is a way for me to connect with older and newer generations to fulfill that wish," Nikki said. Navy ships traditionally have a municipal and a female sponsor. Normally, a first lady is the sponsor, but this time Nikki is set to get the nod as sponsor of the new *Arizona*. For more, [read the article](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/about-us/leadership/director/directors-corner/in-memorial/memorial-stratton.html>

★ The Sailors Who Saved *Lehigh*

During the Battle of Charleston Harbor, five Sailors received the [Medal of Honor](#) for their actions in freeing their grounded warship. Gunner's Mate George Leland, Coxswain Thomas Irving, Seaman Horatio Young, Landsman William Williams, and Landsman Frank Gile played an integral role in saving Union ship [Lehigh](#) that had come to the aid of Soldiers. On Nov. 16, 1863, *Lehigh* and other ironclad ships were ordered to cover approaches to the Union position from the water in case the Confederates intended to launch a boat attack. The commander of *Lehigh* had ordered to anchor the ship by sundown, but flood tides that night moved the ship and grounded it on a sandbar. Under heavy enemy fire, Leland and Irving took a small boat to [Nahant](#) to pass a line over and begin the towing process. After two failed attempts, Young, Williams, and Gile stepped up to help. The third attempt succeeded, and within about an hour, *Lehigh* was off the sandbar. For more, [read the blog](#) at DOD's website.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/people---special-topics/african-americans-in-the-navy/african-americans-and-the-navy--1860s-1890s/uss-lehigh-nh-59437.html>

★ Another View of a Famous Statue at the U.S. Naval Academy

A statue of famed [American Indian](#) chief Tecumseh stands at the [U.S. Naval Academy](#). The bronze figure has become an informal location where midshipmen perform rituals in hopes of achieving higher grades. The statue, and what it represents, has a fascinating history. According to the [Naval Academy Museum](#) and the Smithsonian, "the current statue is a bronze replacement of a wooden figurehead sculpted by William Luke of Norfolk in 1821. Representing Chief Tamanend, or 'Tammany,' the figurehead graced the prow of [Delaware](#). Launched in 1820, *Delaware* was a ship-of-the-line, a formidable fighting vessel carrying 74 cannons, overshadowing [Constitution](#). As such, the ship served as the flagship of the Mediterranean fleet and of the coast of South America. In the [Civil War](#), *Delaware* was scuttled when Confederates seized the Norfolk Naval base, but the wooden figurehead was salvaged and brought to the academy during the tenure of Adm. [David] Porter after the war." For more on the statue, [read the article](#).



Photo Link: https://www.dcmilitary.com/tester/news/local/another-view-of-a-famous-statue-at-the-u-s-naval-academy/article_9d60ffe6-6a8b-5912-a5e3-4303e5025961.html

★ Preble Hall Podcast

In a recent [naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, former assistant commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Mike Williams (Ret.), who commanded Joint Task Force 160 in 1994, discusses the initial months of Operation Sea Signal—the response to the Cuban and Haitian migrant issue. Nearly 60,000 Cuban and Haitian migrants were brought to Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba. 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.

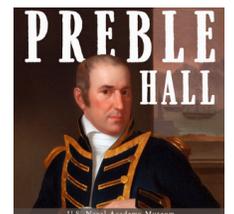


Photo Link: <https://www.usna.edu/Museum/PrebleHall/>

★ WWII Veteran Receives Purple Heart After 75 Years

Joe Bartlett, 94, received a [Purple Heart](#) recently after being wounded in action more than 75 years ago. On June 3, 1945, Bartlett was serving as an electrician's mate when his ship came under kamikaze attack. The brazen enemy attack left him with an injured leg. During the ceremony, Bartlett said the high point of [World War II](#) came a few months after his injury when it was announced the [Japanese had surrendered](#). At the time, he was in Manila Bay, Philippines, awaiting orders to head to the Japanese homeland. After the surrender, Bartlett went to Japan and witnessed the total destruction of the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima. Soon after coming home, he married his wife Betty. They were pen pals during the war; next year, they will celebrate their 75th wedding anniversary. For more, [read the article](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.ardmoreite.com/story/news/2020/11/11/wwii-vet-joe-bartlett-receives-purple-heart-after-75-years/6229066002/>

★ Webpage of the Week

In celebration of National American Indian Heritage Month, this week's Webpage of the Week is the [guide and interpreter Sacagawea](#) page located under [NHHC's namesakes](#). USNS *Sacagawea* proudly bears the name of the Shoshone Native American girl who acted as guide and interpreter for Lewis and Clark on their expedition into the Northwest region of the United States. President Thomas Jefferson made the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803. He wanted explorers to survey the landscape, learn about Native American tribes, and make maps. He turned to Meriwether Lewis to head the "Corps of Discovery." Lewis chose William Clark, who was his friend and former military superior, to accompany him. Sacagawea and her husband proved invaluable in helping Lewis and Clark explore the newly acquired region. For more, check out the page today.



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

★ Today in Naval History

On Nov. 17, 1917, [Fanning](#) and [Nicholson](#) sank the first German submarine of [World War I](#), *U-58*, off Milford Haven, Wales. *Fanning* had been at sea for five days when at approximately 4:20 p.m., the bridge lookout spotted a periscope about 400 yards away. *U-58* crossed the destroyer's bow, and *Fanning* gave chase, ringing down full speed and swinging the ship into position over the enemy boat. After dropping depth charges that wrecked *U-58*'s motors, diving gear, and oil leads, the boat plunged to 200 feet before blowing ballast for a hurried ascent. Escort flagship *Nicholson* dropped another charge close to the sub and scored another hit, then opened fire with her after gun. *Fanning* followed suit and scored several hits on the German boat. After a third *Fanning* attack, the enemy submarine's hatch flew open and German sailors quickly clambered onto the deck with their hands in the air.



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/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/n/nicholson-ii.html>