



# 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.

## ★ Previously Published, Unpublished WWII Narratives Now Available on NHHC's Website

From 1943–45, a series of published and previously unpublished combat narratives on specific [World War II](#) naval campaigns were produced by the publications branch of the Office of Naval Intelligence. In commemoration of the [75th anniversary](#) of the war's end, NHHC's publishing and website management team has republished an assortment of the declassified narratives in their original, unabridged form. NHHC historian Randall Fortson has placed the original content into historical context, provided extensive annotations, and added an appendix for the latest edition—[The Mediterranean Convoys, 1943–44](#)—from archived, unpublished selections. To download a free copy of any of the combat narratives (PDF file, 508-compliant), visit the [World War II Office of Naval Intelligence combat narratives](#) page 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-471000/80-G-471134.html>

## ★ John D. Ford Commissioned—100 Years Ago

On Dec. 20, 1920, the destroyer [John D. Ford](#) was commissioned. The ship served in Atlantic and Pacific waters during [World War II](#) and received a Presidential Unit Citation, specifically honoring her "extraordinary heroism in action" during the [Battle of the Java Sea](#). [John D. Ford](#) was named to honor Rear Adm. John Donaldson Ford, a native of Baltimore, MD, who served more than three decades in various high-level positions, notably as fleet engineer of the Pacific Station in 1898 on his hometown's namesake ship, [Baltimore](#), during the Battle of Manila Bay in the [Spanish-American War](#). Ford's ship served honorably throughout WWII, earning four battle stars before she was decommissioned on Nov. 2, 1945, and scrapped in April 1948. NHHC proudly holds [John D. Ford's ensign](#) in its vast collection of naval artifacts.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/artifacts/ship-and-shore/Flags/NationalFlags/ensign-uss-john-d-ford--dd-228-.html>

## ★ On the 50th Anniversary of the First Flight: 14 Important Moments in the Life of the Iconic Tomcat

During the [Cold War](#), advancements in Soviet long-range patrol and bomber aircraft called for [naval aviation](#) to develop a fighter that could engage the Soviets well beyond the outdated visual range. Grumman's answer: the [F-14 Tomcat](#). The iconic warbird made its first flight in December 1970, and thanks to 1988's blockbuster film *Top Gun*, the F-14 Tomcat is probably the U.S. Navy's most recognizable aircraft. The F-14, equipped with long-range AIM-54 Phoenix air-to-air missiles, had the capability to engage multiple hostile aircraft more than 90 miles away. It flew at extremely high-speeds and could carry a heavy amount of ordnance, proving to be a highly effective deterrent against the Soviet threat. For more, [read the blog](#) at [The Sextant](#). [NHHC](#) and the [National Naval Aviation Museum](#) teamed up to compile a list of the top 14 moments in the life of the storied Tomcat.



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/12/18/on-the-50th-anniversary-of-first-flight-14-important-moments-in-the-life-of-the-tomcat/>

## \* Honoring 30 Years of Women in Command at Sea

Recently, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. [Michael Gilday](#) and his wife Linda had a new display installed in their residence that highlights the accomplishments of female Navy [trailblazers](#). Included is a photo of Cmdr. Darlene Iskra, who in 1990 became the first woman to command a U.S. Navy commissioned ship. Iskra, a native of [California](#), considered joining the Navy after high school but opted to attend college instead. After graduating from San Francisco State University, she worked in the civilian world for about five years. Then one day, while living in the [state of Washington](#), Iskra came across an article that advertised potential jobs in the Navy, but back in 1978, female Navy officers were rare. In March 1979, Iskra took a chance and reported to Officer Candidate School. Her class was the second to allow both men and women to attend. After graduating from OCS, Iskra's first assignment was to dive school, which at the time was located at the [Washington Navy Yard](#). For more on Iskra's career, [read the blog](#) by NHHC's Denise Krepp at [The Sextant](#). For more on [women in the U.S. Navy](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2020/12/21/honoring-30-years-of-women-in-command-at-sea/>

## \* New Year's Day Log Entry

The Navy's tradition of writing the first deck log entry of the year in verse is American and thought to have started in the years after [World War I](#). The deck log is not usually a document where creativity is allowed, but on New Year's Day during the mid-watch, from midnight to 4 a.m.—and only during this watch—the officer of the deck can create rhyming verses to convey all the required information of the ship. For more on the [Navy's deck log tradition](#), read [what is a deck log?](#) at [NHHC's website](#). NHHC is reviving the tradition of the New Year's deck log contest. For specifics on the contest with a deadline of Friday, April 2, 2021, visit the [Voices Forged by the Sea: New Year's Day Deck Log Contest](#) page.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/research/archives/resources-for-the-fleet/deck-logs/new-years-contest.html#contest>

## \* Zumwalt Passed Away—20 Years Ago

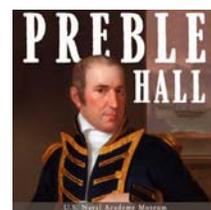
On Jan. 2, 2000, retired [Chief of Naval Operations](#) Adm. [Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr.](#) died at Duke University Medical Center, Durham, NC. A veteran of [World War II](#) and the conflicts in [Korea](#) and [Vietnam](#), Zumwalt exemplified honor, courage, and commitment during 32 years of naval service, earning a [Bronze Star](#) with valor for his actions during the [Battle of Leyte Gulf](#). As the CNO, Zumwalt embraced innovation—strategically, technologically, and with his personnel programs—to modernize the U.S. Navy. [Zumwalt's legacy](#) resulted in a number of innovative programs, such as the *Oliver Hazard Perry*-class frigates, the *Ohio*-class ballistic missile submarines, and the legendary [F-14 Tomcat](#), all of which had lasting impacts on the warfighting readiness of the Navy. Notably, Zumwalt recognized the primary force-multiplier of the U.S. Navy was and always will be the Sailor. As a social reformer, he began [quality of life improvements](#) and the institutionalization of equality for minorities and women.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/people/chiefs-of-naval-operations/admiral-elmo-r--zumwalt-jr-/zumwalt-legacy.html>

## \* Preble Hall Podcast

In a recent [naval history podcast](#) from Preble Hall, Dr. Jorit Wintjes from the University of Wurtzberg, Germany, discusses amphibious operations, ship duels, naval strategies, commerce raiding, the use of ships built for the Confederacy, and other naval components of the Franco-Prussian War. 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. Recently, a [historic naval ships](#) episode has also been published. Dr. Bill Cogar, naval historian and former director of the academy's museum, discusses the Historic Naval Ships Association and the museum ships' importance in conveying the nation's maritime heritage.



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

### ★ Navy to Host Air Force on 20th Anniversary of 9/11

The [U.S. Naval Academy](#) football team is scheduled to host the U.S. Air Force on Sept. 11, 2021—the 20th anniversary of the al Qaeda-led [terrorist attacks](#) that killed thousands of Americans in New York City, the Pentagon, and Pennsylvania. The game was originally scheduled to take place the first weekend in October, but the academies decided to make the change in their schedules. “We will use this nationally televised opportunity to reflect on the meaning of our freedom and the competitive spirit of our nation,” Navy athletic director Chet Gladchuk wrote in a news release. “Two service academies coming together to display our strength of unity and our determination to forever persevere.” For more, [read the article](#) in the *Military Times*. For more on [Navy athletics](#), go to [NHHC’s website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/12/23/navy-football-host-air-force-20th-anniversary-of-9-11.html#:~:text=Navy%20football%20will%20host%20Air,announced%20the%20news%20Tuesday%20morning>

### ★ First U.S. Dreadnought Battleship Commissioned

On Jan. 4, 1910, [USS Michigan](#)—the first U.S. dreadnought battleship—was commissioned. The ship was named to honor the [26th state](#) admitted to the Union on Jan. 26, 1837. During [World War I](#), *Michigan* operated out of various ports on the eastern seaboard. Assigned to Battleship Force 2 in April 1917, the warship escorted convoys, trained recruits, engaged in fleet maneuvers, and participated in battle drills. On Jan. 15, 1918, while steaming in formation with the fleet off Cape Hatteras, *Michigan’s* foremast buckled and was lost as the battleship struggled in [heavy seas](#). Six men were killed and 13 injured in the storm. After repairs, she resumed operations off the east coast and trained gunners in the Chesapeake Bay until the “Great War” ended. *Michigan* continued to participate in multiple cruises until she was decommissioned at the Philadelphia Navy Yard on Feb. 11, 1922, and stricken from the Navy list the following year.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/us-navy-ships/battleships/michigan-bb-27/NH-66299.html>

### ★ Kingfish Attacked Japanese Convoy—75 Years Ago

On Jan. 3, 1945, on her 10th war patrol, [USS Kingfish](#) attacked a Japanese convoy in the Bonin Islands, sending Japanese passenger-cargo ship *Shibozono Maru* and freighter *Yaei Maru* below the waves 200 miles north of Chichi Jima. The [submarine](#) spotted the convoy on the previous day’s patrol, but [heavy weather](#) prevented her from engaging the enemy. For the remainder of the patrol, *Kingfish* was assigned the additional task of lifeguard duty in Pacific waters. During [World War II](#), *Kingfish* conducted 12 war patrols, sank 14 enemy ships totaling 48,866 tons, and was awarded 9 battle stars. After the war, *Kingfish* participated in Navy Day activities in October 1945 at Orange, TX, before the battle-tested submarine was decommissioned at New London, CT, the following year.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/19-n/19-N-70000/19-N-72408.html>

### ★ Webpage of the Week

In commemoration of the commissioning of the first-in-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile [submarine](#) on Dec. 30, 1959, this week’s webpage of the week is [USS George Washington](#), which is new to NHHC’s [notable ships](#) pages. On June 28, 1960, *George Washington* steamed to Cape Canaveral, FL, where the boat loaded two propellant Polaris missiles. While standing out in the Atlantic Missile Test Range on July 20, 1960, *George Washington* made history when she successfully launched the first Polaris from a submerged submarine. At the completion of the successful launch, the boat’s commanding officer, Cmdr. James Osborn, sent President Dwight D. Eisenhower the message, “Polaris from out of the deep to target. Perfect.” About two hours later, the submarine deployed a second Polaris that smashed into an impact area some 1,100 miles downrange.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/Other/K-25571.html>

## ★ Today in Naval History

On Dec. 29, 1812, the frigate [Constitution](#), commanded by Commodore [William Bainbridge](#), captured the 38-gun frigate HMS *Java* off Brazil—the second British frigate seized by “Old Ironsides” in six months—during the [War of 1812](#). Despite loss of her wheel early in the fighting, *Constitution* fought well. Her superior gunnery shattered the enemy’s rigging, eventually dismasting *Java*, and mortally wounding her captain. *Java* was so badly damaged that she had to be burned. The seemingly invincible *Constitution* returned to Boston, MA, late in February for refitting, and her wounded commander was relieved by Capt. Charles Stewart.



*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/art/exhibits/conflicts-and-operations/the-war-of-1812/uss-constitution-vs-hms-java/uss-constitution-vs-hms-java---.html>