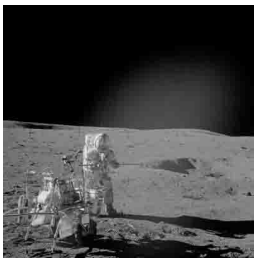
NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

February 2, 2021

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.

Apollo 14 Astronauts Land on Moon—50 Years Ago



On Feb. 5, 1971, Apollo 14 astronauts—Navy Capt. Alan B. Shepard Jr., commander, and Navy Cmdr. Edgar D. Mitchell, lunar module pilot—became the fifth and sixth human beings to walk on the moon. The third astronaut on the mission was Stuart A. Roosa, command module pilot, who conducted orbital science activities during the lunar surface period. The Apollo 14 mission was the third to land on the moon. Previously, the Apollo 11 and the Apollo 12 missions both made successful landings. The Apollo 13 landing was aborted after the service module oxygen tank ruptured while enroute to the moon. During the Apollo 14 nine-day mission, 94 pounds of lunar material was collected that went to 187 scientific teams in the United States, as well as 14 other countries for study and analysis. For more on the Navy's role in space exploration, go to NHHC's website.

Photo Link: https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/browse-by-topic/exploration-and-innovation/navy-and-space-exploration/Apollo_14_NASA.html

Wisconsin Completes First Gunfire Support During Desert Storm—30 Years Ago

On Feb. 8, 1991, as part of Operation Desert Storm, USS *Wisconsin* completed her first gunfire support operations during Desert Storm off Khafji, Saudi Arabia, firing against artillery batteries, infantry bunkers, and an Iraqi mechanized unit in direct support of U.S. Marine Corps ground operations. During the operation, 29 rounds were fired during eight separate fire missions. Additionally, the night reconnaissance capability of the RQ-2 remotely piloted vehicle was deployed to locate targets and track enemy movements. In particular, RPV's conducted surveillance of the Kuwaiti coast and interior, Kuwait City, and Faylaka Island providing intelligence for planning the follow-on ground offensive, Special Forces raids, and amphibious operations. During the eight months *Wisconsin* was deployed to the Persian Gulf, the ship fired 24 Tomahawk land-attack missiles and a multitude of 16-inch, 5-inch, and 20mm rounds in support of 36 different naval gunfire missions. In addition, she flew 348 UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) hours, recorded 661 helicopter landings, and steamed 46,000 nautical miles.

Photo Link: https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-navy-ships/battleships/wsconsin-bb-64/NH-97207-KN.html

The Selfless Service of Lt. Carlton B. Hutchins

On Feb. 2, 1938, while piloting U.S. Navy seaplane PBY-2 in tactical exercises with the U.S. Fleet off the California coast, Lt. Carlton B. Hutchins collided with another aircraft above Pacific waters. Although his plane was badly damaged, Hutchins remained at the controls attempting to bring the damaged plane to a safe landing and to afford an opportunity for his crew to escape by parachutes. His cool, calculated conduct contributed principally to saving the lives of all who survived, although he was killed in the planes subsequent crash. His conduct on this occasion was above and beyond the call of duty and represents the definition of selfless service. For his "extraordinary heroism," Hutchins posthumously received the Medal of Honor. His wife, Elizabeth, accepted the nation's highest honor on his behalf from President Franklin D. Roosevelt in August 1938. For more on the storied history of 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-48000/NH-48987.html

African American/Black History Month

Throughout the month of February, the nation observes African American/Black History Month. African Americans have made significant contributions to our military and society, and those contributions continue to make our nation great. Today's African American Sailors stand proudly knowing the accomplishments of their predecessors including the eight black Sailors who received the Medal of Honor during the Civil War, and the 14 black female yeomen who enlisted during World War I. The Navy planted the seeds for racial integration during World War II that would later provide critical leadership and expertise during the Cold War. African Americans continue to distinguish themselves through times of peace and conflict. For more on the African American experience in the U.S. Navy, go to NHHC's website.

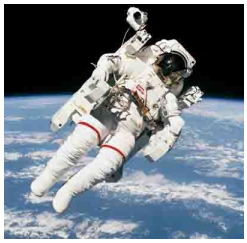
Photo Link: https://www.history.navy.mil/

How the Rugged F4F Wildcat Held the Line During World War II

As he scanned the Pacific skies in 1943, Marine Capt. Joe Foss spotted a Japanese formation of about 100 bombers and escort planes heading towards Guadalcanal. With only 12 fighters in his attack group, Foss knew he was impossibly outnumbered. Although the odds were stacked against him, the Medal of Honor recipient ordered his group to use the overcast conditions to their advantage as they attacked the overpowering force. The tactic tricked the enemy into believing they had encountered a much larger force. The Japanese subsequently withdrew from attacking strategically important Henderson Field without dropping a single bomb. "The Wildcat was actually well-armored and very difficult for the Japanese to shoot down," said Smithsonian's Larry Burke. Smithsonian plans to display a Wildcat in the National Air and Space Museum's new World War II gallery scheduled to open in 2024. For more, read the article in *Smithsonian Magazine*. 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/nara-series/usn/usn-42000/usn-42969-f4f-wildcat.html

First Untethered Spacewalk



On Feb. 7, 1984, naval aviator Bruce McCandless made the first untethered spacewalk from the space shuttle *Challenger* in the first test of the manned maneuvering unit. McCandless used hand controls to regulate his movement from a nitrogen-propelled backpack apparatus that allowed free movement in space. Fellow crewmembers used a 70mm camera to take the famous photograph through windows on the flight deck. The use of the mobile foot restraint attached to the shuttle's remote manipulator system arm was also used for the first time on this mission. Known as the "cherry-picker," the MFR provided a platform, so astronauts could stand wherever they needed for work outside the spacecraft. For more on the Navy's role in space exploration, go to NHHC's website.

Photo Link: https://www.nasa.gov/image-feature/astronaut-bruce-mccandless-on-first-ever-untethered-spacewalk

Jones Takes Command of *Bonhomme Richard*

On Feb. 4, 1779, Capt. John Paul Jones took command of *Bonhomme Richard*. The crew—selected and recruited by Jones—represented a variety of nationalities and languages, hailing from the American colonies, France, Scotland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, India, and even England. Unsurprisingly, they often quarreled among themselves, and Jones faced discipline problems even before the ship set sail. A group of Englishmen, who had signed on to escape prison, plotted to kill Jones and seize control of the ship. Once Jones learned of the plan, the ringleader was hauled before a court martial and severely punished. Jones ended up dismissing more than 100 English Sailors because of the ordeal.

Photo Link: https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-72000/NH-72802-KN.html

Kearsarge Continues Navy Tradition with Ship's Bell Baptismal Ceremony

On Jan. 24, amphibious assault ship USS *Kearsarge* (LHD-3) continued one of the Navy's oldest traditions when it hosted a christening and bell baptism ceremony for three *Kearsarge* families on the ship's flight deck. "This ceremony is important to my family, because the Navy is such a huge part of our lives," said Cmdr. Cory Peterson, who had his child christened in the bell during the ceremony. "Anytime we get an opportunity to connect and give our children a lasting impression of what we do and why we're called to wear the cloth of our nation is just another chance to bring our family closer together." The custom of baptizing a child under or inside the ship's bell originated in the British navy. Sometimes, as on this occasion, the bell is filled with water to be used as a christening bowl for the ceremony. Once the baptism is complete, the child's name normally is inscribed inside the bell. For more, read the U.S. Navy release. For more naval customs and traditions, go to NHHC's website.

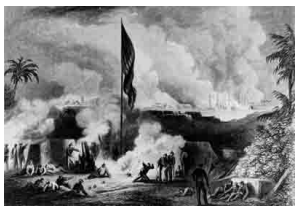
Photo Link:
https://www.facebook.com/Kearsarge/photos/pcb.4420550561294083/4420550231294116/?type=3&theater

Webpage of the Week

This week's webpage of the week is new to NHHC's notable ships. USS *Swordfish* (SS-193) was commissioned on July 22, 1939, and after shakedown and subsequent repairs, was underway to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in early 1941. On Nov. 3, *Swordfish* departed Pearl Harbor with three other submarines and arrived at Manila, Philippine Islands, on Nov. 22. The submarine remained at that location until after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. The following day, *Swordfish* set sail on her first war patrol conducted off the coast of Hainan, China. After damaging several enemy vessels, the boat sank Japanese cargo ship *Atsutasan Maru* on Dec. 16 with a spread of torpedoes—the first American submarine to sink a Japanese ship during World War II. *Swordfish* performed superb over the course of the war, before she was lost in January 1945 on her 13th war patrol in the buildup to the Battle of Okinawa. *Swordfish* sank 21 enemy vessels—amounting to 113,100 tons of enemy shipping—and earned eight battle stars for her WWII service. Check out this page today. It provides a short history, suggested reading, and selected imagery.

Photo Link: https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/19-n/19-N-50000/19-N-51811.html

Today in Naval History



On Feb. 2, 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed ending the Mexican-American War. Mexico agreed to extend the southern border of Texas to the Rio Grande River, and ceded present-day California, New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada, as well as parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming to the United States. The catalyst for the war was the U.S. annexation of Texas on Dec. 29, 1845. When Mexico responded by ending diplomatic relations with the U.S. government, President James K. Polk asked Congress to declare war on Mexico. Congress approved Polk's declaration on May 13, 1846. U.S. Navy involvement included success in the California campaign claiming Monterey, San Francisco, and San Diego. From the Gulf of Mexico, Commodore Matthew Perry captured enemy strongholds and blocked supply routes. Commodore David Conner coordinated with the Army to land more than 22,000 American Soldiers on Vera Cruz in March 1847. Within a few months of the Vera Cruz landings, Mexico City fell into U.S. hands.

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-65000/NH-65708.html