

Scuttlebutt

VOICE OF THE PATRIOTS POINT VOLUNTEERS ★ ISSUE 45 ★ FALL 2019

Lake Michigan: A Naval Aviation Gold Mine

By: Sandra Sowers

On December 7, 1941--a day that will live in infamy--the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by the naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. The attack which began at 7:55 Hawaii time (12:55 EST) lasted less than two hours. The assault claimed the lives of more than 2,400, wounded 1,000 more and damaged or destroyed 20 American ships and more than 300 aircraft. The Army lost 92 aircraft; the Navy lost 150.

On December 8, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Japan. The speech, one of the most memorial of his career, was met by thunderous applause from Congress and soon afterward the United States officially entered the Second World War.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, two things became readily apparent: aircraft carriers would play a much larger role in warfare than had previously been envisioned, and the success of carriers would depend largely on the skills of well-trained pilots.

A massive plan was instituted to qualify 45,000 Navy pilots. Three huge naval aviation training schools were set up. But there was a practical problem. Although it was relatively easy to teach fledgling pilots to fly, the skills required to fly on and off of a carrier was something that could only be perfected through actual experience. Before pilots could be assigned to combat duty on aircraft carriers, they had to demonstrate a proficiency for the underway flight operations. The Navy stipulated that trainees had to take off and land a minimum of ten times (later reduced to eight) in order to be qualified.



Hello my great team of Volunteers,

First thank you all for the warm reception you all have provided me. I appreciate what you all do for Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum. We could not be successful without your service. The staff has been working hard a developing a 7 year Strategic Plan for Patriots Point. I will share this plan with you all in December at our luncheon. I look forward to spending some time with you all in Pensacola. It will be a great trip. Please continue asking the great questions as you see me. Enjoy the rest of your fall season. I have been told 80 degree day's equals fall in low country. See you at the Point.

Sincerely

Larry

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Lake Michigan cont.

Complicating this problem, was there were no carriers available for student pilots to use. The few existing American aircraft carriers couldn't be spared for this duty. Even if carriers had been available for training purposes early in the war, the waters around the United States were infested with enemy submarines and considered unsafe for such operations.

In 1941, Commander Richard F. Whitehead, aviation aide to the head of the Navy's Great Lakes Training Center, advocated converting existing lake steamers into training aircraft carriers. No one in the Bureau of Ships hierarchy listened. But after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the idea gathered supporters. In 1943 Lake Michigan waters contained two-thirds of the Navy's training facilities, whose skies were thick with inexperienced fliers, hurling their crafts past the shores of a city fevered with war work.

The Navy wasn't awash with money then. When it needed a carrier for pilot training, it paid \$756,000 for a paddlewheel excursion boat called the *Seeandbee*, sheared off the top, put in a 550 foot deck and christened it the *USS Wolverine*. (Later , a second paddleboat, the *Greater Buffalo*, would be added and christened the *USS Sable*.)

Great Lakes' shipbuilders stripped away the passenger decks. Cut down to their hulls, the *Wolverine* and the *Sable* looked more like Mississippi riverboats than aircraft carriers.

Flight decks were constructed atop each hull and fitted with eight sets of aircraft arresting gear. Both vessels' flight decks had to be extended far beyond their bows and sterns to provide suitable simulations of combat carriers' flight decks.

Lake Michigan, the largest body of water within the contiguous United States, was ideal for training pilots. It was far from the submarines lurking off both coasts and it freed up real carriers to fight the battles. There is another benefit of the lakes that is often overlooked. Japan quickly lost the war, because among many other things, its navy could not replace its carrier pilots in both comfort (calm seas) and safety (no enemy subs). The United States could.

Between 1943 and 1945, the aircraft carriers used for training were docked at Chicago's Navy Pier. The pilots flew from Glenview Naval Air Station in Glenview, IL.

Aircraft were moved around the flight deck and taken in for service. Speed was the name of the game. Before going overseas for carrier duty, a pilot had to take off and land eight times. The sole purpose of the *Wolverine* was to provide a floating surface on which planes could land, turn around, and take off. On 28 May 1944, fifty-nine pilots landed and took off 488 times from the *Wolverine*, setting a record.



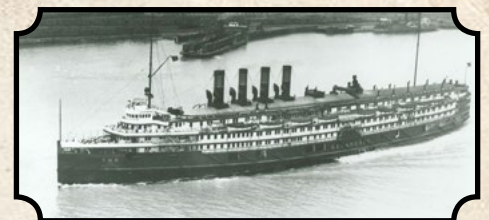
USS Sable

Even with planes landing every 10 seconds, every day, it wasn't fast enough. Therefore on 8 May 1943, the Navy commissioned a sister carrier, the *USS Sable*, the largest passenger ship in the Great Lakes.

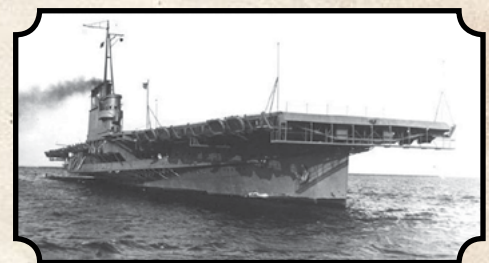
By war's end, about 15,000 pilots, including a young airman named George H.W. Bush, who would go on to become President of the United States, became qualified on the two carriers.

. It is estimated that as many as 300 aircraft are at the bottom of Lake Michigan. This was a result of speed and inexperience. Not only were the pilots new, but the crew were often new as well. At least 50 planes were ditched in the lake between Waukegan and Chicago, miles offshore on landing attempts

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Paddlewheel excursion boat - Seeandbee



Converted Seeandbee - USS Wolverine



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Lake Michigan cont.

on the two carriers. Although records are unclear, many damaged planes were shoved off the converted passenger ships to make room for other trainer aircraft.

James T. Bryan, a former head of the USS Yorktown Association, said these planes are in mint condition and there are no existing copies of some. Artifacts lost in the cold, fresh waters of Lake Michigan usually exhibit excellent preservation characteristics. Many of the aircraft have been found in good condition, tires inflated, parachutes preserved, leather seats maintained and engine crankcases full of oil. Often paint schemes are well preserved, allowing for easier identification.

The *Wolverine* and the *Sable* were sold for scrap in 1945.

Among the many planes lost in Pearl Harbor were eleven Grumman F4F-3 Wildcat fighters; eight Vought SB2U-3 Vindicator scout/bomber; and twenty Douglas SBD Dauntless scout/bombers. (The Vindicator was practically obsolete at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack.)

A handful of classic war birds like Hellcats, and Corsair have also been located and brought up over the years, many to be sent to museums or lovingly restored by war plane enthusiasts.

In May of 1982, the directors of the carrier, *USS Yorktown* announced their plans to raise some of the many planes that were ditched in Lake Michigan. The USS Yorktown Association, a group dedicated to honoring carrier aviators who lost their lives, stated that it was beginning a search and recovery operation. Although the planes were still the property of the Navy, they had no interest in salvaging the them. Because of the actions of individuals like Rear Admiral James T. Flatley, Jr. and the Yorktown Association, the Navy gave permission to begin the salvage operation. The association had to promise to use the planes as memorials or museum pieces.

According to James T. Bryan, Jr., there was a gold mine of aircraft in Lake Michigan. In cooperation with the Navy, the Yorktown planned to display the first plane brought up at its *Yorktown* museum in Charleston, SC.

There are two planes on the hanger deck of the *USS Yorktown* that have been salvaged from Lake Michigan. They are an F4F-3A Wildcat and a SBD Douglas Dauntless.

In the fall of 1988, divers located a one-of-a-kind F4F-3A Wildcat World War II fighter in Lake Michigan. (The F4F-3A is a variant of the F4F-3.) In 1940 the F4F-3A was the first monoplane-carrier fighter placed into service by the Navy. The plane to be salvaged had gone into the lake during carrier landing qualifications on the *USS Wolverine* in 1944.

Patriots Point Development Authority entered into a contract with Allen Olson and Tarras Lyssenko to salvage



F4F-3A Wildcat



SBD Douglas Dauntless

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Lake Michigan cont.

and deliver one Navy F4F-3A aircraft located in Lake Michigan at Longitude 41 degrees, 15 minutes and 20 seconds North; Latitude 87 degrees, 33 minutes and 30 seconds West, Olsen and Lyssenko agreed to the terms of the salvage. The aircraft was to be delivered to South Carolina in “as is” condition with the wings removed. The cost of the operation was \$35,000.

It was ascertained that there were no human remains in or near the aircraft and that the aircraft was not armed with any type of ammunition internal or external. It appeared that the aircraft was completely intact. The cockpit was not accessible enough to obtain the Bureau Number (BUNO) from the instrument panel.

Bryan, working with Admirals Kinnear and Flatley, consummated a deal with Grumman to have a dedicated group of their retirees to restore this priceless Wildcat at no cost to Patriots Point Development Authority or the Yorktown Association. Several members of the restoration team had built the original plane in 1939.

It was established that the restored F4F-3A was to be trucked to *USS Yorktown* on or about 1 October 1993. The arrival of the F4F-3A was to coincide with ceremonies on the hanger deck for the annual “deck edge” memorial service, flyby by an F4F Wildcat owned by Dick Foote, laying of the wreaths, musket volleys by a Marine Rifle Squad and taps.

The F4F-3A (with a Pratt and Whitney engine) was intended for export, but because of the need for aircraft after the attack on Pearl Harbor, most were issued in the spring and summer of 1941 to the United States Navy and the Marine Corps.

The Bureau of Aeronautics serial number was not recognizable on this particular aircraft, but it was identified as Bureau # 3956. The 3956 was the only F4F-3A to operate out of Navy Air Station Glenview and was lost while there.

The 3956 is especially historically significant because of its rarity. The Wildcat on display in Hangar Bay One of the *Yorktown* is one of only 65 built by Grumman. The 3956 is representative of all the fixed wing Grumman Wildcats. The 3956 is one of two still in existence. Every plane has a manufacturer’s designed number. That number is used on the plane’s log and on every pilot’s log that flies that plane.

On 31 October 1993, on board the *USS Yorktown*, Patriots Point formally dedicated the plane to the memory of Lt. Commander Edward Henry “Butch” O’Hare, USN.

SBD DAUNTLESS

The SBD-5 Dauntless is one of the most famous and successful planes to fly from the deck of an aircraft carrier. It is remembered as the plane that sank all four Japanese carriers at the June 1943 Battle of Midway. This plane is one of the very few true Navy SBDs remaining in existence.

The SBD entered service in 1940 and served through the end of the war in 1945. This plane is one of 5,935 produced by Douglas Aircraft Company between 1940 and 1944. The SBD on deck at Patriots Point has the BUNO 36173.

The SBD, designed by Edward H. Heinemann, had a top speed of 245 MPH and maximum range of 1,100 miles for the single engine 1,200 hp Wright R-1820-60 SBD5. The Dauntless was well-liked, and dependable. It normally carried a bomb load of 500 to 1,000 pounds but was designed to carry up to 1,900. The Dauntless was primarily used for scouting and training as well as dive bombing.

The Dauntless served aboard the *Yorktown* (CV-10) in 1943 to 1944 before being replaced by the SB2C “Helldiver.” In late 1986 or early 1987 then director of PPDA, Jerry Guerry, received permission to pay \$65,000 to the divers who had located SBD Dauntless that had been in 100 feet of water in Lake Michigan for 44 years. The deal

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Lake Michigan cont.
included trucking.

There were problems, however, with funds being provided for the payment for storage of the aircraft in a hangar west of Chicago . When an outstanding bill of \$1,000 went unpaid, Tim McCarter of D/B/A Aeroplane Factory threatened to sell “the wreck” to the highest bidder. James T. Bryan, Jr., with the Yorktown CV-10 Association, paid the thousand to save the Dauntless from being sold.

The Dauntless was transported by World Wide Trucking, at the divers’ expense, to the airport hangar of Coke Stuart, in Valdosta, GA. Stuart’s son quoted a restoration bill that Bryan considered too high. As a result, Bryan contacted Mike Rettke who gave a lower price of \$140,000. With Yorktown Association funds, Bryan paid \$910 to have the Dauntless transported to Rettke’s “backyard” shop.

When the restoration was completed in September of 1991, Rettke was still owed \$40,000. Before he would agree to delivery, \$20,000 had to be paid. Bryan was unable to pay Rettke because PPDA’s funds had been frozen. So Bryan **loaned** the Yorktown Association \$20,000 and sent it to Rettke via an association check. After a full year, because of other obligations, the association still owed Bryan \$10,000.

When the next \$20,000 was due to Rettke, Bryan said he would dig into his modest life savings and send the money. But he said he was tired of bank rolling the Yorktown Association and Patriots Point projects.

Bryan felt strongly that the SBD belonged to Patriots Point because it was very historic and valuable. In 1992, the value of the SBD was estimated at one million dollars because it was one of only four authentic restored SBD’s in the world. The total cost of the restoration was \$145,000 including hangar fees, trucking, and a KIA memorial bronze plaque.

Donations were necessary to aid with the restoration of the Dauntless. It was the generous donations of the family of Ensign Samuel J. Underhill that helped Bryan the most. Ensign Underhill, who flew an SBD from the deck of the first *Yorktown CV-5*, during the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross and the United States Navy named a new destroyer escort, *USS Underhill DE-682*, in his honor for his heroic action in defense of the *Yorktown-Lexington* task force. The ship was commissioned on 15 November 1943. It served from 1943 until 24 July 1945 when it was sunk by a Japanese midget suicide sub. Only 125 of 238 men survived. Ensign Underhill was remembered in a dedication of a WWII Douglas Dauntless SBD dive bomber at Patriots Point in 1991.

The Dauntless has been on board the *Yorktown* near the Midway exhibit since 1991.

F4-U CORSAIR

There is also an F4-U Corsair on the *Yorktown* which was pulled from Lake Washington. The Corsairs were often called “hogs” because of the snout nose 13 feet from the cockpit. These were the planes made famous by Pappy Boyington’s Baa Baa Black Sheep Marine Squadron.

On this particular aircraft, the plane’s Navy insignia and serial # V 88368 were still visible. The plane had suffered little more than a damaged rudder. The three-blade propeller and hatch canopy were missing and its tail shredded from a less careful salvage attempt, but after



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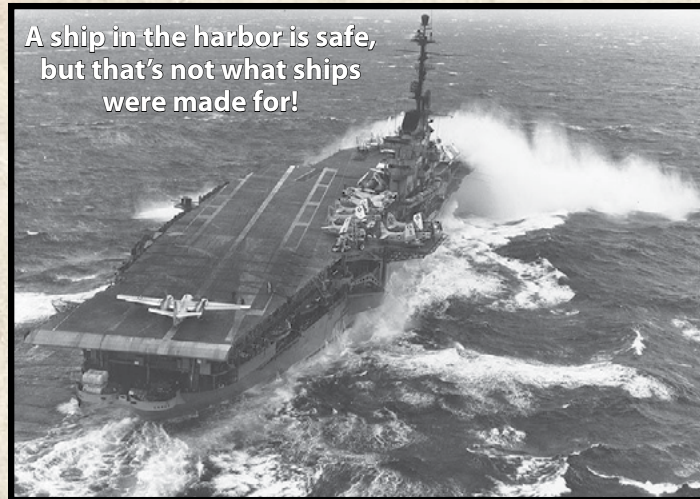
Lake Michigan cont.

approximately 30 years underwater, the WWII era relic was remarkably unscathed.

The *USS Yorktown* carried Corsairs to the Pacific for the attack on Japanese mainland in WWII.

Because of the efforts of groups like Patriots Point Development Authority and the Yorktown Association, dozens of planes have been salvaged from Lake Michigan and are now in museums for today's and future generations to visit, and be awed by the stories from another era. Close to 75 years after Pearl Harbor, Lake Michigan continues to be a Naval Aviation gold mine.

QUOTE OF THE QUARTER



PATRIOTS POINT

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Two New Volunteer Positions

By: Thom Ford

Since the last edition of Scuttlebutt, we have added two new positions or functions to the Volunteers duties.



Chris and Larry 'Doc' Barron have taken on the tasks of keeping the Volunteer Lounge inspection-ready and managing the coffee mess. In the Navy, these duties are called a unit's 'First Lieutenant.' Chris and Doc attacked their new responsibilities with vigor, and we are



all enjoying the results of their zeal. It should also be noted that Chris, with Doc's unskilled assistance, fabricated the new covers on the Information Desk barstools. BZ to you both, and thanks for your service.

Warren Onken will organize our outreach to, and maintain connectivity with, our Volunteers who cannot make it to Patriots Point due to illness or family emergency. Our collective thanks to Warren for generously giving of his time and energies for this demanding duty.



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ON THE RADAR



October

- 11 NPTU Graduation at 8:00 am
- 12 USS *Saratoga* Reunion
- 14 USS *Willard Keith* Reunion
- 15-18 Patriots Point Volunteers Trip to National Aviation Museum at Pensacola Naval Air Station; Patrol & Recon Wing at Jacksonville Naval Air Station; VMAT Fighter and Attack Sq Beaufort SC
- 16-19 Yorktown Association 71st Annual Reunion
- 18 USS *Weeks* Reunion
- 22-23 IV Corps MACV Reunion

November

- 2-9 Laffey Association Work Party
- 5 Volunteers Dinner Cruise
- 9 Marine Corp Birthday Ball
- 11 Veterans Day Concert
- 18 NPTU Graduation

December

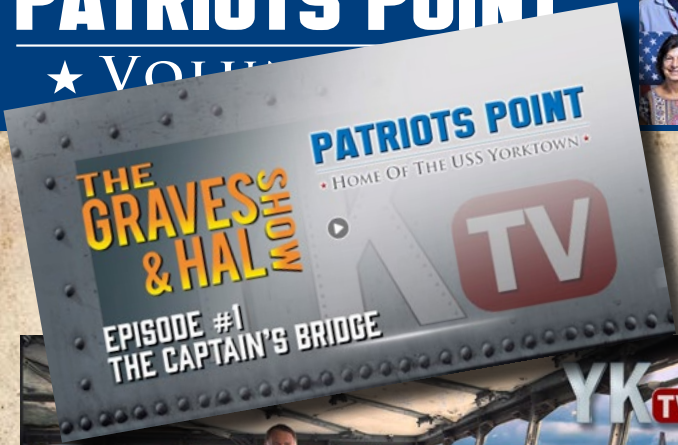
- 6 NPTU Graduation
- 7 Pearl Harbor Day Memorial Service will be held on the Yorktown at 11:00 a. m.

March

- 13 Patriots Point Volunteers and Staff Golf Tournament, POC is Thom Ford

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DID YOU KNOW

Did you know that Patriots Point has a You Tube channel and a Facebook page?
YKTV is the place to find all kinds of videos both informational and funny.



<https://patriotspt.org/YouTube>

<https://Facebook.com/PatriotsPoint.org>



Great way to stay informed!



www.PatriotsPoint.org



Dave Brienner



Welcome aboard Dave Brienner, 29 year Navy man. Served in USS *Cony*, a Fletcher class destroyer. Also did his time in Nam training U.S. and Vietnamese riverine forces. (Ask about his physical fitness when arriving in country.) Did extensive time working with the Military Sealift Command. An insurance executive post service.



Randy Garrison

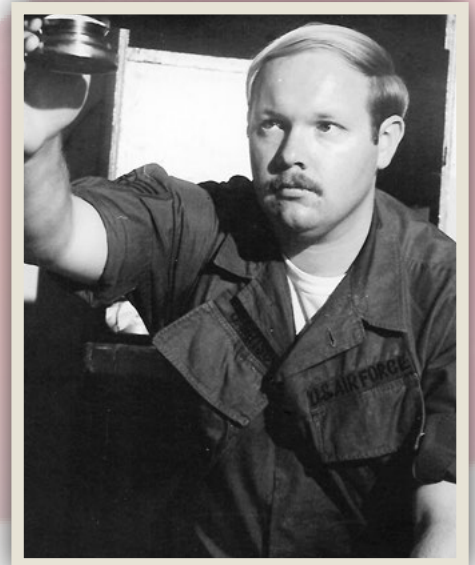


Randy Garrison from Military thru Retirement

Served in the U.S. Air Force in November 1966 through November 1970. After basic training he received specialized training in photography, film processing, and printing processes and was assigned to the 16th Photographic Processing and Interpretation Facility (PPIF) in Vietnam.

The mission was to receive the films taken by the reconnaissance aircraft (F-4 Phantom's, F-101 Voodoo's, and RB-57 Canberra's) then process the films, make prints and conduct photo interpretations. After Vietnam he was transferred to Edwards AFB and later to Udorn RTAFB Thailand.

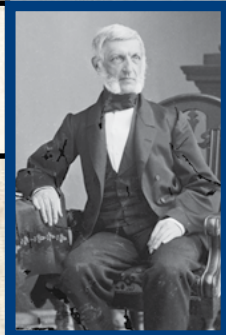
After separating from the USAF he returned home to Mt. Pleasant, SC., working in retail he resumed his education at nights achieving his Associates, Bachelors and Masters Degrees along with several Post-Graduate Classes under the GI Bill. In 1995 he started his own consulting firm working in the arena of Quality Management conducting training as well as auditing organizations around the country in the International Standards, ISO 9000. Randy retired in late 2017.





It Happened On This Date

Oct 10, 1845: Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft established the Naval School in Annapolis, Md. It is later renamed the U.S. Naval Academy.

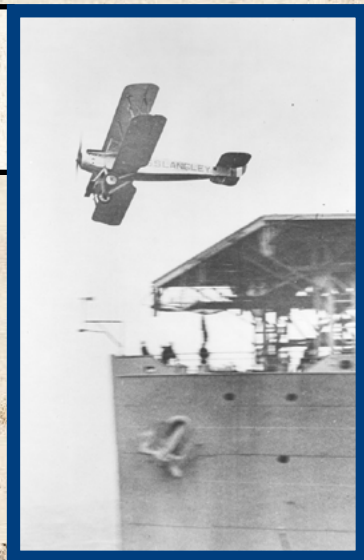


Oct 13, 1775: The U.S. Navy was founded, the Department of the Navy was later established in 1798.

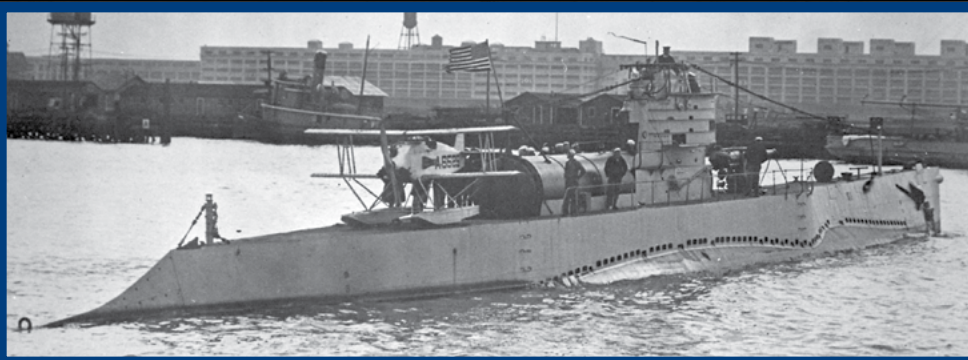


Oct 11, 1910: Wright Brothers pilot Archibald Hoxsey crossed paths with President Theodore Roosevelt and invited him for a ride. Roosevelt becomes the first president to fly.

Oct 17, 1922: Lt. Commander Virgil C. Griffin, piloting a Vought VE-7SF bi-winged fighter, makes the first-ever “official” takeoff from a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier, USS *Langley*.



Nov 5, 1923: The submarine USS *SS-1* (SS-105) launches a Martin MS-1 seaplane, marking the first flight of a submarine-launched aircraft.





It Happened On This Date

Nov 16, 1927: The U. S. Navy commissions its second aircraft carrier, USS *Saratoga* (CV-3). A converted flattop, which was originally designed to be a battlecruiser.



Nov 21, 1943: The USS *Laffey* DD-724 was launched, sponsored by Miss Beatrice Laffey, daughter of Civil War seaman and M of H recipient Bartlett Laffey. The Navy's third Sumner class destroyer would perpetuate the name of the USS *Laffey* DD-459 that was destroyed in battle the previous fall.

Dec 7, 1941: In the early morning the Japanese began their attack on Pearl Harbor, which was conducted in two waves: The first wave of 183 enemy aircraft attacked just before 8:00 a. m. and the second wave of 170 planes hit a little after 8:30 a.m. Of the ships anchored and damaged during the attacks, all but two of the battleships, *Arizona* and *Oklahoma*, were raised to fight again.



Dec 17, 1903: The modern aviation age is born. Brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright pilot the first heavier than air machine. The Wright Flyer traveled 120 feet in the air over the sand dunes of Kitty Hawk, N.C., staying aloft for 12 seconds.

Dec 21, 1968: American Astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders blast off aboard Apollo 8, becoming the first humans to leave Earth's orbit and on Christmas Eve, would become the first to orbit the moon. The Apollo 8 crew and capsule were recovered by the USS *Yorktown* CV-10 on Dec 27th.



AN UPDATE FROM THE USS YORKTOWN FOUNDATION

The **USS YORKTOWN FOUNDATION** is the designated 501(c)3 fundraising organization for Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum. Our mission is “to cultivate a unique learning environment that connects generations by celebrating America’s history and its heroes, inspiring freedom, patriotism, leadership and service”. We raise money for exhibits, symposiums and special projects, and scholarships for underserved students to participate in educational programs on the ship. We focus primarily on JROTC student groups, but serve other student groups as well.

We had a busy year in FY 2018/19, raising \$350,000 for the Museum! Here are some of the highlights:

- The Foundation provided \$53,000 in scholarships for 1375 underserved students from 30 schools in 17 counties to come participate in educational programming and overnight camping at the Museum.
- The Foundation received a donation of \$65,000 for a major technology and systems upgrade of the Flight Academy.
- The Foundation received a second \$25,000 grant from American Airlines to create a career development commercial aviation scenario in the Flight Academy. This totals \$50,000 in support from American Airlines.
- The Foundation raised \$21,568 in funds to purchase a working radial airplane engine to be part of the education programming at the Museum.
- Together with a gift from the SunTrust Foundation, the Yorktown Foundation funded the “Picturing Nam” exhibit, as well as other activities for Vietnam Veterans Day.
- The Foundation supported the Coast Guard Birthday Party, where 1900 Coast Guard members and their families enjoyed free food, drinks, ice cream, music and activities.
- The Foundation sponsored the Educator Science Café Series, organized by Patriots Point Education Department. The Educator Science Café is a series of informal events for science educators in our community to share ideas and information.
- Through a grant from the Tin Can Sailors Association, the Foundation funded the restoration and framing of the USS Laffey D-Day flag.
- The Foundation supported the D-Day program, including travel and hotels for the 9 D- Day veterans and their families.
- The Foundation received the donation of the 1938 Packard sitting beneath the B-25.
- Together with Motley Rice, LLC, the Foundation funded the 9/11 “Never Forget” Mobile Memorial traveling exhibit.
- The Foundation supported the following symposiums: *100th Anniversary of World War I; Echo Company in Ramadi, Portrait of My Grandmother, Eleanor Roosevelt/75th Anniversary of the USS Yorktown Commissioning; Life in a Jar- the Irena Sendler Project; Fly Girls; Top Gun: An American Story.*
- The Foundation allocated \$20,000 to create the Mac Burdette Scholarship Endowment Fund in honor of the retiring Executive Director.

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USS Yorktown Foundation cont.

Meet the USS Yorktown Foundation's accomplished and dedicated Board of Directors:



Michael R. Sudzina
Chairman, Procter & Gamble,
Director of Professional and Scientific Relations (retired) and Patriots Point Volunteer



Rear Admiral James H. Flatley III
Vice Chairman, Rear Admiral, United States Navy, *(ret)*



Chauncey R. Clark
Sullivan's Island Town Council, *Mayor Pro Tem* and Patriots Point Volunteer



Rebecca P. Costanzo
SunTrust Mortgage, *Senior Vice President/Area Manager*



Gray Coulton
Baird - Private Wealth Management,
Senior Vice President



Kent Hutchinson
Condor Systems, *Chairman (retired)* and Patriots Point Volunteer



Tommy McQueeney
State Farm Insurance



Kevin R. McDearis
Blackbaud, *Executive Vice President/Chief Products Officer*



L. Joseph Wischerath
Maine and Co., *President/CEO (retired)*



George P. Waters
Waters Investments, LLC, *President/CEO*



Allison Hunt serves as Executive Director and can be reached by phone at 843.881.5925, by email at allisonhunt@ussyorktownfoundation.org, or by dropping by the Administrative Office landside.



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PATRIOTS POINT
Home of the USS YORKTOWN (CV-10)
Volunteer Department

*** WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS ***



Katherine Marshall-Mayer



Dave Brienner



Andy Toth



Butch Hills

Scuttlebutt

Management: Larry Murray, Executive Director — *Volunteer Coordinator:* Thom Ford

Editor: Andy Toth

Scuttlebutt Layout: Jim Vickers

