

Scuttlebutt

VOICE OF THE PATRIOTS POINT VOLUNTEERS ★ ISSUE 47 ★ SPRING 2020

A “Pieces of History” Story – World War II Bombardier’s Diary

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I recently completed a transcription of my late cousin Captain Alfred Brorstrom’s hand-written diary of his service as the bombardier of a B-17G with the 731st bombardment Squadron, 8th Air Force from mid-1944 to spring 1945. The diary, a narrow lined notebook of over 100 pages, reveals remarkable details of the everyday life of an aviation cadet and newly commissioned Army Air Corps bombardier in training, followed by deployment to England, and 30 missions over some of the most heavily defended targets in occupied Europe and Germany.

Cousin Al rarely talked with me and my siblings about his service in World War II, but after my return from a combat tour in Vietnam, we did share stories and reflections. He never mentioned his diary, and

it was only by luck long after his death that it was discovered along with a scrapbook of news articles in a metal box containing his awards, aviator’s sun glasses, wings, insignia, and other items.

The training of a bombardier was both lengthy and diverse. Al qualified first as an aerial gunner, then as a navigator, and finally as a bombardier, before joining the crew of a B-17G for collective mission practice including cross-country flights and dummy bomb runs. His diary contains many comments on how training in these skills such as aerial gunnery, target identification and formation flying continued between missions in Europe.

His descriptions of very early morning pre-mission briefings, the forming up of squadrons and flights over Britain with occasional accidents, the crossing of “flak zones” enroute, the difficulty of target identification due to weather conditions and flak barrages, the challenging flights “home” with battle damage, and the sorrow of lost comrades, are all detailed with clarity and frequent good humored sarcasm and honest emotion.



*Al Brorstrom, Captain,
US Army Air Corps*

Among the most remarkable parts of this personal history are Cousin Al’s comments on living conditions on American air bases in England and off-duty visits to towns and villages, particularly London. Al had an “obsession” with food. Many paragraphs are filled with his descriptions of both good and bad meals, and comments on the rationing system among the British civilian population. He was also an avid “tourist”, visiting many familiar landmarks,



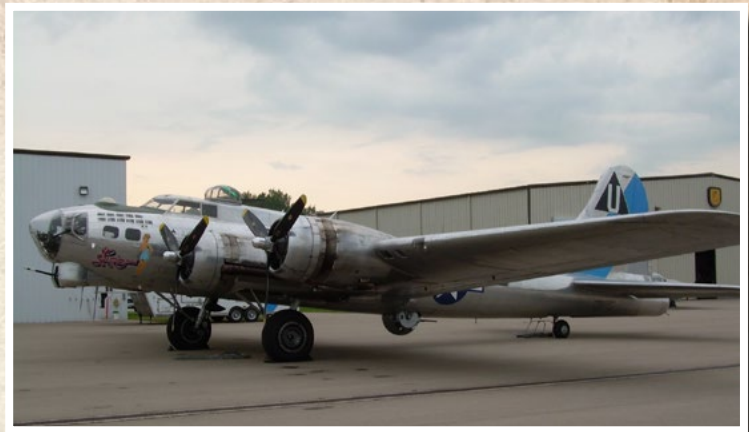
*The Mighty 8th
Insignia*



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and often getting lost going back to base after curfew.

The diary provides a personal, yet easily generalizable, account of the wartime experiences of an actual member of the “Greatest Generation”, someone who served with honor, and came home with memories we can now share. Other published accounts of air operations in the European Theater describe the realities of combat and the sacrifices made. His handwritten diary begins with the flight across the US and the Atlantic with his B-17G crew and their subsequent training in England. The extracts chosen from Al’s personal diary for this article focus on personal experiences behind the “big picture”, all are in Al’s own words.



Boeing B-17G of the Commemorative Air Force on the ground in Madison, WI

Saturday, July 29, 1944

“Today, Jack, my pilot, flew his first mission. He flew as a co-pilot with a more experienced crew to get an idea of what it is like over there. Haven’t seen him since he came down. He is still sacked up. Looks like we will be going up real soon, tomorrow or the next day at the latest. Bad news this evening when boys came back we heard we had lost our new C.O. in an air crash. Both planes exploded.”

Monday, July 31, 1944

“Well, today was the day of days. We flew our first mission today. They awakened me at 0540 and told me briefing was at 0600. They were supposed to wake me at 0430 but they slipped up somewhere. I went to the briefing without eating and the first thing they did was to pull up the screen which revealed our mission for the day. It was marked on a large map and you should have heard the sad sound and comments when the boys saw that we were going to Munich. That’s just about the deepest penetration we can have from England. A nice easy way to start.

After our special bombardiers briefing, Charlie and I were allowed to go to breakfast. Take off for us was about 0845 and the weather was foul. We reached the base of the clouds about 600 feet from the ground and didn’t come out into the clear until about 6000 feet.



Bombardier position on the B-17G

I pulled the pins {safety mechanism} on those 11 500 lbs. demolition bombs that we were carrying and climbed into my heated suit. We spent the next two hours just flying around and forming our Group. I put my flak suit on when we reached the enemy coast, also wired my G.I. shoes to my parachute {Clearly to be used if he had to walk after bailing out, the heavy insulated flight boots not being good for that.} and hung my parachute to one of its hooks. Believe me, I was loaded down.

We flew at about 23,000 feet and climbed to 26,000 ft. when we got to the I.P {Initial point}. I opened my bomb bay doors at about 1305 hours on the group leader’s signal and bombs away was about 1320. I might also mention here that those damn Jerries can really shoot.



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We were completely obscured from them as the target was from us. Our target was a jet propelled plane plant and a plant manufacturing “methanol” a new fuel. They fire their guns by radar and really do a job. It was bursting all around us and one hit us under the radio room and ripped a 12 inch gash in the fuselage. Outside of that, we only got about 12 other holes in the ship.

We landed about 1720 and were really glad to get back. We were interrogated and then headed for chow. After dinner we went back to clean our guns and I was in the sack by about 2200. Before retiring, I inquired whether or not we were flying and they said no, which was music to my ears because I was really bushed.”

Tuesday, August 1, 1944

“Luck was with us today in one sense of the word because we didn’t have to fly and that made it possible for us to sleep and believe me, we were tired. I woke up at noon today. The reason I say we, meaning those that flew, were lucky in one sense of the word was because today’s mission although long was very easy, no flak, no fighters. The run was to southern France and it was a “Zebra Mission” – that meant we were dropping supplies and guns and ammo to the French patriots. Today, they dropped enough to equip 5500 men. They came in at 500 feet over a plateau to drop the stuff. Everything was let down easy with parachutes.” {A discovery. I have never read or heard of B-17 bombers being used to drop supplies by parachute.}

Wednesday, August 2, 1944

“Well, today we were awakened at 0830 for 0930 briefing. Setting us up so late we figured we were in for a short haul and we weren’t far wrong. The target was the tunnel entrance to a large underground robot supply depot, north of Paris at the town of Mery. There were two tunnel entrances and another wing was to take care of the second one.

We were carrying 6 1000 lb. demos and believe me they are mean looking babies. Our bombing altitude was about 24,000 feet and we were dropping salvo. {Meaning full loads released at one time for concentrated impact as much as the forward speed of the plane and the wind would allow.} We had no flak until we reached the I.P. and that wasn’t too bad. What seemed an eternity of time passed between the time we opened our doors at the I.P. and dropped the bombs on the target.

To make things real interesting, when I hit the Salvo Switch only my left rack went away and my radioman shouted the news to me over interplane. I immediately turned on my interval meter and started hitting my toggle switch. As soon as I started, my radioman told me the remaining three bombs went away – about 3 or 4 seconds late. I hate to think where they landed because 3 or 4 seconds at 24,000 feet makes a big difference on the ground.”



B-17G bombers of the 452nd Air Bombardment Group fly in formation over the North Sea

Friday, August 4, 1944

Well, we were awakened today for mission # 3. Briefing was at 0600 and up goes the screen. Bremen, oh my God! (Typical comment). Nice way to start a mission, but when it was over I knew what he meant. We flew out over the North Sea in a northeasterly direction and turned in towards Bremen at the mouth of the Wisser River. There was some flak from Bremerhaven but it didn’t get near us. The town of Rustingen was obscured completely by smoke screen. They even went so far as to have boats in the river putting up a smoke screen.

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We saw scattered flak all the way to the I.P. but nothing serious. Incidentally, we were flying # 7 spot in the low group, low which meant we would be the last ship to go over the target. We hit the I.P. and turned toward the target and, although I have only had two missions besides this one, I never want to see any more flak than I saw today, and believe me, it was damn good.

I saw my first ship go down today and I'd rather not see another. It was a ship in the high group and it just burst into flame when it was hit. It peeled off out of the formation and floundered around like a leaf in the breeze. I couldn't believe a ship that large could get so far out of control. My waist gunner saw five chutes from the plane and he said the ship disintegrated all the way down and exploded when it hit."

Tuesday, August 8, 1944

"This has ceased to be funny. We were awakened again this morning at 0600 and were briefed at 0715. That does give you a pretty fair night's rest but three in a row is pretty rough. I couldn't see us getting another easy mission after yesterday but that's just what it was. We were to aid the boys fighting in France about 12 miles south of Caen. We were to bomb a small village where an artillery battery was stationed. This one was even shorter than yesterday's mission.

We were going in at 13,000 feet because there wasn't to be much, if any, in the way of flak. There was a possibility of some mobile flak but that's all. We were carrying 12 500 lbs. General Purpose Bombs in the bomb bay and two 1000 lbs. General Purpose Bombs under the wing. {Another interesting fact. I did not know B-17 ever carried bombs under their wings.} This was an abnormal bomb load but we were carrying about 400 gallons less fuel than usual. We didn't meet any flak at all going from the base to the I.P. The run was a long one and once again we didn't drop. A previous wing had dropped and completely obscured the target."

Saturday August 12, 1944

"Today we start our 48 hr. pass. Our pass isn't supposed to start until 1700 but we took off at 1030 and made the 1050 train for London. It was a very boring 4 hour ride on the train before we pulled in to Liverpool Street Station. Then the fun really began. Saturday in London is just like Saturday in any big town which has an influx of military personnel. We went to five hotels before we finally got rooms in a place called the Hotel Winston. There were three of us – pilot, navigator and me - and it cost us a pound a piece for two nights which was rather reasonable. It wasn't too nice a spot but it had good beds and that is all we asked.

The food problem isn't too good in London and I swear that I had a hamburger which had a percentage of sawdust in it. I could be wrong but what I'm driving at is that it wasn't too good. We went to a show at night and it was on the style of our musicals. This is the climax – we found a Chinese Restaurant where we could get good chicken chow main. It really was a treat. I hit the sack about 2345."

Sunday, August 13, 1944

"We rolled out of bed about 0900 and had breakfast in the restaurant in our hotel. Porridge, omelet and bacon, and coffee and it wasn't too bad. They were a little stingy with the sugar but I had expected that and had brought some with me from K rations which I had consumed.

We all wanted to go to church so we called a cab and asked him where we could go. Preferably to one of the larger and well known churches. He suggested Westminster Abbey and that really fit the bill. After the service we looked over the



Bombed out London during the war





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rest of the Abbey – all that we were allowed to. A bomb had hit part of it and that part was restricted. It was quite a thrill to see the tombs of so many of the great names of history and literature after having studied or read of all of them at one time or another

After we left the Abbey, we saw St. Margaret’s Church where all of the royal weddings are held. We got within ½ block of No. 10 Downing Street and also saw Mr. Anthony Eden’s home which is across the street from No. 10. We passed by Scotland Yard also the Houses of Parliament.

There was a vendor on the corner selling grapes so we thought we would like some. Jan picked out a very robust looking bunch and had them weighed. They weighed 1 ¾ lbs. and the vendor said “That will be one pound, 5 and 3.” (\$5.25). Can you imagine paying money like that for a bunch of grapes? I was all set to tell him what I thought of him, but Jan was still hungry so he bought a \$2 bunch.

{Comment: Over and over, it seems Al simply can’t appreciate the food shortage that existed in wartime England even this late in the war. This lack of appreciation for shortages was a common misunderstanding of US airmen, even those being passed along escape networks in occupied countries.}

After being told to take the wrong bus about four times, we finally got the right one and got a look at the Tower of London and St. Paul’s Church. The buzz bombs had been finding this area and things were a little messy in spots. Those little babies must carry quite a little load of T.N.T. from the destruction wrought by each one

We took in a cinema as soon as we came back to Piccadilly. Also forgot, before the movie we went to see Madame Toussard’s Wax Museum. It really is a wonderful spot and the reproductions are as close to the real thing as anything I’ll ever see. You could almost feel them looking at you and expecting you to speak. They have real guards and wax models and quite a few of the questions are directed to the wax models.”



The heart of London – Al’s favorite place to hang out

Thursday, September 7, 1944

“They had us up about 0700 for a practice mission this morning. We were briefed and were waiting around the locker rooms for the rain to stop. It had rained nearly all night and was still going strong. We were all hoping against hope that the mission would be scrubbed. Our patience was rewarded when they fired red flares from the tower which means mission scrubbed.

They fixed me up with one hour of British Bomb Trainer in the afternoon but that was all in the way of things to be done for the day.”

Sunday, September 10, 1944

“We have reached the stage now where we expect to get up every morning and they wake us up again this morning at 0200. If this keeps up, we won’t bother going to bed. Briefing was at 0330.

Today we are going to Nurnberg and it doesn’t look too rough on the flak map. We took off and formed, and our route was very close to the one we took into Mainz. Thru France and then into Germany near the town of Nancy, France. We passed within 10 miles of Mainz on the way in to the target. There was very little flak but

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we managed to get 40 or 50 holes in our ship.

Killer {his navigator} caught a piece of flak in his left buttock and although we knew he had been hit we didn't think I had penetrated his heavy clothing. It wasn't until we were on the way home that he started to remove his clothing and check. He put his hand in and pulled it out with blood on his fingers. He removed the clothing over the wound and the flak had made a wound about the size of a nickel and had just penetrated the dermis slightly.

I put a little iodine on it and bandage it for him and by this time he was just a bit chilly. We were up at 25,000 feet and the temperature was -3 degrees Celsius. We got him dressed up and the heated suit started doing its job and soon he was as snug as a bug.

The trip back to the base was routine outside of a greeting from Coblenz in terms of flak which wasn't too near us. That puts mission #13 into the books. We took off seeking mission # 12B but now that it's over it becomes # 13."

Monday, September 11, 1944

We were aroused this morning at 0315 and briefed at 0500. We were heading for the town of Poltava in Russia and we were bombing Chemnitz on the way. The target wasn't too heavily protected by flak and we didn't suffer hardly any battle damage. We went on our way to Russia. We passed Kiev on the way in and we couldn't see very much of it because we were too far away. We landed in Poltava about 1830 and while we were circling around we had a pretty good look at the town and it looked like it had been hard hit. We also saw the graveyard of the 452nd. The first time our group went over they were pretty badly shot up, and only two ships were in flying condition. There was quite a pile of aluminum, believe me.

We were assigned to tents and had chow. There were Russian girls to serve us and you should see the size of those females. They were by far the most rugged women I have ever seen. We were rather tired after the long grind so we hit the sack early."



Target: Berlin. The Brandenburg Gate and the bombed-out remains of the German capitol.

Wednesday, September 13, 1944

"They woke us up about 0300 this morning for a 0500 briefing. We were going to start on the second leg of the Shuttle Run to Italy. Enroute we were going to bomb Diosgyou in Hungary. It was about 60 miles south east of Budapest. We arrived in Celone, which was our base in Italy, located near the town of Faggia. It was very warm and very dusty and didn't look like a very nice spot. My first impression turned out to be a pretty good estimate of things as they were.

Thursday, September 14, 1944

"We slept until about 1100 this morning and it had been rather cool sleeping even under three blankets. We are going to have to get another blanket apiece somewhere. One of the boys in the Group came in and told us



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we could go swimming today if we wished to and that there would be a truck at 1200 to take us. We got up and cleaned up, ate dinner and were on the truck in time.

We rode for about 11/2 hours to get to the beach which was on the Adriatic. It was very pretty and the water had a definite blue hue to it. The place we were swimming at was a part of a rest home for a pursuit group {fighter planes} stationed in Italy. The water was very warm but it wasn't very rough. I had expected breakers but I forgot that it was a Sea and not the ocean. Most of us had to swim in our shorts because we didn't have swimming trunks. After the swim, we took a sun bath and it was just like good old Belle Harbor back home."

Friday September 15, 1944

"We were awakened about 0330 this morning for a 0500 briefing. We were going back to good old England. I had really gotten to love that place after seeing Russia and Italy."

Tuesday, October 10, 1944

"We were up about 0700 this morning to make our 0900 train for London. We were down at the MP gate about 0820 to get a lift to town. A truck came along and was going thru Thetford so we decided to go there. When the truck got there, the driver told us he was going to Cambridge so we stayed with him all the way.

We got to London about 1300 and went to the club to get our room. We then went to the Officers Mess for lunch. After lunch we went to the Officers PX to do some shopping. We went back to the club and read a bit and rested until dinner time. Had dinner in the usual place and then went to see "the Mask of Dmitros" which was a pretty good picture. Hit the sack about 2230."

Thursday, October 13, 1944

"We went to see "Greenwich Village" and it was a very poor picture. We had to make the 5:46 pm train to get back to base but we decided to go to our little Greek Restaurant for some Black Market steak and French Fried Potatoes. The owner didn't want to give this to us a first but I told him steaks or no go, so we had steak and it was delicious. We made our train with about 3 minutes to spare.

We had an uneventful rip back to Attleboro and we were back at the base by 2300. There I found two packages and five letters waiting for me."

Sunday, October 15, 1944

"They awakened us this morning at 0515 for 0630 briefing. We had breakfast and went to the briefing. The curtain goes up and we go to Helgoland. You should have heard the cries of joy from the boys. {I looked up what kind of target this probably was - either a V-1 launch site protected in caves or a resupply base for submarines.}

It was a secret mission as they were trying out a new technique. We were to plaster the island with frag bombs and then two robot controlled ships loaded with explosives were to be flown in at 1500 feet for the kill.

We formed without mishap and were on our way. The whole



RAF Deopham Green and its location near Norwich, UK

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trip was over the North Sea and we had to arrive and bomb between 1140 and 1145 because the Mother ships and the two robots were coming in right after that.”

Tuesday, October 17, 1944

“This one is the topper. They came in to get Killer and me for pre-briefing at 0010 this morning. We were all up writing until 2400 and I had just gotten to bed about 0005 which gave me just 5 solid minutes of sack time. I think I was too surprised to be angry because I just got up and dressed and we were on our way.

Our target was to be marshalling yards in Cologne and the whole Eight Air Force was hitting targets in Cologne. They were trying to cripple the transportation facilities of Cologne because it was the center for sending shipping to the front. Altogether, 1300 planes were going to Cologne. After pre-briefing we went to breakfast and then to the regular briefing. It is fun to know beforehand where we were going but I don't think it was worth getting up so early for.

We got a stand by signal about 45 minutes before takeoff but we got the go ahead sign soon after and took off just a few minutes later. We started forming up just about daybreak and later saw the sunrise. With no sleep to fortify me I was quite chilly even with my heated suit on. The trip to the I.P. was uneventful and the target run was almost flak free. Right at the target there wasn't any flak at all. We turned off after bombs away, the run had been P.F.F. because of a solid undercast, and headed for the Rally Point.”

Thursday, October 26, 1944

“There was trouble today when the boys were forming up and two ships {B-17's} from our group collided and went down. Only one man got out of the two ships. They got in prop wash and collided in mid-air. Two B-24's also collided today and a Mosquito exploded on takeoff. My activity for the day was confined to target study on the ground.

{Wednesday, Nov. 8, 1944 thru Friday, Nov. 17, 1944. Al describes a four day visit to an officer's Rest Camp in rural England with a relaxed atmosphere, wearing civilian clothes and joining in with lots of recreational activities.}

Saturday, Nov 25, 1944

They had me up this morning at 0230 for a 0245 pre-briefing. Our target for today was the Leuna Oil Plant at Merseberg. This was my first trip to Merseberg and from all I had heard about it, I knew I wasn't going to like it.

We took off and climbed to our forming altitude. The group formed without mishap and we were on our way. The trip in was uneventful and we managed to make our course good through the flak areas. We reached the I.P. and started our bomb run. It was to be a P.P.F. run because there was a 10/10ths undercast. There was only a little flak and it was very inaccurate. It was nothing like what I had expected but don't misunderstand me, I'm happy the way it was.

On the way back, we started to get low on gas and Jack and Lt. Goswich, who was our command pilot that day decided that we had better land at Brussels. We made it to Brussels all right and we were picked up in trucks and brought to the outskirts of town. Here we ate supper which consisted of cold chicken, bread and butter. It was really delicious and we were really hungry.

We got our passes allowing us to go into Brussels. It was rather early so we decided to see a bit of the town. We met some boys in the lobby who were going for some ice cream so we went along.

The place we were told to go to was a beautiful night club and we all came in in flying clothes. Nothing





Pieces of History cont.

was said however, and we were shown to a table. There was a band playing and also male and female vocalists. Some chap came out and started speaking in French, {I wonder if Al expected him to speak English?}. From the laughter he provoked, I assume he must have been a comedian.

We were given a menu and we all ordered a “parfait Monty” (after Field Marshall Montgomery). It turned out to be a combination of chocolate and vanilla ice cream. It didn’t nearly satisfy us, so we all ordered a “dame blanche” which turned out to be a dish like you get banana splits in back home with 3 scoops of vanilla ice cream and chocolate syrup. This was better than the “parfait Monty”. Next we all tried something called “chocolate”. This was a small metal container like a small square shaped vase filled with chocolate ice cream. This still left something to be desired so we all ordered another dame blanche’ and that satisfied us for the evening. Our bill for 6 of us was \$17.50, tidy little sum for just ice cream, don’t you think?

NOTE: There is a gap in Al’s narrative from December 3rd to December 26th. This is really unfortunate as The Battle of the Bulge was about to begin. Weather had a major impact on air support for the forward units. His news clipping scrapbook include the following:

His 20th mission on December 17, 1944, a massive attack across the Rhein with Giessen underlined – possibly Al’s group’s target.

His 21st mission on Dec. 18 against the rail marshalling yards near Mainz.

His 22nd mission on Dec. 26 against rail yards in Aldernach, west of Coblenz.

His 23rd mission was on Dec. 29 against supply systems supporting Field Marshall von Rundstedt’s forces in The Bulge.

Friday, Dec. 29, 1944

“They got us up this morning at 0145 for pre-briefing. Our target was to be a junction of roads and railroads which was in direct line with the German push.

We went to breakfast and then to the main briefing. All information on the mission wasn’t in yet so we had to sit around and wait in the briefing room. While we were waiting, the lead bombardiers and back-up men (including me) were called to a special meeting. Lt. Colonel Gill, our Air Exec had a few words he wanted to say to us. It turned out to be an ass chewing and was due to the poor bombing we had been doing. It didn’t last long but it was to the point.

We were deputy lead in the low squadron today, so we took off last. We formed without mishap but we did see a B-24 explode. This is getting to be a regular occurrence.

It was wide open in the target area so most of the run was visual and the actual bombing was also visual. The trip back was uneventful except when we got to the base. There was a ground fog and Jack couldn’t seem to see the runway and we must have gone around about 30 times before he finally set it down.

The pictures showed that all three squadrons got very good results. That should make the Colonel happy. That’s # 23.”

Friday, Jan. 5, 1945

“They had us up this morning at 0215 for a 0230 pre-briefing. Our target for today was marshalling yards at Hanau which is just east of Frankfurt.

We took off in the dark just as we had on Wednesday and started forming in the dark. After Wednesday, Janssen, our engineer, said he wouldn’t fly again if they formed in the dark because of all the accidents, but he was with us again and he was very nervous up there until daybreak.

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We had no trouble forming although some of the boys did. Our high squadron lost its leader and when we left the base, it was miles behind us. It caught up to us and it only had 8 ships in it instead of the 13 it was supposed to have.

We got to the I.P. and started our bomb run which was P.F.F. and just about 45 seconds before bombs away, the lead bombardier finally picked up the target. The mickey hadn't brought us in on course, so he put in a big correction to get on the target and just about leveled out before bombs away. The flak at the target was moderate and fairly accurate. We escaped unscathed and headed home.

The weather was very bad and after crossing the lines we dropped to 10,000 feet and then to 8000. Finally we were down to 800 feet and crossing the North Sea we were down to 600. We worried about gasoline because this had been a long mission. We made it, however, and landed after 9 hours and 30 minutes of flying."

Sunday, Jan. 7, 1945

"This is getting annoying. I was awakened this morning at 0245 for a 0300 pre-briefing. Our target was a bridge over the Rhine River at Cologne. They expected a P.F.F. run but hoped for a visual given it is a point target.

I was flying with a pilot named Boydsten and he seemed a pretty good pilot. Everything was going along fine until we were near the battle line. We were up about 26,000 feet and I noticed that the formation was drawing ahead of us. There was also quite a bit of vibration. The pilot and co-pilot started talking over the interphone and it seems that ice had formed in three of our carburetors. We were only indicating 130 mph when it should have been 160. They tried everything in the books to clear it up but to no avail. When we were about 40 minutes from the I.P. the pilot decided to turn back.

Suddenly the ship went into a very steep dive and I thought we had had it. I was really scared for about 30 seconds but then Boydsten righted the ship and everything was all right. We lost about 2000 feet, and those engines started purring like kittens. It was too late to catch our formation, so we just headed for home."

Wednesday, January 17, 1945

"Once again I was awakened for a mission, this time at 0310 for 0330 pre-briefing. Our target was to be the submarine pens and dry docks at Hamburg. Although far from an easy target after what they had planned for us yesterday, we considered ourselves lucky. Looks like I'm doomed to be the lead bombardier today because we are leading the low squadron.

Our course took us over the North Sea all the way to our I.P. It looked, while we were flying over the water, as though the run would be P.F.F. When we reached the I.P. however I could see the target area and I knew that I was to get my first visual run on a target.

We overran the I.P. and the squadron had to make a left turn to get back to what was to be our briefed run on the target. This took quite a bit of time, but I took control for my actual bomb run which lasted only about 4 ½ minutes long. I checked speed and course and looked up to check my bubbles. When I looked back in the sight, I couldn't see the target. Bombs from the squadron ahead of us had completely obscured it with smoke. I checked some external check points and it still looked all right, so I let go.



452nd Bomb Group aircraft "Tarry-A-Long" on its 23rd mission over Bordeaux France, 27 March 1944



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Pieces of History cont.

There was moderate but accurate flak for the last couple of minutes of the run and it was very difficult for me to have to sit up there with my head in the sight when I would have liked to have been wearing a complete flak suit and my helmet and been back from the nose a bit.

After bombs away, I got back and felt a lot better. We were in flak almost all the way to the Rally Point. The flak suppression aircraft were supposed to make a corridor clear on the way out to the coast but we either didn't fly it or it didn't exist because the flak started all over again. A piece shattered one of the small windows over the left nose gun and I was glad I had my goggles on because it splattered all over my face. Just before we reached the coast there was more flak. Our co-pilot who rode the tail reported that two of our ships were missing.

We got back to the base without further trouble and went to a critique.

The pictures of the bombing came in and my bombs appeared to be around the M.P.I. (main point of impact) but no rating can be put on them because they are right in the smoke. I sure hope they were in there.

After we got back from the critique, I found out that one of my friends had been killed by a piece of flak in the temple. His ship was riding #4 right behind us. He got rid of his bombs and while reaching for his flak helmet he was hit. That is the second occurrence like that. Last mission it was the whole crew that went down and they were boys we lived with in the same hut. They may be safe and P.W.'s in Germany but no news has been heard from them since they went down. That puts number 28 into the books. Only two more to go but they sure look big to me."

Transcriber's note: Al flew his last two missions on January 28 and January 29, 1945. The news clippings in his scrapbook relate that the 1000 plane mission on the 28th occurred after four days of inactivity due to bad weather and involved both B-17 Fortresses and B-24 Liberators covered by 250 P-51 Mustang fighters.



The view from the front and the Norden Bombsight



Serial Gunner and Bombardier wings as well as the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters along with Captain Brorstrom's US Army commission

Al left England on 3 March 1945 by surface ship and arrived in the US on 17 March 1945 having spent 8 months and 18 days in Europe. His military records indicate that he was promoted to Captain, Air Corps, Army of the United States, on 28 May, 1945, and discharged in July 1947.



A newspaper photograph (undated) of Al rigged out in hat, earphones, life vest, parachute and uniform states:

"Lieutenant Alfred V. Brorstrom...a bombardier with the Eighth Air Force, is celebrating a triple event in his fighting career. He has flown his 30,000th combat mile in a total of 240 combat hours, and has dropped a total of 150,000 pounds of bombs on Nazi installations."





2020 Volunteer and Staff Invitational Golf Tournament

The VOLSTAFF (Volunteers and Staff) Invitational Golf Tournament was held at the Patriots Point Links on 13 March. Sponsored by the USS Yorktown Foundation, the winning team of the ‘Captain’s Choice’ competition were (left to right) Rich Barnett, Mike Schaffer, Carl Herscher, and guest Tom O’Rourke. Scrappy and Allison Hunt, Foundation Executive Director, presented the trophies.



Magdelain		Wilson	
Flatley	76	Morgan	80
Baumgart		Shuler	
Dalton		Common	
Amos		Coates Long Drive	
Moore	78	Doak	78
Hugh Gordon		Fran Lundwall	
Clark			
Herscher	1st PLACE 73	Humbles CTR. II'S	
Barnett		Fowler	74
Schaffer		Slater	
O'Rourke			
Edmiston			
Simons	74		
Rountree			
Haun			



PATRIOTS POINT

★ VOLUNTEERS ★

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VOLSTAFF cont.



Kevin Dalton, Paul Baumgart, Bernie Magdelain and Jim Flatley



Chauncey Clark, Wes Moore, Steve Amos and Hugh Gordon



Rich Barnett, Carl Herscher and Mike Schaffer



Dave Shuler, Wayne Wilson, John Common and Dick Morgan



Sarah Edmiston, Claude Rountree, Tom Simons and Brian Haun



Wil Doak, Fran Lundwall and Dan Coates



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Frank Humbles, Mike Fowler and Bill Slater



Frank Humbles receives the Closest to the Pin award



John Goodwin, Allison Hunt and Thom Ford



Dan Coates receives the Longest Drive award



Thom Ford, Allison Hunt, Scrappy and Bernie Magdelain



2020 Volunteer Enrichment Seminar Program Underway

One very special thing about Patriots Point volunteers is that you don't have to look very far to encounter individuals with an amazingly wide array of experiences and the ability to tell a good story.

When the 2020 Seminar Program was announced in December, we put out a call for interested members of the volunteer community to come forward and lead one of the 12 educational sessions over the course of the year. And come forward they have! As noted in the last Scuttlebutt, Dave Shuler and Fred Sieber kicked off the program. Stoney Bates and Robert Newman expressed interest right away and were lined up as presenters in January and February. Bill Dutour was originally scheduled for March, but due to the lounge remodeling and the Covid-19 outbreak has been bumped into April. Several others have expressed interest, suggested great topics and have been scheduled in the months ahead. The program is rolling, thanks to the generous contribution of time and effort by Patriots Point volunteers.

Upcoming topics:

- ★ **Bill Dutour** will present “PIRACY: How it's affected my 27 years in the Merchant Marine”
- ★ **Randy Garrison** will present: “Tanks in the Wire”, The battle of Lang Vei, February 6 – 7, 1968”
- ★ **Woody Caine** will present: “A Tribute to a Member of the Greatest Generation: Alfred Brorstrom, Bombardier, Captain, US Army Air Corps”

We have several other topics and presenters lining up for the summer months, and we are continuing to seek out members of our volunteer community who want to share their expertise, experience and compelling stories with the rest of us. Please reach out to Paul Baumgart by e-mail to volunteeradmin@patriotspoint.org if you are interested in taking part in the 2020 line-up of enrichment seminars.



Stoney Bates kicked off the 2020 seminar series with a gripping account about the Japanese invasion of Wake Island, entitled “The Alamo of the Pacific”. His talk told the story of the valiant effort of a small detachment of Marines under the command of Major James Devereux to hold off the Imperial Japanese Navy, and landing forces in those dark days following the attack on Pearl Harbor.



Volunteer Seminar Program cont.



Robert Newman's discussion about "The History and Operation of Naval Propulsion" was a great education for many of us as he led a discussion tracing 245 years of naval history and the pathway from harnessing the wind all the way through to generating steam in the core of a nuclear reactor. Robert led a large group of interested volunteers after his one hour talk on a close-up look at the engine and fire room spaces that make up Tour 2.

Ambassador Program

The Marketing and Sales Department is revitalizing the Patriots Point Ambassadors program (formerly Concierge), wherein volunteers regularly visit area hotels, ensuring their reception staffs are fully informed of the museum's events and offering, and special discounts. Staff members Sis Reda and Tracy Snyder will assist in execution of this outstanding and highly sales-producing effort. Our volunteer-ambassadors are Renata Sierzega, Geoff and Mary Ellen Bertkau, Dave Sowers, Jack Leber, Barbara Whitnack and Susan Kaufman.



Renata Sierzega, Geoff and Mary Ellen Bertkau, Dave Sowers, Micheal Cashman (Docent) Jack Leber, Barbara Whitnack, Susan Kaufman and Sis Reda (Marketing).

Fran Lundwall, Dan Coates and Will Doak

Brian Haun and Claude Rountree

Tom Simons and Sarah Edmiston





It Happened On This Date



April 1970 – Vietnam Chronicle: President Richard Nixon sends American troops into Cambodia. Civil war started in that country between Communist and Non-Communist forces. President Nixon decided to destroy communist bases using American troops. Congress and others thought he overstepped his authority.

June 1944 – USS Laffey (DD 724) Chronicle: Upon arriving in Plymouth, England on May 27th, Laffey immediately prepared for the invasion of France. On 3 June, she headed for the Normandy beaches escorting tugs, landing craft, and two Dutch gunboats. The group arrived in the assault area, off Utah beach, Baie de la Seine, France, at dawn on D-Day, 6 June 1944. On 6–7 June, Laffey screened to seaward, and on 8–9 June, she successfully bombarded gun emplacements. Leaving the screen temporarily, Laffey raced to Plymouth to replenish and returned to the coast of Normandy the next day. On 12 June, pursuing enemy E-boats that had torpedoed the destroyer Nelson, Laffey broke up their tight formation, preventing further attacks.



June 1959 – USS Clamagore (SS-343) Chronicle: On 29 June 1959, the Clamagore arrived at Charleston, SC, her new home port, and after a period of coastwise operations, sailed 5 April 1960 to join the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean for a tour of duty which continued until July, when the submarine returned to Charleston. For the remainder of 1960 Clamagore operated off the east coast.



June 1970 – USS Yorktown (CVS-10) Chronicle: During the first half of 1970, the USS Yorktown operated out of Norfolk, VA and began preparations for inactivation. On 27 June 1970, Yorktown was decommissioned at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was berthed with the Philadelphia Group, Atlantic Reserve Fleet. She remained there almost three years before her name was struck from the Navy List on 1 June 1973. During 1974, the Navy Department approved the donation of Yorktown to the Patriot's Point Development Authority, Charleston, South Carolina. She was towed from Bayonne, New Jersey, to Charleston in June 1975. She was formally dedicated as a memorial on the 200th anniversary of the Navy, 13 October 1975.



Volunteer Lounge Rehabilitation

Total overhaul of the Volunteer Lounge is well underway, thanks to the support of the Executive Director Larry Murray, Operations Director Mike Hastings and Maintenance Manager David Coates.

The project kicked off with the tough steel work performed by Malcolm Jenkins and Fred Suehl, cutting out and closing off large ducts, removing the large hatch and combing, and leveling the deck.

The next stages underway are cleaning, painting and new carpet. The end result will be not only the Volunteer Lounge but also a potential small meeting and symposium support space.



Mike Hastings



David Coates



Malcolm Jenkins



Fred Suehl



First Quarter Volunteer Service Awards

Recognizing Five Years



Woody Caine
A volunteer since January 2015 and the Volunteer of the Year in 2019.



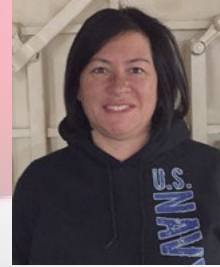
Mike Schaffer
A volunteer since February 2015



Bill Mallon
A volunteer since February 2015



Martin Diamond
A volunteer since March 2015



Barb Amidon
A volunteer since March 2015



Jerry Bateman
A volunteer since March 2015

Recognizing Ten Years



Phil Osborn
A volunteer since 2009



Recognizing Twenty-Five Years

Dave Shuler

A Volunteer since February 1995





USS YORKTOWN FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES NEW VOLUNTEER FUND PROGRAM

Allison Hunt & Thom Ford

The USS Yorktown Foundation announces a new Volunteer Fund program, created by a team of Patriots Point volunteers. This restricted fund is dedicated to projects identified and designated by our Volunteer team, and is funded by tax deductible donations to the Foundation earmarked for the Volunteer Fund. The fund has already raised over \$3500 for projects at the Museum.

Volunteer Fund Mission Statement:

The Volunteer Fund supports the USS Yorktown Foundation by resourcing volunteer selected projects designed to enhance the visitor experience and fulfill the vision to honor the past and inspire future generations.

The Volunteer Fund is managed by the Volunteer Fund Steering Committee (VFSC), with Paul Watters at the helm. The other members of the VFSC are Rich Mady, Dave Sowers, Chris Barron, Steve Amos, Lisa Isaacson, and Kent Hutchinson, Committee liaison to, and member of, the Foundation Board. Thom Ford and Allison Hunt provide administrative support.



The Steering Committee members represent you in choosing and supporting worthy projects and activities at Patriots Point and in the community. Through Thom, they are standing by to take your suggestions and proposals!

The first Volunteer Fund project is already underway! Supplies for the refurbishment work in the Vietnam Experience Exhibit by Low Country Leathernecks and Patriots Point volunteer working parties are being purchased through the Volunteer Fund. The working party is supported by Robert Simmons and his staff, and led by Dave Sowers. His workforce thus far has consisted of volunteers Robert Newman, Bill Casassa and Stoney Bates, and Low Country Leatherneck Steve Driscoll, who have re-stained the boardwalks.

A second project, improvements in the Sick Call area in the medical spaces, has been adopted by the VFSC. This project will make this area more historically accurate and will create signage to describe “Sick Call” and the “Mission of the Medical Department”. Leading the effort is volunteer ‘Doc’ Barron. The Committee is also monitoring progress in refurbishment of the Primary Flight Control (PriFly) space,



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Foundation cont.

awaiting an opportunity to contribute.

If you have any suggestions or recommendations for Volunteer Fund projects, email Thom Ford at thford@patriotspoint.org. If you would like to donate to the Volunteer Fund, you can go online to ussyorktownfoundation.org, click on the Donate button, and under “Fund Choices” select “Volunteer Fund- Special Projects in Honor of Patriots Point Volunteers”. You can also mail a check to USS Yorktown Foundation, 40 Patriots Point Rd., Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464. Please note Volunteer Fund on your check. Your gift is tax-deductible and greatly appreciated! Thank you for all you do for Patriots Point!

The opportunity is also there to make a legacy donation through estate beneficiary designation. If you do so, please let Allison Hunt know at allisonhunt@ussyorktownfoundation.org so that we might acknowledge your generous support in the Volunteers’ Scuttlebutt newsletter.

Donors to the Volunteer Fund to date:

Legacy Donors (Estate Beneficiary)

Thom Ford

Eagle Donors (\$500 or more)

Rich and Janet Mady

Kent and Joan Hutchinson

Mike Sudzina

Sandy and Audrey Greene Family, *in honor of MOH Recipient Leo and Gaylee Thorsness*

Donors

Jim and Nancy Flatley
Chauncey Clark
Larry and Chris Barron
Frank Forrest Humbles
Stephen M. Amos
Dick Morgan
Monty Montillo
Carl Herscher
Bernie Magdelain
Paul Watters

Thom Ford
Allison Hunt
Jen Barbot
Thomas Valentukonis,
*in honor of grandchildren
Kenneth and Megan Geier*
Thomas Simons
Sarah Edmiston
Lisa Isaacson
John Goodwin

Richard Barnett
Paul Baumgart
Dr. and Mrs. John Common
Michael and Barbara Fowler
Thomas and Barbara White
and grandson Michael
Claude Rountree
Wesley Moore
Walter and Frances Lundwall
Wayne Wilson

Wilson Doak
Michael Schaffer
Dave Shuler
Bill Slater
Joseph Burgess
Dan Coates
Hugh Gordon



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.





The Ten Fleet Carriers that Led the Way: Dec 1941 – July 1943

Paul Baumgart

Editor's Note: I have had the opportunity to listen to many of the volunteers introducing the Yorktown to our visitors, and have listened to many stories and telling of her proud history. I found that I was hearing different accounts about the state of the fleet when the Fighting Lady arrived on Station 24 July 1943. I decided to do a bit of research and give us all a common understanding of the dire situation the United States Navy was in, some twenty months after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The year 1942 is frequently described as the darkest year of World War II for the United States. When we introduce the **USS Yorktown (CV-10)** to our Patriots Point visitors, many of us note that it and her sister ship the **USS Essex (CV-9)** were the first two of 24 Essex Class carriers to be built over the course of the war. By V-J day, the United States Navy had amassed a formidable armada of Fleet Carriers, Light Carriers and Escort Carriers bringing thousands of airplanes to the front lines for both naval engagements as well as providing combat air support for our Marines and Soldiers working their way across the Pacific taking back the territory lost early in the war.

By the time the Essex arrived on station in May 1943 with the Yorktown close behind, arriving in July, only one of the first eight US Fleet carriers was left in the Pacific Fleet to greet these first prototype vessels of the class that would change the course of Naval war in the Pacific. The **USS Saratoga (CV-3)** had been battered several times and repeatedly returned to action during those long months following the attack on Pearl Harbor right through to the summer of 1943.



USS Saratoga (CV-3) 1943

It is instructive to consider the fate of the other seven Fleet Carriers that preceded the arrival of the Essex Class ships, and reflect on the dire situation Admiral Nimitz and Admiral Halsey were facing in 1943 when the USS Yorktown sailed into Pearl Harbor on July 24th.



USS Langley (CV-1) Scuttled off Java coast after being damaged by Japanese air attack - 1942

Let's consider them in order. The ancient **USS Langley (CV-1)** was commissioned in its configuration as a fleet carrier in April 1937. It was in port in the Philippines when war broke out. The vessel was dispatched to Australia to work with elements of the Australian navy to try and secure the country from Naval attack. The ship was extensively damaged by Japanese bombs off of Java, Indonesia on 27 Feb 1942, and scuttled by torpedoes from an American destroyer. Most of the crew were evacuated safely. **LOST IN ACTION.**

The **USS Lexington (CV-2)** the sister ship to the USS Saratoga followed the Langley to a watery grave less than 3 months later sinking at the Battle of the Coral Sea after

Fleet Carriers cont.



USS Lexington (CV-2) – Was lost at the Battle of the Coral Sea – 1942

operating out of Pearl. WW II SURVIVOR

Every one of us at Patriot Point is familiar with the fate of the **USS Yorktown (CV-5)**. Commissioned in 1937 she played an important role in those first devastating months of the war. She was in the Atlantic on December 7, 1941, but was rapidly deployed to the Pacific, reaching station by late January 1942. She saw extensive action in the early engagements with the Japanese, culminating in her role at Midway. There she suffered significant damage from three Japanese “Val” dive bombers late in the battle. She underwent repairs and was preparing to be towed back to Pearl Harbor, despite a significant list, when she was torpedoed by Japanese submarine I-168. She sunk in the early morning hours of 7 June 1942. **LOST IN ACTION.**



USS Yorktown CV-5 hit by Japanese aerial torpedo, June 1942

Another ship that made it through the war was the **USS Enterprise (CV-6)**. She was struck by bombs with extensive damage in two separate engagements, and patched up and returned to action as quickly as possible. In May of 1943 with the Essex arriving and the Yorktown on its way, Enterprise sailed for the States for extensive repair and overhaul, arriving Puget Sound on July 20th just as the Yorktown was closing in on Pearl Harbor. So for the month of June 1943, 77 years ago, just two fleet carriers, the Saratoga and the Essex remained in action in the Pacific theater. **WW II SURVIVOR**



Wasp on fire shortly after being torpedoed

The **USS Wasp (CV-7)** was commissioned in April 1940, and saw just 10 months of action after the Pearl Harbor attack before she was lost in the Naval battles raging in the Solomon Islands while the Marines held that strategically important piece of ground. On 15 September 1942, approximately 350 miles SE of Guadalcanal, Wasp was struck by several torpedoes fired from a B1 type Japanese submarine. There were casualties, however, 1,946 crewmembers were evacuated and survived. **LOST IN ACTION.**

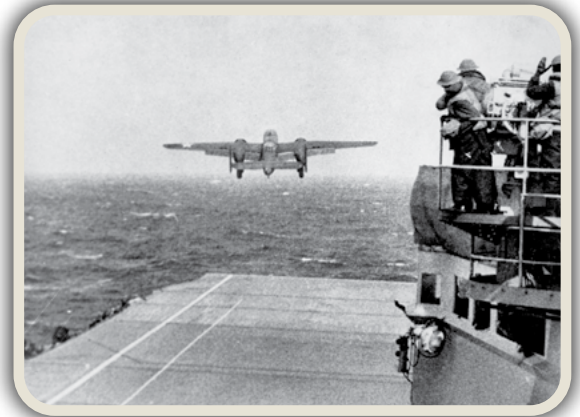
The last of the first ten fleet carriers to be considered is the **USS Hornet (CV-8)**, famous for its role in one of the most important and daring air raids of the war, the Doolittle mission made famous by



Fleet Carriers cont.

the book “30 Seconds Over Tokyo”. Our visitors can get a close up look at an airplane configured as one of the planes launched from the deck of the Hornet on April 18th, 1942. She went on to fight at the Battle of Midway, participated in the Solomon Campaign and came to her demise at the Battle of Santa Cruz, where she was bombed and torpedoed by Japanese warplanes. She sunk 27 October 1942, just one year and seven days from the date of her commissioning. Miraculously, once again 2,200 men survived the sinking while 140 went down with the ship. **LOST IN ACTION.**

By the time the USS Yorktown, our Fighting Lady, reached Pearl Harbor in July 1943, the situation was desperate as can be clearly seen by considering these significant losses. One could go through similar lists of destroyers, cruisers and other types of ships that added to the devastating losses we saw in 1942 and early 1943. But the arrival of the Essex and the Yorktown signaled the turning of the tide. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, this was not the end, or even the beginning of the end, but most certainly could be considered as the *end of the beginning.*



A B-25 taking off from USS Hornet for the Doolittle raid on Tokyo

What to see on board:

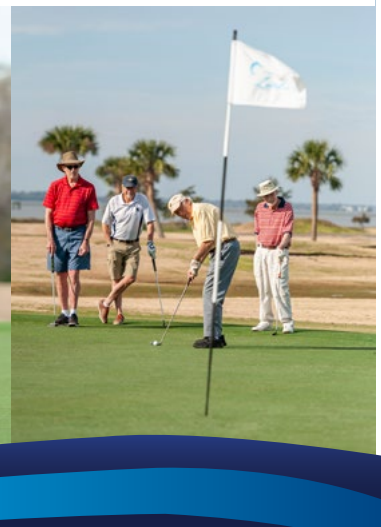
- The USS Yorktown (CV-5) and the Battle of Midway are featured in an exhibit in Hanger Bay 1.
- The “Arlington of Carrier Aviation” exhibit adjacent to the Battle of Midway exhibit details and memorializes the loss of life on all of the carriers, including the first ten highlighted in this article. Men of the ship’s company and aircrews are remembered.
- The B-25 Mitchell bomber and accompanying Doolittle Raiders exhibit in Hanger Bay 3 chronicles the mission of the USS Hornet and this important moment in history.
- The USS Essex (CV-9) is featured in the first stop on the way to the flight deck. The room contains amazing photographs and records the history of the first of the class.
- Tour 4 offers a close up look at the history of Light Carriers (CVL) and Escort Carriers (CVE) as well as some other famous Essex Class ships, Cruisers and Battleships.

Bill Slater

Wil Doak and Fran Lundwall

Dick Morgan

Dave Shuler putting





National Vietnam War Veterans Day Observance

March 29, 2020

Lasting from 1955 to 1975, the Vietnam war engulfed the Southeast Asian country of Vietnam as well as its neighboring countries, Cambodia and Laos. The protracted conflict resulted in several million deaths, most of whom were Vietnamese civilians.

The United States began its military involvement in an effort to back the South Vietnamese government’s effort to quell an aggressive communist onslaught, which at the height of the Cold War was feared to promote the spread of communist ideology and influence worldwide. During the war, about 500,000 US troops were dispatched to the region and more than 58,000 died, and many more were injured. Our veterans who served in that terrible conflict often returned home to anything but a hero’s welcome.

The war ended in 1975 with the fall of Saigon and the victory of North Vietnam.



In November 2017, President Donald Trump marked Veteran’s Day and the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War by meeting with US Veterans in Vietnam. The annual holiday celebrating and honoring our Vietnam Veterans was established on March 29th thanks to a measure signed into law by the President, known as the “Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017”. Americans are urged to display the US Flag in honor of our Vietnam veterans and to remember and celebrate those who served.

The roots of the holiday stem back to Memorial Day, May 25, 2012, when President Barack Obama issued a proclamation that marked the start of a 13 year-long celebration

honoring Vietnam veterans extending until Veterans Day 2025.

In the Presidential Proclamation, President Obama wrote:

“As a grateful Nation, we honor more than 58,000 patriots—their names etched in black granite—who sacrificed all they had and all they would ever know. We draw inspiration from the heroes who suffered unspeakably as prisoners of war, yet who returned home with their heads held high. We pledge to keep faith with those who were wounded and still carry the scars, seen and unseen. With more than 1,600 of our service members still among the missing, we pledge as a Nation to do everything in our power to bring these patriots home. In the reflection of The Wall, we see the military family members and veterans who carry a pain that may never fade. May they find peace in knowing their loved ones endure, not only in medals and memories, but in the hearts of all Americans, who are forever grateful for their service, valor, and sacrifice.”



Vietnam Veterans Day cont.

Among the 144 volunteers at Patriots Point, more than 25 of our compatriots served in that conflict and many others served in various support roles outside of the country. Our Vietnam Experience exhibit recognizes and honors our Vietnam Veterans every day of the year, and we take great pride in honoring all of our volunteers who served the cause of freedom over the course of that war.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 crisis that has forced the closure of Patriots Point for an indefinite period of time, resulted in the cancellation of a planned observance of the holiday on March 29th. But as fellow volunteers we salute and honor our team members for whom this holiday has been dedicated.



A Message To All Vietnam War Veterans (Revised)

In the 1960s, our country issued a call-to-arms as it had many times since 1775. Its young men and women had never failed to heed that call. Since Bunker Hill, circumstances occurred to test our nation's young in the art of war-fighting as an obligation of duty to their country. From the War of Revolution through the war in Korea, America's best stepped forward almost in unison.

During the war in Vietnam, you were the ones who answered that call. In spite of others in our bifurcated nation, who fled the confines of the United States, dodged the draft, or feigned any number of mental and/or physical maladies to avoid military service, you answered that call—you responded. In spite of friends, relatives, and even





Message to Vietnam Veterans cont.

parents pleading with you to avoid military service—you responded. Regardless of the pardoned deserters and draft dodgers, and regardless of the well-connected members of our society receiving “special” treatment and exceptional consideration, you either accepted your draft notice, or you volunteered—you responded. In that vein, you were no different from your fathers and grandfathers who served in World War II and the Korean War. You trained to become a member of America’s elite military forces deploying to the war in Vietnam. You made friends, shared hardships, had good times, fun times, and some bad times and developed a manifest comradery, often still lingering. Indeed, you formed a brotherhood, easily recognized by veterans of those earlier wars and those younger veterans of our most recent wars, some still being prosecuted. Most all of you put your life on hold while you served your country in time of war, and you completed your tour of duty with honor.

After your honorable service, you returned home to a nation largely divided. Many of you were asked to doff your uniform and wear civvies for your trip home within the United States of America. There were no parades; no cheering crowds greeted your arrival through airports, or other ports of entry. Some of you had difficulty adjusting to being “home” again, while others more readily did adjust. Some hid their service time and could only confess with other veterans, often through military service organizations who, at first, sadly failed the Vietnam Veteran community. You were treated differently than other war veterans, creating visible and invisible scars just being a Vietnam War Veteran.

Newscaster Tom Brokaw, on assignment to cover a Normandy D-Day ceremony, became so enamored with the stories of those who landed in France to begin the liberation of Europe he completed a book and coined the phrase “Americas Greatest Generation.” It was published in 1998. His description of that generation was on target. However, those men and a few women that marched to the sound of the gun did so with a supportive nation, a supportive Congress, indeed a national support for the men and women of the “Greatest Generation.” It was contagiously affecting an entire American population. And, upon their return, the supportive “welcoming home” was a deafening and defining loud and clear message. From every fiber of this great nation came a well-deserved “thank you” for what they had accomplished.

By contrast, when you came home from Vietnam, you reentered an indifferent nation; sometimes it became disrespectful, even hostile. The simmering rejection of the war-fighting evolved into the rejection of the war-fighter. I was fortunate to have returned from Vietnam surrounded by fellow veterans still on active duty. I remained in the cocoon of military life, whereas, most of those I served with in the war zone, immediately reentered civilian life a different person—in a seemingly different country.

As the “fog of war” has lifted, history reveals that the youth of America who responded to the nation’s call during the war in Vietnam, are, in every respect, by any measure, cut from the same cloth as the World War II and Korean War veterans; indeed, you lay claim as equals to Tom Brokaw’s identified “Greatest Generation.” You accomplished this feat while facing rejection for entering the armed forces, chastised for fighting a war our Congress had first supported, and then rejected, and faced many other obstacles just for being a Vietnam War Veteran. That Congress, supported by many citizens of this nation, cut support for that war in Vietnam—and cut the pride of those who fought it.

Yet, time has proven Vietnam veterans to be as noble in thought, word, and deed, as all American war veterans ensue, and deserve equal legacy to the “Greatest Generation.” Your obstacles were far greater than any one of them could have ever imagined.

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Message to Vietnam Veterans cont.

Times have changed. A Presidential Proclamation reads, in part:

“... Our veterans answered our country’s call and served with honor, and on March 29, 1973, the last of our troops left Vietnam. Yet, in one of the war’s most profound tragedies, many of these men and women came home to be shunned or neglected -- to face treatment unbecoming their courage and a welcome unworthy of their example. We must never let this happen again. . . .”

Three years ago, the President made Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Day of 29 March, a national holiday.

Stand tall. You are also Americas Greatest Generation. Welcome Home Vietnam War Veterans!

Ralph Stoney Bates

Major USMC Retired

A Vietnam War Veteran





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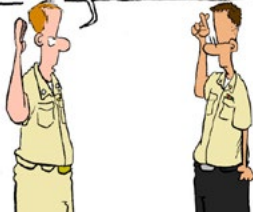
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By JEFF BACON
<http://www.broadside.net/>

RAISE YOUR RIGHT HAND, UNCROSS YOUR FINGERS, AND REPEAT AFTER ME.



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WHY THEY LOCK THE SUGGESTION BOX

SUGGESTIONS



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WHAT REALLY HAPPENS ON THE SIGNAL BRIDGE



...AND...THE HORSE...YOU...RODE...IN...ON...BREAK.

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DID YOU KNOW

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



<https://patriotspoint.org/YouTube>

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




Great way to stay informed!



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Patrol

the USS YORKTOWN

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Volunteers take the Camping Department's 'Shadows of the Ship' tour. The picture is shot in DC Central.



Hugh Gordon, Bill Watkinson, Rich Mady, Jim Arcure



Allison Hunt and Jim Flatley



Bill Watkinson enjoying time with young visitors



Robert Haller sharing with our visitors the story of the USS LAFFEY



Fran Lundwall & Dan Coates



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