



Where History Comes Alive

## BATTLESHIP NORTH CAROLINA

# Scuttlebutt

April 2009

### Happy Birthday BB-55!

The Battleship turns 68 this year. She was commissioned into the U.S. Navy on April 9, 1941, at the New York (Brooklyn) Navy Yard. [It was rescheduled from April 11th, which was Good Friday in 1941.] The ship's company was photographed during the ceremony (above).

Ensign Clay Ross, staying at Hotel St. George in Brooklyn, wrote home, "On Wednesday morning at 11:30 AM Eastern Standard Time our ship is going to be put in Commission. It will be a big event and will be broadcast all over the world. We expect at least 1,000 visitors that day." The New York Journal and

American confirmed Ross' letter. It announced on April 7 that "invitations went forward today to 1,000 guests for the commissioning of the 35,000-ton battleship North Carolina at the Brooklyn Navy Yard on Wednesday morning. Due to fears of sabotage, virtually the entire list of guests has been limited to Navy officers and their families." Another article explained "the Yard virtually will be swarming with special police, marine detachments and government officials to block any attempt at sabotage as the program gets underway at 11:30 a.m." The concern over sabotage was echoed in other

papers.

The Daily Press called the Mightiest Battleship a "solid, gleaming symbol of America's awakening from a sleepy naval holiday of 18 years." The New York World-Telegram proclaimed that "she will have been completed in record time—nearly half a year ahead of schedule."



*"The North Carolina is one of a new line of ships that will give the United States unchallenged supremacy on the high seas....We will have sea power strong enough to be a determining influence on every sea in the world."*

Secretary of the Navy  
Frank Knox, April 9, 1941

### We want YOU to help us kick off the Annual Battleship Birthday MWR

In celebration of the ship's 68th birthday, we're asking you to help us launch an annual Battleship Birthday MWR fund. In the Navy and the Marine Corps, MWR stands for Morale, Welfare and Recreation. In our case, it is Museum Works Resource. This fund will be a line item in the Friends of the Battleship budget.

The Friends, a non-profit organization, funds Museum Department projects: exhibits, interpretation, educational programs, artifact acquisition, and restoration projects.

Just as you give family and friends gifts on their birthday, we are proposing an annual

gift to our National Historic Landmark and one of the most decorated American Battleships of World War II.

We are sending this email to hundreds of interested people like YOU. If 500 of us give \$10 each, then the Museum Department will have \$5,000 for new exhibit signs or some other worthwhile cause! And even in hard times, \$10 is very manageable.

It's also tax deductible. Please make checks payable to Friends of the Battleship AND be sure to write Battleship Birthday Fund in the memo line. Send to Battleship Birthday, PO Box 480, Wilmington, NC 28402.



Special birthday cake for  
the battleship, 1944.

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Battleship

### How many BB-55 crew members are there?

More than 7,000 men served on the ship between 1941 and 1947. In the mid-1960s some of the crew members formed a Battleship Association. Their annual reunion will be held on the Ship from April 30th-May 2nd. Crew member names may be found on the Battleship's website. There is also a printed list inside the main deck but it is not the most current.

### Who Owns the Battleship?

The U.S. Navy transferred the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA to the State of North Carolina in 1961, but the Navy retains proprietary interest in the ship in perpetuity, thus establishing the Battleship as a U.S. Navy heritage asset. Among other provisions of the contract, it requires the State of North Carolina to maintain the Battleship in a proper material (conserved) and safe condition for visitors (exhibited). To that end, the Battleship is inspected annually by the U.S. Navy for compliance. The Battleship is part of the state's Department of Cultural Resources.

### Who Governs the Battleship?

The Battleship is governed by an 18-member Commission

appointed by the governor. The commission sets our policy, approves the annual budget, and determines short and long range goals.

### What about the items inside the Battleship?

Remaining within the ship upon her transfer to the State of North Carolina was an extensive array of original equipment, materiel, documents, etc. and these objects are also considered U.S. Navy heritage assets and are treated as loans. Also, by provision of the contract, the Battleship Commission shall not dispose of the vessel or any part of it without the permission of the Navy through its agent, the Naval Sea Systems Command. All other items in the Battleship's collections that have been or continue to be donated

or purchased belong to the Battleship Commission.

### Who Financially Supports the Battleship?

Our guests! The Battleship does not receive any state or federal tax dollars or funding. We rely upon ticket and gift shop sales, space rentals, events, donations and sponsors for operating expenses.

### How long has the Battleship been in Wilmington?

"Save our Ship" campaign brought the Battleship to Wilmington in October 1961.

### Are there Alligators?

Yes, this area is the farthest north of their territory. The largest one is referred to as "Charlie." They are wild animals...not friendly pets!

## Upcoming Events

**Battleship Easter Egg Hunt Friday April 10th.** Program times: 9:30 am, 11:30 am, 2:00 pm

Join us for a fun-filled Easter Egg Hunt in our Battleship Park. Children from ages 2-9 will find fun, eggs, candy, and games! This wonderful holiday activity for children is only \$5.00 per child. Pre-registration is required: 910-251-5797.

**Battleship Alive! Saturday, 8:00am-5:00pm, May 2nd**

Watch and interact with World War II living history interpreters as they bring the Ship to life. Included with regular admission. The USS NORTH CAROLINA BATTLESHIP Crew Association will also be holding their reunion

this weekend. For information: 910-251-5797 Ext. 2046.

**Fabulous Fantail Film Festival 8:30pm**

Enjoy movies on the fantail (back deck) of the ship just like her WWII crew. Tickets are \$1. Fresh popcorn & sodas are on sale. For information: 910-251-5797 Ext. 2049.

May 1<sup>st</sup>: Destry Rides Again, 1939.

May 8<sup>th</sup>: The Clock, 1945.

May 15<sup>th</sup>: They Were Expendable, 1945.

May 22<sup>nd</sup>: Father Goose, 1964.

**BB&T Blue Skies and Golden Sands, North Carolina Symphony in the Park Saturday, 7:30pm, May 23rd**

More than two dozen artists share the stage with the North Carolina Symphony in a celebration of the coastal Carolinas.

The all-star cast includes Legends of Beach, a band comprised of five former Embers members. Concert is FREE. Limited parking at the Battleship and water taxi shuttle from downtown available for a fee. Call 910-251-5797 Ext. 2024.

**44<sup>th</sup> Annual Memorial Day Observance**

**Monday, May 25th, 5:45 PM**

Remember those who gave their lives in service by honoring veterans at our traditional Memorial Day Observance featuring a military guest speaker, an all-service Color Guard, a 21-gun salute by a Marine Corps Honor Guard, a military band, Taps, and a memorial wreath cast onto the waters. FREE. The ceremony is held on the fantail of the Battleship. For information: 910-251-5797 Ext. 2050.



BB-55 Crew Portrait, Summer 1941

## Friendly Fire: April 6, 1945

The Battleship NORTH CAROLINA along with three large aircraft carriers, two light carriers, three battleships, four light cruisers and 12 destroyers were fighting off the coast of Okinawa on April 6, 1945. During the day an estimated 182 Japanese kamikazes in 22 groups attacked the allied ships. The Battleship shot down three of the kamikazes.

At 1304 an allied ship fired at a low flying kamikaze and struck the Battleship by accident. A 5-inch/38 caliber projectile hit the base of the port side 5-inch battery director (Sky 2), located just above the signal bridge. 44 men were wounded and three were killed.: Brenn, Watson and Karam.

Harold Smith, Fire Controlman 1/c, recalls that 40mm open directors were installed just below Sky 2 and Sky 3 in order to put a 5-inch mount

with each director to increase the speed of changing direction to combat the kamikazes. Brenn and Watson were assigned to the port side Sky 2 director. Smith was opposite, on the Sky 3 director. Brenn and Watson had been stationed in the Secondary Battery Plotting Room three levels below the Main Deck. They had recently transferred to this new position in order to be outside where they could see the action.

### Crew Memories

I had just started at the Combat Information Center and gone out on the Signal Bridge. LCDR Kurin, the division officer, asked me to stay. I was a surface plotter and I stayed because he ordered me to. We had many casualties that morning. Most everybody on the Signal Bridge got hit. My buddy walked out right in front of me and I was a step behind him. He got out before he was pulled

back. He was seriously wounded. You often wonder but never mention what would have happened otherwise. *Everett Beaver, Radarman 2/c*

Three men in my division got killed today and I knew them all well. It kind of gives you a funny feeling. It seems as if tomorrow I will wake up and find it all a dream. I was on the Signal Bridge when it all happened. A five-inch shell hit Sky II by the base. It was fired by one of our destroyers. I could hear the shrapnel hit against the steel on the side of me. I hope I never see a day like today again.

*Jerry Kass, Fire Controlman 3/c, as noted in his diary*

### Killed In Action April 6, 1945

Edward Emil Brenn,  
Chief Fire Controlman

John Malcolm Watson,  
Fire Controlman 1/c

Carl Elmer Karam Jr.,  
Seaman 1/c



Captain Colclough awards Harold Smith a purple heart for wounds received in action during an enemy air attack on April 6, 1945.



Watson, left, and Brenn, right, on liberty. Both lost their lives in the friendly fire.



Damage to the 5-inch director (circled in red). The 40mm directors were just below (red arrow), aft of the searchlight.



## Thank YOU Friends Members!

Last month we thanked our volunteers. This month we would like to thank the members of our "Friends."

### **Admirals:**

Bob Bird/Independent Insurance Agents of North Carolina

Chuck Smith/Rhino Demolition and Environmental Services Corp.

Macys East

### **Commodore:**

Margaret De St. Aubin/Wren Foundation Inc.

William E. Oakley

### **Captains:**

Gordon R. Booth

In Memory of James F. Lobbach, Jr., USAF (Ret.)

Robert Ruffner/Clancy and Theys Construction

Harold Weinstein

### **Commanders:**

Dr. and Mrs. R.D. Almkuist

John Arnold

Norwood E. Bryan, Jr.

William Collinson

Joseph Corbin

Tom and Mimi Cunningham

George Currie

James W. Garey

Estelle Hamby

Sion & Helen Harrington

Egbert M. Herring, III

Leslie G. Hollenbeck

K. Corey Keeble/Royal Ontario Museum

James C. Lorentzen

Mrs. John L. McCain

Richard D. Moore

Bruce Patterson

Charles and Sue Paty

Charles D. and Judy Pierce

Sallie Bett Severa

James Weber

Jay Weitzel

Sidney Welvang

John Whitley

### **Lieutenant Commander:**

Robert Abbotts

Darrell Adams

Thomas Van Arsdale

Brad Babson

Carlisle A. Bateman

Leo Bednarczyk

David Bone

Sally and Don Brauer

Mark and Lisa Buff

Robert and Ronda Clark

Christina Davenport

Robert & Susan Dixon

Albert R. Dunn

Capt. Thomas W. Durant, USN

(Ret) & Janet Durant

William W. Edwards

Gene Gallagher

Ralph Harwood

Becky Hill

Capt. Wilbur D. Jones, USNR

(Ret)

Barry H. Kilfoil

Charles Love

Donnie Lovette

Teresa Marra

Willie E. McGee, Jr.

Jay and Iris Meade

Jimmie W. Mungle

Clara Monroe

Wallace C. Murchison

Jim Ramentol

Marcy Ritche

Rodney and Belinda Robinson

Leo Sienkiewicz/NC Chapter

#1, PHSA

Philip Simon

Larry C. Steffee

Shannon Tittle

Mildred Willenbrock

Thomas H. Wright III

### **Lieutenant:**

Leo Bostwick

Fred E Donaghy, Jr.

Eric Eschert

Frank & Ann Glossl

Robert and Sheila Goolsby

Chuck and Sandra Gore

Fred J. Hall, Jr.

Tom and Karin Hamilton

Reginald L. Harris

Saunders Jones

John R. Jordan

Jimmy and Bonta Kee

Robert S. Ketchum

Tommy Marshall

John and Karon Matthews

Bobby Melvin

Jason Z. Miller

David and Carol Norris

Billy Patterson

Ashmead P Pipkin

J. Fred Rippy

Don and Yvette Slawter

Edwin Southern

Samuel O. Southern

Andrew Stratton

Wilmer Taylor

Alan Tapscott

James Ursic

Henry Weber

L. Bruce Whitaker

Beau Woodling

Mike Wortham

Ray Wycoff

### **Lieutenant (jg):**

Emory Bass

Katherine Brantley

Capt. Walter M. Bullard, USNR

(Ret)

Robert G. Carnegie

Charles S. Carter

Lee C. Clayton

Marc J. Cohen

Capt. Frank Conlon, USN

(Ret.)

W.L. Deaton Jr.

Randall J Egsegian

Ronald Fascher

Herbert Gant

Richard J. Haas, Jr.

Don Hall

L. D. Haynes

G. David Heath

Barbara Hennrich

John Kamstra

Larry Malaby

Candance P Martin

Vernon C. Porterfield

Richard Riano

Ronnie Rhodes

Pamela Schrader

Bryon Wyche Schulken

David J. Smith

Dr. Chris Thompson

Charles G. Townsend

Thomas Walton

Peter Winship

Wayne Woodard

### **Ensign:**

Charles W. Baird

Joseph Benedek, Jr.

Charles H. Garnes

Richard McGowan

Alfred H. McGuire

Timothy Sanford

Harold Smith

(All Friends members in our database as of March 25, 2009.)

## The Friends of the Battleship

*When you enlist in the Friends, your donation supports the Battleship!*



*Friends receive a discount on the Hidden Battleship tour.*

Friends of the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA is a non-profit organization whose funds support exhibits, interpretation, educational programs, artifact acquisition, and restoration projects.

The Battleship does not receive funding from federal, state or local governments for its operations. The Ship is maintained through revenue generated from admissions, museum store sales, rentals, donations, and Friends' memberships.

The Friends generously funded the restoration of a rare 26 foot U.S. Navy Motor Whaleboat

The Friends commissioned a model of the Confederate Ironclad NORTH CAROLINA and a custom display case

The Friends underwrote the cost of our exhibit on the new fast attack submarine USS NORTH CAROLINA SSN777, including a model, display case, mounts for the bow flag, custom photographic banners, and custom artwork of the submarine by maritime artist Stephen Rountree.

If you would like to help fund future exhibits and interpretation and help purchase artifacts, please consider this an invitation to join a great group of people who love the Battleship.

Friends receive free admission to the Ship for a year, 10% discount in the store, discounts on tours and special programs, and this monthly newsletter. E-mail [museum@battleshipnc.com](mailto:museum@battleshipnc.com) for an enlistment brochure!

### Enlistment Levels

<b>Lieutenant (jg)</b> Individual	35.00
<b>Lieutenant</b> 2 Individuals	45.00
<b>Lt. Commander</b> Parents and children under 18 years of age or grandparents and grandchildren under 18 years of age	75.00
<b>Commander</b> Lt. Commander benefits plus five guest passes	150.00
<b>Captain</b> Lt. Commander benefits plus 10 guest passes	300.00
<b>Commodore</b> Recognition signage in the Visitors Center and 25 guest passes	500.00
<b>Admiral</b> 1,000.00 Recognition signage in the Visitors Center, one complimentary fantail rental (not including per person charge), 10 guest passes OR 35 guest passes for those companies that prefer this option	

## Explore and Discover! Battleship NORTH CAROLINA

- Business Office:** Director: Capt. Terry Bragg, USN (Ret.)  
Maintenance Director: Roger Miller; Comptroller: Elizabeth Rollinson  
Brooke Laton, Candy Edwards, Kim Mintz
- Museum:** Kim Sincox, Mary Ames Booker
- Maintenance:** Robert Hall, Terry Kuhn, Steve Lewis, Phil Southworth, Gary Pietak
- Programs:** Danielle Wallace, Shelly Robinson
- Ship's Store:** Leesa McFarlane, Cathy Shipman, Devin Buie, Tara Banks, Sabrina Porter, Michelle Sutton
- Night Watchmen:** Danny Bradshaw, Bill Parr, Brian Gibson
- Webmaster:** Randy Drew