



Where History Comes Alive

## BATTLESHIP NORTH CAROLINA

# Scuttlebutt

May 2009

## Fabulous Fantail Film Festival

It's Friday night movie time on the Battleship! Enjoy movies on the ship's fantail just like her WWII crew did while in port or at anchor. "Movies were very big and we all looked forward to them," wrote Mark Sullivan. "There was all sorts of hooting and hollering especially if we got to see Rita Hayworth or Betty Grable. Comedies were fun, but ladies led the day. The movie did not start until the officers had all arrived."

Seats were provided and reserved for officers in order of seniority. The enlisted men could bring mess benches but were required to "personally return them immediately after the show." The screen was hung from the airplane crane. In March 1945, the war interrupted the movie being shown on the fantail when a kamikaze attacked a nearby air-

craft carrier. The crew went to battle stations but soon returned to finish watching the movie.

While at sea and not in a combat zone movies were shown below in #1 and #2 mess halls. The officers watched their movies in the wardroom. The pictures were projected onto a bed sheet hanging in the middle of the room. Senior officers sat on one side (front) and junior officers sat on the other side. "I saw movies backwards for more than a year," recalled Herb Weyrauch.

Electricians from E Division ran the movies and the motion picture operator was paid \$25 a month for his work. The funds came from the ship's stores profits.

During the war the Navy Motion Picture Service selected, procured and distributed

6,000 films annually. The Battleship exchanged movies with smaller ships when they came alongside for refueling. In a 1944 survey of Navy men worldwide the favorite films were musicals, comedies, dramas and mysteries. Combine Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and girls shown in Technicolor and you had a sure fire winner!

See if you recognize the movies we know were shown on the Battleship:

Frisco Sal (officers) and Princess O'Rourke (crew)

Three Is A Family (officers) and Main Street After Dark (crew)

I Love A Soldier (officers) and Holy Matrimony (crew)

The Cross of Lorraine (officers) and The Man in the Iron Mask (crew)

## MAY MOVIES

- May 8th. The Clock, 1945, starring Judy Garland and Robert Walker.
- May 15th. They Were Expendable, 1945, starring Donna Reed, Robert Montgomery, and John Wayne
- May 22nd. Father Goose, 1964, starring Leslie Caron, Cary Grant, and Trevor Howard

Movies begin at 8:30 PM. Tickets are \$1.00 at the door. Popcorn and sodas will be available. Chairs are provided or bring your own (no steel tips). Seating is limited to 500 guests. In the event of rain, the movie will be shown the following Sunday evening. Details call: 910-251-5797 Ext. 2046.

## Thanks to our Sponsors!

Three cheers and a huge thank you to the sponsors of this year's Film Festival:

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And another huge thanks to our media partners!

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## May Events

### SUMMER HOURS

EFFECTIVE MEMORIAL DAY, MONDAY, MAY 25TH THE BATTLESHIP WILL BE OPEN FROM 8 AM TO 8 PM. THE LAST TICKET IS SOLD AT 7 PM.

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

More than 24 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.

### 44th 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. For information: 910-251-5797 Ext. 2050.



Leo Bostwick and Fred Vellettri enjoy the fellowship of the annual USS NC Battleship Association Reunion. It is held in early May each year.

## From the Archives: BB-55 Saved from Scrap

"Four warships at Bayonne To Be Sold for Scrap," the newspaper clipping announced. It was 1960 and the US Navy was preparing to sell the battleships NORTH CAROLINA and WASHINGTON along with cruisers ALASKA and GUAM.

In November 1960, North Carolina Governor Luther Hodges appointed an advisory committee to look into acquiring the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA as a war memorial. "A Queen Heads for the Scrap Heap," the article declared. Quickly one group went to Bayonne, NJ, to "take a close look at the battle-scarred old lady." Another group traveled to Houston to survey the work of the Battleship Texas Commission. The TEXAS had "proved profitable because of its popularity with tourists."

The newspapers reported on the discussions whether it was

worth the "expense and trouble" to bring the ship to North Carolina. Committee member T. Ed Pickard warned that "maybe someday the only battleships you'll see will be at historic shrines and tourist attractions." After the site visits the committee recommended to Governor Hodges that the state acquire the Battleship and that money required to install the ship could be raised from private sources without state aid.

In December 1960, committee member Hugh Morton "who has been active in tourist promotions in the state for many years," commented that "it will be on my conscience the rest of my life if I do not do all I can to save this ship." A statewide campaign was launched to raise \$250,000 to bring the Battleship to Wilmington and Morton was named chairman of the USS North Carolina Battleship Commission.

### Will Our 'Showboat' Die In A Junk Yard?

-Charlotte Observer, December 3, 1960



### Pick Up A Good Book by Frank Glossl

As a docent on the Battleship I'm often asked by visitors what they could read to learn more about the history of the ship. Although a number of books have been written about the NORTH CAROLINA, one book that always comes to mind is by Cindy Ramsey titled the *Boys of the Battleship North Carolina*. The other is a book written by Capt. Ben Blee, USN (Ret) simply titled *Battleship North Carolina*.

Both are excellent for someone who wishes to learn more about the NORTH CAROLINA and as a docent both are required reading. However Cindy Ramsey's book presents a true to life picture of what life was like aboard one of the most decorated battle-ships of WWII.

In this book, Ms. Ramsey tells the story of the battleship through the eyes of the men who served her. After doing research about the ship at the National Archives in 2000, Ramsey spent six days helping the staff of the memorial

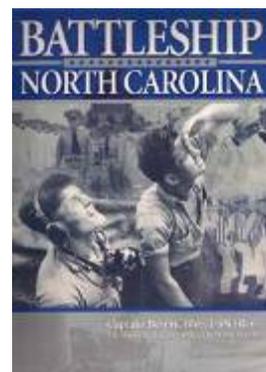
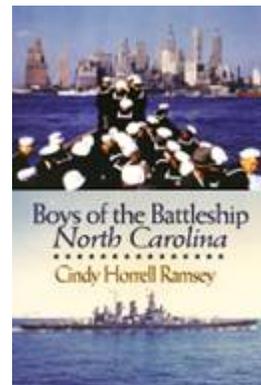
compile a living-history archive of personal interviews conducted with the surviving crewmembers when they attended the ship's annual reunion. She became fascinated with the stories these men told. For the next few years, she continued talking to the men to flesh out their stories. The result is this narrative about the ship as seen through the eyes of the young sailors who matured into men while manning this floating fortress.

I've read and reread this book a number of times and always come away learning something new or remembering something I had forgotten from the last time I read it. Many of the accounts of the sailors whose lives she follows I use as part of my tours. It allows me, as well as the other docents, to bring a more personal side to the tours we give or the spaces we interpret.

I would encourage anyone who loves this ship as much as I do or those who just want to know her better to read this book and get a feel for what it was like to live, work and

fight on the mighty USS NORTH CAROLINA. As Cindy writes in the introduction in her book: "Sailors know the difference between a fairy tale and a sea story. A fairy tale begins, 'Once upon a time.' A sea story starts simply, 'Now, this is no bull....' This book is a sea story."

As I mentioned above the other book I recommend is by Capt Ben Blee, USN (Ret). Capt Blee's book is more technical in nature and covers the history of the ship from the keel being laid in 1937 to the ship coming to rest in Wilmington, NC in 1961 as a memorial and museum. For readers who are looking for how the ship was built, where she served during the war years, her major components from the engine rooms to the radar systems and massive guns, this is the book for you. It not only covers the ship as a weapon of war but also all the major campaigns she participated in while in the Pacific theater. Capt Blee served on the ship during the war as her intelligence officer and his first hand accounts bring the ship and her story to life.



Books may be purchased from the Ship's store. Call 910-251-5797 extension 3007 or 3008 to order. Visa/Mastercard accepted.

### In Their Own Words by Angelo Grippo

We recently received typed remembrances from Angelo Grippo, who reported on-board BB-55 in June 1945. Born in 1913, Angelo was drafted into the Navy in December 1943 and reported to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Chicago. In March 1944 he was sent to electrical school and onto the electrical interior communications school in Anacostia.

"On June 2, 1945, I received my orders to report to the...Battleship. When I first saw her I thought what a

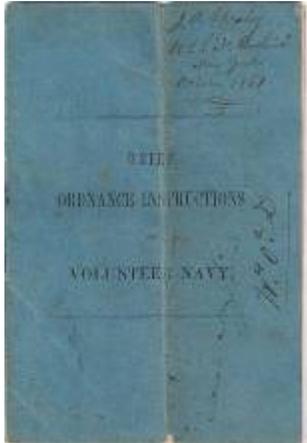
beautiful ship. She was monstrous. I had not been assigned a bunk so I laid out my mattress and pillow and slept on deck. Every morning at about five it would rain lightly. I would hurry and get my gear and go inside. I was asked to take care of the automatic telephone system. The room was three decks down [on 1st platform]. To get there I had to go through damage control room which was about 10x10. There were always two lieutenants sitting facing a large board in this room. The room was air-conditioned. I still had

not been assigned a bunk so I slept on deck of telephone room which was about 8x10. Two large cabinets held the automatic equipment. Also there were nine six-volt batteries to take over in case of electrical failure. I had to check the batteries everyday to make sure [they were] fully charged. The captain was on inspection tour one day and noticed my gear on the deck. He turned to his orderly and said 'get this man a bunk.' My air conditioned days were over."

## Where History Comes Alive

### BATTLESHIP NORTH CAROLINA

## Flotsam & Jetsam



### Volunteer Update:

A couple months ago we told you about our great volunteers and the program is growing! Each week in the Museum Department we work with:

Paula & George Burn who are new ship interpreters.

Richard Riano who is adding archival material to our subject research files.

Bill Barnes who is learning about ship's gunnery and doing special projects in the archives.

Frank Glossl who is currently learning about main and secondary battery plot for a specialized firepower tour.

Kirk Binning who is an interpreter in the engine room and organizing the engineering papers in the archives

And Cortlandt (Cort) Barnes who is learning WWII radio communications.

### Mail Call:

I have been a fan of the battleship since I first saw it as a boy of about 8 years old. I am now 44. It is possibly the reason I love WWII history so much, especially the naval war in the Pacific. I work for a company that provides artificial limbs and orthopedic braces. Many of these patients are WWII vets, and of course, I have to get their stories, which only fuels the fire. A few times, a vet tells me more than he told his family in over 60 years!

The NORTH CAROLINA Battleship Memorial, to me, keeps these stories alive as the vets die off. I hope she still inspires 8 year old boys and girls. Thanks, Charles Emerson

*Note: Emerson joined the Friends of the Battleship as a result of last month's newsletter. Thank you for letting us share your story.*

### Recent Acquisition:

"Brief Ordnance Instructions for Volunteer Navy," prepared by the Navy Department, August 15, 1861. Handwritten on cover: "J.A. Chesley/U.S.S. No Carolina/New York / October 1861." In a question and answer format the booklet describes how to load a gun, what types of shells and fuses to use, how to determine range, and how to handle mishaps. "How do you put a cartridge in a gun? The first loader puts it into the bore, seam sideways and tie outwards, and shoves it well down with his left hand."

A new exhibit about the Ship-of-the-Line NORTH CAROLINA (1820-1867) is under development for the visitors' center. This line-of-battle-ship had 74 guns on three decks.

## Explore and Discover! Battleship NORTH CAROLINA

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**Museum:** Kim Sincox, Mary Ames Booker

**Maintenance:** Robert Hall, Terry Kuhn, Steve Lewis, Phil Southworth, Gary Pietak

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Battleship NORTH CAROLINA, PO Box 480, Wilmington, NC 28402; 910-251-5797; [www.battleshipnc.com](http://www.battleshipnc.com)