

NAVAL ORDER

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Naval Order Observes Medal of Honor and Vietnam Veterans Day

pages 19-22

- Commander Generals Report – page 2
- San Diego Congress 2023 – page 3
- Commandery Reports – page 5
- Nimitz Award – page 17



USCGC *Blackthorn Memorial* – page 25



USS *Texas* Update - page 23

COMMANDER GENERAL'S REPORT TO THE ORDER



The Naval Order Newsletter is published quarterly by
THE NAVAL ORDER OF THE UNITED STATES

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Companions,

We don't just study Naval History to relish in the successes, analyze the shortcomings, and memorialize the past sacrifices although these actions are core to making sure that our history stays alive and fresh in our memories. We also learn the lessons and find ways to apply them to future actions.

Of current-day naval officers and leaders.

Naval Warfare is still one of the most relevant components of our projection of power. We must honestly assess the use of our platforms in the developing environments we face today. Littoral operations, Blue Water Operations, Anti-Submarine Warfare, ASUW, Ship to Shore Operations, etc. still



Rules of engagement (ROE) are critical decisions in an environment where the other side has no national identity or does not follow any of the past agreements for resolving conflict. The rapid changes in how we view warfare and the world make the imperative of history even more relevant.

However, now history has a shorter cycle than ever before and its lessons must be recognized and studied in terms of a much shorter decision cycle. It is important to catalog the near-term decisions and processes through using oral histories and applying modern technologies. As historians we can explore new paradigms for documenting the actions

have tremendous relevance but our review of these cycles of history now is more near term.

We will use our member companions, annual Congress, and our publications to continue to document and express the achievements of our Naval Forces. However, we must stay relevant with the operations of the near/recent past as they affect the plans for the near future. We will reach out to engage the warfighters of today to help document the lessons of today to help influence the decisions of tomorrow.

**For the Good of the Order,
CAPT Bob Whitkop, USN (Ret.), Commander General**

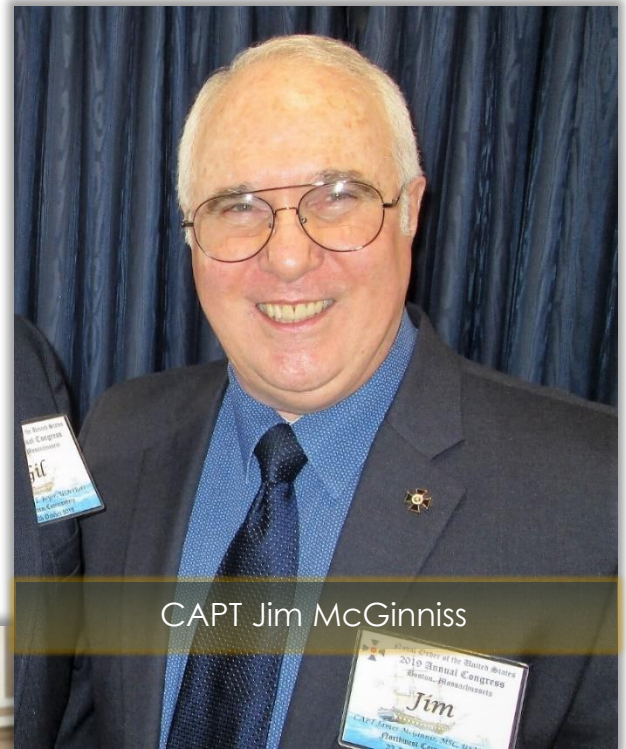
The Naval Order Congress Returns to the West Coast!

Save the dates: 17-23 October 2023
Hilton Double Tree in Mission Valley (San Diego)

The theme of this year's Congress will be the "Marine Corps." To help commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, we will attend a graduation ceremony at MCRD and have lunch at the MCRD Officer's Club.

As of this writing, we expect to tour the USS Midway (CV 41) museum ship and possibly hold an event aboard this historic ship that past Commander General, the late RADM Tom Brown, commanded during his illustrious career.

Our traditional awards luncheons and dinner will be at our hotel. Of course, we will have historical presentations on Saturday afternoon. Already confirmed is our own Companion CAPT Jim McGinniss and three award winning National History Day presentations.



CAPT Jim McGinniss

One of the first classes to graduate from MCRD San Diego



Check our website, navalorder.org, and Facebook page, for costs and schedules as final details are worked out.

Those who haven't been to San Diego in years will be amazed by the changes.

Continued on next page...

2023 NOUS CONGRESS IN SAN DIEGO

Our host hotel room rate is \$160 a night – the Federal Per Diem rate. This rate will be available three days before and three days after the Congress. This gives attendees ample opportunity to savor the sights and sounds of San Diego and/or Tijuana. The trolley provides access to top attractions such as Old Town and the historic Gaslamp District and can take you to the Mexican Border.

The hotel itself is connected to the Hazard Valley Center with its shops, restaurants, and movie theatres.

If you'd like a high-end experience, the Mission Valley Fashion mall is only one trolley stop away. The hotel has brochures and a concierge that will help you coordinate your time and arrange transportation if necessary

The registration form will be in our summer newsletter and available well in advance on our website.

See you there!

Submitted by Doug Moore, RADM, SC, USN (Ret.)

Top things to do & see before & after the 2023 NOUS Congress :

Visit the Maritime Museums, including USS Midway Sea World • San Diego Zoo • Enjoy the views from Mt Helix Drive the Pacific Coast Highway • Visit Old Town Pay respects at the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery Watch a sunset at Sunset Cliffs • Play coastal golf at Torrey Pines Stroll Balboa Park • Eat authentic Mexican food And of course, Take a long walk on the beach

San Diego



CHARLESTON COMMANDERY

The Charleston Commandery met on Sunday, 19 March 2023 with 15 members and 9 visitors attending.

We received word that our Vice Commander, CAPT Peggy Williams was at the emergency room with her husband CAPT Bob Williams. They need our prayers. We also learned that RADM Charlie Young, USN, (Ret.) was also in the emergency room at the time. (Editor's

Note: Sadly, we learned before going to press that CAPT Bob Williams has "crossed the bar." Fair winds and following seas shipmate.)

RADM Jim Flatley III, USN (Ret.) gave a very interesting presentation with a video of his touch and go's and full-stop landings and take offs, aboard

USS *Forrestal* (CVA 59) in 1963. Flatley and his fellow crew members, LCDR Walter W. "Smokey" Stovall and Aviation Machinist's Mate (Jet). V 1st Class Ed Brennan, made history when they completed full-stop landings and takeoffs in a Lockheed C-130 Hercules aboard the *Forrestal*; it was the largest plane, with the heaviest load, ever to successfully land on a carrier.



RADM Jim Flatley III
in his official portrait



Lockheed KC-130F Hercules aboard USS *Forrestal* (CVA-59)

This was an experiment to determine if aircraft carriers could be replenished at sea using this method.

Then a Lieutenant, Flatley was a test pilot at NAS Patuxent River, Maryland.

He gave a brief recap of Naval Aviation history and how his father, VADM James Flatley, Jr., made a significant contribution to aviation safety and tactics. The Navy adopted his father's recommendations. His father, a Navy "ACE" who was aboard *Langley* (CV 1) during the Battle of Coral Sea, had a distinguished war record and career as a renowned tactician. He retired as a Vice Admiral. The Admiral Flatley Memorial Award for aviation safety is awarded each year to one aircraft carrier and amphibious ship, along with their embarked air wing and Marine expeditionary unit. The frigate, USS *Flatley* (FFG 21) was named after him.



Statue of VADM Flatley in his hometown of Green Bay, Wisconsin

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USS Flatley (FFG 21)

Mike Carra also gave a brief report of his ongoing search for Amelia Earhart. He shared artifacts and other documents from the original search. He has worked on a two-hour documentary which will air on the Discovery Channel at a date to be determined. Plans are in the works for him to share his video and presentation on the Battle of Midway either at our May



VADM Flatley during World War II

or June meeting. He is a noted Aviation and Military Historian and is a member of our Commandery.

Several of our visiting guests requested information about the Naval Order and stated that they might join. Several of our members who hadn't attended in a while returned, but some of our regulars were absent for various reasons. Our efforts to rebuild attendance after Covid and to recruit new members is beginning to pay off.

Our Companion, Don Compagna, volunteered to donate and present the sword to the Outstanding NROTC graduate at the Citadel.

We mentioned the recent passing of our long-time member, Mike Alford. Mike was a Naval Academy grad who went into the Air Force and after retirement taught Business Administration at the Citadel.

Submitted by CDR Bob "Fuzzy" Knight, USN (Ret.)



Charleston Commandery Change of Command.

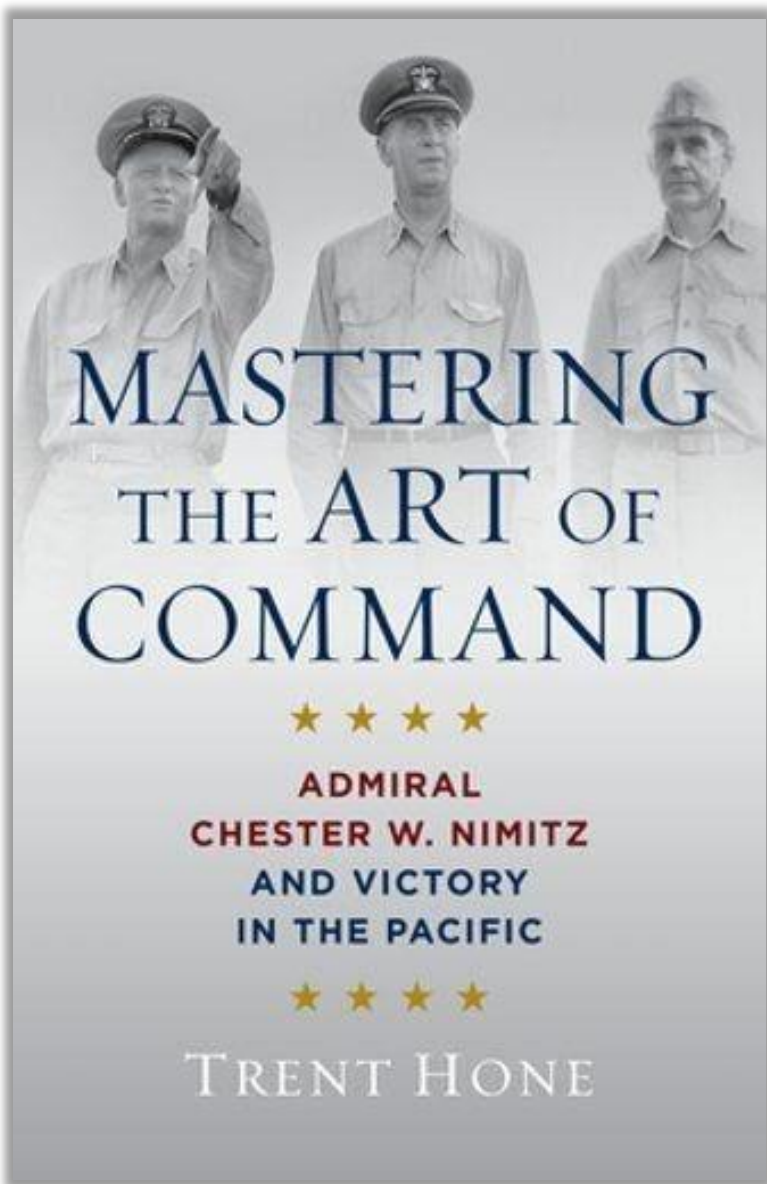
Pictured left to right : Treasurer John Witty, Vice Commander CAPT Peggy Williams, Commander CDR Robert 'Fuzzy' Knight and outgoing Commanders Michael and Aimee Pereira.

Maritime History Virtual Lecturer Series

The careful reader will notice that we have changed the lecture series name from *Naval* to *Maritime* History.

Although our lectures have included presentations on Navy and Coast Guard history, we are also looking for presenters representing the U.S. Marine Corps, Merchant Marine, Public Health Service Corps, and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. All our lectures can be linked on our Facebook page and found on our YouTube channel.

In November, Mr. Trent Hone, Naval Historian and Vice President, ICF International, discussed his latest book: **Mastering the Art of Command: Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and Victory in the Pacific War.**



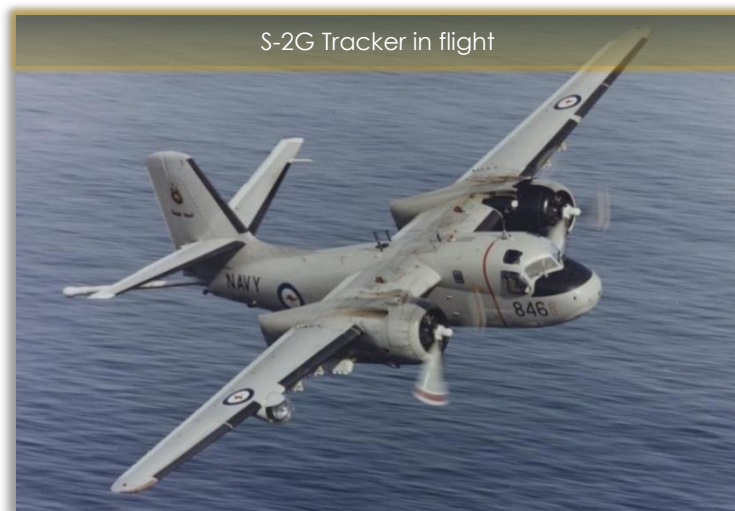
During his presentation, Mr. Hone explored Nimitz's artistic approach in detail and highlighted how core attributes of Nimitz's leadership allowed Nimitz and his subordinates to readily adapt and adjust to new information and maximize the effectiveness of their command and organizational structures. Mr. Hone integrated command and operational history to describe the war as it appeared from Nimitz's headquarters and how Nimitz mastered the art of command. The book is superb as was Mr. Hone's lecture. You can watch the presentation at bit.ly/40S2XFG.

Our December program took us from the WWII Pacific theater to cold war flight operations in the Norwegian Sea as companions, Dr. James Tritten, Mr. John Peracchio, and I



reenacted *Kerfuffle Over the Norwegian Sea* – Dr. Tritten's account of events that unfolded during a dark and stormy night when then LT Tritten was the Naval Flight Officer in an S-2G Tracker attached to the USS *Intrepid* (CV-11).

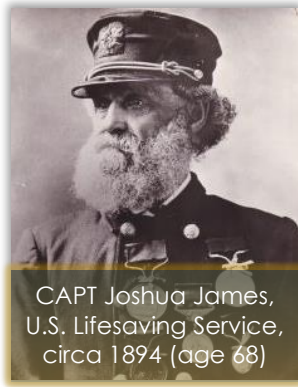
On 26 September 1972, shortly after taking off from the *Intrepid*, LT Tritten's Tracker lost an engine. The situation quickly became *interesting*. Watch the whole story unfold at bit.ly/3MaOZdO.



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Our February program was totally new and different. Ms.

Cinzi Lavin (about whom I have written in two of Continental Commandery's 2022 NOUS Newsletter columns), discussed her musical, **Toilers of the Sea**. *Toilers* tells the story of CAPT Joshua James, the most highly decorated



CAPT Joshua James, U.S. Lifesaving Service, circa 1894 (age 68)

civilian lifesaving crew commander in United States Lifesaving Service history. The program included a bit of Lifesaving Service history, a discussion of CAPT James' contributions to the service. Ms. Lavin explained how, after moving to Hull, Massachusetts and writing one musical about the area (on the southern edge of Boston Harbor) she was asked to write the musical about CAPT James. The program included a few songs and several scenes from the musical. You can watch our *Toilers* interview at bit.ly/3IZ2MK3.



Surfboat Nantasket – designed by CAPT James – being pulled from water to Point Allerton U.S. Life-Saving Station. Today, the

Call for Volunteers

In January, CAPT Passman sent an email to 44 of CTL's younger companions. As of the time of this writing, eight CTL Companions replied to the call. Several have volunteered to join one or more of CTL's operating committees and one has assumed a leadership position.

Welcome MAJ Randolph (Randy) Belden, USA as CTL's new Vice Commander, Projects, and Mr. Robert (Bob) Thompson as CTL's new Chair, Community Outreach Committee.

The invitation remains open to all CTL Companions. Any companion who is interested in volunteering to help CTL fulfill NOUS' mission should contact CAPT Passman at commander@continentalcommandery-nous.org.

Submitted by Fred Passman, CAPT USN (Ret.)

A Commemorative Wreath-laying in Bermuda

On 25 February 2023, Naval Order companions Dr. Judy Pearson and CAPT John Rodgaard, USN (Ret.) represented the Naval Order at the annual Midshipman Dale Commemoration in St. George's Parish, Bermuda. The commemoration honors Richard Sutherland Dale, who died in Bermuda, on 22 February 1815 at the age of 21, as a prisoner of war, following the sea battle between the USS *President* and HMS *Endymion*, at the end of the War of 1812. Dale was the last U.S. Navy commissioned officer to die in that war. Like so many brave men in uniform, he perished on a foreign shore, far from home.

John Rodgaard and Judy Pearson were in the official party, as they have been for over eight years. For more information about the history of this event, and the participation of the U.S. Navy and the Naval Order, see the article on the Naval Order website: bit.ly/40QucB7.

This year's ceremony began at 1700 on King's Square, in the center of this seaside village, where officials, citizens, and tourists gathered. Mr. David Frith, the master of ceremonies, called everyone to order and announced the sequence of the day's activities. Training Ship Admiral Somers Sea Cadets assembled for inspection, carrying the colors – the flag of Bermuda and the U.S. Flag with 15 stars. The island's Deputy Governor of Bermuda, Mr. Tom Oppenheim, inspected the young men and women who stood at attention.



Deputy Governor Tom Oppenheim inspects the Sea Cadets

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Also in the official party were the Worshipful Mr. George Dowling, Mayor of St. George's; U.S. Consul General, Karen Grissette; the Venerable Marie Loewen and the Reverend Canon John Mark Stow of St. Peter's Church. Representing the U.S. Daughters of the War of 1812, Ms. Grissette, laid a wreath under a plaque on the square honoring 15 U.S. Navy prisoners of war who died on Bermuda in the War of 1812.



John Rodgaard (left) with Deputy Governor Oppenheim and Mayor Dowling

Following announcements, the Sea Cadets, onlookers, and the official party, led by a piper and drummer, formed a procession to walk to up the hill to the nearby graveyard behind St. Peter's Church, founded in the early 17th century. There, everyone gathered in front of Dale's grave, which is covered by a white marble gravestone. Dale's original marble gravestone was placed by his father, Commodore Richard Dale, a naval hero of the American War for Independence. The Naval Order replaced the aging gravestone in 2016.

The graveside ceremony consisted of Bible readings, prayers, and the singing of the National Anthems of the United Kingdom and the United States. Deputy Governor Oppenheim laid a wreath on the gravestone, representing Mrs. Louise Hall Reider for the Dale family and the U.S. Navy, in honor of her deceased father, CAPT Scarritt Adams, USN. Consul General Grissett laid a wreath on the behalf of the American People. CAPT John Rodgaard laid a wreath for "The 1805 Club." Dr. Judy Pearson laid a wreath for the Naval Order of the United States. Afterwards everyone met in the fellowship hall for conversation and refreshments. The lovely ceremony symbolizes the friendship and shared history of the United States, Great Britain, and Bermuda.

Submitted by Judy Pearson Ph.D.

Remembering the Maine - the 125th Anniversary

This year marks the 125th anniversary of the explosion on the USS *Maine* that took the lives of 260 U.S. Navy personnel in 1898. The event was the impetus that propelled the nation into the Spanish - American War.



Wreckage of USS Maine

The ship's main mast is preserved in Arlington National Cemetery as a monument to those who perished. The monument rises above a field of white marble gravestones – marking the final resting place of 230 sailors from the *Maine* (additional remains fill a cemetery plot in Key West, Florida). The powder magazine explosion was so horrific that, in some cases, individual bodies could not be identified. Many of the graves read: FOUR UNKNOWN – USS MAINE.



The Maine Monument at Arlington National



Grave of Unknowns of the USS Maine

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NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMANDERY

It was here, under the monument, on Wednesday, 15 February 2023 that veterans and service personnel gathered to commemorate the tragedy. Five Naval Order companions attended: CAPT William Steagall, USN (Ret.), CAPT John Rodgaard, USN (Ret.), Dr. David Winkler USN (Ret.), Dr. Judy Pearson, and CAPT James Rojek, Deputy Company Commander of the 3rd Infantry Regiment. Approximately 40 people attended, including representatives from American Gold Star Mothers.

The ceremony began when the Navy Ceremonial Guard paraded the colors, and the Navy Band played the National Anthem. Commander Matt Johnson (USN) opened the ceremony, and a Navy chaplain led the invocation. The keynote speaker was RADM Sam Cox of the Navy History and Heritage Command.



RADM Sam Cox, keynote speaker

Admiral Cox reminded the listeners that the USS *Maine* was in Havana Harbor in 1898, protecting U.S. interests while Cubans revolted against Spanish rule. No one knows how the explosion in the powder magazine occurred. Investigations have concluded that it was probably an accident. However, at the time, U.S. citizens suspected sabotage. The event shook the nation in the same manner as the attack on Pearl Harbor or the attacks on 11 September 2001. The rallying cry was "Remember the *Maine* and the hell with Spain."



Laying the wreath at the base of the monument

Admiral Cox stated that during that era, approximately 300 sailors died each year in the line of duty – a testament to the dangers of life at sea. He said that the *Maine* monument serves as a reminder of those who sacrificed their lives in the service of the nation and the suffering of their families. "When we expect sailors to live and die for their country, the least we can do is remember them."

With that, a sailor placed a wreath at the base of the monument while a bugler played taps.

The ceremony concluded with a benediction and a moment of quiet reflection, as once more, we looked over the vast expanse of white gravestones that is Arlington National Cemetery.

Submitted by Judy Pearson, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: The USS *Maine* (ACR 1) was an armored cruiser (also known as a second-class battleship.) *Maine* was 324 feet 4 inches (98.9 m) long overall, with a beam of 57 feet (17.4 m), a maximum draft of 22 feet 6 inches (6.9 m) and a displacement of 6,682 long tons. She was divided into 214 watertight compartments. A centerline longitudinal watertight bulkhead separated the engines and a double bottom covered the hull only from the foremast to the aft end of the armored citadel, a distance of 196 feet (59.7 m). She had a metacentric height of 3.45 feet (1.1 m) as designed and was fitted with a ram bow. Her complement was 374 officers and men.

Submitted by MCCA Bob Hansen, USN (Ret.)

Secretary of the Navy, Carlos del Toro, Speaks at National Press Club

On 21 February, companions CAPT Bill Steagall, CAPT John Rodgaard, Mr. Peter Pennington, and Dr. Judy Pearson attended the monthly Headliners' Luncheon at the National Press Club, Washington DC in honor of the featured speaker, our Naval Order companion, Secretary of the Navy, Carlos del Toro. Also present at our table was Dr. Jennifer London, the widow of Dr. Jack London, a past Dewey award recipient and life member of the Naval Order.



SECNAV del Toro spoke to a room of about 80 former and active senior naval and marine officers, together with several naval/military attachés and members of the Washington, DC press corps. He said that he was honored to speak to the press, because the media is an essential element of democracy; they hold our leaders accountable. He told the audience that after WWII, the U.S. emerged as the dominant naval power that rewrote the laws on the uses of world's oceans. "The U.S. has guaranteed freedom by securing sea lanes throughout the world."

The SECNAV described the growing challenges to world security posed by threats to navigation of the world's oceans – not only from piracy, but from totalitarian regimes such as the People's Republic of China. He emphasized the value of international alliances in the face of Russia's "unconscionable" invasion of Ukraine. He reminded his audience that the U.S. has given/pledged 50 billion dollars in assistance to Ukraine.

Where there is trouble in the world, Navy Carrier Strike groups are in the region to establish a U.S. presence.

Del Toro made the point that the U.S. must maintain a navy that can meet today's global challenges, from adversaries and environmental crises. He spoke of the need to "adapt a balanced, rational approach to the challenges we face." We must always be prepared for any contingency. The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, he said, are "the most capable and lethal naval force in the world."

Describing the Navy's infrastructure optimization program, he mentioned a newly formed task force in Bahrain, a new naval base in Japan, and the next generation of guided missile destroyers and nuclear attack submarines. The Navy is modernizing shipyards and dry docks. "Sailors and Marines are working every day to protect American lives and interests."

SECNAV noted several ways in which American citizens can support our naval forces. One way is through "continued faith in American values." He recognized former president Jimmy Carter, once a naval officer, who, as of this writing, has entered hospice care.

A lively Q&A followed del Toro's speech. In his responses to questions from the audience, he touched on the challenge of recruitment for a volunteer military, during a time of low unemployment. Additionally, he stated that the Department of the Navy must work with Congress to support legal immigration to bring in vital workers for shipyards and shipbuilding enterprise. To have a "larger navy and a more modern fleet," the U.S. must invest in shipbuilding facilities, R&D, science and technology, strategy, space technology, and cyber security.

He closed with his three guiding principles:

1. Maintaining a modern naval force and infrastructure
2. Strengthening partnerships with our allies
3. Creating a culture of warfighter excellence.

Submitted by Judy Pearson, Ph.D.

NEW ORLEANS COMMANDERY

Winter and Spring were as busy as ever for the New Orleans Commandery. Highlights include a Commandery holiday dinner in December, and companion attendance at several Mardi Gras balls to include the New Orleans Military Officers' Wives Club (MOWC) krewe of CAMAN (Coast Guard, Army, Marine Corps, Airforce, Navy) Ball. New Orleans Companion, RADM Joel Whitehead, USCG (Ret.) was dubbed King for 2023!

How does New Orleans salute active military, veterans, and first responders? With a red, white & blue patriotic procession, of course! Also of note, several Companions rode with the "Legion of Mars" for their first parade ever! The Mars parade precedes the traditional Mardi Gras festivities. It is the first in New Orleans to honor all those who have served. Sponsored by the Cincinnatis Club, the krewe was founded by combat veterans in 2013. In partnership with the City of New Orleans, the procession includes first responders, law enforcement personnel, and veterans from throughout the country. Along with their parade, Mars participates year-round in military related philanthropy, including feeding Veterans on Veterans Day at the VA hospital. The krewe also helps active military, veterans, and first responders when they are in need, such as following natural disasters.



The Legion of Mars parade honors veterans, first responders, and police.

The Commandery's holiday dinner and meeting was held at Southern Yacht Club in New Orleans on 14 December 2022. The guest speaker for the evening was New Orleans Companion CDR Darrell Smith, USN (Ret.). CDR Smith spoke of the environmental research ship USS *Pueblo* (AGER 2) and its capture by North Korean forces on 23 January 1968, in what was later known as the "Pueblo Incident". He outlined details of the days leading up to the capture of the *Pueblo*, conditions while imprisoned, and life after release.

Of the 83 crew members, two gentlemen were civilian oceanographers employed by the Navy. One of them, Mr. Dinnie Richard "Dick" Tuck, maintained ties with the Naval Oceanographic Office and the Gulf Coast until his passing in April 2022, and was a good friend and colleague of CDR Smith.

Dick's widow and two of his children joined us for the very special evening. CDR Smith shared personal letters from Mr. Tuck, a lithograph by *Pueblo* skipper, Commander Lloyd "Pete" Bucher and other artifacts.

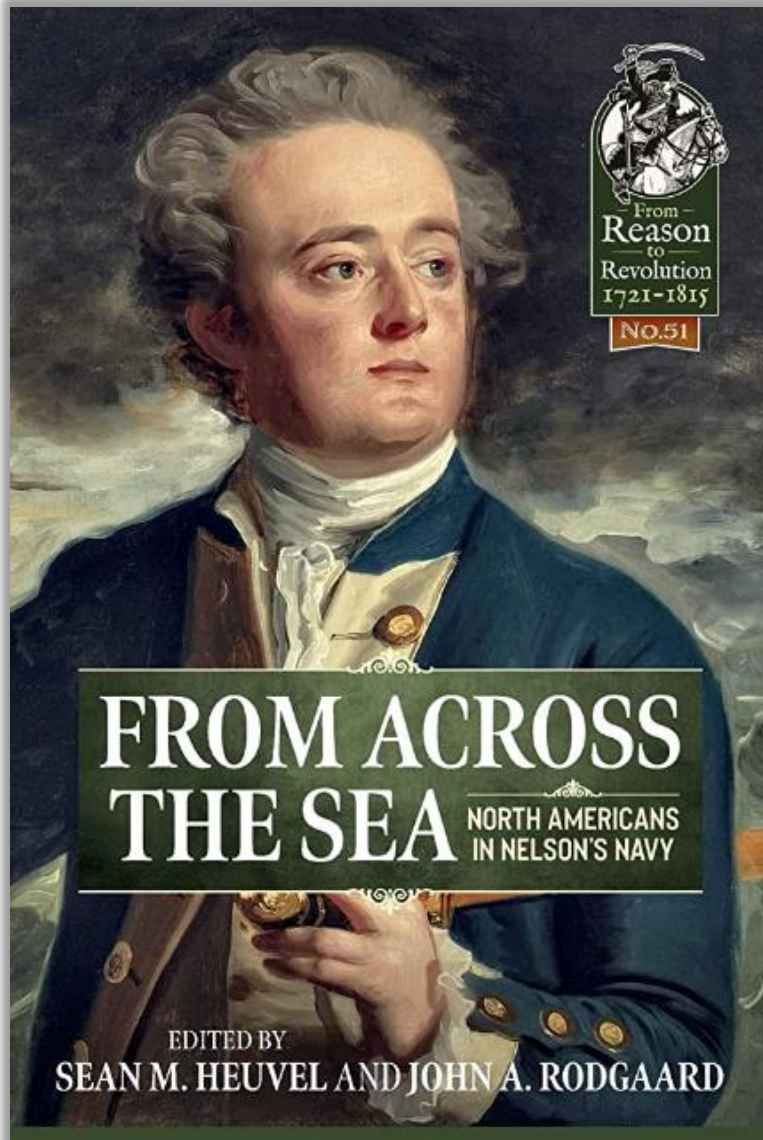
Family of "Dick" Tuck joined us for our holiday dinner. Left to right: son Rick, wife Vie, daughter Patty



CDR Smith went on to discuss changes to the conduct of U.S. maritime Special Reconnaissance Operations (SRO) that were developed in the wake of the **Incident** and subsequent impacts on Naval Oceanography operations. Commandery members shared personal experiences about their involvement in SRO policy development and operations and Mr. Tuck's family shared some personal stories.

Submitted by CAPT Eric Trehubenko, USN (Ret.)

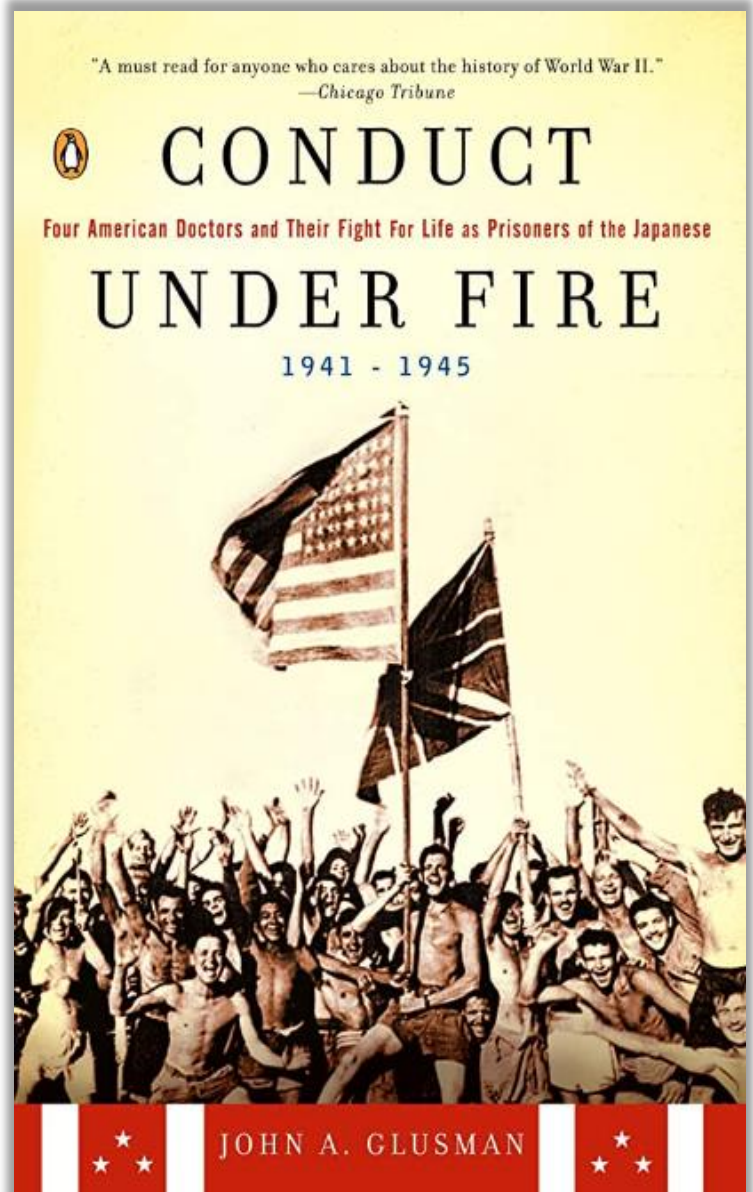
In December, the New York Commandery held a remembrance for the 81st Anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. We were also honored to have CAPT John Rodgaard, USN (Ret.) to speak on his book, **From Across the Sea: North Americans in Nelson's Navy**. CAPT Rodgaard is a Past Commander of the National Capitol Commandery. His presentation was followed by many questions and an active discussion.



John Glusman was the guest speaker at our February luncheon. He spoke on his book **Conduct Under Fire - Four American Doctors and Their Fight for Life as Prisoners of the Japanese**, which recounted his father's experience as a Navy doctor, imprisoned by the Japanese for 3 1/2 years. The talk was excellent with a slide presentation. A lively question and answer period followed.

Glusman is vice president and editor-in-chief of W. W.

Norton and Company, the largest independent, employee-owned publisher in the United States. He received his B.A. from Columbia College in 1978, and an M.A. from the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences at Columbia University in 1980. He has taught at The New School for Social Research, the graduate writing program at Columbia University, and he has written for numerous publications, among them, the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The Economist*, *Rolling Stone*, *Washington Journalism Review*, and *Travel + Leisure*. He is a Distinguished Alumnus of Columbia University's Graduate School of Arts & Sciences.



Our commandery's luncheon on Monday, 6 March was a full house.

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NEW YORK COMMANDERY

Commander-Elect CDR John F. V. Cupschalk opened the meeting, while past Commander Hank Warnke led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance and the Invocation was led by past Commander Chaplain, the Rev. Bill Schmidt, SMP. CDR Cupschalk led a remembrance for the USS *Houston*, with a moment of silence for the 700+ sailors who lost their lives at the Sunda Strait in 1942.

The key speaker, introduced by past Commander Don Schuld, was New York Commandery's Companion and Treasurer Richard P. Kaye, Esq., who spoke about his model ship collection. He related that his army father had been treated by a Navy Corpsman, and afterwards took an interest in ships. Richard Kaye continued that interest and began building Navy ship models from scratch. Over the years, he has "built" an impressive fleet of hundreds of ships, ranging from aircraft carriers to minesweepers. He displayed some of his fleet. Everyone enjoyed the display and discussion that ensued.



Richard P. Kaye with his ship model collection

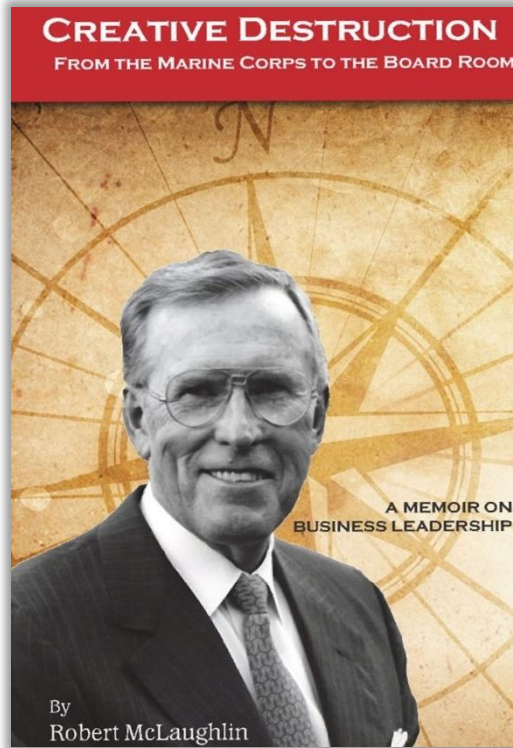


Submitted by CDR John F.V. Cupschalk, USN (Ret.)

SAN FRANCISCO COMMANDERY

Thunder, lightning, hail, and heavy rain inundated San Francisco as we began 2023 with our first luncheon meeting of the new year.

To facilitate staff scheduling at our venue, the Italian Athletic Club, we changed our regular luncheon to second Tuesdays. We still managed a good turnout as the worst winter weather in decades made its way through California. Dry weather and sunshine greeted early arrivals; however, mother nature was in a playful mood as the day's events were punctuated by thunderstorms and hail.



Our guest speaker was our own companion, Bob McLaughlin. Bob told us how his Marine Corps experience prepared him for an exemplary career in corporate America. He has had an amazing career working with some of the biggest names in the

Bay Area, a few of which may surprise you.

Those who have had the opportunity to sit down with Bob over lunch will be amazed at his story, as told in his book, "**CREATIVE DESTRUCTION: From the Marine Corps to the Board Room**" --the cover photo which is shown above. Bob brought copies of his book with him "hot off the presses." He offered the book to Companions for \$20 each and donated 100% of the proceeds to the commandery. Bob's presentation was punctuated by a tremendous thunderclap just as he made a point, which was taken as a good omen as the rain then seemed to let up. McLaughlin commented that his "experience as the Typhoon Control Officer" for Camp Kawasaki, Okinawa

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SAN FRANCISCO COMMANDERY

from 1955 thru 1956 enabled him to hold off the rain in San Francisco from 1100 to 1400 hours!

Many companions bought copies for themselves as well as family and friends. The book will surely imbue them with skills that will help them in their careers and help the commandery as well.

Our special guest in February was USN Veteran Mr. Gordon Stutrud, Executive Officer of the LCS-102 Museum Ship at Mare Island. Mr. Stutrud talked about the LCS-102 in particular and the history of the ship type.



USS LCS(L)-102 museum ship at Mare Island.

Most of us are aware of the current class of LCS (Littoral Combat) ships, like the USS *Oakland* that we helped commission in 2021. The LCS-102 is a class of (Landing Craft Support) small ships used to support amphibious landings in the Pacific During WW2. USS LCS(L)(3)-102 was laid down 13 January 1945 at Commercial Iron Works in Portland, Oregon. The vessel was launched on 3 February 1945 and commissioned on 17 February 1945.

USS LCS(L)(3) 102 is the last survivor of the 130 LCS vessels build for the U.S. Navy. She was initially designed for close-in fire support during amphibious landings. The designers could not anticipate that these versatile ships would also perform firefighting, towing, damage control, convoy escort duty, underwater demolition team support, anti-smuggling patrol, smoke screen (fog) generation, anti-suicide plane and boat operations, and the rescue and medical assistance for survivors of damaged ships.

The LCSs, known as the Mighty Midgets, saw combat at Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Philippines, Borneo, China, and the Occupation of Japan. LCS-102 not only supported the Marines during the Battle of Okinawa, but even served in the Japanese Navy during the 1950's and 60's. LCS -102 later served in the Royal Thai Navy. It was returned to the United States Navy and became a museum ship at Mare Island. It is on the National Register of Historic Places.

March's luncheon featured some very special guests – our commandery's National History Day awardees. They are:

High School Awardee: Zachary Brasher for his podcast, "All Hands on Deck - The Debate Over Integration in the United States Navy, 1861 - 1865";

Middle School Awardee: Alexander Miller for his paper, "The Cod Wars: Iceland's Victory Through Diplomacy and the Global Consequences of Their Success"; and

Runner-up: Rosie Gates for her performance, "The Pirate Who Saved America." Rosie and her parents attended in person.

All three Awardees participated in our luncheon.

Even though we are technologically challenged, we were able to listen to Zachary's podcast. We learned how African Americans were reluctantly admitted to the United States Navy during the Civil War but quickly proved their worth. Although the U.S. Navy integrated, formal integration in all the armed services did not happen until after World War II.

Alexander had hoped to join us in person, but the weather did not permit it. He presented his paper on the Cod Wars via Zoom. The Cod Wars refer to a series of confrontations between Iceland and Great Britain between 1952 and 1976 over fishing rights in the north Atlantic. At one point, Iceland was threatening to withdraw from NATO. Diplomacy ultimately prevailed.

Rosie Gates' project was a "performance". Rosie adopted the persona of New Orleans based pirate Jean Laffite during the Battle of New Orleans. Laffite and his fleet helped General Andrew Jackson to defend the city during the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. Laffite was known to financially benefit from his "support."

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He later set up a camp on Galveston Island in Spanish Texas from where he supported Spain during the Mexican Wars of Independence.



Rosie Gates takes on the persona of Pirate Jean Lafitte

Rosie's family had a great time with our commandery. According to Rosie's mother, "My husband (Bobby Gates), Rosie, and I were extremely honored to be invited to San Francisco. Rosie had a great time preparing her notes, and we were extremely grateful for her to have this experience. We talked about the amazing people we were blessed to meet for the entire five-hour drive back home. Thank you for allowing us to join your meeting, and for giving Rosie an experience she'll remember for life!"



San Francisco Commandery NHD coordinator Tom Snyder poses with Bobby, Rosie, and Jennie Gates and Tom Andrews.

Everyone who had the opportunity to meet Rosie and her parents hopes that this will not be the last time we see her.

Links to Zach's podcasts and Alexander's paper, as well as a video of Rosie's performance, are on our Commandery's Facebook page. Other National History Day projects are on the Naval Order Website.

Our luncheons do not represent our sole involvement in Sea Service History and Heritage projects. Most of us are closely involved with the Marines' Memorial Association and Foundation. The Marines' Memorial Association (MMA) was founded by General Alexander Vandergrift, a Naval Order Companion, in 1946. Since then, the Naval Order has regularly participated in, and even organized events at, the Marines' Memorial Club. Despite a retrenchment during the COVID pandemic, our companions have been actively involved in MMA events this year. In January we heard BGen Jason L. Morris, Commanding General of MCRD San Diego and Western Recruiting Region, speak about the challenges of recruiting and training our Marines in the current geopolitical environment. Our 2023 Naval Order Congress in San Diego hopes to center on activities at the MCRD which will also mark MCRD's 100th anniversary.

In February the MMA hosted director J.D. Dillard to discuss his latest feature film, **Devotion**, which is now available to stream on Paramount+ or purchase on Digital. Joining the discussion was Dillard's father, retired Naval Aviator Bruce Dillard, a former member of the Blue Angels. Both Dillards were available for interviews (and autographs) before and after the event.

Devotion stars Jonathan Majors (*Creed III*) and Glen Powell (*Top Gun: Maverick*) in the inspiring true story of two elite U.S. Navy fighter pilots who helped turn the tide in the most brutal battle in the Korean War: Jesse Brown, the first Black aviator in Navy history and his fellow fighter pilot and friend, Tom Hudner. Their heroic sacrifices and enduring friendship would ultimately make them the Navy's most celebrated wingmen. Hudner was awarded the Medal of Honor for attempting to save Brown after he was shot down. Clips from the film were shown during the evening.

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Dry weather returned to San Francisco for March's lecturer at the Marines' Memorial Club. We had a very special guest, LtGen George W. Smith Jr., a career infantry officer and current Commanding General of the 1 Marine Expeditionary Force.



LtGen George W. Smith at the Marines' Memorial Club

General Smith updated us on the readiness of his forces to deploy when and where needed anywhere in the world. His speech was engaging and insightful. Guests were thrilled to hear his observations and appreciative of his honest and thoughtful answers.



San Francisco Commandery Companions Don Reid, MajGen Mike Myatt, USMC (Ret.) and LtGen Mike Rocco, USMC (Ret.). Myatt served many years as CEO of the Marines' Memorial Club and Foundation. LtGen Rocco is the current CEO.

The Marines' Memorial Club and Hotel is open for business. It has reciprocal relationships with many other clubs and military organizations worldwide.

Submitted by MCCS Bob Hansen, USN (Ret.)

Texas Commandery holds Annual Commandery Nimitz Award Banquet

On Saturday evening, 25 February 2023, the Texas Commandery of the NOUS held its Annual Banquet at The Briar Club in Houston, Texas. Attendance by 60 people reflected an increase from pre-Covid times. Three Midshipmen from the Rice University Consortium NROTC Unit attended as guests of the Texas Commandery and assisted by leading the Pledges to the American Flag and to the Texas Flag. Midshipman 2/C Joseph Paci presented the POW / MIA Litany.

Our honoree this year, LCDR Bryan C. Stern, USN (Ret.), attended in a most unusual manner – by ZOOM from the front lines of the conflict in the south-eastern Ukraine!



LCDR Bryan C. Stern on ZOOM call from the Ukraine, with Rev. Dean in the foreground

We named LCDR Stern the recipient of the 2022 Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Leadership Award for his work in the creation and operation of Project Dynamo, which is a veteran-led, donor-funded international search, rescue and assistance organization based in Tampa, Florida. Project Dynamo assists those impacted in disaster areas and conflict zones throughout the world. The organization was "stood up" during the American troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, in which many American citizens were left behind.

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To date, Project Dynamo has rescued more than 6,000 people and hundreds of animals from harm's way, primarily in Afghanistan and the Ukraine. It operates in "The Grey Space" where the U.S. Government is not present. In practical terms, when the government is unable to assist, Project Dynamo responds.

We did not know if LCDR Stern could be present in person to receive the Nimitz Leadership Award. He was in the field negotiating for the release of an American civilian who found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time and was captured by Russian Army forces in southeast Ukraine. That incident ended well, but, as LCDR Stern stated, "in a war zone, trust is both rare and fleeting."

In LCDR Stern's absence, we had arranged for Reverend Robert Dean, Jr. to speak on his behalf. Reverend Dean was the beneficiary of Project Dynamo's rescue efforts that brought him, and more than 20 other American civilians, out of the Ukraine in the early days of the Russian invasion. Reverend Dean was able to arrange for a direct ZOOM link to LCDR Stern, who was able to bring our Companions and guests up to date on Project Dynamo's ongoing operations. The connection was good enough for him to answer questions posed by companions and one of our Midshipman guests.

Before we closed the ZOOM link, the Texas Commandery extended a NOUS Membership to LCDR Stern in recognition of his exemplary leadership. He received a standing ovation.

Another special guest at the banquet was Mr. Thomas Gillette, who was a 10-year-old child survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Tom has been our keynote speaker at several of our Commandery's Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremonies. He has encyclopedic knowledge of all things related to the Pearl Harbor attack as well as fascinating stories about that horrific day. He watched Japanese aircraft fly less than 100 feet over his family's home enroute to attack Battleship Row. His stories are not typical sea stories – his are true!

Also attending were five former Commanders of the Texas Commandery: CAPT W. O. King, Jr. USN (Ret.), CAPT David S. Burr USN (Ret.), CDR Jim Sterling USN (Ret.), MM2 (SS) Gil Raynor, USN (Ret.) and CDR Bryan Lethcoe USN (Ret.). We are always proud to honor our former leaders.

The evening closed with a combined toast - to the United States of America, to the Great State of Texas, to the Naval Order of the United States, to our Prisoner of War and Missing In



Action brethren and to the continued success of Project Dynamo.

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Texas Commandery Companions and Midshipmen Guests

Left to Right: LtCOL James McQuiston, Rev. James Payne, former LT Cheri Ackert-Burr, CAPT David Burr, CAPT Joseph Dervay, CAPT W. O. King, CDR Bob Frazier, CAPT Buzz Gralla, MM2 (SS) Gil Raynor, Midn. 2/C Joseph Paci, Midn. 2/C Yanari Raines, Midn. 2/C Chloe Tondera, RADM Peter Andrus, CDR Jim Sterling (with NOUS Burgee) and LT Steven K. Howell.

USS Houston (CA-30) Memorial Service

On Saturday afternoon, 4 March 2023, the USS Houston (CA 30) Survivors' Association held its Annual Memorial Service recognizing the sinking of both the USS Houston (CA 30) and the HMAS Perth (D 29). The Memorial Service was held at Sam Houston Park, in downtown Houston and was led by Mr. John K. Schwartz, son of the late Otto Schwartz, a Navy survivor of the sinking of the USS Houston.

Sinking of the USS Houston (CA 30)
Naval History and Heritage Command



Participants included representatives from the City of Houston, Australia, Great Britain, The Netherlands, the United States, and Indonesia. The representative from Indonesia, the Honorable Andre Omer Siregar, introduced an Indonesian family whose grandparents had given aid to the survivors of the sinking and who were later punished by the Japanese troops for their humanitarian actions. The speakers representing the United States were RADM Samuel J. Cox, USN (Ret.) and LtCol Russell Fluker, USMC. RADM Cox is the Director of the Naval History and Heritage Command and is the Curator of the Navy.

Many affiliated organizations, including the Texas Commandery of the NOUS, presented floral wreaths as part of the service. A detachment of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps provided escorts for the wreath presentations.

In 2014 and 2015 U.S. Navy and Indonesian Navy divers located and identified the wreckage of the Houston at the bottom of the Java Sea. There was evidence of illegal salvage. Efforts are underway to preserve the wreckage and prevent salvage activities.

Submitted by Steven K. Howell

Naval Order Companions Observe Medal of Honor Day 26 March 2023 & Vietnam Veterans Day 29 March 2023

The Naval Order of the United States honors veterans through our history and heritage programs. We count veterans of all wars among our membership, past and present.

Today, many of our members are veterans of Vietnam. We are also actively considering more ways to honor sea service veterans who have been awarded the Medal of Honor. This March, we paused to reflect and honor our sea service veterans who not only served in Vietnam, but were awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism during their Vietnam service.

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society was chartered in 1958 by Congress to promote a bond between recipients of the Medal of Honor, provide appropriate aid to those who are awarded the Medal along with their widows and children, to help protect and preserve the dignity, honor, and name of the Medal, to inspire and stimulate youth to become good citizens, and to foster and promote patriotism. The Society's role has never included nominating, selecting, or awarding the Medal of Honor.

Today, the Society continues to carry out these missions through programs that are dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Medal of Honor and its recipients, inspiring and educating Americans, and promoting the values associated with the Medal; courage, commitment, integrity, sacrifice, citizenship, and patriotism. They do this through the Society's proprietary programs:

- Recipients' Medal of Honor Museum
- Archives and collections
- Valor Outreach Program
- Medal of Honor Character Development Program
- Citizen Honors Awards for Valor and Service

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MEDAL OF HONOR DAY AND VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

The Society also continues to provide bonding opportunities for recipients through communications to members, annual conventions, and other events. The Society supports them by making travel arrangements and advocating for their healthcare needs.

The membership of the Society and its board of directors is composed solely of Medal of Honor recipients. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that does not receive funding from any government agencies. Instead, it relies on private



donations to operate. The Society maintains an office and the recipients' Medal of Honor Museum at Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, on board the USS Yorktown. As part of Public Law 106-83, the Medal of the Honor Memorial Act, the Museum was designated as one of three national Medal of Honor sites.

The Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017 was signed into law by 45th U.S. President Donald J. Trump, designating every March 29 as National Vietnam War Veterans Day.

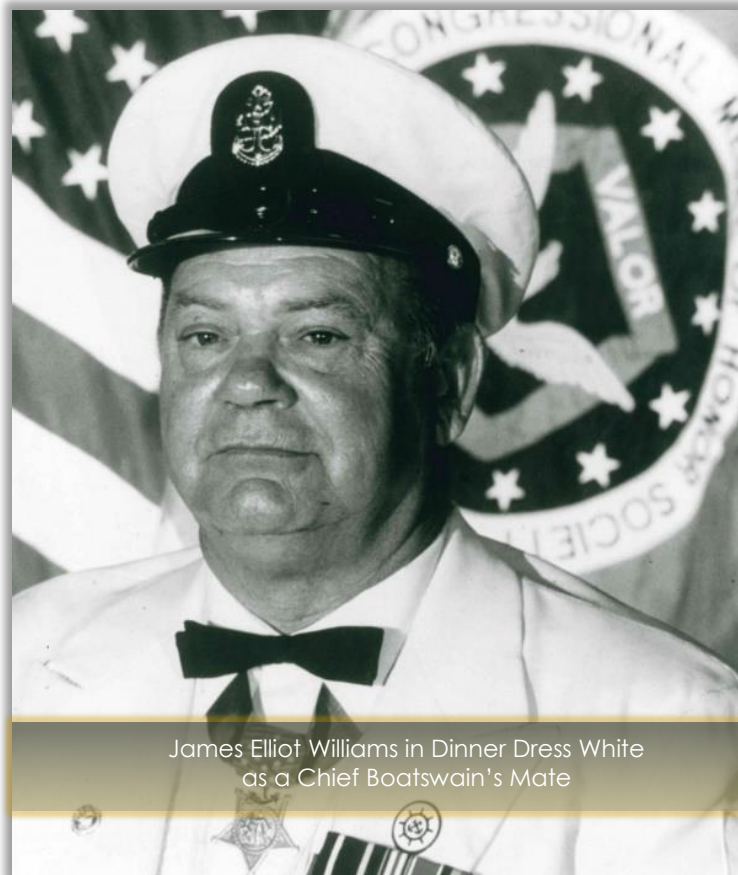
This special day joins six other military-centric annual observances codified in Title 4 of the United States Code §6, among them Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Veterans Day. 29 March is a fitting choice for a day honoring Vietnam veterans. It was chosen to be observed in perpetuity as 29 March 1973 was the day United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam was disestablished and also the day the last U.S. combat troops departed Vietnam. In addition, on and around this same day Hanoi released the last of its acknowledged prisoners of war.

The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration honors all veterans who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time from 1 November 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location, and their families.

1 November 1955 was selected to coincide with the official designation of Military Assistance Advisory Group-Vietnam (MAAG-V); 15 May 1975 marks the end of the battle precipitated by the seizure of the SS Mayaguez.

Following are brief biographies and excerpts from their citations of two sea service veterans born in South Carolina who were awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism in combat in Vietnam.

Boatswain's Mate First Class James Elliot Williams



James Elliot Williams in Dinner Dress White as a Chief Boatswain's Mate

Boatswain's Mate First Class James Elliot Williams was the most highly decorated U.S. Navy Sailor in history. He retired shortly after his Vietnam Service and was subsequently made an Honorary Chief Petty Officer by the Master Chief of the Navy. In civilian life he was a U.S. Marshall. He passed away on 12 October 1999.

Awarded For Actions During Vietnam War

Service: Navy

Division: My Tho Detachment

Date of Action: 31 October 1966

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CITATION:

"The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Boatswain's Mate First Class James Elliott Williams (NSN: 9908934), United States Navy, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in action on the Mekong River, Republic of Vietnam, 31 October 1966.

Petty Officer First Class Williams was serving as Boat Captain and Patrol Officer aboard River Patrol Boat (PBR) 105, River Section 531, My Tho Detachment, accompanied by another patrol boat when the patrol was suddenly taken under fire by two enemy sampans.

Petty Officer First Class Williams immediately ordered the fire returned, killing the crew of one enemy boat and causing the other sampan to take refuge in a nearby river inlet. Pursuing the fleeing sampan, the U.S. patrol encountered a heavy volume of small-arms fire from enemy forces, at close range, occupying well-concealed positions along the riverbank.

Under the leadership of PO1c. Williams who demonstrated unusual professional skill and indomitable courage throughout the three-hour battle, the patrol accounted for the destruction or loss of 65 enemy boats and inflicted numerous casualties on the enemy personnel.

His extraordinary heroism and exemplary fighting spirit in the face of grave risks inspired the efforts of his men to defeat a larger enemy force and are in keeping with the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service."

In addition to the Medal of Honor, Williams was awarded the Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, three Purple Hearts and a Legion of Merit with combat and Bronze Star with combat "V". and many other service awards and unit citations.

During the Korean War, Williams Served aboard the USS Douglas H. Fox (DD 779) from where he was detached to take raiding parties into North Korea on small boats during the Korean War.

Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Virginia Beach, Virginia, was dedicated the BM1 James E. Williams Building in 1997. Navy guided missile destroyer USS *James E. Williams* (DDG 95) was named and christened in his honor on 28 June 2003, at Pascagoula, Mississippi.

PFC Ralph Henry Johnson



PFC Ralph Henry Johnson in his Recruit Training Portrait with awards posthumously added

Awarded For Actions During Vietnam War

Service: U.S Marine Corps

Division: Company A, First Reconnaissance Battalion, First Marine Division (REIN) FMF

Date of Action: 5 March 1968

Continued on next page...

MEDAL OF HONOR DAY AND VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2023

CITATION:

“For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a reconnaissance scout with Company A, in action against the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong forces.

In the early morning hours during Operation Rock, Pfc. Johnson was a member of a 15-man reconnaissance patrol manning an observation post on Hill 146 overlooking the Quan Duc Valley deep in enemy-controlled territory. They were attacked by a platoon-size hostile force employing automatic weapons, satchel charges, and hand grenades.

Suddenly, a hand grenade landed in the three-man fighting hole occupied by Pfc. Johnson and two fellow marines. Realizing the inherent danger to his two comrades, he shouted a warning and unhesitatingly hurled himself on the explosive device.

When the grenade exploded, Pfc. Johnson absorbed the tremendous impact of the blast and was killed instantly. His prompt and heroic act saved the life of one marine at the cost of his life and undoubtedly prevented the enemy from penetrating his sector of the patrol's perimeter. Pfc. Johnson's courage, inspiring valor, and selfless devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.”

Johnson enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve at Oakland, California on 23 March 1967 and was discharged to enlist in the regular Marine Corps on 2 July 1967.

Upon completion of recruit training with the 1st Recruit Training Battalion, Recruit Training Regiment, MCRD San Diego, California, in September 1967, he was transferred to the Camp Pendleton, California.

He underwent individual combat training with Company Y, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, and basic infantry training with the Basic Infantry Training Company, 2nd Infantry Training Regiment, completing the latter in November 1967. He was promoted to private first class on 1 November 1967.

In January 1968, he arrived in the Republic of Vietnam,

and served as a reconnaissance scout with Company A, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division.

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston, South Carolina, formerly the Charleston VA Medical Center, was named in honor of PFC Johnson, with a formal dedication on 5 September 1991. Johnson's Medal of Honor, along with his Medal of Honor citation and a portrait of him (included here), is framed and on public display at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center's front lobby.



The Arleigh Burke-class USS *Ralph Johnson* (DDG 114) is named in his honor. The warship arrived at the Port of Charleston's Columbus Street Terminal on 19 March 2018, and was commissioned on 24 March 2018.



Submitted by MCCS Bob Hansen, USN, (Ret.) -

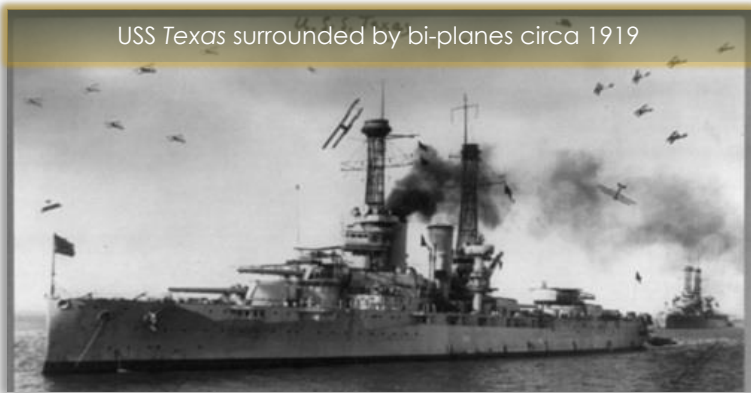
MCCS Hansen served with Lighterage Division, Naval Support Activity DaNang, Vietnam, 1968-70. He deployed to Task Force Clearwater and MCB 74.

History Synopsis

Battleship *Texas* (BB 35) is the last surviving Dreadnought, as well as the only battleship in existence today, that served in both World Wars.

Commissioned on 12 March 1914, CAPT Albert W. Grant was her first Commanding Officer. She was viewed as the most powerful weapon in the world with her main battery of ten 14 inch/45 cal. guns, capable of firing a 1,400 lb. armor-piercing projectile to a range of 13 miles.

Texas' first service was in Mexican waters following the Tampico Incident of 9 April 1914. In 1916, *Texas* became the first U.S. battleship to mount anti-aircraft guns when two 3-inch (76 mm)/50-caliber guns were installed on platforms atop the boat cranes. She was also the first USN ship to control gunfire with directors and rangefinders, the analog forerunners of today's digital computers.



USS *Texas* surrounded by bi-planes circa 1919

During WWI, *Texas* crossed the Atlantic to join the Grand Fleet. On 23 October 1942, *Texas* supported Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa.

During the Battle of Port Lyautey, she hosted a young war correspondent named Walter Cronkite. Cronkite was the first to issue the first uncensored news reports about Operation Torch. Cronkite's experiences aboard *Texas* launched his career as a war correspondent.

While *Texas* was bombarding Battery Hamburg enroute to Cherbourg, a German 24-cm shell fired from that battery skidded across the top of her conning tower, shearing the top of the fire control periscope off. A shell from Battery Hamburg struck the *Texas*, penetrated her port bow directly below the Wardroom, and entered the stateroom of Warrant Officer M.A. Clark. That shell failed to explode. The unexploded shell is currently displayed aboard the ship.

In August 1944 *Texas* participated in the invasion of southern France.

In February 1945 at Iwo Jima, *Texas* participated in the three-day bombardment preceding the Marines landing. Once the Marines went ashore, *Texas* provided gunfire support. She next supported the invasion of Okinawa. At Okinawa, *Texas* fired 2,019 fourteen-inch shells, 2,643 5-inch shells, 490 3-inch shells, 3,100 rounds of 40 mm ammunition, and 2,205 rounds of 20 mm ammunition.

After World War II

After the war, *Texas* was part of Operation Magic Carpet, the transportation of American service members home to the United States. In 1946, at Norfolk, preparations for her inactivation began. On 18 June 1946, she was placed officially in reserve at Baltimore, Maryland.

Life as a Museum Ship

On 17 April 1947, the Battleship *Texas* Commission was established by the Texas Legislature to support bringing the *Texas* to Texas. On 20 April 1948, *Texas* was turned over to the State of Texas.

With Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz in attendance, *Texas* was ceremoniously decommissioned on 21 April 1948 and her name was struck from the Naval Vessel Register. *Texas* was the first permanent battleship memorial museum in the United States.

Unfortunately, the Battleship *Texas* Commission (BTC) was not able to generate funds sufficient to maintain the *Texas*.

In 1975 the *Texas* was designated a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. Then, in 1975, the National Park Service designated the *Texas* a National Historic Landmark.

Transfer to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Concerns over the condition of the *Texas* led the Texas Legislature to pass legislation in 1983 designating the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) as the State agency responsible for the *Texas*.

On 13 December 1988, *Texas* was pulled from her berth at San Jacinto Park and towed 56 miles to Todd Shipyard in Galveston, Texas. Once under tow, while still in the Houston Ship Channel, she started taking

Continued on next page...

on water from a serious breach just forward of her engine rooms.

She underwent a 14-month rehabilitation project at Todd Shipyard to restore her to her 1945 condition as close as available funding and materials could accomplish.

After her return to her slip at the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, Texas resumed her duties as a museum ship open to the visiting public.

Current Plan for the Texas

During the 2019 Texas legislative session, Senate Bill 1511 was passed to address which organization will steer the future course for the Texas. The bill 1511 provided for the TPWD to lease Texas to The BTF for 99 years. Ownership of Texas remains with The State of Texas. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), was signed by both TPWD and BTF. The BTF is now charting the future course for the Texas.

The Texas Legislature has provided funding, in separate legislation, in the amount \$35 million for the current rehabilitation work on the Texas. Those funds came from the State's "rainy day fund."

Work on the Texas

Texas is now dry docked at Gulf Copper Shipyard at Galveston, Texas. She was towed there in August 2022.

More Information and Photos

The best source for more information on the Texas is the BTF's web site at battleshiptexas.org. At that site, you can view photos and regular updates of the current work on the ship. There are also many YouTube videos with status updates and Texas history.



Texas in Drydock

Submitted by CAPT Chuck Hewell, USN (Ret.)

USCGC Blackthorn (WLB 391) was a 180-foot (55 m) seagoing buoy tender (WLB) which sank in 1980 in a collision with a tanker near the Tampa Bay Sunshine Skyway Bridge, resulting in 23 crew member fatalities.



Collision in Tampa Bay

The U.S. Coast Guard held their annual memorial service at the Blackthorn Memorial site in St. Petersburg Friday, 27 January to honor the lives lost. Vice Admiral Kevin E. Lunday, USCG, Atlantic Area Commander, was the main speaker. Tampa Bay Commandery represented by companions RADM Bill Merlin, USCG (Ret.), present Commander Jim Hoey, past Commander, CAPT Kris Carlock, USN (Ret.) and CAPT Art Whiting, USCG (Ret.) attended to present a wreath and give their support. Having just completed her overhaul at the Gulf Tampa Drydock Company, which included overhaul of the main propulsion generators, Blackthorn was outward bound from Tampa Bay on the night of 28 January 1980. Meanwhile, the tanker Capricorn, was standing into the bay. Blackthorn's captain, LCDR George Sepel had departed the ship's bridge to investigate a problem with the newly installed propulsion shaft. ENS John Ryan had the conn.

Earlier the cutter had been overtaken by the Kazakhstan, a Russian passenger ship. When requested by Kazakhstan to pass, the Blackthorn navigated starboard permitting Kazakhstan to pass. The Blackthorn then navigated to almost mid-channel and resumed course. (Some contend that the brightly lit passenger vessel obscured the ability of the crews of Blackthorn and Capricorn to see each other.)

Capricorn began to turn left, but this course would not allow Capricorn and Blackthorn to pass port-to-port, as the rules of navigation generally required. Unable

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TAMPA BAY COMMANDERY – USCGC BLACKTHORN MEMORIAL

to make radio contact with *Blackthorn*, *Capricorn's* pilot blew two short whistle blasts to have the ships pass starboard-to-starboard. With the *Blackthorn's* officer of the deck confused in regard to the standard operating procedure and rules of navigation, *Blackthorn's* captain issued orders for evasive action. Despite the *Blackthorn's* evasive action, a collision occurred.

Damage to the *Blackthorn* from the initial impact was not extensive. However, *Capricorn's* anchor was ready to be let go. The anchor became embedded in the *Blackthorn's* hull and ripped open the port side above the water line. Then as the two ships backed away from each other, the chain became taut. The force of the much larger ship pulling on it, caused *Blackthorn* to tip on her side until she suddenly capsized. Six off-duty personnel who had mustered when they heard the collision alarm were trapped inside the ship. Several crew members who had just

reported aboard tried to escape and in the process trapped themselves in the engine room. Although 27 crewmen survived the collision, 23 perished.

Primary responsibility for the collision was placed on the *Blackthorn's* captain, Lt. Commander Sepel, as he had made an inexperienced junior officer (Ensign Ryan) officer of the deck and allowed him to navigate the ship through an unfamiliar waterway with heavy traffic.

A board determined that the cause of the collision was the failure of both vessels to keep well to the side of the channel which lay on each ship's starboard (right) sides. Concurring with the marine board's determination of the cause, the Commandant emphasized in his "Action" that the failure of the persons in charge of both vessels to ascertain the intentions of the other through the exchange of appropriate whistle signals was the primary contributing cause. Additionally, ADM Hayes pointed out that attempts to establish a passing agreement by using only radiotelephone communications failed to be an adequate substitute for exchanging proper whistle signals.

The marine board found evidence of violation of various navigation laws on the parts of *Capricorn's* master and pilot. There were similar findings on the part of *Blackthorn's* commanding officer and officer of the deck. These matters were referred to the commanders of the Seventh and Eighth Coast Guard Districts for further investigation and appropriate action.



The Commandant also acted on various safety recommendations made by the marine board concerning training and equipment aboard Coast Guard vessels, and navigation considerations in Tampa Bay.



Jim Hoey and CAPT Kris Carlock with Tampa Bay Commandery's wreath

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Seaman Apprentice William "Billy" Flores was posthumously awarded the Coast Guard Medal, the service's highest award for heroism in peacetime in 2000.



Seaman Apprentice William "Billy" Flores

SA Flores, who had been out of boot camp just one year, opened the life jacket locker as *Blackthorn* capsized, securing its hatch open with his belt, and made sure that his shipmates were able to access and use the life jackets. His actions saved a number of lives during the accident. His heroic role was initially overlooked by the two official reports by the Coast Guard and the NTSB, but was later given the recognition he deserved. His family was presented with the Medal on 28 January 2000, the 20th anniversary of the tragedy. Seaman Apprentice Flores died aboard *Blackthorn*. In October 2010, it was announced that the third new Sentinel-class fast response cutter, a 154-foot patrol boat, would be named for Flores. In May 2021, Flores was awarded the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor for his actions on USCGC *Blackthorn*.

Submitted by CAPT M. K. Carlock
M.K.Carlock@gmail.com

We note the passing of our fellow Naval Order Companions. May their memories be a blessing.

Dr. James Michael Alford (USNA '60)

(Certificate 9179)
Charleston Commandery
Joined 15 February 2012
Died 26 February 2023

Mr. Norman Edward Champagne

(Certificate 9637)
Newport Commandery
Joined 31 May 2016
Died 20 December 2022

CAPT Allan Wayne Collins, CEC, USN (Ret.)

(Certificate 8805)
Arizona Commandery
Joined 22 July 2008
Died 24 June 2022

RADM Nelson Otto Heyer, USN (Ret.)

(Certificate 6181)
Miami Dade County Commandery
Joined 17 November 1988
Died 18 January 2023

Mrs. Linda Sue Mauck

(Certificate 8453)
Monterey Commandery
Joined 10 October 2020
Died 14 June 2022

CAPT William Robert Mehrhoff, USN (Ret.)

(Certificate 7328)
Miami Dade County Commandery
Joined 01 September 1995
Died 01 October 2022

VADM James Alvin Sagerholm, USN (Ret.)

(Certificate 9665)
National Capital Commandery
Joined 30 November 2016
Died 03 November 2022

Welcome New Companions!

Arizona

Mr. John Craig Low, (USA Vet)
Mr. Bruce Baron Benham

Atlanta

Mr. Sydney Dodd Frissell Farrar, II (USMC Vet)

Charleston

Mr. Kevin James Glynn, (USN Vet)

Florida First Coast

ET1 Kenneth John Joseph Santucci, USN (Ret.)

Massachusetts

LtCol Michael Anthony Wabrek, USMC(Ret.)

National Capital

LCDR Sean Patrick Walsh, USN (Ret.)
Maj Daniel Troy Dewit, USMC

New York City

Mr. John Alan Glusman
Mr. Jeffrey Brian Noss

Tampa Bay

Mr. Richard Wesley Gest, (USN VET)

Texas

Mr. James Clement Lanshe (USMC VET)
ENS Sean Michael Lucas, SC, USN

Send all contact info changes to:
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M.K.Carlock@gmail.com
415-725-2101



Leads for potential new members are coming in. We have received 43 leads through Square Space. Combining those with 25 previously reported new gains and seven rejoins, we have potential growth of 75 new Companions since November 2022.

This is a strong start, so please keep sending the referrals to our Naval Order landing page, navalorder.org/membership-form, for an inquiry. This is NOT a formal application form. It is designed for someone who is interested in learning more about the Naval Order and how to join. An application will still need to be submitted.

All commanderies except MDC, MON, NWT, and WNY have received a lead or a new member.

Special thanks to Fred Passman, we now have an electronically fillable pdf form which potential members can fill out online. Printing, handwriting, and snail-mailing in an application can now be bypassed by this new, easy form if one wishes.

Please review this item and let me know how we might start using this form in our workflow. For example, there probably needs to be a guide that says after you fill it out, do you print it and mail it, or do you digitally sign it (how?) and email it? Your feedback will be helpful and appreciated.

If you would like to contact me directly, you may at nous.vcg.membership@gmail.com or 571-334-2794. I will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have about the Naval Order of the United States and/or membership to our organization.

Submitted by CAPT Bill Steagall, USN, (Ret.)
Vice Commander General, Membership
NOUS.VCGMEMBERSHIP@gmail.com



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