

TO THE POINT

SPRING 2025

The Quarterly Newsletter for Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum

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BATTLE OF OKINAWA 80TH ANNIVERSARY: THE SHIP THAT WOULD NOT DIE

From April 1 to June 22, 1945, more than 12,000 American lives were lost in the battle that ultimately proved to be a victory for the Allied forces and was the last and most significant battle in the Pacific theater. Over these 82 days, Allied Forces struggled with the Japanese for control of air bases vital to the plan to invade Japan.

On April 16, 1945, during the attack at Okinawa, the USS Laffey (DD-724) was attacked by 22 Japanese planes, seven kamikaze planes, and two bombs. These attacks killed 32 and wounded 71. The USS Laffey stayed afloat despite fighting through fires, smashed guns, and a jammed rudder. **It was the fiercest attack ever survived by a U.S. Navy vessel.** The ship was awarded the Presidential Citation for her valor and earned the moniker "The Ship That Would Not Die."

The USS Laffey was not the only ship heavily damaged during the Battle of Okinawa; a total of 368 ships were destroyed during this time, and



another 34 were sunk. The USS Mannert Abele was attacked by more than 15 kamikazes and struck by a baka bomb that split the vessel in two, rapidly sinking the ship and killing 73 sailors. The USS Lindsey was severely damaged by two kamikaze planes, killing 57 sailors and wounding another 57 in addition to the 12,000 men lost in the water and 763 downed aircraft.

April 18 marks 80 years since the U.S. responded to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor with the historic "Doolittle Raid". To read more about the iconic mission, see "Isoroku Yamamoto & The Doolittle Raid" on Page 3.

Battle of Okinawa 80th Anniversary

Patriots Point will host a two-day event commemorating the historic event and the men behind the military efforts.

Life Aboard the Laffey Day | April 15

Step aboard the "Ship That Would Not Die" and experience life as a sailor during Life Aboard the Laffey Day. This immersive event brings history to life with special programming and hands-on experiences honoring the USS Laffey and her courageous crew. More event details on Page 4.

A Day of Remembrance | April 16

This day of remembrance commemorates the anniversary of the attack on the USS Laffey at Okinawa, honoring the courage and sacrifice of her crew. A memorial ceremony will be held at 10 AM, followed by historical presentations and guided tours of the kamikaze attacks on the destroyer. Visitors will be able to explore the



entire museum, engage with living history reenactors, and view a brand-new exhibit aboard the USS Laffey. Special discussions focusing on the kamikaze attacks on the USS Laffey will be open to guests, offering an in-depth perspective on the pivotal events that shaped the ship's history.

This commemorative event is a chance to honor the brave crew members of the USS Laffey and reflect on their extraordinary story of survival and heroism.



March is Member Appreciation Month

GET \$10 OFF ANY MEMBERSHIP LEVEL!

Join the fleet in March and receive \$10 off any membership level. Membership helps support our mission, preserve our historic ships, fund educational programs and scholarships, and create new exhibits throughout the museum.

Members are invited to participate in special programs, complimentary Captain's Tours, exclusive giveaways, and a special Member Appreciation Event, all while enjoying **year-round Friend of the Fleet Membership benefits:**

- ★ Free Museum Entry
- ★ Tour & Onsite Discounts
- ★ Exclusive Member Events
- ★ Priority Booking
- ★ Partner Discounts
- ★ And More!

Scan the QR code to learn all the ways you can save by becoming a member or visit patriotspoint.org/membership.



MOVIE + GAME NIGHT

Friday, March 28 | 6 - 10 PM

Details:

Live Music | *Summer Royalty*
Movie Screening | *Captain Marvel*
Life-Size, Board + Card Games
Lite Bites + Movie Snacks
Cash Bar

Tickets: *Fleet Circle Members Free*
\$10/Members \$15/Non-Members

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FEATURED EVENT

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

PATRIOTS POINT PARTNERS WITH USC TO PRODUCE FEATURE FILM

Vietnam Veterans Day marks the anniversary of the 1973 withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, recognizing the contributions of more than three million Americans who served and 58,000 who gave their lives in service to their country.

To show our gratitude, all **Vietnam veterans and their immediate families will receive free admission** to Patriots Point on March 29. Each Vietnam veteran in attendance will also receive an official Department of Defense Vietnam War Veteran lapel pin—a token of recognition for their service.



Vietnam Veterans Day Ceremony

Patriots Point will host a ceremony at 11 a.m. inside the Vietnam Experience Exhibit to commemorate those who served. Patriots Point invites veterans, families, and community members to participate in this meaningful opportunity and pay tribute to those who served our nation with unwavering courage.

Vietnam Historical Film

Patriots Point has partnered with the University of South Carolina Libraries to present archival films offering a firsthand look at the Vietnam War through Marine combat footage, Department of Defense reports, and network news broadcasts. A display of photographs, letters, and artifacts from the South Carolina Library will also highlight the experiences of South Carolinians who served.

The film screening begins at 1 p.m. in the Smokey Stover Theater aboard the USS Yorktown.

New Online Collection & Exhibit

As part of this year's commemoration, Patriots Point has launched a new online collection featur-



ring James "Doc" Pueschel, a Navy corpsman who served with the 1st Marine Division, 3rd Battalion, Mike Company during the Vietnam War. Pueschel played a critical role, providing lifesaving medical aid under fire. Mike Company sustained 100% casualties during the war, with Pueschel himself wounded four times while assisting fellow service members. The physical artifacts from Pueschel's service and medical equipment used during the war are on display in the Quonset Hut of the Vietnam Experience.

For more details on Vietnam Veterans Day, or to view the new collection, visit PatriotsPoint.org.

EVENTS ON THE SHIP

Second Saturdays
April 12 & May 10

Medal of Honor Day
March 25 | 10 AM - 2 PM

Movie + Game Night
March 28 | 6 - 10 PM

Vietnam Veteran Day
March 29 | 11 AM - 3 PM

Life Aboard the Laffey
April 15 | All Day

**Battle of Okinawa
80th Anniversary**
April 16 | 11 AM - 2 PM

**Military Night @
Charleston Battery Game**
May 17 | 7:30 PM

**Memorial Day &
TAPS Across America**
May 26 | 3 PM

Medal of Honor Day
March 25 | 10 AM - 2 PM

Guests can interact with historical artifacts, hear heroic stories, and take a special self-guided tour to learn how specific exhibits relate to Medal of Honor recipients.

**Military Appreciation Night
@ Charleston Battery Game**
May 17 | 7:30 PM

Come support the Charleston Battery as they face San Antonio FC in a special Military Appreciation Night at Patriots Point Soccer Stadium.

**Memorial Day &
TAPS Across America**
May 26 | 3 PM

Patriots Point will continue the tradition of playing TAPS on the flight deck (rain or shine) at 3 p.m.

PEOPLE OF PATRIOTS POINT

30 Years of Service at Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum

Dave Shuler, a devoted Patriots Point Volunteer, has marked 30 years of service at the museum!

Having just retired from a 37-year career with the Ford Motor Company, Dave moved back south, settling in Mt. Pleasant. With time on his hands, he answered an ad in

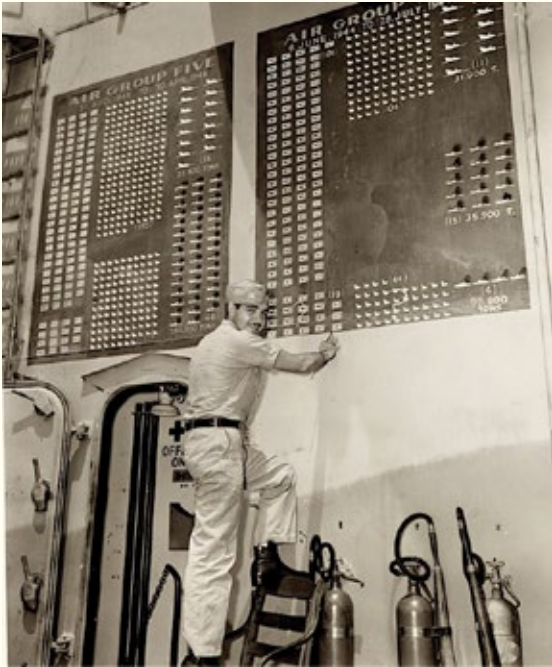
the Moultrie News in November 1995, seeking volunteers at Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum. Dave recalls the day when he was invited to interview with Don Ziglar, the first Volunteer Coordinator. Dave has been a trailblazer since the beginning, enthusiastically paving the path for all who have followed in his footsteps. Dave helped build the museum's volunteer program, recalling being on the ship five days a week, with just one other volunteer.

Dave Shuler remains an active volunteer at Patriots Point to date. Sharing the Yorktown's stories with thousands of visitors since December 1995, many have followed him through the hangar bay and below decks on the very tour route he developed. Dave's enthusiasm, wry sense of humor, and unmatched storytelling make our artifacts come alive—for every visitor he encounters.

Visit PatriotsPoint.org to learn how YOU can join the Patriots Point crew!



STORIES AT SEA



Fitch adds to Air Group One's kill board while balancing on a chair.

Stephen Fitch Adds to Air Group One's Kill Board

Stephen Fitch was a Lt. Commander in the Engineering Department on the USS Yorktown (CV-10). An artist at heart, Fitch would draw both small cartoons and comics as well as detailed schematics of engine compartments and staterooms. Fitch is also the artist behind the squadron emblems on the flight deck killboards.

A plank owner aboard the USS Yorktown and original member of the ship's engineering department, Lieutenant Commander Stephen David Fitch's skills brought the Fighting Lady to life in more ways than one. A sailor, engineer, and talented artist, Stephen Fitch's collection

provides a unique look into both the Yorktown's construction and the culture of a "city at sea".

Brought in early to help build the Yorktown, Lt. Fitch's fingerprints are woven into the construction of the ship. His collection reveals his deep relationship with the ship and the men aboard. Fitch's artistic abilities made him a great friend to have, as pilots relied on him to paint their kill board scores and provide illustrations for other shipboard publications. His playful sketches reveal the humor that existed on the ship, the cast of characters who populated it, and the quiet moments in between.

FEATURED ARTICLE

ISOROKU YAMAMOTO & THE DOOLITTLE RAID

In early April, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto wrote to Niwa Michi at her geisha house in Tokyo, "The first stage of operations has been a kind of children's hour and will soon be over; now comes the adults' hour, so perhaps I'd better stop dozing and bestir myself...." From December 7 to early April, the Imperial Japanese military forces had been on a roll throughout the Far East, and no one could stop them as they pushed aside all Allied resistance. Japan appeared unstoppable and had no serious threats to Japanese military forces or the homeland. In his letter to Niwa, Yamamoto didn't buy all the Japanese press clippings.

Two weeks after Yamamoto's fifty-eighth birthday on April 4, Jimmy Doolittle and his raiders hit Tokyo, Kawasaki, Yokosuka, Nagoya, Yokkaichi, and Kobe on April 18. The raid did not hurt the Japanese militarily, but the psychological blow was tremendous. Yamamoto commented, "I was distressed to hear that Tokyo finally had a raid." He realized much sooner than most that the government and media did not want the Japanese to learn the implications of these attacks. "I feel it was just enough of a taste of the real thing to warn the people of Tokyo against their present outlook." However, the government was quick to minimize the psychological damage of the raid by news coverage of the minimal damage and playing on the words of the "Do-Little" and his "Do Not Much" raiders.

The public was fooled, but the psychological impact was devastating among Japan's military. Yamamoto wrote, "It's a disgrace that the skies over the imperial capital should have been defiled without a single enemy plane shot down."

The Doolittle raid's immediate impact led Yamamoto to



move up his planned attack on Midway. The Japanese Army did not support the original attack, but after Doolittle's raid, it quickly offered up forces for the Midway invasion. Midway would become



the battle that would destroy four of Japan's ten aircraft carriers and put the Japanese on the defensive for the remainder of the war. It would ruin Yamamoto's hope of a peace settlement with the United States, without which he realized Japan was doomed. After the defeat at Midway, some survivors were confined to bases in Kyushu to hide the bad news and withhold it from the nation. Lower-ranking servicemen were sent to the South Pacific, and most would never see their families again.

Doolittle, his 16 bombers, and 80 aviators had swung a small hammer, shattering the glass facade of Japanese military power, and began to crack and tumble with this first impact of growing American power. Yamamoto recognized the coming of the "adults' hour" when hard choices and facts would fall psychologically and literally upon Japan.

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THE FUNNIES

Dilbert Likes the Roar!

Don't use full throttle ALL the time just because you like the ROAR!



Don't use full throttle ALL the time just because you like the ROAR!

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HOUSEKEEPING



Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum
Open Daily: 10 AM - 5 PM | Ticket Office Closes: 4 PM

CAPTAIN'S CHAIR

Hello, friends!

As the days grow longer and temperatures rise, there's no better time to visit Patriots Point! Spring is a season of renewal, and here at the museum, it brings a fresh lineup of exciting events and activities for the whole family.

This season, we are thrilled to present a series of exciting programs that honor our nation's history and provide hands-on learning experiences. From special guided tours to new interactive exhibits and educational workshops, visitors have a unique opportunity to connect with the past in meaningful ways. We're also hosting a variety of community events, including family game night, live reenactments, and engaging activities.

We invite you to make Patriots Point a part of your spring plans and experience the rich history, excitement, and beauty that this season has to offer. Be sure to check our website and social media channels for updates on event schedules and special programming. We look forward to welcoming you and your family for an unforgettable visit!

Sincerely,

Allison Hunt
Patriots Point, Executive Director

SPECIAL EVENT

LIFE ABOARD THE LAFFEY

This day will provide an immersive experience on life aboard the USS Laffey. Living history reenactors will be stationed throughout the ship, with former crew members available to discuss their experiences. Visitors will be given printed maps highlighting important sections of the ship to explore.

Laffey LEGO Replica

A large USS Laffey LEGO replica will be on display in Hangar Bay III of the Yorktown. Visitors can view the impressive creation and meet its creator, Sam Singewald.

Event Date: Tuesday, April 15

Build Your Own USS Laffey

Take part in the Lego fun by building your own USS Laffey model and submit it to win a fun prize!

How to Enter

1. Build a shoebox-sized LEGO model of the USS Laffey.
2. Bring your creation to Patriots Point by 5:00 p.m. on April 15.
3. Entries must be submitted with name, age, and parent/guardian's contact information.

Competition Details

Entries judged on creativity, accuracy, and craftsmanship. Bring contest submissions to Hangar Bay III of the USS Yorktown. Winner announced Friday, April 18.

FEEL GOOD STORY

Rescuing History: The Artifacts of Charles Bonness

During the renovations of an old family home, a local consultant overseeing the project noticed a pile of belongings set aside for disposal. Among them were aged letters, faded photographs, and personal effects—items that hinted at a deeper story. Unable to ignore their historical value, he gathered them up and took them home.

That evening, as he and his wife carefully unfolded the letters, they were transported back in time. The name Charles Bonness appeared again and again, revealing the life of a young sailor who had gone missing in 1942. The words on the pages spoke of hope, duty, and family, preserved for decades by his devoted sister. She had kept them as a way to hold onto his memory, passing them down through generations. But as time went on and the family line ended, these precious artifacts were nearly lost forever.

Recognizing the significance of Charles's story, the consultant's wife felt an immediate connection. She knew these relics of the past belonged somewhere they



could be honored—not discarded and forgotten. With deep conviction, she reached out to the museum's Collections Department, ensuring that Charles's legacy would be preserved.

Now, more than 83 years later, the artifacts have found a home at Patriots Point where they'll be available to schools, researchers, and visitors—keeping the memory of Charles Bonness alive. What was once nearly discarded is now a permanent tribute to a young sailor who will never be forgotten.

CORPORATE SPONSORS

Nothing Bundt Cakes

Fleet Members receive **20% off** orders at the Mount Pleasant Nothing Bundt Cake's store.



From "Happy Birthday" to "Just Because" Nothing Bundt Cakes offers luscious cakes and unique handcrafted decorations for every occasion. Made from the finest ingredients, their cakes are hand-crafted and available in a variety of sizes. Make every occasion sweeter with their wide selection of one-of-a-kind cakes.