

# The Daybook

Volume 5 Issue 2

Winter 1999



The Navy's Greatest Team

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## About The Daybook

The *Daybook* is an authorized publication of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum (HRNM). Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps and do not imply endorsement thereof. Book reviews are solely the opinion of the reviewer.

The HRNM is operated and funded by Commander Navy Region Mid-Atlantic. The museum is dedicated to the study of 220 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free. *The Daybook's* purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum related events. It is written by the staff and volunteers of the museum.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Daybook* can be reached at (757) 322-2993, by fax at (757) 445-1867, e-mail at [gbcalthou@comar.navy.mil](mailto:gbcalthou@comar.navy.mil), or write *The Daybook*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA 23510-1607. The museum can be found on the World Wide Web at <http://naval-station.norfolk.va.us/navy.html>.

*The Day Book* is published quarterly with a circulation of 1,200. Contact the editor for a free subscription.

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*Hurricane of Fire: The Union Assault on Fort Fisher* by Charles A. Robinson III. Reviewed by HRNM curator Joe Judge.

**Cover Photograph:** Baseball legends Bob Feller and Fred Hutchinson in 1938. Both men played on the Norfolk Naval Training Station baseball team in 1942. Photo courtesy of David Eskenazi Collection and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, WA.



Rear Adm. R.T. Ziemer  
Commander Navy Region Mid-Atlantic

# SIGN-ificant

## The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

Several weeks after receiving this issue of *The Daybook*, drive past the Nauticus building and look at the front façade. There you will see a 7' sign that identifies the Hampton Roads Naval Museum together with its USS *Cumberland* logo. Special thanks to the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation for its perseverance in making the sign a reality. The Foundation has been steadfast in its efforts to work with the City of Norfolk to approve another sign on the Nauticus building. The Foundation is also funding the construction and installation of the sign.

Make sure you also note our improved interior directions. Nauticus and the Hampton Roads Naval Museum staff have worked together to fund an entrance sign

The year 1999 got off to a great start with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Volunteer Recognition Awards Dinner held January 28. Special thanks to those interpreters who dressed the part: **Gary Abrams, Jud Hill, Hunt Lewis, Al Petrich, Ralph Preston, Sally Tobin, and Preston Turpin.** Also, thank you to the volunteer committee that made the party possible: **Gene Hanlin, Al Petrich, Betty and Gurley Ritter, and Sally Tobin.**

Museum members were saddened by the loss of Foundation Vice-President **Jackie Smith**, who passed away January 27, 1999. Jackie had served as a member of the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation since April, 1992 and as vice-president since April, 1998. She never missed a meeting and was a most active



*Mrs. Jackie Smith, former vice-president of the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation. (Photo courtesy of Dr. B.L. Smith)*



*The museum's new indoor sign now located just outside the museum's main entrance. The sign was carved by Ed Cobb.*

that clearly spells out location, hours and visiting Navy ships. Once inside, visitors can look up into the atrium and view the new 15' Museum sign—a work of art by master carver Ed Cobb. For visitors that take the elevator, please note the sailing ship and directions to the museum. All of these signs allow visitors to understand first, that the Museum resides within Nauticus, and once inside, to find our exhibit gallery on the second floor.

board member in personal fundraising. A great honor has been bestowed on Foundation board member and Museum volunteer **Dr. Charles J. Devine, Jr.** An EVMS endowment honors him along with his brother and father, all innovators in the field of urology.

Finally, you may have noticed that *The Daybook* has changed. The publication has been enlarged to 16 pages and includes exciting new features like book reviews,

expanded articles on Hampton Roads' rich Naval history, and color pictures. We have scaled back the frequency of the publication to a quarterly format. We hope you like the new look and that you enjoy reading future *Daybook's* in the months ahead.

*Becky*

# What's in Store For 1999 at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum has a big menu for you to choose from in 1999. For more information or to make reservations for Dunderfunk or the Lecture Series, please call 322-2992. For education programs call 322-2986 and for exhibit information call 322-2993.

## Education and Living History

The Museum has a wide variety of education programs for several different grade levels. In addition, the living history group Ship Company of the CSS *Virginia* will make several appearances at the museum throughout the year. Group tours of the museum's exhibits are always available.

## Lecture Series

-Robert Timberg, author of the highly acclaimed book *The Nightingale's Song*. **March 9 at Club Pier 26.** (See page 4 for more details.)

-Veteran WTKR TV-3 anchor and reporter **Ed Hughes** speaks about the 1967 attack on the Hampton Roads-based intelligence ship USS *Liberty* (ATGR-5). **June 6 at Club Pier 26.**

-Royal Navy veteran and commentator **Alexander Wooley** speaks on the future of the NATO alliance. **August 11 at Club Pier 26.**



-Adm. Jay Johnson, Chief of Naval Operations. **Place and time TBD.**



## Dunderfunk

On the last Thursday of every other month, the Museum sponsors an informal get together at lunchtime to discuss naval history. This year's topics include Pearl Harbor, ship model building, military art, and new maritime exhibits at other museums. This year's program begins on **February 25 at 12:30 p.m.** Cost for lunch is \$9.

## Exhibit

**Pax Americana: The U.S. Navy in the Era of Violent Peace.** Over the last 15 years, the U.S. Armed Forces have been called upon in increasing numbers to provide forces for humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. This exhibit showcases artifacts and photographs of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps during these operations. **Opens April 12.**



Marines of the 1st MEU on patrol in Somalia, 1993. (Photo courtesy of the Joint Combat Camera Command)

# Museum Welcomes Author of *The Nightingale's Song*, Robert Timberg

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum is pleased to present Robert Timberg, best-selling author of the highly acclaimed book *The Nightingale's Song*. Mr. Timberg's presentation will take place at Norfolk Naval Station's Club Pier 26 at noon on March 9. A lunch will be served at the cost of \$10. Reservations are required. Please call 757-322-2992 to make reservations.

Mr. Timberg is currently deputy chief of *The Baltimore Sun's* Washington bureau. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1964 and served with the 1st Marine Division in Vietnam from March 1966 to February 1967. After the war, he received his Masters in journalism from Stanford University and has received several awards for excellence in journalism. He has worked for *The Sun* since 1971.

Mr. Timberg's talk will be centered around the thesis of his book. The book itself focuses on five well known alumni of the U.S. Naval Academy and how their experiences at the Academy and in the Vietnam War affected their public careers. Using his book as a starting point, the theme of his talk will be about the effect that the

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum presents Robert Timberg, author of *The Nightingale's Song*. March 9, 1999 at Norfolk Naval Station's Club Pier 26. Lunch included at a price of \$10. Reservations required. Call 757-322-2992 to make reservations.

Vietnam War had on an entire generation of Americans.

Here is an excerpt from *The Nightingale's Song*:

John Kennedy primed the pump. On a bitter-cold day in January 1961, he proclaimed the United States and its citizens

willing to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship" to advance the cause of freedom around the world.

Cheers greeted the declaration. For that moment the youthful, vibrant new President embodied the far-flung, seemingly limitless ideals of the nation that had chosen him as its leader.

Kennedy was wrong, of course, assuming as he did that the generation then moving toward its majority would be like those that had preceded it, including his own, men and women who could imagine something to die for

The Brigade of Midshipman, toes numb, lips cracked, fingers frozen on the stocks of rifles, marched in the inaugural parade. Approaching the reviewing stand, the midshipmen executed a crisp eyes right, unaware that the pledge spoken minutes earlier by their new Commander-in-Chief had unleashed forces that would soon thin their ranks and reshape their world.

Kennedy was dead less than three years later, but the legacy of that pledge, the Vietnam War, bruised American society like nothing else in this century. The nation split over the war, as did the generation that has now come of age. Those who opposed the war forged a movement that eventually led to the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam and created a counter-culture that dominated much of the life of the nation in the late sixties and early seventies. By the mid-1970's, unscarred by Vietnam combat, these former antiwar activists had moved into the mainstream of American life, assuming positions of stature in politics, government, education, law, finance, and the arts. By then many were serving in Congress. In January 1993 the first of their number moved into the Oval Office.

For those who served in Vietnam, the war and its aftermath ushered in troubled times. Unlike veterans of other wars, they came home to hostility, contempt, ridicule, and at best indifference. Their experiences



were at first disorienting, then alienating. As they saw it, they had fought bravely against a resilient and implacable foe, innocently trusting the leadership of the nation that had sent them off to war. Many saw comrades killed and wounded. Thousands came home and maimed themselves.

They reacted in different ways. The stereotype became the so-called ticking time bomb, the vet who dashes to the roof of a building in some sleepy southwestern town and guns down a dozen people with a sniper rifle. Others, emotionally shattered by the war, found little meaning to their lives in the confusing aftermath of the conflict. Some became derelicts, street people, drains of society. Still others turned against the war, hurling their medals at the steps of the Capitol. For most, anger, bitterness, and distrust of the institutions of the nation for which they had fought became the prevailing emotions.

John McCain, Bud McFarlane, Jim Webb, Oliver North, and, to a lesser extent, John Poindexter belong to still another group, probably the largest, the one that "went to ground," as Harold G. Moore and

*Excerpt continued on page 5*

*Excerpt continued from page 4*

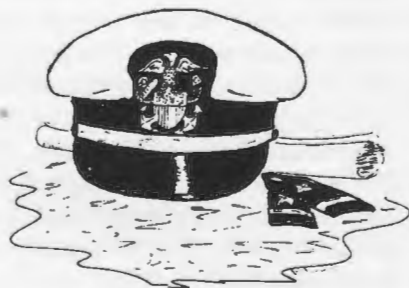
Joseph L. Galloway have written, waiting patiently for America to "come to its senses."

No less angry, bitter, and confused, these men were, above all, survivors. However painful their individual wartime experiences, they knew they had to put Vietnam in a safe place, let it scab over and get on with their lives. And so they did. Before long, they were working side by side with men and women who had opposed the war, with others who avoided military service by jiggering their college schedules, marital status, or health histories.

They were not immune to the occasional dark thought. They noticed, for example, that the antiwar movement lost much of its vigor when draft calls slackened and the white, middle-class kids who had been its center of gravity no longer felt threatened. They noticed, as well, that the officials who had maneuvered the nation into the war, then managed to lose it through arrogance, deceit, and incompetence, were making a slick escape, like Robert McNamara, exiled to the World Bank. For a time, though they were able to ship such thoughts off to the same safe place where they kept other, more brutal Vietnam memories.

For some of these men, though, no place was safe enough. You couldn't tell by looking at them, probably not even by talking to many of them, but they were the walking wounded of the Vietnam generation. And down the road, there would be hell to pay. 🚢

Excerpt taken from pages 85 to 87 of *The Nightingale's Song* by Robert Timberg. Copyright © 1995 by Robert Timberg (N.Y. Simon & Schuster, Inc.) Used by permission of the publisher.



*An exhibit on the Navy's comptroller is now on display at the Regional Resources Support Office located inside Ranger Hall at Naval Station Norfolk. (Photo by Gordon Calhoun)*

## Gallery & Exhibit Update

Things have been rather hectic around the museum lately and we have finished making a few changes to the permanent gallery space. *Cuba Libre!* was kept open through the beginning of the year and was just taken down in January. As we put the permanent exhibits back together, we have decided to keep a few of the items used in *Cuba Libre!* for the permanent Spanish-American War exhibit.

First and most importantly, the museum has been granted permission by the Curator of Navy Ship Models to keep the 1884 builder's model of the Norfolk-based battleship USS *Maine* (BB-2/c, ex-ACR-1). *Maine's* jack has been sent out to be professionally conserved. Once this process is complete, it will accompany the model in its new location.

Second, the model of the Norfolk-based torpedo boat USS *Winslow* (TB-5) built by museum volunteer **Bob Comet** will be put on display (promise!). Bob will soon be working on another Hampton Roads warship that was built here and then fought in the Spanish-American War, the patrol gunboat USS *Nashville* (PG-7).

Thirdly, after much thought, we have decided to keep the Spanish torpedo rather than send it off to storage. For those of you not familiar with this item, for years the museum has had a torpedo taken from the Spanish cruiser *Vizcaya*.

Finally, we recently installed an exhibit for the Navy's regional comptroller. Among other items included in this exhibit are money



*One of the more interesting items in the comptroller exhibit is a c.1960's IBM punch card machine. This is the machine Navy payroll clerks used to complete time cards. It is also a pioneer in causing the Y2K problem. (Photo by Gordon Calhoun)* certificates (in lieu of real money) issued by the U.S. Government to members of the Armed Forces for use in foreign lands; turn of the century adding machines; and several photographs illustrating the need for accountability in the Navy system. Also included is an IBM punch card machine used by the Navy for payroll purposes. Among other things, this machine was a pioneer in causing the Year 2000 computer bug as one can only punch out the last two digits of the year. The exhibit is located in Ranger Hall at Naval Station Norfolk. 🚢



Richmond-native Vinnie Smith, catcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates and later one of the great umpires of the National League, anchored the Norfolk Naval Training Station baseball team in 1942 and -43. (HRNM photo)

When the United States entered World War II, Uncle Sam enlisted and conscripted millions of young men to fight the Axis powers. It did not matter how famous one was as everyone was needed. Movie stars, entertainers, and sports personalities were called into action.

One such celebrity was Cleveland Indians pitcher Bob Feller. At age 22, Feller and his wicked fastball both had national reputations. However, two days after Japanese aircraft struck Pearl Harbor, Feller, the ace pitcher of the Indians staff, enlisted in the United States Navy. Feller dropped an extremely promising Major League career and comfortable lifestyle for a life of beans and bugle calls. "There was a war going on, which was something a bit more important than baseball," Feller said recently in a phone call from his home in the suburbs of Cleveland.

After boot camp, the Navy sent Feller to Hampton Roads to begin training as a gunner mate at the Norfolk Naval Training Station (NTS). However, the Navy also wanted him to do what he did best: play

baseball. Military commands across the country had asked professional sportsmen to form teams at their respective installations to entertain the soldiers and sailors stationed there. Even though people like Feller had little to no experience in the Navy, the service rated him and other athletes as Chief Specialist Athletic (C.S.A.). Officially, they were apart of the command's physical fitness program and considered to be physical fitness trainers. The program only lasted a year as it was abolished in early 1943. NTS had a baseball team before Feller arrived, but all of the players were amateurs and attracted no more attention than the intramural softball teams. That all changed when Feller and 20 other sailors who happened to be professional baseball players arrived.

The players put together a team in March 1942. Many of the players were

Signalman Gary Bodie. How does one manage a team with so much firepower? Chief Bodie knew little about the finer details of the game of baseball. According to Feller he "stayed the heck out of the way. That's what a manager should do."

King initially scheduled 34 games for his team. In this first slate of games, NTS's opponents included college teams such as William & Mary and the University of Richmond and minor league teams such as the Norfolk Tars, Portsmouth Cubs, and Baltimore Orioles (the Orioles did not become a Major League team until 1956 when the St. Louis Browns moved to Baltimore.) All home games were played on the Naval Station's baseball stadium off of Farragut Ave (see sidebar on page 9.) Tickets were required, but most games were free of charge. When admission was charged, the money usually went to the Navy-

## The Navy's Greatest Team

### Norfolk's Naval Baseball Team of WW II

by Gordon Calhoun

household names along with Feller. There was the fiery personality of Detroit Tiger pitcher Fred Hutchinson. He was known by many nicknames including "The Hutch" and "Stoneface." There was Portsmouth, VA's own and future member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Clarence "Ace" Parker. Parker was one of the first persons to excel at baseball and football. There was Sam Chapman, the star outfielder and "siege gun" for the Philadelphia A's. Chapman was training to become a Naval aviator.

There was Richmond-native Vinne Smith, a catcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates and future National League umpire. According to Feller, Smith was "the best player on the field." In left field was Jimmy Brown, normally the star forward for the Boston Celtics basketball team. Other lesser-known players including Maxie Wilson and Charley Meteleski of the Portsmouth Cubs filled out the roster. The rest of these players generally had several years of minor league ball at the AAA level.

Lt. Cmdr. Andrew E. King, the command's morale officer, assigned two career Naval personnel to manage the team. Lt. Fred R. Soltz was designated as "baseball officer." Managing the team during games was Chief

Marine Corps Relief Society.

The season started for the new team on April 4. By the end of the first week of play it won the first six straight games by a combined score of 37 runs for and seven runs against. The "NTS nine" sold out every home game and many away games. As many as 5,000 sailors and officers overflowed the grandstands of McClure Field to catch a glimpse of their team. By the end of the month of April, the team racked up a record of 19 and 2. The highlight of this initial run was a masterpiece pitching performance by Feller against Wilson (an AA minor league team) where he struck out 22 batters. During the season and Maxie Wilson each struck out 15. The *Norfolk Seabag*, the official newspaper of the station, very proudly compared the station's team to the Major League Brooklyn Dodgers who themselves won 14 of 17 games in the month of April.

The *Seabag's* pride in the baseball team was evident by the amount of space

*Greatest Team continued on page 7*



Philadelphia A's star outfielder Sam Chapman and the legendary pitcher/manager Fred "The Hutch" Hutchinson inspect a bat just before the first game. To Chapman's left is Chief Signalman Gary Bodie, theoretically the manager of the team, and to Hutchinson's right is Lt. F.R. Stolz who took care of all the team's administrative functions. (HRNM photo)

### ***Greatest Team continued from page 6***

team was evident by the amount of space devoted to articles about the team. The newspaper almost always led off the front page with a weekly wrap up of the NTS victories. Quite often, one or two photographs would accompany the articles. If one only had the *Seabag* to read about the events of World War II, one would tend to forget there was even a war going on. Little to no news about the war itself was ever reported in the 1942 edition of the *Seabag*. If the baseball team was to provide entertainment and a positive distraction for sailors nervous about the war, it succeeded with flying colors.

In the first week of May, the NTS nine traveled up to Richmond's City Stadium, the largest baseball stadium in Virginia, to play against the baseball team of Fort Lee. Like NTS, Fort Lee's team had several professionals on it. The game was dubbed the "Soldiers-Sailors" game and all proceeds of the match were split between the Navy Relief Society and the Army Emergency Fund. It attracted a sell-out crowd of 12,500. Feller was matched up against Porter Vaughn, formerly a starter

for Philadelphia A's. The *Seabag* reported that Feller was helped out by a great defensive play by Chapman. Feller also helped himself out by getting the only extra base hit of the game. The Sailors went on to win the game 4-2. The game drew the largest crowd ever to see a baseball contest in Virginia. After the Solider-Sailors game, NTS had a much easier time against the Medical College of Virginia, Newport News, and Bridgewater College.

Fans of the NTS team were in a mild state of shock when they learned that Feller was being transferred to Newport, R.I. to complete his gunnery training. He threw one more victory, a two-hitter against the Norfolk Tars, before heading north. Team members might have been in a mild state of shock over Feller's transfer, as they lost their next game to a part-time, semi-pro team out of Winston-Salem, 3-1. NTS had been on a 19-game winning streak before the loss. But, it got back on track quickly, as they won the next eight games, which included a 24-5 destruction of East Carolina Teacher's College. The month of May concluded with the second game between

NTS and Camp Lee, in which the sailors won 3-2.

Feller transferred back to Norfolk at the beginning of June, just in time for a game between NTS and an all-star team from the Army. June also marked the beginning of games against other commands. Feller warmed up for the all-star game by pitching a two-hit shutout of Fort Story's team. NTS won 16-0 against Fort Story and then against the semi-pro team from Winston-Salem that had earlier handed the sailors their first loss. Sam Chapman transferred to Washington to begin formal flight training the day after the game against Winston-Salem. The *Seabag* wrote fondly, "Here's hoping you smack those Japs as hard as you did the baseball for us."

The Army team from Fort Lee visited Norfolk twice and earned a split decision during the second week of June. Around this time, the Naval Base band began to perform live music before each game and in the stands during the game adding to the already festive atmosphere.

Just as the team prepared to leave for  
***Greatest Team continued on page 8***



*Greatest Team continued from page 7*

New York to play the Army All-Stars, a combined Army/Navy All-Star team was scheduled to play against the winner of the Major League All-Star team on July 7 in Cleveland. Mickey Cochrane, future Hall of Fame catcher for the Detroit Tigers and a Navy lieutenant, was picked to manage the team. He chose four NTS players to be on his roster. He chose Feller, Chapman, Hutchinson, and Smith. The *Seabag* recognized that Chapman might not be able to make it because of his flight training, but still hoped he would make time for the game.

The team traveled to the upper east side of Mahattan to play the Army All-Stars before 15,000 at the Polo Grounds (home of the New York baseball Giants.) Feller pitched another masterpiece and NTS cruised to a 5-0 win over the Army's best. The *Seabag* got its wish with Chapman. Every chance he received, he traveled from Anacostia Naval Air Station in Washington, D.C. to Norfolk to play outfield or shortstop.

The four NTS All Stars left for Cleveland to play against the American League All-Stars on July 7. Cochrane picked Feller to be his starting pitcher. Needless to say, the American League team provided stiffer competition as it included players like Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams (who would later,

after much debate, sign up with the Marines), Bobby Doerr, and Rudy Yorck. Much to the pleasure of the *Seabag*, Chapman did make it to the game, but unfortunately the military team lost 5-0.

However, NTS got right back to work defeating several teams in the month of July and August. The *Seabag* correctly described the NTS nines' games for those two months with the headline, "Like Old Man River, NTS Keeps Rolling." The article went on to say, "Just like a river on a rampage, the Station's star-studded baseball team continues to rush along, leaving the limp forms of victims in its wake."

The highlights in July included three more victories against Camp Lee, extending the record against them to 6-1. During this particular series with Camp Lee, Chief Brodie became somewhat annoyed at his players. While Bodie was happy with the victories and for the most part stayed out the way, he still did not like being completely ignored. He told The *Seabag* at the beginning of August that if his players continued to ignore his signs during a game, he would send them to signalman school located right down the street from the field.

In August, pitcher Maxie Wilson racked up his 17<sup>th</sup> victory with a no hitter against a



*Pictured here is the unmistakable enthusiasm of New York Yankee shortstop and broadcaster Phil "Scooter" Rizzuto. Rizzuto played, along side Dom DiMaggio of the Boston Red Sox, for the NTS team in 1943 before being shipped off to the Pacific. (HRNM photo)*

semi-pro team out of Washington. Hutchinson also got his 17<sup>th</sup> victory that month and Feller advanced his record to 14-3. The tandem pitched three consecutive shutouts during the month. As the NTS nine won its 75<sup>th</sup> game (against eight losses), the *Seabag* concluded the month of August with the comment "Soldiers, Senators, and Semi-pros all look alike to the all-Conquering Naval Training Station..."

The team closed its 1942 campaign in September with a marquee match against the Major League Washington Senators and games of lesser prestige against the FBI and Camp Pendleton teams. NTS finished with an amazing record of 92 wins and only 8 losses. Shortly after the season ended, many of the NTS team were transferred to ships or other stations. Feller, for example, was transferred to the battleship USS *Alabama* (BB-60) which was going through commissioning trials in Hampton Roads. Many others were transferred to Great Lakes Training Station or to commands in the Pacific.

The loss of NTS's stardom was compensated by the addition of star New York Yankee shortstop Phil "Scooter"

*Greatest Team continued on page 9*

### Norfolk Seabag's Sports Editor-Mo Siegel

The colorful sports editor for the *Norfolk Seabag* was one SK2 Morris Siegel. Along with writing articles about the feats of the NTS baseball team, Petty Officer Siegel would occasionally handicap pro and college sports games in his weekly sports column. He apparently went around the Norfolk Naval Base bragging about shore shots in sports gambling, but he had to eat his words during the first week of November 1942. His explanation went something like this:

"Keeping step with the game itself are the nation's sportswriters who, armed with rating tables and good luck charms, venture forth comes of battle from which they are as far removed from the Himalayas from the Rockies. Undaunted after a steady series of

reversals, this hard tribe, nevertheless, throws the past week's mistakes into the hellbox and begins anew each week. Having learned the hard way that when it comes to calling our shots we are much better on a shuffleboard (we had the Redskins to beat the Bears: score Bears 73, Redskins 0-ouch!!) We've decided to initiate a new type of prognosticating: PICK THE LOSERS. Anyone found wagering over two soap wrappers will be given an inaptitude discharge. -M.S."

"Mo" Siegel would later become a sports columnist and reporter for both the *Washington Star* and *Washington Post*. His writing gained a national following and he became one of the Washington, D.C. area's most famous writers. 🏠



*Greatest Team continued from page 8*

Rizzuto. Rizzuto was, and still is, a man of endless enthusiasm and one of the best shortstops ever to play for the Yankees. Three more professional players, Dom DiMaggio of the Boston Red Sox, Harold "Pee Wee" Reese of the Brooklyn Dodgers, and Fred Collins of Kansas City, joined Rizzuto to form a new core for NTS's 1943 season.

Rizzuto put his charismatic personality right to work as he helped spearhead the newly conceived "Pearl Harbor" war bond drive which started on Dec. 7 and lasted for two weeks. With his assistance, NTS collected more than \$60,000 in bond money and topped the list of all other commands in the Hampton Roads area.

Three more Major Leaguers joined the team just before the 1943 campaign started. They were Tom Early of the Boston Braves, Charlie Wagner of the Red Sox, and Walter Masterson of the Washington Senators. The baseball team continued in 1943 to receive a great amount of attention in the *Seabag*, but slowly, news articles from the war began to appear.

The sailors opened up the season with an exhibition game against the Senators. The *Seabag* humorously suggested that McClure along with Adm. Simons, the commander of the Fifth Naval District, should be catcher and pitcher for the game. The article also suggested that Clark Griffith, legendary owner of the Senators, should be starting pitcher for his team. The two teams played three games, with NTS winning two of them.

On the other side of the Base, the Norfolk Naval Air Station baseball team acquired some talent of its own. After being humbled by NTS in 1942, NAS Norfolk received six players with professional ball playing experience from NTS. All six men were entering aviation rates.

The 1943 campaign began where the 1942 left off. NTS won six games straight in April, including a 23-0 demolition of the Norfolk Tars. The much anticipated showdown between NAS and NTS occurred on April 23 and 26. The first contest was taken by NTS 6-4. The second contest occurred on a "neutral" site, specifically at Norfolk Baseball Park which was normally the home of the Tars, with all proceeds to benefit the current war bond drive. Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher Hugh Casey handcuffed NTS in the second game by pitching a no-hitter for

## McClure Field's Namesake


Down the road from the Norfolk Naval Station's Electronics School on Farragut Avenue is McClure Field. This is the field that the stars of the NTS baseball team played. It is still in use today by intermural teams. The architectural features of the stadium have remained mostly the same since its construction in 1918.

The Navy named the stadium McClure Field in 1944 for the commanding officer of the Norfolk Naval Training Station during World War II, Capt. Henry A. McClure. A 1907 graduate of the Naval Academy, McClure served 38 distinguished years in the Navy. He spent most of his career with the Asiatic Squadron before coming to Norfolk in 1941. At age 25, he was the youngest officer ever to command a warship on the infamous Yangtze River patrol in China. His ship was the gunboat USS *Villalobos* (an ex-Spanish gunboat captured during the Spanish-American War.)

McClure went on to command one of the destroyer groups of the squadron, before being assigned to command the ship's company of the fleet's flagship, the heavy cruiser USS *Augusta* (CA-31.) His experience with small warships made him

a natural choice for NTS, as the station was the Navy's home for destroyer and destroyer escort training.

He earned two Chinese Expeditionary Force Medals, the Mexican Campaign Medal, a World War [I] medal, and was awarded the Navy Cross during his career.

Bob Feller remembered McClure as "an excellent officer and a good friend." McClure would often sit in the dugout when the NTS team was playing. 



Capt. Henry A. McClure, commanding officer of the Norfolk Naval Training Station during World War II and the namesake of McClure Field. (HRNM photo)

NAS in front of a sellout crowd. The rivalry was set as NTS demanded four more games to be played over the course of three days. The two teams split the four game set.

NTS's national prestige gradually increased as it successfully organized a third game with the Senators. This time, the game was to be played in front of a sellout crowd of 35,000 at Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C. Maxie Wilson led the

way to a 4-3 victory in a game that raised over two million dollars for the war bond drive.

Throughout the rest of the season, NTS played almost exclusively other military teams. With the notable exception of NAS, NTS defeated almost all of its opponents. This included a 23-0 romp over Camp Pendleton. Rizzuto led the team with a

*Greatest Team continued on page 15*



Baseball's unwritten "color line" extended into the Navy as well. Pictured here is the 1944 NTS "Colored All-Stars." Unfortunately, little is written about this team, except that they drew very good crowds and had a record of 23-11 in 1944. (HRNM photo).



# The Museum Sage

## Making Out Like a Bandit Aboard the Frigate Chesapeake

The Sage has something that is quite astounding. He has found something positive about our beloved frigate *Chesapeake*. You know the warship I am talking about: she was involved in an unfortunate incident off the coast of Virginia with the British frigate *Leopard*, all seven of her captains either died a horrible death or were forced to leave the Navy involuntarily, and was finally put out of her misery by the British in 1813.

But we naval historians have found one positive note about America's most cursed warship. One of *Chesapeake's* seven captains was a relatively unknown officer by the name of Samuel Evans. Evans' career was like many military officers. He did his job committed to his country and duty and caused little controversy. His record as an officer goes down in history as a person of quiet competency. While he may have died in obscurity, he most certainly did not die poor.

Evans was promoted to the coveted rank of captain in mid-1811 and placed in charge of the Gosport Navy Yard here in Hampton Roads. Shortly after Congress declared war against Britain, the Navy transferred Evans to the Charlestown Navy Yard (located just north of Boston) and gave him command of *Chesapeake*. He was to outfit and prepare the frigate for her first wartime cruise. Preparations were finished by December and *Chesapeake* put to sea in search of British warships and commerce. After successfully pulling away from a British battleship, Evans and his crew hit the mother lode on January 14, 1813.

On that day, *Chesapeake* intercepted and captured a 400-ton British merchant ship

named *Volunteer*. The British vessel was carrying dry goods from Cork, England en route to Brazil. The cargo was valued at over \$700,000. Keep in mind that Evans, as a captain of a 36-gun frigate, was paid a little more than \$1,000 a year. Evans put a young midshipman named John Yarnell in charge of this fortune and ordered him to sail for Portsmouth, NH.


Two days after the capture of *Volunteer*, *Chesapeake* came across and captured another British merchant, *Liverpool Hero*, which was carrying dry goods and jewels. After she was "divested of valuables," she was burned and sunk. *Chesapeake's* next two prizes were both found to be Spanish vessels and were released without further incident.

For the next two months, *Chesapeake* failed to capture any more ships and by April, Evans decided to cash in his chips. At this point in the cruise, Evans' eye, which had been injured in combat while serving as an officer aboard the brig *Argus* during the Barbary Wars, became infected. Evans decided to head back to Boston. But, before he and his frigate made it home, *Chesapeake* struck gold one more time. In early April, *Chesapeake* captured two schooners; one was carrying \$17,500 worth of luxury items.

In all, *Chesapeake* captured only seven ships over a period of four months. Evans determined that two of these ships were neutral vessels and released them both. The Secretary of the Navy granted Evans a shore billet due to his eye infection and made him commandant of the New York Navy Yard. Even though Evans would never again sail another war cruise as he eventually went blind in the one eye, he was not going home a poor man.

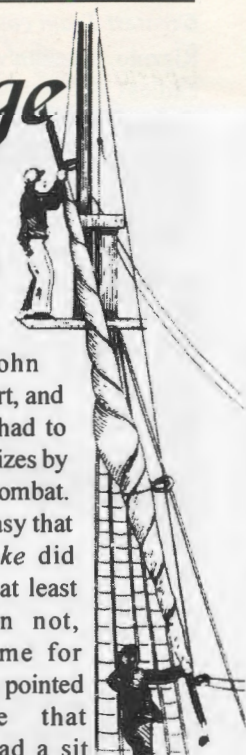
According to Christopher McKee's master work of naval history, *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession*, Evans' short time at sea netted him \$10,290 in prize money, or over eight times what he received in annual salary. While Evans' prize money amount was only the eighth highest total netted by an American Naval officer during the War of 1812, it was probably the most easily earned. Most of

the seven officers ahead of him, a list that includes the likes of Stephen Decatur, John Rodgers, Charles Stewart, and Thomas Macdonough, had to capture their valuable prizes by defeating the British in combat.

So we can now rest easy that our frigate *Chesapeake* did something positive for at least one person. We can not, however, say the same for Evans' crew. It has been pointed out to The Sage that *Chesapeake's* crew had a sit down strike shortly after Capt. James Lawrence relieved Evans. The crew was angry over the fact that they had not been paid their share of the prize money. Lawrence begged and pleaded with the Secretary of the Navy and with his crew to remedy the situation. Lawrence eventually took matters into his own hands and settled it. The poor morale and lapse in training, however, were some of the major reasons for *Chesapeake's* defeat at the hands of HMS *Shannon*. See Joe Mosier's article on *Chesapeake* for more information on this part of the frigate's career. 



Capt. Samuel Evans—quite obscure, but quite rich. Evans commanded the Gosport Navy Yard before taking *Chesapeake* to her most successful cruise in the ill-fated frigate's 23 year history. (HRNM photo)



## *The History of Peacekeeping Operations*

The following paragraph was part of a very recent *Washington Post* story about the current situation in Somalia:

"In the end, the thousands of Somali lives saved were overshadowed by the deaths of 18 U.S. soldiers in an Oct. 3, 1993 firefight with militiamen loyal to a warlord UN officials were determined to arrest. When an American commando's stripped corpse was dragged through the streets of the capital, Mogadishu, the endlessly televised spectacle precipitated not only UN withdrawal, but also a profound international reluctance that six months later let genocide in Rwanda proceed unchallenged."

It made The Sage think just how little we as historians have studied peacekeeping, and other low-intensity operations, and the impact they have had. Usually the first thought about such operations is that we should not be involved in them because they do not have an immediate impact on national security. The truth of the matter is that the U.S. Navy and its Marines have been involved in several humanitarian and other "low-intensity" operations over the last two hundred years. To be fair, policy makers in the 19th century criticized these type of operations with the exact same arguments that critics in the 20th century make.

For naval historians, however, these peacekeeping operations force us to look at non-traditional historical examples for wisdom. In the past, naval historians preached the works of Alfred Mahan to budding young Naval officers. Mahan's *The*

*Influence of Sea Power Upon History: 1660-1783* affected several generations of naval thinkers world-wide. It argued that the reason the British controlled the

world was because they were able to control the oceans. Influential politicians such as Teddy Roosevelt took Mahan's arguments to heart and successfully argued for the construction of a large American fleet built around battleships.

However, we now must recognize that "sea power" is no longer about controlling the oceans in the sense that Alfred Mahan argued. The teachings of Alfred Mahan have become



*A U.S. Navy doctor examines a baby in Somalia during Operation Restore Hope, 1992. (Photo provided by the Joint Combat Camera Command)*

obsolete. We can not use Jutland or Leyte Gulf as our models anymore about how to use naval power. Even the Battle of Atlantic of both World Wars has become somewhat of a dinosaur since it does not look like we will be battling Soviet submarines any time soon. We must find other historical examples. We talked about one of them in the last issue: The Africa Squadron. To a lesser degree, the Spanish-American War is a good model as it was an all-littoral conflict [i.e. the fighting occurred near the enemy's coast and the Navy's mission was to support a land attack.]

In a sense, the Navy has already

*We now must recognize that "sea power" is no longer about controlling the oceans in the sense that Alfred Mahan argued. The teachings of Alfred Mahan have become obsolete. We can not use Jutland or Leyte Gulf as our models anymore about how to use naval power.*

recognized the need to change. The "...From the Sea" doctrine, which was written in the late 1980's, focuses on littoral warfare and not on sea control. The doctrine somewhat correctly assumes that we will already have control of the oceans in any future conflict. New weapon systems, such as the next generation of Tomahawk missiles, the Joint Strike Fighter, and a new vertically mounted 155mm gun, emphasize land

attack. It is time now for naval historians to find historical examples to provide the wisdom to help make the modern doctrine work. Official historians, in particular the Marines, have begun this process. But more work, specifically from civilian historians must be done.

In April 1999, the museum with the help of several different organizations will open a new exhibit about some of these operations, and how the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are involved in them. Specifically it will look at not only Somalia, but Beirut, Bosnia, Haiti, and the convoy operations in the Persian Gulf in the 1980's.

Each one of these operations was labeled "controversial" at some point.

It is The Sage's hope that you will come see this exhibit and learn from it. Because more than likely, the United States will be involved in more operations like Haiti and Somalia in the future. Ultimately, however, what is really needed is a history of low-intensity operations on the same par as Mahan's work. 🚢

# Book Reviews

## *A Signal Victory: The Lake Erie Campaign, 1812-1813*

by David Curtis Skaggs and Gerard T. Altoff

Reviewed by Joe Mosier

It was an epic victory, one snatched from the jaws of defeat. By day's end on September 10, 1813, the Battle of Lake Erie had resulted in the almost unheard of surrender of an entire Royal Navy squadron. American commander Oliver Hazard Perry offered no exaggeration when he reported, "We have met the enemy and they are ours." Yet surprisingly little has been written over the years to describe the battle and the campaign leading to it. Gerard Altoff and David Skaggs have done an excellent job in setting the battle within the context of American expansion and the War of 1812.

In an extremely well-researched and documented work, the authors bring new emphasis to the actions leading up to the

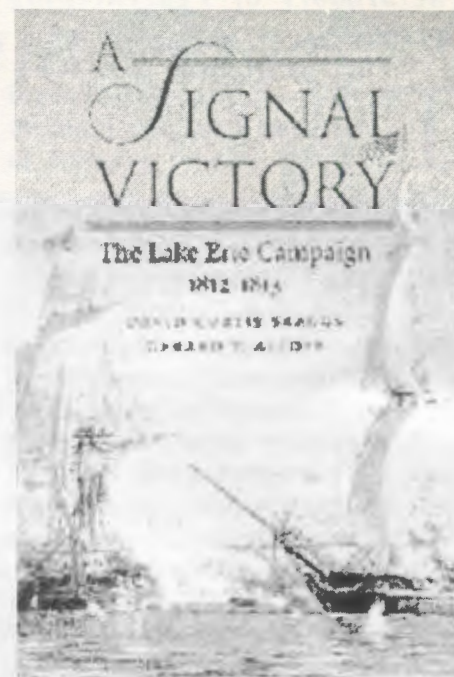
David Curtis Skaggs and Gerard T. Altoff, *A Signal Victory: The Lake Erie Campaign, 1812-1813*. Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1997. 247 pages, illustrations, maps, appendix. ISBN 1-55750-030-4. \$34. 95.

meeting at Put-in Bay. In particular, they deal thoroughly with the importance of Native Americans in both American and British political maneuvering and tactical planning. Native American tribes in the Northwest Territory relied on British aid in their efforts to hold back the flow of white settlers. Help the British were willing to provide, in part, to gain leverage for enforcement of the 1783 Treaty of Paris' guarantees on restoration of Tory property by the Americans. The resulting unrest in the Old Northwest in turn became a rallying cry of the War Hawks in their demand for war against England. When that war came in June of 1812, the British anticipated an

American march on Montreal. To forestall this, Canadian Governor General Sir George Prevost struck first along the western lakes with forces heavily supported by Native Americans. As American Gen. William Hull surrendered Detroit on August 16, 1812, he claimed to do so to prevent an Indian massacre of the garrison's civilian women and children. Native American involvement was critical to Prevost's success in diverting American efforts from an attack on the strategically all-important Montreal. In the end, Royal Navy commander Robert Barclay sought the engagement at Put-in Bay to keep open supply lines supporting his Indian allies at Amherstburg, Ontario.

Skaggs and Altoff detail the growth of both American and British naval squadrons on the Great Lakes. With virtually no ships available at the start of the war, both sides were forced to draft seamen and constructors to build up their forces on the lakes. Raids and counter-raids were used to disrupt the builders' efforts and destroy ships still under construction. Once built, ships still had to be manned and armed. The authors discuss these efforts in fine detail. Their description of the armament of the Lake Erie squadrons is especially useful. The traditional consideration of broadside weight is less compelling than the careful analysis of weight and range that Skaggs and Altoff provide. The difficulty in providing experienced seamen and seasoned leadership is also recorded.

This reviewer takes exception, however, to the authors' repeated claims of "woeful inexperience" in combat operations" on the part of American officers. Both Commodore Isaac Chauncey (in overall command of the Lakes) and Perry were veterans of not only the Barbary Wars (1802-1806), but of the Quasi-War with France (1798-1800) as well. Chauncey



served aboard *President* and Perry was a midshipman for two cruises in *General Greene*. Lt. Jesse D. Elliott, Perry's second in command, had served in both *Essex* and *Vixen* during the Barbary Wars. It makes the American victory no less thorough and the British defeat no less stinging to admit that both forces were led by equally competent, seasoned officers.

The description of the battle is a full chronological recounting based on all available records. One of the traditional divisions among naval historians has been the relative worthiness of the two senior Americans present, Perry and Elliott. The authors come down firmly in the camp of Mackenzie and against views of Cooper and Roosevelt. The key element in this debate is why Elliott in *Niagara* did not come up to support Perry in *Lawrence* while the flagship was being pounded by Barclay's flag *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*. Elliott's supporters accept his explanation that he was acting in consonance with Perry's pre-engagement orders to maintain place in line of battle. Elliott's detractors point out Perry's signal to engage their designated adversaries. They ascribe darker motives to Elliott's belated and rather desultory entry into the fray. Indeed, the authors are at their best in their fine weaving of multiple sources to recount the beginnings of the long and destructive feud between the Perry and Elliott factions in the young United States. *A Signal Victory continues on page 15*

## *Hurricane of Fire: The Union Assault on Fort Fisher*

by Charles A. Robinson III

Reviewed by Joe Judge

The largest naval armada in American history was riding off the coast. Soldiers, sailors and marines watched the enemy gun placements for signs of life as the fleet bombarded the shore. In a few moments the assault would begin – as assault that would have a direct impact on the end of the war, an assault in which many would die struggling to get through the surf, and more would die advancing across the beach. It was Christmas Day.

While this scene might have been set at Iwo Jima, or Omaha Beach, it took place off the coast of North Carolina. The Union assault on Fort Fisher, near Wilmington is one of the great stories of the Civil War, and it is the subject of *Hurricane of Fire: The Union Assault on Fort Fisher*, an excellent new book by Charles M. Robinson III.

Wilmington was a major point of entry for Confederate blockade runners. By 1865 the South was in retreat on every front, and

Charles M. Robinson III, *A Hurricane of Fire: The Union Assault on Fort Fisher*. Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1998. 249 pages, illustrations, maps, appendix. ISBN 1-55750-7201. \$34. 95.

needed every bullet available. Huge profits were available for those willing to risk the Union blockade, and Wilmington was filled with such people. In fact, the city took on an almost lawless character as the war progressed.

It was Fort Fisher that kept Wilmington open. The fort was a bastion on the point of land where the Cape Fear River meets the sea. This complex of batteries, in conjunction with extremely dangerous offshore waters, prevented the Union Navy from closing the port. By 1865 the Fort stood defiant, still allowing blockade runners to supply Lee's army.

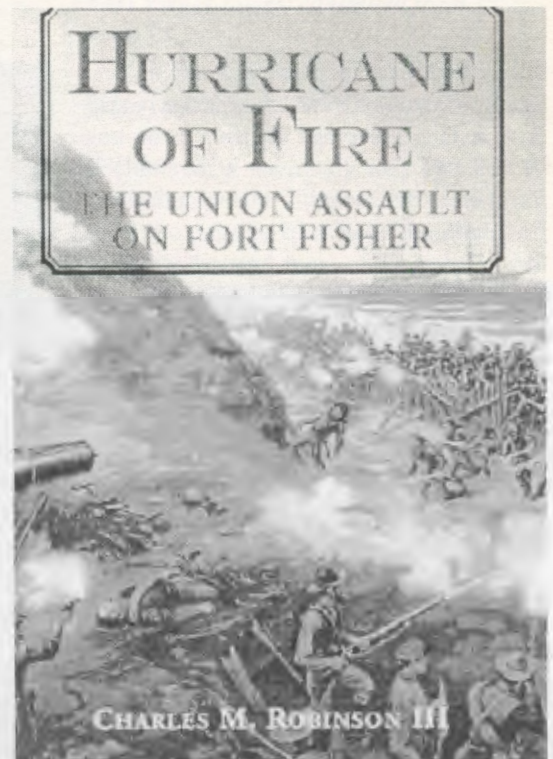
The commander of the Fort, Col.

William Lamb, was born in Norfolk. He graduated from the College of William and Mary, and after the war became the mayor of Norfolk and a force in local politics. In late October Lamb prepared for the assault he knew was coming by calmly paying his bills, purchasing some bonds and selling ten bales of cotton. The scene of Lamb arranging for his family's financial security is one of many stranger-than-fiction scenes that Mr. Robinson uses to advance the story, including the following:

-Robley Evans, a young Virginian in the Union Navy, received a letter from his brother, who was in the Confederate Army on Lee's staff. The letter arrived while Robley and others were observing the utmost secrecy to plan the destruction of the Fort. It stated "We will give you a warm reception at Fort Fisher." Robley showed the letter to Admiral David Dixon Porter, the Union's naval commander for the assault on the fort, and reported that Porter "was very indignant when he read it."

-Admiral Porter met his army counterpart, the notorious Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler, on the James River. Butler and Porter were on Butler's yacht when Porter noticed "half a dozen ... cut-throat looking fellows," who when questioned remarked that they came on board "to see how you fellers live." The men were placed under guard and removed from the ship, but a short while later the yacht was ripped by an explosion and sank, Porter and Butler escaping in the captain's gig.

-President Lincoln, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells, and Lt. Gen. U.S. Grant all agreed that Wilmington had to be closed. Because of the peculiar geography of the peninsula and the treachery of the waters, the fort could not be bypassed. It had to be assaulted, which meant that the Army and Navy had to work together in a combined operation. The first assault, on Christmas Day 1864, was a misguided fiasco, as Union soldiers landed and then abandoned the assault, after the Navy failed to disrupt the



fort after a day long bombardment. The failure of the operation ended the career of Gen. Butler. Admiral Porter successfully, if not completely honestly, blamed the poor results on the Army, and prepared to work with the new Army commander, Gen. Alfred H. Terry, on a second assault, set for January 15, 1865.

The heart of the book is the description of one phase of the second attack: an ill-considered attempt by U.S. Naval and Marine Corps personnel to storm the southern portion of the fort. Future admiral and Spanish-American war hero George Dewey was a lieutenant at the time, and present at Fort Fisher. He commented that the naval command had "the idea that storming the face of the strongest work in the Civil War was the same sort of operation as boarding a frigate in 1812." Porter was undeterred. In fact, he did not see the need for the Army to participate at all, remarking "I don't believe in anybody but my good officers and men." Three hundred and nine of these good men were killed, wounded or missing in his pursuit of maximum credit for the Navy.

Despite the wasted lives and effort of the Naval Brigade, the second assault did succeed. The soldiers under Terry successfully carried the works after more effective Naval bombardment. The port of Wilmington was closed.

*Fort Fisher continued on page 15*



USS *Elrod* (FFG-53), *William H. Standley* (CG-32), and *Okinawa* (LPH-4) escort the reflagged Kuwaiti tanker *Gas King* to safety through the Persian Gulf war zone, 1987. (Naval Historical Center photo)

## *Pax Americana:* The U.S. Navy in the Era of Violent Peace

A New Exhibit on the U.S. Navy and Peacekeeping Operations  
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*A Signal Victory review continued from page 12*


States Navy.

*A Signal Victory* is a worthy addition to any naval history enthusiast's library. Skaggs, an academic historian at Bowling Green State University, and Altoff, a ranger-historian for the National Park Service, have collaborated well. The resultant work is rich with detail (33 pages of footnotes, a glossary of naval terms and a thorough bibliographic essay) and clearly written. It offers some new insight into why the battle was fought and a thorough retelling of how it was fought. Well worth the reader's time and money. 

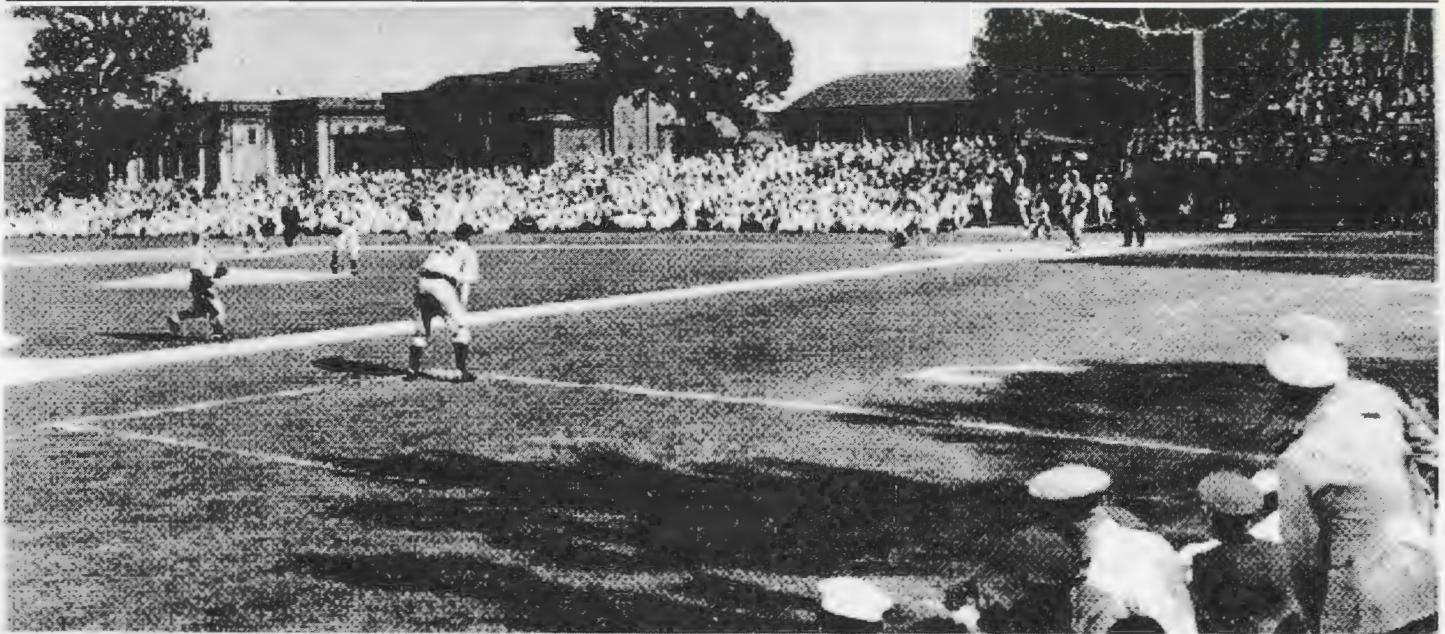
*Joe Mosier is an archivist with the Chrysler Museum of Art and a volunteer writer for the Hampton Roads Naval Museum since 1994.*



*Fort Fisher review continued from page 13*

The book gives a quick (about 200 pages) and straightforward account of these and other events. The prose is clear and uncluttered, a seemingly easy feat that is difficult to obtain. Small events jump forth from the page to illuminate the drama of the great fort and some of the people who were connected with it's fate. The author also exhibits a feel for the geography – one might even say the ghosts – of Fort Fisher obtained from childhood visits and family stories. Those ghosts will be satisfied with this account of their sufferings. 

*Joe Judge is the curator of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum and has been here since 1990.*



*Picture here is a 1943 exhibition game between the Norfolk NTS team and the Major League St. Louis Browns (forerunner of the modern day Baltimore Orioles) at the NTS Stadium (later designated McClure Field.) (HRNM photo)*

*Greatest Team continued from page 9*


.347 batting average. The season climaxed with a 4-3 victory over the Boston Red Sox, which came to Norfolk in early June in front of a overflowing crowd of 7,000 at NTS's stadium.

Another potential inter-Naval rivalry was being suggested by sailors around the country. Many people wanted to organize a "Navy World Series" between NTS and the team at Great Lakes. At this point in the season, NTS had a record of 51-13-1 and Great Lakes had a record of 34-7-1. Some minor insults and "trash talking" began in Norfolk, as the *Seabag's* new sports writer thought that Great Lakes did not have equivalent opposition. For example, NTS

had played Norfolk NAS 28 times and had beaten them 18 times. Unfortunately, this game never materialized. However, the new commander of Fifth Naval District, Adm. Herbert Leary, suggested a "Fifth Naval District" world series between NAS and NTS. A seven game set was set up for the middle of September. The series went a full seven games with NTS winning game seven 1-0.

The NTS team began to break up again after the 1943 season ended. Almost all of the professional ball players had completed their training in Norfolk and were being shipped out to the front. The club had brought together some of the brightest stars of

professional baseball to Norfolk. NTS's team, and several others like it across the United States, was a baseball fan's wish come true as it was the original "Dream Team."

Before the war was over, the NTS nine raised over four million dollars for crucial war bond drives and for the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. But, most importantly, the NTS nine let sailors, many of whom had never left their hometowns before joining the Navy, relax their minds just a bit during World War II's darkest hours. 

*The editor would like to thank Bob Feller, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (Seattle, WA), and the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame and Museum for their assistance with this article.*





The Team-This is the team picture of the 1942 Norfolk Naval Training Station baseball team that had a record of 93-8. Unfortunately, Bob Feller was so famous that someone cut out his face out of the photograph. (HRNM photo)

## In Our Next Issue....

- ☞ The Navy Yard Under Investigation
- ☞ WTKR TV-3's anchor Ed Hughes to speak about USS *Liberty* (ATGR-5)
- ☞ Book Reviews: *In Irons: The American Economy and the British Blockade* and *Lamson of the Gettysburg*