



H-Gram 077: Carter Hall at the Naval Academy, Remember the *Maine*, and the Charge of USS *Bailey*

24 February 2023

This H-gram covers the following topics:

- My remarks at the renaming of Maury Hall for former president Jimmy Carter at the U.S. Naval Academy on 17 February 2023
- My remarks at the USS Maine Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery for the 125th anniversary of the ship's loss
- The charge of USS Bailey (DD-492), one of the most heroic, and little known, actions in U.S. naval history



Lieutenant James "Jimmy" Earl Carter, Jr., USN, in main control room of USS K-1 (SSK-1) between June and October 1952. (NH 85526)

U.S. Naval Academy Building 105 Renaming Ceremony

At a ceremony at the U.S. Naval Academy on 17 February 2023, Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro officially renamed Building 105 (formerly Maury Hall) in honor of President James Earl "Jimmy" Carter Jr., the only Naval Academy graduate to become President of the United States. This was a result of the congressionally mandated Naming Commission (co-chaired by Admiral Michelle Howard) recommending to the Secretary of Defense that all Department of Defense "assets" (including Navy buildings) that are named for someone who served in the Confederacy be renamed. The Superintendent of the Naval Academy, Vice Admiral Sean Buck, gave opening remarks, and the Secretary of the Navy gave

remarks encompassing President Carter's career, including after his presidency. I was tasked to provide a historic overview of Jimmy Carter's Navy career and the impact of his presidency on the Navy.

Whatever your opinion of President Carter, you probably don't know much about his short, but eventful, career in the U.S. Navy after graduating with distinction from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1946, with the wartime-accelerated Class of '47. For example, he was washed off the bridge of submarine Pomfret at night in a storm in the north Pacific and only by sheer luck snagged the aft 5-inch gun (and did not lose his grip). Or his role in developing the Combat Information Center and shipboard surface-to-air

missiles. Or receiving a dose 1,000 times greater than what would be considered a safe level of radiation today while leading a team to clean up a partial meltdown of a Canadian research reactor. Or preparing to become the engineering officer for the only liquid metal (sodium) beryllium-moderated nuclear reactor ever installed on a U.S. Navy submarine (the second nuclear submarine in the U.S. Navy, USS Seawolf). Or his interview with then-Captain Rickover, from which comes the title of his 1975 book *Why Not the Best?* Had he stayed in the Navy, there is plenty of reason to believe that he would have had a stellar career. To read more, please see my remarks at the event [<https://www.history.navy.mil/about-us/leadership/director/director-speech-carter-hall.html>].

125th Anniversary of the Sinking of the USS Maine

At 2140 on 15 February 1898, the battleship Maine suffered a catastrophic explosion while at anchor in Havana harbor in the Spanish colony of Cuba, resulting in the deaths of 262 of the 355 officers and men in her crew (351 were aboard). The cause of the blast has never been conclusively determined, but it was most likely due to something internal; no conclusive evidence of any external cause has surfaced in the last 125 years. Regardless, this was as traumatic an event at the time as Pearl Harbor and 9/11 were later, and the press frenzy afterward quickly led to intense political pressure, leading to the subsequent war with Spain. Each year, Arlington National Cemetery holds a commemoration service at the USS Maine Memorial (topped by Maine's mainmast). My remarks as the keynote speaker for this year's ceremony may be found here [<https://www.history.navy.mil/about-us/leadership/director/director-speech-125th-maine.html>]. For my original H-gram on the sinking, please see H-Gram 015 [<https://www.history.navy.mil/about-us/leadership/director/directors-corner/h-grams/hgram-015.html>] for a short overview and H-015-3 for a fuller account.

80th Anniversary of World War II Forgotten Valor: The Charge of USS Bailey

On 23 March 1943, a mostly forgotten battle occurred in waters about 100 miles south of the Komandorski Islands, midway between the end of the U.S. Aleutian Island chain and the Soviet Kamchatka Peninsula. An outnumbered U.S. Navy force, centered on the heavy cruiser Salt Lake City (CA-25), engaged a superior Japanese force in a four-hour-long daylight long-range gunnery duel (one of the last pure surface actions in naval history). Despite thousands of rounds fired, at the end of the battle, no ships were lost on either side, and personnel casualties were very few. The battle has gone down in history as a case of "sound and fury, signifying nothing," to quote Shakespeare. Nevertheless, at one point the battle was on the verge of becoming what could have been the worst defeat in U.S. naval history, with the potential loss of over 3,000 men in freezing waters. However, the battle also included one of the most courageous actions in U.S. naval history, specifically the charge of the destroyer Bailey (DD-492), with Coghlan (DD-606) and Monaghan (DD-354) in trail through a torrent of shellfire against the Japanese cruiser line at the most desperate and critical point in the battle, an action that has never really received the recognition it deserves. For an overview on the Battle of the Komandorski Islands, please see my original H-Gram 016 [<https://www.history.navy.mil/about-us/leadership/director/directors-corner/h-grams/h-gram-016.html>] and for more detail on the charge of the Bailey and the battle, please see H-016-1.

All previous H-grams may be found here [<https://www.history.navy.mil/about-us/leadership/director/directors-corner/h-grams.html>]. As always, you are welcome (and encouraged) to share H-grams at will.