

The Daybook

Volume 7 Issue 2

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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 225 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. It is also responsible for the historic interpretation of the battleship *Wisconsin*.

The museum is open daily. Call for information on *Wisconsin*'s hours of operations. Admission to the museum and *Wisconsin* are 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 gbcalthoun@nsn.cmar.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://www.hrn.m.navy.mil>.

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Politicians Are A Lot Smarter Than You Think Plus The Sage (Gasp!) Admits to Some Mistakes

Cover Photographs: With the battleship officially commissioned, *Wisconsin* and her crew steamed for the main battleground in the western Pacific in late 1944. She was built to fight and defeat enemy battleships. But, *Wisconsin*'s design was a very versatile one. With few enemy battleships giving battle, Third Fleet assigned the 45,000-ton warship with many other roles including fleet oiler (as shown by the picture in lower left), a hospital ship, a fighter director, and a shore bombardment vessel. In this issue of *The Daybook*, we look at the World War II operational history of battleship number sixty-four.

Nourishment for Body and Spirit

The Director's Column

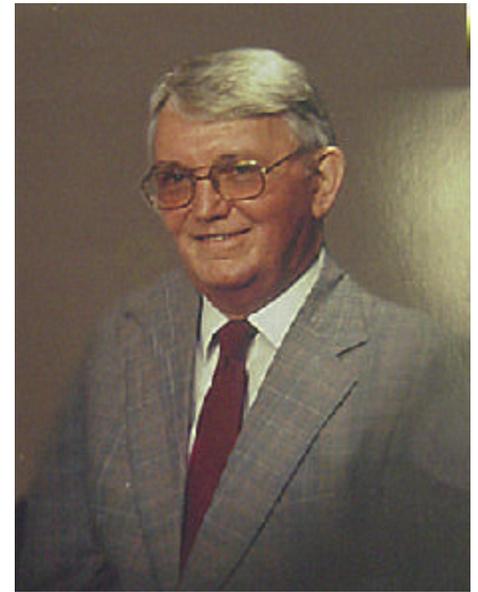
by Becky Poulliot

In the midst of *Wisconsin* fever and field trip mania, let's not forget a more sedate and cerebral offering from the museum: **our lecture series**. The museum actually provides two types of programs. The first, known as the Luncheon Lecture Series, is the larger and features award-winning writers published by the Naval Institute Press. The two remaining speakers for 2001 are Kathleen Williams, author of WWII's *Secret Weapon*, and Christopher McKee, arguably the single-best authority on the early American Navy. McKee will speak on his well-known book, *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession*. The luncheon lectures are held at Club Pier 26 on Norfolk Naval Station and include a book-signing by the author.

The second lecture program is for those die-hard naval history buffs, and is called the Dunderfunk Society. The name is funky (pun intended), but authentic, and refers to a biscuit and sauce dessert served aboard 18th century sailing ships. The name and the society were created by HRNM volunteer Joe Mosier. Anyone can join; all we ask is that you provide names of potential speakers and try to attend the presentations. Dunderfunk is quite informal. This year we are holding all the luncheons in the second floor Nauticus conference room. Still to come in 2001 are Mark Scalia and David Poyer, both authors of recent books, and retired RADM Raymond Taylor, who will speak on the removal of mines during Desert Storm. Want to learn more? Call 322-2992 to get on our mailing list or log on to our website at www.hrnm.navy.mil.

The museum recently lost a founding member of the Dunderfunk Society, published local author Jack Robertson. I can sum up Mr. Robertson in one word: indefatigable. He offered only his best and expected others to do likewise. He was a one

man army (a former member of the Army Air Corps too) when it came to promoting the Hampton Roads Naval Museum. I knew I was in trouble, when a sentence began, "Becky, I've been thinking..." Having attended my share of leadership seminars, I would try to deflect his grandiose ideas by hitting the ball back into his court, and challenging him to do the leg work. The amazing thing is that in every case, Mr. Robertson delivered! He single-handedly lobbied for a donation box in our museum after the relocation to Nauticus, a task that had earlier been declared impossible. Mr Robertson recently raised money, designed and oversaw the fabrication and installation of museum advertising signage in the Norfolk International Airport concourse.



Museum docent Jack Robertson recently passed away. Mr. Robertson was a passionate advocate for the museum and for history everywhere. (Photo provided by Mrs. Jack Robertson)

sell, with 100% of the profits going to support the Hampton Roads Naval Museum. If you are interested in this well researched study of the 1781 Battle, call



HRNM LPO QM1 (SW) Clay Pickard poses with television and stage legend Jean Stapleton aboard the battleship Wisconsin. Ms. Stapleton was in town starring in a play about the life of Eleanor Roosevelt at the Wells Theatre in downtown Norfolk. (Photo provided by The Flagship)

Mr. Robertson served as our ambassador to the community, presenting programs to civic groups and sharing his love of the 1781 Battle Off the Virginia Capes. Jack's widow Mary has presented extra copies of his book *Block the Chesapeake* to our museum foundation to

MGEN Dennis Murphy at 445-9932.

Becky

Battleship *Wisconsin* Opened to Public on April 16

The long wait is over! After several months preparing and training, the battleship *Wisconsin* and accompanying exhibits opened to the public on **April 16**. Visitors can access the ship by coming to the second deck of Nauticus and entering a walkway to the ship located next to the entrance to the museum. Volunteer docents will be on hand at several locations throughout the ship to answer visitor questions.

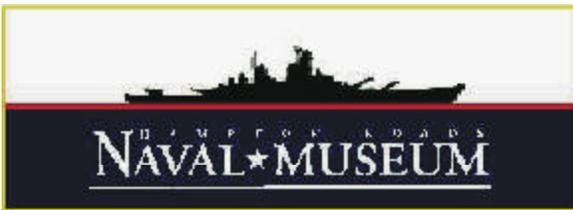
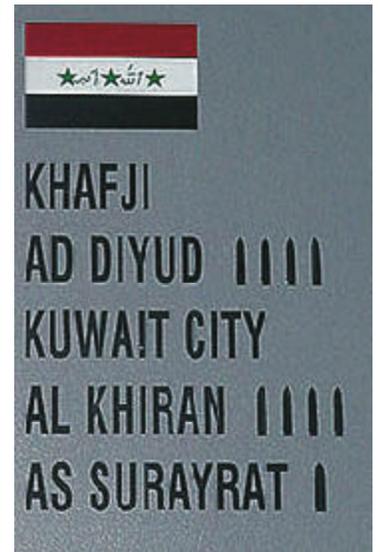
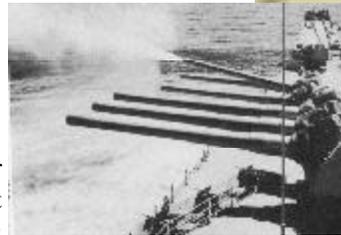
The museum's exhibit will introduce the visitor to the career of the battleship. On their way out to the ship, visitors will get an overview about what makes *Wisconsin* and her crew so special. It is a traditional museum exhibit that is supported by several

Design in Philadelphia, PA to design the exhibits. Maltbie and Associates is constructed the exhibits. Maltbie also fabricated the museum's permanent exhibits back in 1994.

For more information about the museum's exhibits and how you can get involved visit the museum web site at <http://www.hrnm.navy.mil>. Admission to the museum's exhibits and the battleship are free. For information about Nauticus' *Wisconsin*

exhibits and price of admission, visit <http://www.nauticus.org> or call 757-664-1000.

The battleship *Wisconsin* and accompanying exhibits are a co-operative project between the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, Nauticus: The National Maritime Center, the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation, the Battleship *Wisconsin* Foundation, the City of Norfolk, and Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic.



artifacts donated by the veterans of the ship and by several months of research. The museum hired Steve Feldman of Feldman



Wisconsin Information

General Information: 757-322-2987
<http://www.hrnm.navy.mil>

Volunteer Opportunities: 757-322-3106
tdandes@nsn.cmar.navy.mil

Honor and Ceremonies: 757-322-2988
ctpickard@nsn.cmar.navy.mil

Historical Information: 757-322-2993 or 322-2984
gbcalthoun@nsn.cmar.navy.mil

Information on visiting Nauticus and Nauticus' Wisconsin Exhibits: 757-664-1000
www.nauticus.org
jburge@city.norfolk.va.us

Wisconsin Project Partners:
USS Wisconsin Association:
www.usswisconsin.org

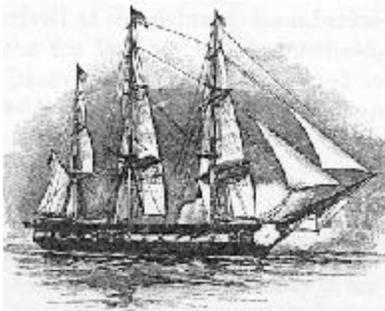
Battleship Wisconsin Foundation:
www.battleshipwisconsin.org

Museum Receives 19th Century Naval Medical Records

The museum recently received logbooks and medical journals of George Blacknall who was a Naval surgeon in the mid-19th century. This important collection comes via a donation by Mrs. Lorraine Coe of Toledo, OH, who is the great-granddaughter of Blacknall.

A native of North Carolina, Blacknall married into an old Virginia family and moved to Hampton Roads. The Navy commissioned him a surgeon's mate in 1828 and he spent the next 34 years practicing medicine. Much of his time was spent at

George Blacknall served as ship's surgeon on four warships: Constitution, the frigate Brandywine, the steam frigate Mississippi, and the more infamous sloop-of-war Cumberland (shown at right), while the warship was off the coast of Africa in the late 1850's.



Portsmouth Naval Hospital. However, he also had several ship assignments including *Constitution* in 1842, the frigate *Brandywine* in 1843 where Blacknall did a tour in China and Indo-China, the steam frigate *Mississippi* in 1849, and with the sloop-of-war *Cumberland* where the ship served as flagship of the Africa Squadron from 1857 to 1859. Blacknall would later resign his commission at the outbreak of the American Civil War and assumed command of the Portsmouth Naval Hospital. He died of pneumonia a year later.

The collection itself consists of four medical logs and two copybooks. Two books are Blacknall's records at Portsmouth, two of them are medical logs while on board *Brandywine*, and the two copybooks along with one medical log are from service aboard *Cumberland*. The logs briefly record Blacknall's diagnostic for each sick sailor

and an equally brief treatment (which often included conspicuous quantities of opium.) The copybook includes several copies of letters written by Blacknall and lists of supplies he purchased for his medical

practice while aboard *Cumberland*. Among the letters is a correspondence between Blacknall and Norfolk-native William Henry McBlair who was captain of the sloop *USS Dale*, which also served with the Africa Squadron

(See *The Daybook* Vol. 4 Issue 6 for more information on McBlair and *Dale*.)

This record group is a good start to help fill in the gaps on the history of *Cumberland* and compliments the many artifacts from the ship already in the museum's collection. It is somewhat unfortunate that *Cumberland* is only known for being the first wooden warship sunk by an ironclad, and not as a ship with a very historic career. We plan to publish

a more complete account of the books and of the life of George Blacknall in a future issue of *The Daybook*.

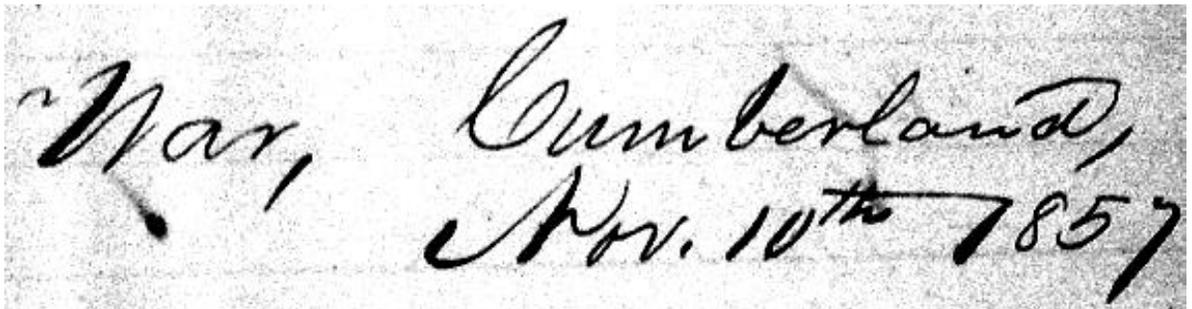
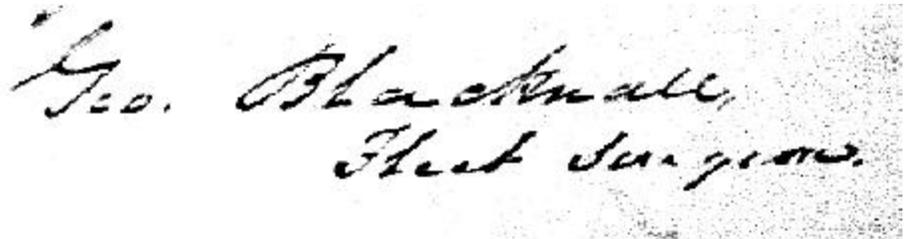
In addition to the collection of medical records and letters, Mrs. Coe also included



Along with Blacknall's medical records, Mrs. Lorraine Coe also donated a horseshoe, made of iron from the CSS Virginia. Items like these are common as much of Virginia's iron was turned into souvenirs. (Photo by Gordon Calhoun)

a small, but interesting novelty item. She also donated a horseshoe that was made out

of the iron plate from the ironclad CSS *Virginia*. After the Civil War, much of *Virginia*'s iron plating was sold for scrap and a few enterprising businesses turned the material into souvenirs. 



New Items and Changes For the Gallery

Along with the new *Wisconsin* exhibits appearing at the museum and at Nauticus, we are planning to add a few items to our permanent exhibits. Among the items are an engineer's clock from the Civil War ironclad USS *New Ironsides* (on loan from the Naval Historical Center) the builder's half-model of the steam frigate USS *San Jacinto* (on loan from the Curator of Naval Ship Models) wardroom china from the aircraft carrier USS *Ranger* (CV-4), and a yeomenette's uniform from World War I. Look for these and other changes in the gallery in the months to come. 🏰



1938 wardroom china from the aircraft carrier USS *Ranger*.



1918 yeomenette uniform and cover



Main engine room clock from the ironclad USS *New Ironsides*



Builder's half-model of the steam-frigate USS *San Jacinto*



Biggest and smallest Whisky Artifacts

Weighing in at two ounces, the smallest artifact in the *Wisconsin* artifact collection is a set of ear plugs donated by *Wisconsin* vet Frederick Mauritsen. In stark contrast, weighing in at a portly 1984-pounds each, the



largest ones are two 16-inch/50 caliber shells donated by the Yorktown Naval Weapon Station. One shell will be used for the museum's exhibit and one will be used for a Nauticus exhibit. 🏰



Wisconsin Goes to War

The Navy's Newest Battleship Joins Third Fleet's Drive on Japan

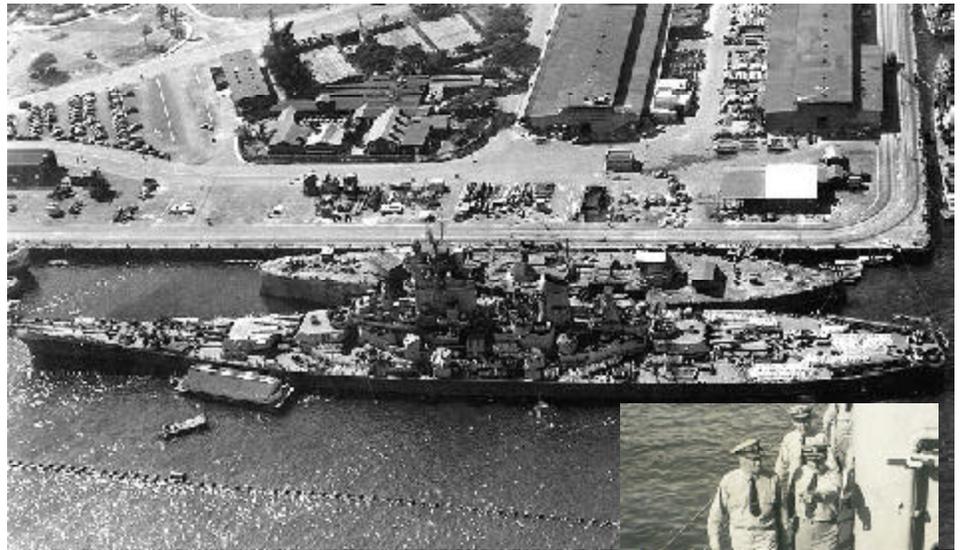
by Gordon Calhoun

With the commissioning ceremonies done and engineering tests passed, the Navy's newest battleship headed for war. *Wisconsin* did not get a chance to enter the war until very late. Commissioned on April 16, 1944, her crew conducted several more drills in the Caribbean before heading out to the main battleground in the western Pacific for the final push on the Empire of Japan. It would seem in hindsight that since Japanese forces had been hit hard and had suffered tremendous losses, that a ship like *Wisconsin* would not be needed. But the war was far from over and *Wisconsin's* design allowed her to serve in a number of roles outside of battleship killer to help bring the conflict to an end.

Flagship-Battleship Division Nine

Scuttlebutt among the crew said that *Wisconsin* was heading for Europe to take President Franklin Roosevelt over on a diplomatic mission. Instead, the ship was ordered to the Panama Canal and Pearl Harbor. The ship arrived in Pearl, with several squadrons of friendly aircraft greeting them, on November 1944. *Wisconsin's* skipper Capt. Earl Stone was welcomed on a more official level by Admiral of the Fleet Chester Nimitz. After shore bombardment and anti-aircraft practice, the ship steamed for the Ulithi Atoll in Caroline Islands. Ulithi was a major anchorage and repair base for the Pacific Fleet.

Rear Adm. Edward W. Hanson, commodore of Battleship Division Nine, met and in a sense marked *Wisconsin's* entry into the war when he broke out his flag aboard the battleship at Ulithi. The Navy organized its battleships into divisions and then assigned a destroyer screen to the division to escort the battlewagons. A battleship division typically consisted of two battleships and one or two destroyer squadrons. The division would then be attached to a task group. Originally Hanson placed his flag on USS *South Dakota* (BB-57). He left "Sodak" on November 17, 1944 and transferred his command over to the more modern *Wisconsin* a few days later.



USS Wisconsin (BB-64) alongside the hulk of the battleship Oklahoma (BB-37) at Pearl Harbor, November 11, 1944. Wisconsin's skipper Capt. Earl Stone is shown at right giving an informal tour to Admiral of the Fleet Chester Nimitz. (Above picture, Naval Historical Center, picture at right, from Wisconsin veterans' collections)



Covering the Luzon Landings/The Typhoon

The battleship's first combat assignment was to assist in the liberation of the Philippines. Though the ship missed the Battle of Leyte Gulf, there was still work to be done with the Philippines, specifically with the main island of Luzon. Assigned to Third Fleet's Task Group 38.2, *Wisconsin's* primary mission was to serve as an anti-aircraft ship and fighter director while the fleet's aircraft carriers conducted search and destroy missions against enemy aircraft and their landing facilities.

Typically, *Wisconsin's* radarmen would pick up an enemy aircraft, which would usually drop a material known as "window" in a vain attempt to confuse *Wisconsin's* radar, and vector in friendly aircraft flying a patrol above the task force to intercept. If the enemy aircraft slipped by the patrol, picket destroyers would then attempt to intercept the intruding aircraft. If this failed, then *Wisconsin's* gunners would attempt to down the aircraft. Having arrived on station off the coast of the Philippines on December 11, *Wisconsin's* crew began to go through this poke and jab game with Japanese

aircraft.

A week into their mission, a typhoon hit. Despite the fact that local weather conditions deteriorated, it was incorrectly assumed that it was just another storm. *Wisconsin* was refueling her destroyers when word came down to cease with the activity, as the seas were becoming too rough. No word came from the fleet forecaster that a typhoon was upon the fleet. The tropical storm lasted all day and the ship was forced to ride out every second of it. Hanson initially ordered his division to head west and then south in an attempt to get out of the storm's way. Instead, the division was told to steam north and west, along the path of the storm.

Winds reached over 70 knots and radar picked up the center of the typhoon just 30 miles to the north of the battleship. According to veterans, *Wisconsin* was rolled almost 30 degrees in either direction. Except for some moderate structural damage (the ship lost both Kingfishers, the captain's gig, the admiral's ***Wisconsin Goes to War continued on page 7***





Wisconsin used remotely controlled drones to provide live fire anti-aircraft training. The ship conducted several exercises enroute to the Philippines and several more once they reached the war zone. (Photo from Wisconsin veterans' collections)

Wisconsin Goes to War continued from page 6

barge, and a jeep stowed on deck) and gun mounts, *Wisconsin* made it through in one piece. Several other ships, including three destroyers did not make it. After a search for survivors, operations continued in support of air strikes off the coast of Luzon through the rest of the year and into January 1945.

Sortie into the South China Sea

Third Fleet had long sought a sortie in the South China Sea, particularly by Adm. Halsey himself. The thinking was that even though the Japanese had suffered devastating losses from the naval battles around the Philippines, they still had enough to seriously threaten lines of communication.

Intelligence reports had concluded that one of the two remaining Japanese squadrons had withdrawn to Camranh Bay in French Indochina. Unknown to American officers until after the war, this Japanese squadron consisted of the hybrid battleship-carrier *Ise*, the battleship *Hyuga*, and the heavy cruisers *Myoko*, *Haguro*, and *Takao*.

Attached to the screening group of Group Two of Task Force 38 (labeled TG 38.2), *Wisconsin* was a part of a very powerful squadron that included *Wisconsin*'s sisters *New Jersey* (BB-62) and *Iowa* (BB-61), four aircraft carriers, four light cruisers, and several destroyers. This group was just one of four battle squadrons and one support squadron that made up Third Fleet.

The sortie began on a cold, rainy January 9, with the fleet navigating the north end of Luzon and then traveling southeast into the

South China Sea. The next day, despite "mostly undesirable" flying conditions, *Wisconsin*'s radar picked up three twin-engine bombers in the early morning hours. *Independence* (CV-22) launched several night fighters and were vectored in by *Wisconsin* and *Ticonderoga* (CV-14). All three bombers were downed within an hour.

The fleet arrived near the coast of French Indo-China on the evening of January 11. Halsey reinforced TG 38.2 with two heavy cruisers, *Boston* (CA-69) and *Baltimore* (CA-68), along with one destroyer squadron and detached the group with orders to search for and attack the expected Japanese surface force. *Wisconsin*'s gunners prepped the main guns to fire shells over the hills surrounding the harbor.

Unfortunately, no enemy battleships were to be found. The enemy squadron had pulled out of Camranh Bay and withdrew to Hong Kong just a few days before Third Fleet's strike force arrived. All of the fleet's carriers launched a massive airstrike against enemy naval bases. Several light warships and tankers were destroyed as was a disarmed Vichy French cruiser and several enemy aircraft. Twenty-three American fighters were downed, however, in the strike. With two fighters from the carrier *Hancock* (CV-19) as escort, *Wisconsin* launched her two Kingfishers in search of an American pilot in Camranh Bay, but did not find him. On their way back, friendly fighters misidentified *Wisconsin*'s tiny air squadron for the enemy. Fortunately, *Wisconsin*'s pilots overheard

their fellow American pilots over the radio and quickly assured them that they were not Japanese seaplanes.

With the strike considered a success, the task group withdrew to the north for follow-up strikes on Formosa and Hong Kong. *Wisconsin* rendezvoused with the refueling squadron that was trailing the task group. Around this time, Japan's infamous propaganda radio announcer Tokyo Rose predicted that Third Fleet's sortie into the South China Sea would end in disaster. Many sailors heard her infamous broadcast late one night, prompting a humorous, yet confident rebuttal in the ship's newsletter.

The air strikes on Japanese air bases and other facilities went well, though *Wisconsin*'s radarmen had a long day trying to sort out friendly aircraft and hostile "bogies." As an example, between January 20 and 21, at least 30 planes in ten different groups were tracked. Ten of them were friendly. One hostile group came close enough for Stone to sound general quarters and order the AA guns to open fire on it. Both the five-inch guns and the 40mm guns opened up and fired off over 150 shells. The enemy bogie decided not to push the issue and withdrew.

While *Wisconsin* and her crew made it out of the South China Sea in one piece ("no cases of combat fatigue or any unusual emotional reactions" according to Stone), some of her destroyers did not. USS *Maddox* (DD-731) was hit by a kamikaze off the coast of Formosa. This is the same *Maddox* that would later be involved in the infamous Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1963. *Wisconsin* received seventeen of her crew (five officers and 12 enlisted), many of whom had to receive major surgery. Because of this influx, along with several other casualties from other wounded destroyers, Stone strenuously requested to his superiors that *Wisconsin*'s depleted medical staff be restored so that all casualties could receive the best attention. Some of the doctors and other medical personnel had been transferred off *Wisconsin* just before the sortie into the South China Sea.

First Assault on Fortress Japan and Iwo Jima

After two months of continuous combat operations, *Wisconsin* and her division withdrew to Ulithi Atoll for repairs and a much-needed break. *Wisconsin*'s younger sister USS *Missouri* (BB-63) was already at berth, **Wisconsin Goes to War continued on page 8**



Along with manning the big guns, Wisconsin's crew was kept busy with other tasks during the war. In the upper right, doctors treat a battle casualty from another ship. Directly above, the destroyer USS Halsey Powell (DD-686) prepares to receive fuel (one of 250 destroyers to be refueled by BB-64) from Wisconsin in heavy seas. To the right, Japanese fighters are tracked and friendly fighters are vectored in by Wisconsin's CIC team. (Photos from National Archives and Wisconsin veterans' collections)



Wisconsin Goes to War continued from page 7

having recently arrived from the United States and the Third Fleet assigned her to join Wisconsin's battleship division. The two young battleships along with the cruisers *San Francisco* (CA-38) and *Boston*, and Destroyer Squadron 53 (DESRON 53) conducted anti-aircraft and maneuver exercises before joining up with the carriers of TG 58 and heading for an assault on Japan on February 14, 1945. Like many of the strikes that Wisconsin participated in, this strike was design to suppress Japanese aircraft and their airfields to prevent them from interfering with a major amphibious assault. In this case, the attack on Iwo Jima was about to get under way.

Wisconsin's sailors humorously referred to DESRON 53 as Wisconsin's "particular pet" as its ships were constantly coming alongside the battleship for fuel, spare parts, mail, news, and of course movies. The movies became somewhat of an issue at the highest level. Wisconsin and her destroyers were supposed to exchange movies so the respective crews would not have to see the same movie over and over. However, Stone wrote that the destroyers were being particularly stingy with the exchange. When they did exchange, the prints were sometimes damaged during the transfer and Stone suggested that a more watertight film canister be developed.

Steaming along at a brisk 23 knots, Wisconsin approached the southeast coast of

Japan on February 16. Strangely, despite the proximity of the large number of ships near Tokyo, the Japanese put up no resistance to the approaching force. In fact, the weather became more of a problem, as several aircraft sorties were cancelled. The carriers launched seven waves of airstrikes, mainly against enemy airfields, before retiring to the south and Iwo Jima.

Wisconsin and her group navigated to the west side of Iwo Jima with orders to block air reinforcements coming from Formosa and Hong Kong. Though Iwo Jima would be one of the heaviest shore bombardments in naval history (3,450 16-inch and 14-inch shells were fired), Wisconsin would not get to participate in the bombardment. All of the newer battleships were assigned to the fast carrier groups and were considered more valuable as carrier escorts. This is not say Wisconsin's crew got to stand down. The refueling teams topped off six more destroyers en route to Iwo Jima on February 19, and prepared for air attacks.

The next morning, however, brought many unfriendlies. In the early morning of February 20, Wisconsin's destroyer screen picked up a sonar contact. Two destroyers broke off to pursue the contact, but nothing further was found. At 0730, Task Force 58's aircraft sortied to support the Iwo Jima landing. That afternoon, the first of many air contacts came

into view. Four groups were tracked throughout the evening. Aircraft from *Enterprise* (CV-6) were vectored in and downed one plane while other ships in the group downed several others. One enemy raid came within seven miles of Wisconsin, but other ships in her task unit were in the way and gunners checked their fire. The enemy aircraft withdrew. Throughout the Iwo Jima campaign, Wisconsin's tracking room was kept busy trying to sort out friendly aircraft from the unfriendly ones. Out of 14 groups, only one was considered hostile, but this was only after Wisconsin's trackers vectored in fighters to make a positive ID. The one hostile group was a twin-engine bomber that Wisconsin chased off with her five-inch guns. She later assisted fighters from *Enterprise* in downing the plane.

In the middle of the fighting, Wisconsin's second commanding officer, Capt. John Wesley Roper boarded Wisconsin in preparation to relieve Capt. Stone. Roper, like Adm. Hanson started out his career on a destroyer, USS *Roe* (DD-24), in World War I and was a long time friend of Stone's as the two of them had served together on *California* (BB-44) in the 1920's. The battleship and her division wrapped up the Iwo Jima campaign with one additional sweep over Tokyo.

Wisconsin Goes to War continued on page 9

Wisconsin Goes to War Continued From page 8

Preparing for Okinawa/Second Raid on Japan

Wisconsin withdrew to Mog Mog, Ulithi Atoll for her second rest period from the front on March 6. Roper officially relieved Stone on the same day. “At times it has been no easy task. The credit belongs to all of you who did the work. You may be sure I’ll continue to be most interested in what you are doing, and where,” Stone commented at the change of command ceremony. Stone had orders to serve on Nimitz’s staff at CINCPAC headquarters.

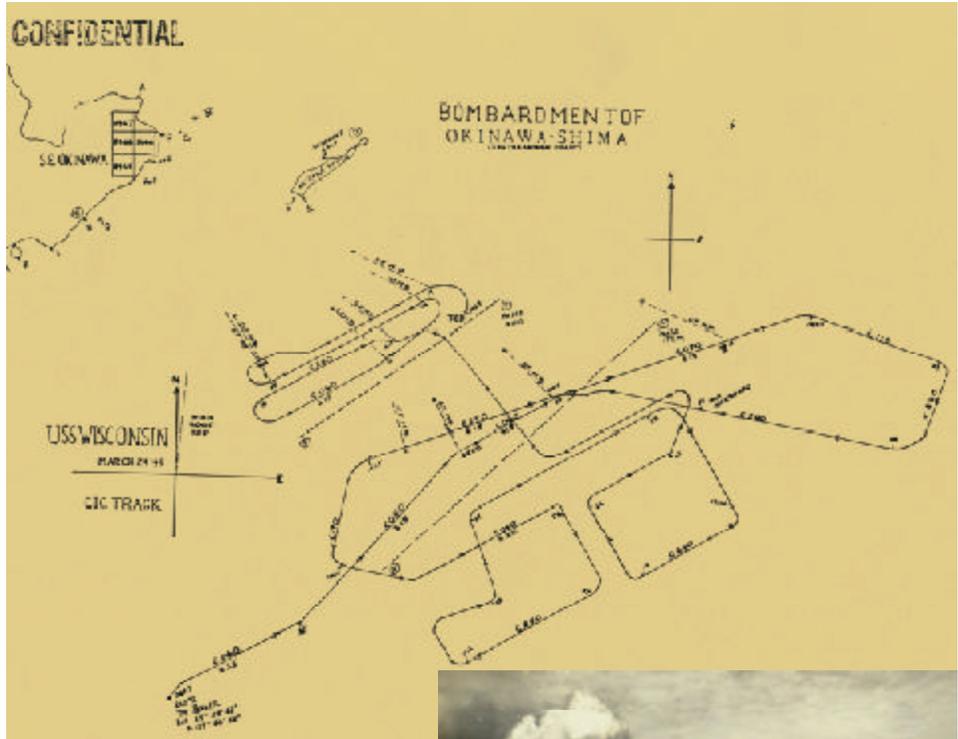
Just a few days before leaving Ulithi, a Japanese suicide dive bomber hit the carrier *Randolph* (CV-15) at anchor just a mile away from *Wisconsin* on the evening of March 11. *Wisconsin* could have easily been the target, as the crew was just about to light up the ship to do a comical play entitled “Two Little Hips.”

With Iwo Jima in hand, the staffs of Third and Fifth Fleets looked towards their next target: Okinawa. At first, preparations for Okinawa were like previous operations for the crew of *Wisconsin*. The ship and her destroyers served as the carriers’ guardians, while the flattops went after local naval and air defenses. Additionally, the carriers of Task Force 58 made another strike on air and naval facilities located on Kyushu in the southern part of Japan. *Wisconsin*, other battleships and cruisers acted as their escort.

Unlike *Wisconsin* first sortie at Japan, the Japanese made more of an effort to harm their enemies. *Wisconsin*’s AA gunners were kept on their toes. Throughout the early part of the sortie, Japanese planes would charge the task force and then withdraw. In one case, trackers plotted 18 groups in the early morning hours of March 18. It is quite



While on the port hand of *Wisconsin*, the carrier *USS Franklin* (CV-13) is hit while off the coast of Japan, March 19, 1945. (Photograph from *Wisconsin veterans’ collections*)



The first time *Wisconsin* gunners fired the main guns in a combat situation was off the coast of Okinawa in March 1945. Shown above is the CIC tracking chart, and shown at right is Turret No. 3 firing at Okinawa. (Tracking chart from National Archives, photo from *Wisconsin veterans’ collections*)



possible it was the same plane popping in and out of radar range. Later that morning, Japanese dive-bombers made a more serious attack when they targeted *Enterprise* with low level runs.

Wisconsin’s gunners checked their fire on the first plane as the Zeke had managed to sneak in with friendly dive bombers returning to *Enterprise*. They then opened up on a second plane that had targeted *Wisconsin* a few minutes later and sent it crashing to the sea with a hit from a five-inch gun. *Wisconsin*’s gunners scored two more kills on aircraft that targeted *Yorktown* that afternoon. One managed to get its bomb off, but only did minor damage and *Wisconsin*’s gunners dispatched the offending aircraft shortly after that.

Hanson noted that American raiding aircraft were able to identify a formidable Japanese surface force at anchor including *Yamato* and four aircraft carriers. The task force inflicted heavy damage to Japanese airfields and to

several ships at anchor before withdrawing on March 19. The task force itself had taken some heavy damage including a crippling, but not fatal, blow to the carrier *Franklin* (CV-13) and one of *Wisconsin*’s “pet” destroyers *Halsey Powell*. Both ships were able to make it back to port. As the task force withdrew, a Japanese submarine had been shadowing it until one of *Wisconsin*’s escorts, *Haggard* (DD-555), ambushed it and brought it to the surface. *Wisconsin*’s spotters made a visual identification of a surfaced submarine later that morning, but apparently had been abandoned. Two destroyers made a closer investigation, but took no further action.

Supporting the Okinawa Landing

As the task force returned from Japan, it steamed directly for Okinawa as more direct preparations for an amphibious assault were underway. The approaches to the beaches on the southeast coast of Okinawa needed to **Wisconsin Goes to War continued on page 14**

Book Reviews

Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Submarine Chasers of World War II

by Theodore R. Treadwell

Reviewed by David Dashiell

As World War II began in Europe and German U-boats became a dire threat to the Allies' navies and sea borne commerce, it became increasingly apparent to the United States that our defenses against such a menace were virtually non-existent. In order to mount some semblance of an anti-submarine force, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called for an all out construction program for subchasers as a stop gap until more effective vessels could be available. The construction program was to consist of two types of vessels: a wooden hull type called "SC's" and a larger, steel-hulled ship called "PC's."

Splinter Fleet: The Wooden Subchasers

Theodore R. Treadwell. *Splinter Fleet: The Submarine Chasers of World War II*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000. ISBN 1-55750-817-8, \$27.96.

of World War II by Theodore R. Treadwell details the experiences of many of the SCs as they performed their assignments in all of the wartime theaters. Treadwell is a former subchaser officer including serving as skipper of SC-648. As one of the 20,000 officers and enlisted men who served on the 448 wooden subchasers of World War II, I eagerly devoured this well written book just as my shipmates will certainly do. It resurrects the memory of these small vessels and their hardy crews which history has all but forgotten.

The need to build small ships in a real hurry almost duplicated the situation our country found itself in 1916, when it became necessary to quickly produce an anti-submarine defense. In World War I, we built 440 110-foot wooden subchasers, which served on our East Coast, the Mediterranean, in the waters of the North Sea, and around the British Isles. The World

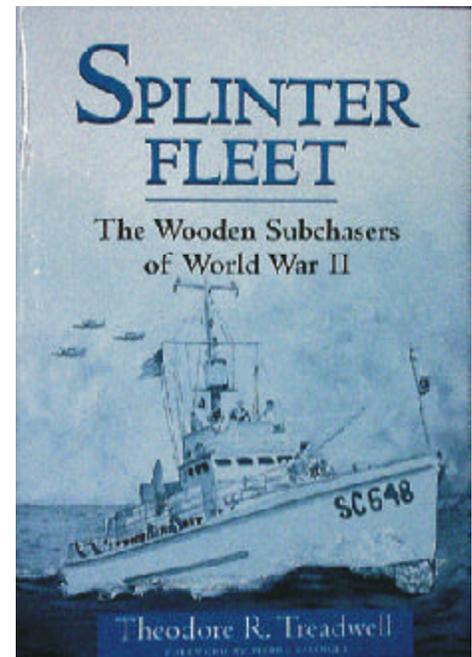
War II Luders design followed the earlier hull model with little change, though the World War II model was a bit more heavily armed, with radar, and a better sonar.

These little ships, as everyone knew, with their 12 knot cruising speed (some with more powerful "pancake" engines were said to reach 21 knots) and meager armament were no match for a German U-boat on the surface. But with their sound gear and depth charges they did pose a threat to the submerged U-boat, and as convoy escorts, there were certainly an improvement over the converted yachts and trawlers which they replaced. The SCs continued as convoy escorts as the war progressed. But they were also given other responsibilities, most notably as control vessels for landing craft in amphibious assaults.

Most of the officers and crews of these, the smallest commissioned ships of the US Navy (PT Boats were smaller, but they were commissioned as squadrons) were products of the Subchaser Training Center in Miami, FL. The book provides a very good chapter on the center, which trained officers and crews of SCs, the 173-foot PCs, and sometimes even for destroyer escort. The center's commanding officer, Lt. Cdmr E.F. MacDaniel, had spent some years on destroyers and had developed a hatred for U-boats.

The author relates numerous experiences of various SCs, including some of his own experiences during air attacks and heavy weather. He tells of SCs that were in Buckner Bay, Okinawa in October 1945 when Typhoon Louise hit. Treadwell recounts a vivid story of survival, one that I can personally relate to as my patrol craft, PCS-1455, rode out the storm at sea.

These tales, however, do not tell the story aboard a subchaser. With three officers and 24 enlisted men, no evaporators for distilling water, cramped quarters, and often living in wet clothing, we frequently had to subsist on sandwiches or crackers



when the cook was seasick or pots would not stay on the galley range.

Often going alongside a larger vessel for provisions and supplies, the query from the subchaser crew to those on the destroyer escort or destroyer would be "How do you guys like shore duty?" The replies of course were equally insulting. The larger vessels, though, were generally very considerate of the plight of the "small boys" and whenever possible provided the SC crews with fresh bread, ice cream, and other amenities such as the opportunity to see a movie.

Nonetheless, Treadwell concludes with this appropriate epilogue: "On September 2, 1945, a total of 254 warships gathered by invitation in Tokyo Bay to be present at this historic surrender ceremony conducted aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*. All classes of warships were there. All, that is, except one. Two months later, when millions celebrated the victory in New York harbor, the *New York Times* called the line of ships 'seven miles of seapower.' Not one subchaser was invited to share in the momentous events. Overlooked? Scorned? It really doesn't matter. Now, having come this far, we know that the doughty little ships of the Splinter Fleet and those iron men who sailed them were indeed too good to be forgotten." 🇺🇸

Mr. Dashiell was an officer on USS SC-681 and PCS-1455 during World War II and is a retired captain from the United States Naval Reserves. He is also retired from the banking industry. He serves as a board member for the museum's foundation and as a volunteer docent.

The Submarine Book: An Illustrated History of the Attack Submarine

by Chuck Lawliss

Reviewed by Linda Marie McNiel

In *The Submarine Book*, Chuck Lawliss easily guides the reader through the chronicles of time from the conception of the first medieval diving bell to the modern attack submarine of the US Navy. The book is an easy read and it is well documented and illustrated. “There are only two types of ships, submarines and targets,” the echo of many submariners. It closely correlates with the words which Lawliss quotes from the movie *The Hunt for Red October*, “A submarine is a weapon of war whose only purpose is the destruction of her country’s enemies.”

As a weapon and as a fascinating ship, the submarine has earned the respect of the US Navy and the general public as well. It has been a pivotal weapon in the strategies

Chuck Lawliss. *The Submarine Book: An Illustrated History of the Attack Submarine*. Springfield, NJ: Burford Books, Inc. ISBN 1-580-80078-5. 224 pages. \$18.95

of war. Lawliss draws attention to this with his explanation of the German wolf packs, the capturing of the Enigma and how the submarines have helped and hurt us in both World Wars.

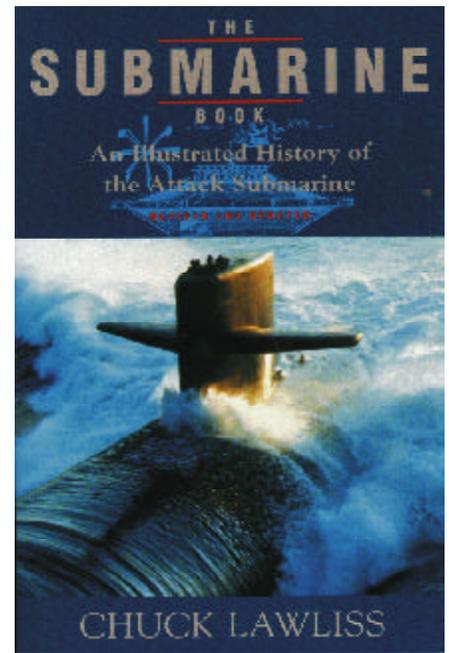
In World War I, one of the catalysts that drew the United States into the war was the sinking of the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. A German U-boat, the *U-20*, torpedoed a British ocean liner killing 1,198 people that included 128 Americans. It was the awakening of the American public that began an outcry for justice. As the German submarine campaign continued to escalate, so did the public outcry. The demand grew for not only involvement in the war but to begin grow our fleet also. However, it must be pointed out that America was still not prepared for the war that was to follow: the Great War. The German U-boats were not only stronger and more efficient, but the game of underwater warfare became far more

deadly.

During World War II, America was roused into the war from her deep sleep. The cry from apathy to fury was overnight, on December 7, 1941. Alongside of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the U-boats sank more sea vessels than ever before. Japanese subs ran the waters of the Pacific also. America needed to up the ante and increase their presence in and under the water. Here, Lawliss gives credit to Admiral Chester Nimitz as being a key factor in the American Pacific Fleet. In addition, he gives honors to submarine skippers Dudley Morton and John Cromwell, Commanders Richard O’Kane, Samuel Dealey, and Eugene Fluckey.

Lawliss shows the human side of the story. He walks the reader through the seaman’s life on a submarine. He shows the hardships, the sacrifices, the skill and dedication that is needed to man the vessels of isolation within the deep waters. As Lawliss develops the history of the subs he easily guides the reader through its development. It takes a man of deep character, intelligence and bravery to man a submarine. Lawliss brings to light the qualities of these men as a whole. Some of the pioneers and personalities that Lawliss talks about are Civil War inventor H. L. Hunley, John Holland, inventor of the Navy’s first commissioned submarine, and President Jimmy Carter, who was a nuclear propulsionist aboard an attack submarine. These are just a few of the men Lawliss describes as he unfolds the story of the submarine.

Another great Naval man and submariner Lawliss honors in his book to the father of the modern submarine warfare – Admiral Hyman George Rickover. Here was a man who saw a vision of the importance a fleet of nuclear submarines could play in our Naval warfare. Rickover’s career and his struggle to the top are highlighted as an important part to our modern defense vessels.



While this book was a good read, little difference between its first edition and the newly revised edition was found. The primary update in this book is his new chapter, “The Cold War’s End Brings New Problems” and the modern day epics of the post-war machine. Direct attention is drawn to the *Kursk* and its bone-chilling reminder that a seaman’s job is not an easy one but that of dedication to his country. Lawliss’ shares his view on the tragic *Kursk* incident. It brings the reader to a time of reflection of the perils of sea and the type of men that love it. The book is valiant tribute to the men we call submariners.

Risks are inevitable, both in and out of war. However, safety, protocol, and improvement for our men and machines in the sea are always being reevaluated. *The Submarine Book* does a good job of describing both the risks, and the evolutionary process of shipbuilding to reduce those risks.

This book is a good primer on submarine history. It is excellent for the Naval historian, military enthusiast or civilian history buff. It is a good book for those who are entering the Navy whose hearts are turned toward the underwater vessels. For the man who serves on the sea, it is a must-read – for him and his wife. 🇺🇸

Ms. McNiel is a free-lance writer from Salisbury, MD. She has previously worked for The Topeka Capital Journal and The Daily Times (Salisbury, MD). She has also taught journalism and writing at the high school level.

Mistakes Were Made

As shocking as it may sound, your beloved Sage has made a mistake. Not just one was mistake, but several. This is the hazard of combining vanity with deadlines. Mistakes do happen, it is a part of being a human. It is also a human need to correct each other's mistakes. Vanity made the Sage think he was always right and deadlines made him think he didn't have time to get his facts right. There are two mistakes in particular which either need to be corrected or clarified.

The first mistake appeared in the last issue in the Sage's column. The Sage told you about the discovery (Vol 7. Issue 1 "The Museum Sage: Truly a Fate Worse Than Death") made by an Iowa University professor on a New Jersey law during the Revolution that sent convicted traitors to the gallows without the benefit of clergy.

They could get out of this dire punishment by enlisting in the Continental Navy. The Sage incorrectly stated that the reason behind sending someone to the gallows without the benefit of clergy was that it was assumed that the traitor's soul would be sent straight to Hell. A few readers pointed out to The Sage was that the real reason for getting to see a member of the clergy, a convicted felon could attempt to get out of capital punishment. If the felon could convince the clergy that he was a Christian, he could escape the death penalty. By taking this away, a traitor would be sent immediately to the gallows without the benefit of such an appeal.

While The Sage is trying to weasel his way out of his mistakes, he might as well explain his rationale behind the Korean War article (Vol. 6 Issue 4 "The Museum Sage: Local Ships, One World Event"), which is mistake

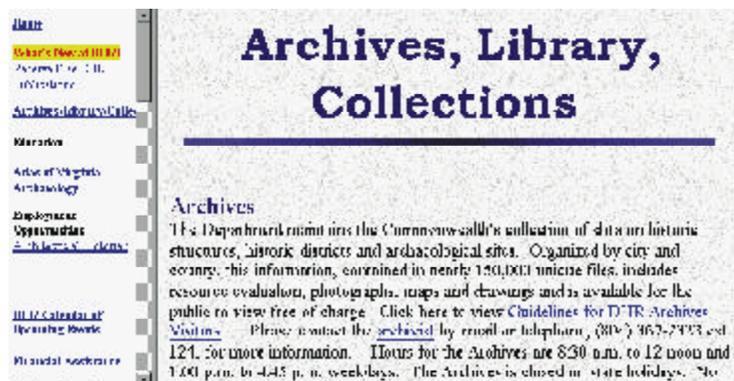
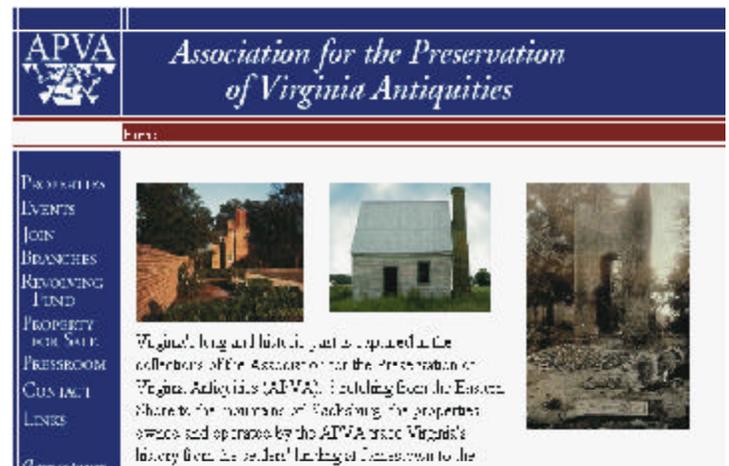
number two.

We were asked, not told, by various public affairs officers to provide names of Hampton Roads ships that participated in the Korean War. Understand that our criteria was very, very loose. Ships that were stationed here were not the only ships on the list. We included everything from ships based here, ships built here, ships that were commissioned here, ships that were refitted here, and many others. In a sense, we were showing just how important this port has always been, even with a visible amount of ignorance from Atlantic Fleet about a war happening in the Pacific Fleet's territory.

The Sage will make mistakes in the future and strongly encourages people to write in and correct him (see page 1 for the many ways of contacting him).

Useful Web Sites

www.apva.org-This is the web site for the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. This organization is well known for sponsoring preservation and archaeology work at the Jamestown Settlement site. It also has several other historic sites throughout Virginia



www.dhr.state.va.us-This is the website for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. This state organization's primary mission is to assist local governments and private individuals in complying with national and state preservation laws. It has a large collection of photographs, architectural drawings, and historic data available free of charge to the public.

Hangfires off of Okinawa

The bombardment of the southeast coast of Okinawa and the island of Kutaka on March 24, 1945 marked the first time *Wisconsin* fired her main guns at a hostile target. Roper had commented that overall the performance was good, but that it could have been better, and there was still much to learn.

In his after action report, Roper was particularly critical of the use of reduced velocity powder bags. He commented, "It is considered an urgent military necessity that the powder be stacked or that the size and/or shape of these reduced velocity bags be changed in order to eliminate the great danger of hangfires, the extremely undesirable conditions in handling the powder, and the great loss of time in loading."

The bags that Roper referred to were smaller and had less powder in them than the traditional silk bags. Battleships frequently used them in shore bombardment as it reduced the minimum range of the guns, allowing the ship to be closer to shore while firing. The bags *Wisconsin* used, however, were oval shaped, as opposed to cylindrical. Often the oddly shaped bags would fall off the magazine hoist, forcing the gun captain and trayman to make a saving catch to prevent the bag from falling into the gun pit.

Additional problems occurred during loading. *Wisconsin's* gunners would often have to elevate the main guns to a 45-degree angle so that they could lob a shell over the heads of the minesweepers and onto a shore target. But sometimes, the bags, because of their shape, would tumble sideways. As a result, the primer would not be ignited and the gun would misfire with a live round in the barrel. Roper reported that three such "hangfires" occurred during the bombardment. To prevent further hangfires, gunners sometimes rammed the last bag in by hand to ensure it was in the correct position. 

Wisconsin Goes to War continued from page 9

be swept for mines. The problem was that there were many coast defense guns that would tear wooden hulled minesweepers to pieces if given the chance. Additionally, Fifth

Fleet had designated this sector to be one of the landing areas once the Marines were called in. To cover the sweeps and make preparations for the landing, the eight battleships of Task Force 58 formed up a bombardment group. Almost a year after she was commissioned, *Wisconsin* was finally going to get to fire her main guns in a combat situation.

The bombardment did not get off to a good start. Hanson expressed his frustration in his after-action report. He commented that "delays in receiving instructions for the bombardment hampered planning and preparation of operation orders." *Wisconsin's* command staff and gunnery officers had a total of 48 hours to prepare plots and navigation charts before the attack.

Fifth Fleet formed the eight battleships and escorts into three bombardment groups. *Wisconsin* was placed in the "Northern Bombardment Group" with *New Jersey*, *Missouri*, and destroyers from Destroyer Division 97. Both of *Wisconsin's* Kingfishers went aloft to assist in fire correction, and each battleship was given permission to fire 40 rounds per gun. The target list included coast defense guns, ammunition dumps, fortifications, and anti-aircraft guns. *Wisconsin's* gunners were ordered to use "reduced velocity" powder bags when firing the main guns. They would give *Wisconsin's* gunners major headaches and caused serious delays between fire missions (see sidebar).

The bombardment commenced on the morning of March 24 at 0851. The main guns were first turned on a small island off the coast of Okinawa called Kutaka Shima. A merchant ship that had run aground was spotted on the other side of Kutaka. After receiving permission to fire on it, *Wisconsin* fired on her first surface ship. Only a few shells were lobbed on the grounded target and unfortunately, no hits were scored. By the afternoon, attention was turned back towards Okinawa and the beaches and Hanson gave the order to "Let 'em have it." The bombardment operation went until 1430 and *Wisconsin* fired a total of 155 high capacity 16-inch rounds.

The bombardment was successful in the



In one of the most dramatic pictures taken of Wisconsin, a Japanese twin engine bomber is hit and sent crashing to the sea during operations off the coast of Okinawa. (National Archives)

respect that the minesweepers were able to accomplish their mission with no losses. As for material damage, both Roper and Hanson admitted more could have been done. Roper wrote that *Wisconsin* observed no material damage, though *Missouri* reported that some coast defense guns and a few industrial targets were destroyed in the bombardment. Roper offered up two explanations for the lack of better results: first, the Kingfishers' spotters had difficulty seeing targets and secondly, there may have been nothing to bomb in the first place. Japanese commanders tried a different strategy at Okinawa and had pulled back most of their heavy equipment off of the coast, as they recognized the firepower of American battleships.

With the bombardment over, *Wisconsin* and her group were reassigned to their now traditional role of carrier escort and destroyer tender. Operating in conjunction with *Missouri*, *Wisconsin* spent the next few months off the coast of Okinawa protecting the carriers *Langley* (CVL-22), *Independence*, and *Yorktown*. While *Wisconsin* was being refueled by the oiler *Nanthahala* (AO-60), *Wisconsin* received word that a Japanese surface group had left the Inland Sea and was heading south. As a precautionary measure, the battleship was ordered back to the operating area off of Okinawa. Arriving on the morning of March 29, several friendly aircraft, both Navy and Army Air Corps bombers, were tracked. Around 1400, *Langley's* radar picked up a group of low flying aircraft that had avoided detection until just ten miles out. Chased by two of *Langley's* fighters, two Japanese dive-bombers targeted *Yorktown*. After one plane was downed, ***Wisconsin Goes to War continued on Page 15***

Wisconsin Goes to War continued from page 14

Wisconsin's gunners opened up along with gunners from *Yorktown*. The other plane dove out of the clouds, dropped its bomb on *Yorktown*, but missed, with both Hellcats in pursuit. The American fighters got the Japanese "Zeke", but unfortunately, both American fighters were hit by friendly AA fire. It is not known who made the mistake, but Roper attributed it to an incorrect identification of the aircraft and suddenness



One of *Wisconsin's* many 20mm gun crews watch the sky and standby for orders. Gun crews were kept at their battle stations for 72 straight hours at one point during the battle for Okinawa (Photo from *Wisconsin veterans' collections*)

of the action.

For the next several weeks, Japanese fighters and dive-bombers targeted *Wisconsin* and her task group. With the battleship's help, most were downed and, most importantly, no carriers were touched. On the morning of April 7, carriers from *Wisconsin's* task group launched several hundred planes and eventually sank the battleship *Yamato* and her ten escorts. *Wisconsin* would not get to face the ship that the Navy designed her to destroy. But, *Wisconsin's* crew had other matters to tend to. Four days later, the Japanese air force made several attempts to get at the American carriers. At one point, there were so many raids designated by *Wisconsin's* trackers that the trackers gave up trying to plot the exact course of each plane. The trackers were able to vector in fighters from *Intrepid*, and prevented most of the enemy from getting anywhere near the carriers. Two of them, however, made it through the initial fighter screen and targeted *Missouri* from astern. Flying only a few feet above the water, the first "Zeke" flew behind *Wisconsin* and dogged both *Wisconsin's* and *Missouri's* gun fire. The plane crashed onto the deck of

Missouri, but caused little material damage and no casualties. A second "Zeke" attempted the same maneuver a few minutes later, but this time *Wisconsin's* gunners got it. The plane exploded in flames about 800 yards off the battleship's starboard beam. Two hours later, gunners went after a third plane, but the plane withdrew before being hit. Before the day was out, *Wisconsin* tracked and/or fired on 15 more enemy air attacks. *Wisconsin's* gunners fired close to 700 five-inch shells, over 1,600 40mm rounds, and over 1,850 20mm rounds in one day.

Now operating with the carriers *Intrepid* and the recently repaired *Randolph*, the large cruisers *Guam* (CB-2) and *Alaska* (CB-1) as well as *Missouri* and *Yorktown*, *Wisconsin's* task group operated in close support of the amphibious assaults. This continued to mean screening of aircraft carriers, and not shore bombardment. The older battleships continued in that role. For the next eight straight weeks, *Wisconsin's* trackers and gunners were kept busy by constant air attacks, particularly on the evening of April 11 when several planes made runs at the ship. There was even the occasional submarine and mine sighting. In one of these sightings, a destroyer spotted a mine directly in *Wisconsin's* path, no more than a couple miles ahead, forcing the battleship to pull an emergency turn while travelling at 18 knots.

Roper began to notice the strain on his crew due to combat. In particular, he noticed that his gunners were lacking fire discipline and were shooting at anything that might be an enemy aircraft. He also commented that sometimes gunners would often continue shooting when an enemy aircraft was either out of range or at planes that were in the process of crashing to sea after they had been hit. Roper recognized that the threat of kamikaze aircraft had put an additional level of anxiety on gunners.

The battleship's gunnery office also noticed the level of anxiety. He commented that it was difficult to make a positive ID on a

plane, especially single engine planes. He believed that friendly aircraft made it worse, and in a sense had themselves to blame, because they would approach the task force in a hostile manner.

Despite the sometimes out-of-control nature of his gunners, *Wisconsin's* skipper praised the gunners for putting up an effective barrage. Roper also made a more general praise of his crew. He commented that even though the crew had been in a combat situation for 58 straight days, the crew was in "high spirits and anxious to stay at sea to help finish the war as quickly as possible."

Third Assault on Japan

It was not until early June that the crew finally got a break. Battleship Division Nine, now under the command of Rear Adm. Louis Denfield, withdrew to San Pedro Bay in the Philippines. Denfield was the first of two future Chief of Naval Operations to serve on *Wisconsin*. The division was also reassigned to Task Force 38 in preparation for another sortie at the Japanese home islands. Battleship Division Nine had been tasked to join in the strategic bombardment of Japan in preparation for the expected amphibious assault of the home islands. The division commenced a few gunnery exercises as a warm-up before proceeding north to Tokyo on July 9.

In comparison to *Wisconsin's* last visit off the coast of Japan, her third one was relatively quiet. Air strikes against industrial targets by TF 38's carriers also went off without a hitch, except for the occasional fog bank.

On July 14, *Wisconsin* received *South Dakota's* two Kingfishers in preparation for the bombardment. Joined by *Missouri* and *Iowa*, the cruisers *Dayton* (CL-105) and *Atlanta* (CL-104), and the destroyers of DESRON 54, *Wisconsin* proceeded at 26 knots towards the industrial port of Muroan Hokkaido. *Wisconsin's* four Kingfishers, along with aircraft from the other battleships, spotted and targeted the Nihon Steel Mill, Wanishi Iron Works, and a coal liquefaction plant.

The bombardment commenced on the morning of July 15 with *Wisconsin* taking its place in the center of the bomb line. *Wisconsin's* specific targets were the Wanishi Iron Works and the Nihon Steel company. While they were using high capacity shells, **Wisconsin Goes to War Continues on Page 16**

Wisconsin Goes to War continued from page 15

gunners equipped the shells with steel nose plugs and base detonating fuses to have the maximum effect on heavy industrial equipment. Using a lighthouse and radar as guides, gunners opened fire first on the steel mill. The main guns fired 128 16-inch shells on the Nihon plant before turning to the Wanishi mill, where the guns fired 163 16-inch



Liberated Canadian prisoners-of-war are fed their first decent meal since their capture on the deck of Wisconsin. These soldiers were a part of the Hong Kong garrison when the city surrendered on Christmas Day 1941. (Photo from Wisconsin veterans' collections)

shells at it. Unlike the Okinawa bombardment, this attack had significantly less personnel casualties and no interruption in fire due to defective equipment. *Wisconsin's* crew fired off the 291 shells in less than 90 minutes. Roper commented that he could not be sure

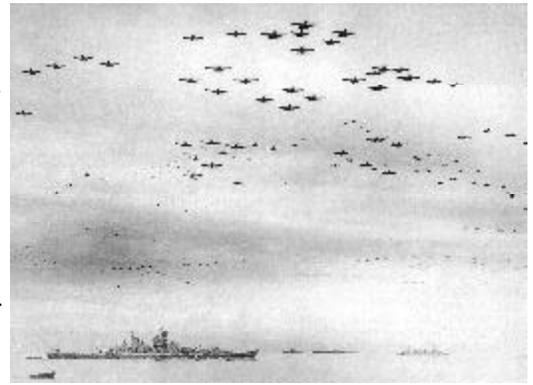
of exact damage caused by *Wisconsin's* guns as there was a low overcast, and smoke from fires caused by the shelling. Liberated POWs would later confirm the destruction of the mill, as they were forced to work there during the day.

Three days later, Third Fleet gave the group a new set of targets. Reinforced by three other battleships, including HMS *King George V*, plus two destroyer divisions, Third Fleet instructed the group to destroy three factories owned by the Hitachi Corporation located about 60 miles north of Tokyo. *Wisconsin* specifically was given a nearby airfield as a target if the opportunity arose. Using radar only as their guide, *Wisconsin's* gunners opened fired at 2314. Over the course of 60 minutes, *Wisconsin's* gunners fired off 228 16-inch shells at the three factories. Even though he could not be sure of the damage caused by the main guns, Roper was pleased nonetheless with his crews' performance in getting so many shells off in a short amount of time.

Peace and Liberating POWs

The bombardment of the Hitachi plants was one of the last combat missions of the war for *Wisconsin*. More gunnery exercises were undertaken in preparation for the great invasion, and *Wisconsin* continued to serve as a fighter director, a hospital ship, and an armored oiler for the division. But, the atomic bombs and subsequent surrender by the Emperor made an amphibious assault on the home islands unnecessary.

Two hundred fifty *Wisconsin* sailors were formed up into what was called a "Blue Jacket Landing Force" to assist in the initial occupation of Japan. While walking up a



A triumphant ending to the war. (Photo from Wisconsin veterans' collections)

beach, the landing force heard several cries in English to them. The cries came from Canadian prisoners-of-war that had been held on Japan ever since their capture in 1941. The French-Canadian troops were formerly from the garrison of Hong Kong and were captured when the Japanese overran the city.

Wisconsin arrived in Tokyo Harbor three days after the official surrender. For her relatively short time in the war, Battleship Number Sixty-Four made a tremendous contribution to the drive on Japan. She and her crew refueled 250 destroyers, shot down three aircraft, assisted on four more, and directed fighters in the downing of several more. She rescued two downed naval aviators from the sea and saved numerous destroyer sailors wounded in action. The battleship brought soldiers and Marines to San Francisco before returning home to Norfolk on January 15, 1946. 

Editor's note: The editor would like to thank David Kohnen, curator for Nauticus' *Wisconsin* exhibits, and veterans of the battleship *Wisconsin* for their information and photographs

In Our Next Issue...

- Bringing the Battleship to Life: *Wisconsin's* Crew in World War II
- The Museum's *Wisconsin* Exhibits
- Book Reviews: *Captain Blakeley and the Wasp: The Cruise of 1814* and *Arctic Mission: By Airship and Submarine to the Far North* by William F. Althoff

