



The Friends of the PNSM
The Wheelhouse

Volume 2, No 2
April 1, 2023

Welcome to the
The Wheelhouse,
a Newsletter

published quarterly
by **The Friends of the
Portsmouth Naval
Shipyard Museum**

Please visit the
Museum and see our
website for additional
information.

<https://www.friendsofportsmouthnsm.org/>

In this issue we bring
you messages from our
**President, Gary
Bahena**, a History
Column from our 1st
**Vice President, Steve
Milner**, a Report from
our **Treasurer, Robert
Fogel**, and a PNSM
Exhibit reviews by
Renée M. Russell

**Editor and
Newsletter Design:
Renée M. Russell**

**The Friends of the
Portsmouth Naval
Shipyard Museum**

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President's Message

Greetings, Friends.

In this issue of The
Wheelhouse, we bring
you updates about
three new and exciting
Museum Exhibits. We
also highlight Amy
Yarsinske's talk at the
Spring Speaker's Series.
Our Annual Meeting will
be on May 09 at the
Children's Museum. The
meeting package will go
out the week of April 3.

Treasurer's Report

The Friends currently
have \$96,560.76 on
hand. During the next 9
months, we are funding
continuation of the Oral
History Project with the
IC Norcom TV
Production students,
and textile conservation
of old uniforms. The
new air conditioner is in
the Lightship, with
\$10,000 donated by The
Friends.

THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD MUSEUM

Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY) History

By: Steve Milner, First Vice President



An Oakland,
California,
newspaper
reports on its
front page
about the
historic raid
over Japan.

Norfolk Navy Yard played role in Doolittle's WWII daring Japan raid

As Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle increased the speed of his bomber as it rolled along the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Hornet (CV 8) on April 18, 1942, he was piloting the first of 16 B-25's launched that day on a historic bombing mission over Japan. At that moment he couldn't have imagined that his wife, Josephine, nearly two years later, would be christening a vessel at the Norfolk Navy Yard related to that mission. (The Norfolk Navy Yard was renamed Norfolk Naval Shipyard on December 1, 1945.)

And when President Franklin Roosevelt was asked later by a reporter where this classified mission originated, he casually responded that it began in "Shangri-La," the fictional Tibetan paradise James Hilton described in his 1931 book "Lost Horizon."

(Doolittle Continued, Page 4)

Calendar Items:

Saturday, April 8 at 10 am, Portsmouth Lightship Museum, Grand Re-Opening

Tuesday, May 9 at noon, Portsmouth Children's Museum, Friends Annual Meeting

Wednesday, July 26, 6-7 PM, Churchland Branch Library, Allie Marie will speak about her research on the German Village at the NNSY.



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Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum

By: Renée M. Russell, Editor

Portsmouth and the Great War

The history of Portsmouth in the Great War, is now featured at the Museum in an overhauled display.

Do as I do and come meet members of the Armed Forces as they would have appeared in 1918. This is the museum's first full-scale diorama illustrating the history of Portsmouth's involvement in "The Great War," before there was WWII. Also highlighted are photo identification badges from the Yard, Trophies and Medals issued to Portsmouth troops, and discover the story of a Portsmouth native who left his position as an electrician at NNSY to serve on the Western



Full-scale diorama – see detail at right



Close up of Female in the Great War

Front. I was fortunate to have Ross Patterson, Assistant Curator, lead me through the Exhibits. The full-scale models, in uniforms from the Great War was so very detailed. Come check out these new Exhibits at PNSM. More info is available at:

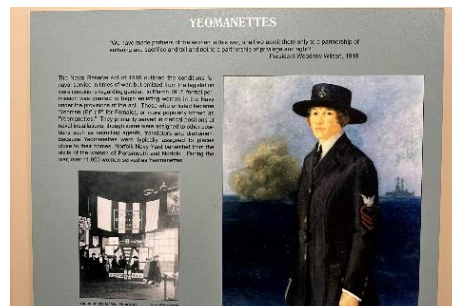
<https://portsmouthnavalshipyardmuseum.com/>



Photo Identification badges from the Yard



Ross Paterson with early US Marine



In March 1917, formal permission was granted to begin enlisting women in the Navy. During the war, over 11,000 women served as Yeomanettes, many at the Navy Yard. They primarily served in clerical positions and other duties at Naval Installations.



The German Village in the Yard



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Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum

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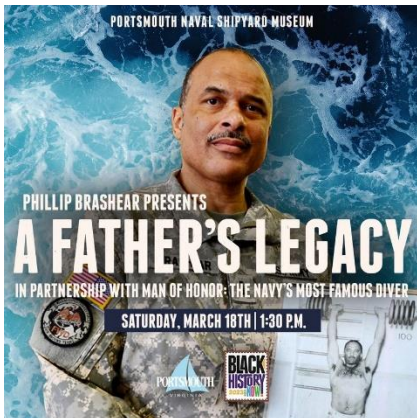


Carl Brashear

Phillip Brashear

A Father's Legacy "Man of Honor: The Navy's Most Famous Diver."

We hope that you were one of about 30 people who were able to visit the Museum for this presentation. On Saturday, March 18, 1:30 p.m., PNSM proudly hosted **Chief Warrant Officer 5 Phillip M. Brashear**, son of Navy Diver, Master Petty Chief, **Carl Brasher** about the life, experiences, and achievements of his father in concert with the exhibit "Man of Honor: The Navy's Most Famous Diver."



Phillip is a 1980 graduate of Portsmouth's I.C. Norcom High School, and today he shared the incredible story of his father's history-making triumph over racial and

physical barriers to become the U.S. Navy's first-ever African-American Master Diver and active-duty amputee. An Iraqi Operation Freedom veteran, and retired Chief Warrant Officer, Phillip M. Brashear is the President of the **Carl Brashear Foundation**.



Carl has presented the story of his father's life at events across the world, giving a unique insight into a man who never gave up.



Mr. Brashear showed footage of the kinds of proofs his dad had to make to get back into diving, with a 300-pound suit, after the amputation of his leg during shipboard operations.



Photos by Renée M Russell

Phillip "never say can't" Brashear and Gary Bahena, President of The Friends

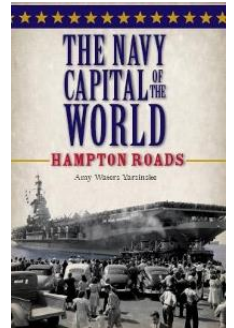
Friends of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum

Speaker Series:

Wednesday, March 22, 6-7 PM,
Churchland Branch Library

It was an honor to have **Amy Waters Yarsinske**, the author of over 85 best-selling and award-winning non-fiction books, speak to our group of about twenty attendees.

Amy explained, through her book **The Navy Capital of The World**, how the Hampton Roads region of Virginia has maintained a proud naval tradition - the beating heart of a rich historical narrative.



Norfolk Naval Shipyard is especially featured because of its long history that predates the USA. With a vital future ahead, the NNSY has set many precedents and influenced the Region, in ever-evolving ways for more than 255 years.

Amy's drive to document and investigate history-shaping stories and people was



clearly evident. Among other techniques of finding original data is that

she attends estate sales. Boxes of rejected photos can become illustrations in her books.

Some came early to meet with Amy and purchase a signed copy of her newest book, **Yorktown Through Time**.



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Doolittle (Continued from Page 1)

It would be another year until the public learned the details of this mission, which inflicted relatively light damage to Tokyo and other Japanese cities. But it was one that greatly boosted American morale, as revenge for the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec, 7, 1941. The mission also showed America could reach targets on the Japanese homeland and no doubt rattled those citizens and military leaders.

When Mrs. Doolittle christened the aircraft carrier USS Shangri-La (CV 38) on February 24, 1944, in Building Ways No. 1, Rear Admiral Felix X. Gygax was the Navy Yard Commandant. The shipyard's employee newspaper, "Speed



Mrs. Jimmy Doolittle smashes a traditional champagne bottle during the christening of USS Shangri-La on February 24, 1944, at the Norfolk Navy Yard. Naval History and Heritage Command

Victory," noted that about 100,000 people attended this event. (During World War II the shipyard's peak employment was nearly 43,000 persons.) Due to wartime national security concerns, a ship's commissioning might have been a low-eyed event. But there were



Jimmy Doolittle, in left foreground, is shown with USS Hornet's commanding officer, Captain Marc Mitscher.

unusual details surrounding this commissioning, mainly the bravery of the "Doolittle Raiders" and their unprecedented flight, attracted national attention.

"Lost Horizon" author Hilton attended the Shangri-La's commissioning, along with other VIP's. These included Virginia Governor Colgate Darden, Jr., who delivered the event's keynote address.

As for the mission itself, Doolittle selected the Army Air Corps crewmen for this classified and challenging effort, which started on American soil. During many practice sessions, the pilots had to take off within a very confined, marked-up perimeter. A B-25 bomber usually required a 4,000-foot runway for takeoff, but for the Japanese mission they would only have about 467 feet on USS Hornet's flight deck. These pilots weren't told why they were practicing this maneuver.

Prior to the mission, the Norfolk Navy Yard performed an availability on USS Hornet in Dry Dock No. 4, and this ship returned

a few weeks later to the Norfolk Naval Base. And before USS Hornet left Norfolk, two Army Air Corps B-25 aircraft were tied down on its flight deck. And once this ship was out in the Atlantic Ocean the planes took off, demonstrating the feasibility of launching heavy bombers from a flight deck designed to support much lighter fighter planes.



Photo # NH 53423 B-25s take off from USS Hornet to attack Japan, 18 April 1942
Here are some of the 16 B-25 aircraft that were launched from USS Hornet to bomb Japan.

Only USS Hornet's commanding officer, Captain Marc Mitscher, and possibly a few others on board, knew the true mission and its destination. (Later, Admiral Mitscher went on to have a distinguished Navy career.)

Once USS Hornet reached San Francisco, under the cover of secrecy and darkness, loaded aboard were sixteen B-25's, tied down on USS Hornet's flight deck as the aircraft carrier prepared to sail toward Japan. Initially, the crew was told it was delivering the aircraft to a forward Pacific land base.

(Doolittle Continued, Page 5)



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Once again, the Norfolk Navy Yard played a role in a major chapter of World War II history by preparing USS Hornet to transport the “Doolittle Raiders” on their historic mission. And the shipyard also was privileged nearly two years later to build the aircraft carrier, USS Shangri-La, a legacy of that amazing bombing run that showed the Japanese that America could strike its heartland.

(Doolittle Continued from Page 4)

John Stallings, Jr. of Hopewell, Virginia, was a Sailor on board USS Hornet as it steamed toward Japan. In a local newspaper interview in 2006, he recalled that when Captain Mitscher eventually announced on the ship’s public address system where they were going, “a lot of caps went flying in the air when we heard that.”

Stallings, who was on the aircraft carrier’s flight deck when the planes took off, said to assist the B-25’s takeoffs, to give them a “little push,” the ship’s air officer waited until the Pacific Ocean swells lifted the vessel’s bow before sending each plane aloft. Because the Japanese unexpectedly detected USS Hornet’s task force, Doolittle and Mitscher decided to launch the planes considerably earlier than planned, and farther from the Japanese mainland. And even though each five-man crew took along extra gas cans, it became apparent that not all of the planes would later reach friendly airstrips in Japanese-occupied China.

Some of the planes ditched in the sea while others crash landed. Of the 80 “Doolittle Raiders,” the Japanese captured several airmen, executing three of them and holding five as prisoners of war until hostilities ended. One plane landed in Russia, which had a peace treaty with Japan and refused to release the crew at that time. Doolittle was forced to bail



Jimmy Doolittle piloted the first B-25 that took off from USS Hornet’s flight deck.

out over the Chinese mainland and was safely evacuated with most of his airmen. Seeking revenge for the raid, the Japanese killed many Chinese, especially those who had helped the raiders escape.

Having lost all sixteen B-25’s, Doolittle thought he’d face court martial. Instead, President Roosevelt awarded him our nation’s highest military tribute, the Medal of Honor. He also was immediately promoted two ranks to brigadier general. When he retired from the new Air Force, which he helped form, Doolittle was a lieutenant general. And as a final tribute to the 88-year-old hero in retirement, he was awarded a fourth star. He and all of his raiders also received Distinguished Flying Crosses.

Books and movies portrayed the “Doolittle Raiders,” foremost among them was the movie, “30 seconds over Tokyo.” The movie used actual mission film and won an Academy Award for its accuracy and special effects.

Updates from PNSM

When the Stakeholders’ Group, including The Friends, interviewed Alex Benitez for the job as the Director of the Portsmouth Museums, his views about changing out Exhibits more frequently was a key factor in the group’s support for his hiring. Look forward to future announcements of upcoming exhibits.

Come check out the Exhibits at PNSM. More info is available at: <https://portsmouthnavalshipyardmuseum.com/>





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Upcoming Speaker Event:

Wednesday, July 26, 6-7 PM,
Churchland Branch Library

Come hear noted local author **Allie Marie** speak about her research on the German Village at the NNSY. As many of you are aware, during World War I, two German ships became stuck at NNSY. While there, their crews built a real-life German village at NNSY.

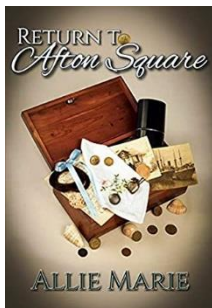


Allie did an extensive profile of the village in her wonderful book

Return to Afton Square.

Allie will be available starting at 5:30 to meet and speak with you and will have

some of her books available for purchase. Allie's fiction books focus on Portsmouth.



For additional information, see this article from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum:

<https://portsmouthnavalshipyardmuseum.com/portsmouths-german-village/>

Upcoming PNSM Event – Lightship Grand Re-Opening

Saturday, April 8th at 10 am
Portsmouth Lightship Museum



Come join The Friends for the Lightship Portsmouth Museum reopening on Saturday, April 8th at 10 am. We can't wait for everyone to see it, all of its new exhibits and added information. The crew from the Shipyard Museum have all sorts of family friendly activities planned, including some giveaways.



Photos by Renée M Russell

