



The Friends of PNSM
The Wheelhouse

THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD MUSEUM

Volume 1, No 2

April 1, 2022

Welcome to the
Second Issue of *The
Wheelhouse*, a
Newsletter published
by the Friends of the
Portsmouth Naval
Shipyard Museum.

Please visit the
Museum and see our
[website](#) for additional
information.

In this issue we bring
you messages from our
President, Gary
Bahena, and a History
Column from our 1st
Vice President, Steve
Milner.

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Renée M. Russell

Photos on Page 2 by
Renée M. Russell

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Shipyard Museum

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[friendsofportsmouth
nsm.org](http://friendsofportsmouthnsm.org)



President's Message

Greetings, Friends and
Members of the Friends of
Portsmouth Naval Shipyard
Museum. We are thrilled to
bring you our second issue of
The Wheelhouse and hope you
become engaged with events
that are shaping up.

We are extremely busy and
invite you to visit our website:
friendsofportsmouthnsm.org. Be
sure to mark your calendars for
the Annual Meeting and see all
the Upcoming Events you will
not want to miss.

NOTE: The next Speaker Series
event will be on Wednesday,
June 22, and will feature Richard
Hepburn, former NNSY
Drydocking Officer, speaking on
the history of NNSY Drydocks.
Also visit the [Events page](#) on the
website to learn more about our
amazing Oral History Project – a
joint effort with the Friends, the
Museums and the IC Norcom TV
Production students.

The Friends. We're back!

~ Gary Bahena
President

NNSY History



**Noted Author worked briefly at
NNSY during World War II**

While reading a book recently about
world-famous author **Joseph Heller**, I
was surprised to learn he had
worked briefly at Norfolk Naval
Shipyard during World War II, before
going into the military. This
information is contained on page 16,
in a one-sentence mention in the
1991 book titled "Joseph Heller," by
Judith Ruderman.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl
Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, Heller
worked as a Blacksmith Shop helper
for a short time at the Norfolk Navy
Yard, as it was known then. It was
renamed Norfolk Naval Shipyard on
Dec. 1, 1945, four months after the
war ended. Heller was 19 when he
enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps
and spent three years in the

Continued on Page 2...

Upcoming 2022 Events

"Picturing Portsmouth:" Exhibit of photographs by Renée M. Russell; now
through the end of April at The Coffee Shoppe," 300 High Street, Portsmouth

Annual Meeting: Wednesday, May 11, Noon, Childrens Museum

Lecture Series: Richard Hepburn, "NNSY Drydocks", Wednesday, June 22, 6-7
PM, Portsmouth Public Library (Churchland Branch)

2nd Annual Portsmouth Paddle Battle: Saturday, September 10



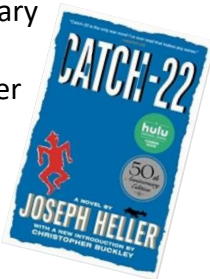
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Noted Author - *continued*

Service, which included his 60 combat missions as a bombardier in B-25's during World War II, and the fictional main character, Captain John Yossarian, who also was B-25 bombardier and resembled Heller's military experiences.

~ Steve Milner
First Vice
President



Diane Cripps, Honored

The Curator of History for the Portsmouth Museums, **Diane Cripps**, was honored at the February 19, 2022 meeting of the Board of Directors of The Friends.

She told us, "Thank you so much for your thoughtful gift and kind thoughts. I am a habitual, old-school note taker, so the lovely notebook you gave me will be put to good use. Whenever I fill up my current notebook, I am always on the lookout for my next one (despite my love for my phone's reminder app).

I wish you all continued good health and the best of luck always in all your endeavors. Keep on doing good things for Portsmouth. Thanks again, and all the best to you! Sincerely, Diane"

Diane and her husband have relocated to Savannah, Georgia.



Former Secretary of the **Friends**, and current Editor of "The Wheelhouse" newsletter, **Renée M Russell**, is having an exhibit of photos in Olde Towne, now through the end of April. You can "Meet the Artist," on April 1 from 6-8 pm at The Coffee Shoppe. Many of the photographs may be familiar to followers of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum Facebook site Photo of the Week postings, from August 2020 – January 2021.



Gary Bahena, President of the Friends of PNSM, presents Diane Cripps with a farewell gift.

John Quarstein – Gosport Shipyard Presentation

Noted Historian, John Quarstein, presented a fascinating lecture at the Portsmouth Public Library in Churchland on March 23, 2022 at 6 pm. He was his usual engaging, entertaining and informative self as he laid out the history of the Gosport Navy Yard from its founding as the Gosport Shipyard in 1767 by Andrew Sprowle, a British Loyalist, through its occupation by the British in 1775,

- past the retaking of the Yard by the Virginian troops in 1776,
- and the burning of the Yard by the British in 1779,
- to its annexation to Portsmouth in 1784,
- its leasing to the fledgling US Navy in 1795,
- its purchase by the Navy in 1801 for \$12,000,
- to the opening in 1833 of the 1st Drydock in the Americas,
- through the burning and loss of the Yard to the Confederacy in 1861,
- and its recapture in 1862 – and beyond.

You just had to be there.

Sorry if you weren't.

~ Gary Bahena

