



*The Friends of the PNSM
The Wheelhouse*

Volume 4, No 4

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October 1, 2025

**Welcome to the
The Wheelhouse,**
a Newsletter published
quarterly by **The
Friends of the
Portsmouth Naval
Shipyards Museum.**

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

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

In this issue we bring
you:

President's Message from
Gary Bahena,
Treasurer's Report,
History Column from
Steve Milner, Paddle
Battle and Junior Paddle
Battle Wrap-Up and more

**Editor (interim)
Gary Bahena**

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Shipyards Museum**
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President's Message

Greeting Friends. In this issue of *The Wheelhouse*, we bring you Steve Milner's very interesting article on submarines at the Shipyards and the Paddle Battle and Junior Paddle Battle Wrap-Up with photos galore. As always, thank you for your continued support. Thanks to the Federal Government shut-down, we do not have our usual piece on the most recent Speakers Series event.

Treasurer's Report

As of October 13, 2025,

The Friends have \$121,168.68 in cash and liquid investments. During this fiscal year we continue funding the Oral History Project.

**Become a
Member
of the Friends.
Apply online!**

www.friendsofportsmouthnsm.org/join-donate



THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARDS MUSEUM

Submarines have a long history at Norfolk Naval Shipyards

By: Steve Milner, Former Public Affairs Officer at
Norfolk Naval Shipyards

When an American submariner plots the nautical coordinates Latitude North 36 degrees, 49 minutes, Longitude West 76 degrees, 18 minutes, he knows he's guiding the vessel toward a safe and friendly harbor—Norfolk Naval Shipyards.

That's what many of them have been doing since 1901, when the nation's first "real" submarine, *USS Holland*, cruised in Hampton Roads waters. In those days, this submarine would periodically visit NNSY's predecessor facility, U.S. Navy Yard, Norfolk, Va., because Naval Base Norfolk didn't yet exist.



USS Holland

(Submarines at NNSY, continued on p.2)

Upcoming 2025 Events

Speaker Series: November 1, 250 Years of Service to the Navy, Rear Admiral Kavon Hakimzadeh, Commander, Norfolk Naval Shipyards.

Special Membership Meeting, Thursday, November 13, 2025, 12 PM, to vote on By-Laws amendment adding official NNSY Liaison position to the Board. **We need you to vote!**



*The Friends of the PNSM
The Wheelhouse*

Volume 4, No 4

THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD MUSEUM

(Submarines at NNSY, continued from p.1)

Another early vessel that traveled to NNSY was the submarine torpedo boat *USS Adder*, which visited in 1903. The *Adder* saw service in the Pacific before and during World War 1.



USS Adder

And the submarine *USS Moccasin*, which also saw service at NNSY, was reamed A-4 in 1911, before it served in World War 1.



USS Moccasin – Naval History and Heritage Command photo

Over the years, NNSY has grown technologically with submarine development—from repairing relatively crude diesel-powered boats to modern-day nuclear vessels with their complex onboard systems.

NNSY entered the submarine nuclear age in 1965, when it refueled *USS Skate* (SSN 578).

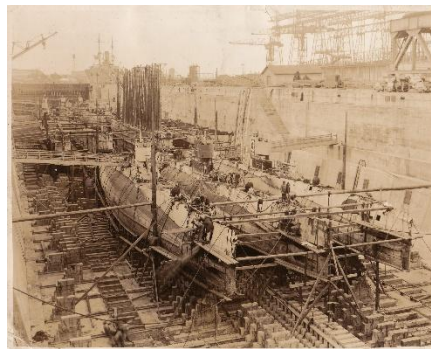


USS Skate

In 1978, NNSY began upgrading submarines at off-site locations, enabling the subs to carry Trident intercontinental ballistic missiles in place of older Poseidons.

Nowadays, NNSY has repaired many Navy submarines in planned availabilities and emergent repairs in the Shipyard and throughout the world.

The largest number of vessels placed at the same time in one of NNSY's drydocks was in October 1920, when 10 submarines and four Fleet targets were housed in Dry Dock Number Four.



Ten submarines and four Fleet targets were housed in NNSY's Dry Dock

Number 4. in 1920. Photo credit Norfolk Naval Shipyard Film Collection

Of course, subs in those days were considerably smaller than their modern counterparts, but it was still a noteworthy accomplishment.



USS Rhode Island (SSBN 740) in Dry Dock #4 on Feb. 26, 2016, at the successful completion of its availability. This is the same dry dock that 96 years earlier housed 10 submarines and four Fleet targets. Photo credit: Fleet Historic Norfolk Naval Shipyard Film Collection

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At an NNSY Change of Command ceremony held this past August 8th at Trophy Park, Rear Admiral Kavon "Hak" Hakimzadeh became the shipyard's 112th Commander, relieving Captain James "Jip" Mosman. Captain Mossman is now serving as the chief of staff at Commander, Navy Regional Maintenance Center.

(Submarines at NNSY, continued on p.3)



*The Friends of the PNSM
The Wheelhouse*

Volume 4, No 4

THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD MUSEUM

(Submarines at NNSY, continued from p.2)



RDML Kavon "Hak" Hakimzadeh, who became the 112th Commander of Norfolk Naval Shipyard on August 8, 2026, speaks at the Change of Command ceremony.

As NNSY's first Commander with the rank of Rear Admiral since the early 1980s, RDML Hakimzadeh, a former aircraft carrier pilot and carrier commanding officer, oversees the Shipyard's planned day-to-day and emergent ship repairs wherever they're needed in the world. He's also responsible for the Naval Foundry and Propeller Center detachment in Philadelphia.

Also at the August 8th ceremony, the Shipyard and the Naval Sea Systems Command further demonstrated their goal of maximizing ship repair efficiency by standing up the Industrial Operations Command under the direction of Captain Lawrence Brandon. It will focus on nuclear

work and core Shipyard processes.



Captain Lawrence Brandon speaks during the Trophy Park ceremony after being named Commanding Officer of the just stood up Industrial Operations Command. U.S. Navy photo by Daniel DeAngelis

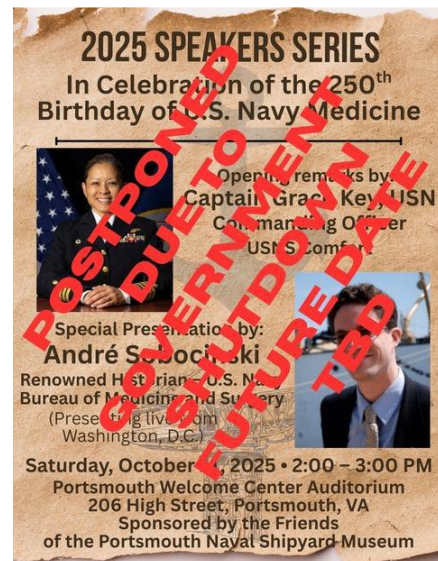
Letters to the Editor

The *Wheelhouse* welcomes **Letters to the Editor**. Please feel free to submit letters to info@friendsofportsmouthnsm.org.

Speaker Series Events

Unless otherwise noted, all Speaker events are held on **Saturday, from 2-3 pm**, in the **Police Auditorium** at the **Visitor's Center** on the corner of **Middle and High Streets**.

250 Years of Navy Medicine, Andre Sobocinski, US Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, **Part 3 of the 4 Part 2025 Series: "250 Years of US Navy History"**



As everyone heard, we had an amazing – really amazing – line-up of speakers arranged by Keith Abernathy for Part 3 of our 2025 Speakers Series, **250 Years of Navy Medicine**. Not only did we have renowned Naval Medicine Historian Dr. Andre Sobocinski, but Keith had lined up Capt. Grace Key, Commanding Officer of the *USS Comfort*, to introduce Dr. Sobocinski and to offer her own opening remarks on the history and importance of Navy Medicine and, as if that were not enough, Keith had also lined up Capt. Kim Shaughnessy-Granger, Commanding Officer of Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, to deliver closing remarks and reflections.

(250 Years of Navy Medicine, continued on p.4)



*The Friends of the PNSM
The Wheelhouse*

Volume 4, No 4

THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD MUSEUM

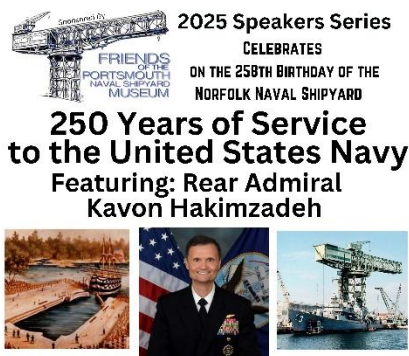
**(250 Years of Navy Medicine,
continued from p.3)**

But, alas, without getting political or taking sides (they are all spoiled children), the shutdown of the Federal government resulted in all Federal employees being barred from participating in any official activity and the lecture had to be postponed.

We do not have a firm date yet but mark your calendars for December 6 – we have reserved the Police Auditorium for that date and Keith is confirming availabilities. We will let you know the new date just as soon as the Government re-opens.

Plan Ahead! **2025 Speakers Series** **Presents** **250 Years of U.S. Navy** **History**

Part 4
250 Years of Service to the Navy
Speaker: Rear Admiral Kavon
Hakimzadeh, Commanding
Officer, NNSY,
Saturday, November 1, 2025, 2 -
3 pm



2025 Speakers Series
CELEBRATES
ON THE 250TH BIRTHDAY OF THE
NORFOLK NAVAL SHIPYARD

**250 Years of Service
to the United States Navy**
**Featuring: Rear Admiral
Kavon Hakimzadeh**

Commander, Norfolk Naval Shipyard
Saturday, November 1, 2025, 2 - 3 PM

Location -
Police Administration
Building Auditorium
Portsmouth Welcome Center
206 High Street, Portsmouth, VA

Open to the Public

FREE

Join us on November 1 for a surprise presentation by Rear Admiral Kavon Hakimzadeh, Commanding Officer of NNSY. Undaunted by the loss of Marcus Robbins due to more Federal nonsense (DOGE), Keith Abernathy was able to secure the participation of Admiral Hakimzadeh. This is one you will not want to miss. See you there!

Special Membership **Meeting to Approve** **Creation of Official** **NNSY Liaison to Friends** **Board PLUS Help** **Reimagine The Friends**

As you may recall from the last *Wheelhouse*, after many years without an official Shipyard Liaison to The Friends' Board, NNSY has designated Danie Larrew to be its next Liaison. This

will require an amendment to the By-Laws.

Please mark your calendars for Thursday, November 13, 2025, at Noon, for the Special Meeting. The Meeting will be held at Roger Brown's in Olde Towne.

You may attend the Meeting in-person, however, the open part of the Meeting will only be about 10 minutes long. You will receive a Meeting Notice and Proxy in the next few days. Please sign and return the Proxy per the Proxy instructions. For those wishing to attend virtually, the Meeting Notice will contain a conference bridge dial-in telephone number allowing you to participate and vote live without coming to the Meeting.

The Special Meeting will be followed by a Special Board Meeting to plan for an informational meeting of The Friends' members to discuss the future role of The Friends with the Shipyard Museum and the Lightship Museum. The date of that information meeting will be announced before the end of November but will be in December or January. Stay tuned.



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Volume 4, No 4

THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD MUSEUM

Inaugural Junior Paddle Battle and 5th Annual Portsmouth Paddle Battle

By Gary Bahena

The 5th Annual Portsmouth Paddle Battle came off and finished a huge success.

It was an unusually challenging day but the Paddle Battle team, with the amazing help of some incredible volunteers, pulled it off.

In case you did not hear, the Paddle Battle team woke up at 3:45 AM the day of Paddle Battle to discover that the U-Haul trailer containing all of the equipment and supplies, including all of the loaner kayaks from Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve, for the event had been stolen. Calls immediately went out to Mayor Shannon Glover and Police Chief Stephen Jenkins who quickly sprang into action. The Mayor woke up James Cullen, retired Coast Guard, who put the touch out to various Coast Guard components for volunteers and replacement kayaks. By 8 AM when the Paddle Battle team arrived at the Paddle Battle site, Coast Guard and Navy volunteers were arriving to see how they could help. Coast Guard Morale, Recreation & Welfare (MWR)

quickly followed with replacement kayaks.

Somehow, the Paddle Battle started on time.

Chief Jenkins and his team had recovered the U-Haul by 9 AM, but without the event booze and the kayaks. [If anyone sees a bunch of drunk kayakers in blue kayaks paddling about, please contact the Police.]



I've been stolen – please help me find my way home.

WAVY later called the event the “Miracle on High Street”.

A huge Thank You to our local Navy and Coast Guard units and volunteers – and the entire Portsmouth community – for stepping up.

Despite the difficulties, we had a record number of Racers, including a record number of Navy and Coast Guard competitors in the Portsmouth Paddle Battle Challenge Cup.

In all, 15 Navy and Coast Guard competitors, from the *USS Bush*, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Coast Guard Base Portsmouth and other

Commands, including 5 Coast Guard and 10 Navy racers, completed their 2.2 mile, 2-lap, course from High Street Basin to the Hammerhead Crane and back. Cheered on by, among others, Captain Derrek Burrus, CO of Coast Guard Base Portsmouth, the spectator crowd enjoyed a spirited competition with only 7 minutes elapsed time separating the Coast Guard and Navy winners. In the end, AZAR Aiden White, USN, *USS HW Bush*, last year's Navy and Challenge Cup winner, finished 1st for the Navy and LT Alex Gomez, USCG, MIFC LANT won the Coast Guard Challenge and the overall Challenge Cup. *Semper Paratus*.

After the Race, all competitors, military and non-military, enjoyed free food provided by our food sponsors Guad's, Baron's and High Street Pizza & Pour. And let's not forget the now popular After Party at Baron's with music provided by local favorite Dan Rosnato!

This year also featured the 1st Annual Junior Paddle Battle, offering free kayak lessons to Portsmouth and local military youth ages 8-14. Despite its own challenges, including losing its lead Sponsor early-on and losing PRHA (Portsmouth's Housing Authority) as a partner when

(Paddle Battle, continued on p.6)



The Friends of the PNSM
The Wheelhouse

Volume 4, No 4

THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD MUSEUM

(Paddle Battle, continued from p.5)

they lost their Federal funding, the 1st Annual Junior Paddle Battle was likewise a huge success.

In the end, 30 kids registered and 15 showed up and got into the water in kayaks, many enjoying the first water-experience of their lives. Thank you to Hoffler Creek and to VB Surf Sessions for loaning us the tandem kayaks and to Mike Weiss, from Hoffler Creek, for leading the kid training and instruction.

Smiles abounded. Check out the photos below.

Financially, it was a very good Paddle Battle. A total of \$17,350 was raised through Sponsorships. Paddle Battle netted just over \$4,000 after reimbursing Hoffler Creek for the stolen kayaks and funding just under \$2,600 to run Junior Paddle Battle. This net will go to fund The Friends' continued operation of the IC Norcom/NNSY Oral History Project. We would have had a near-record net without the stolen kayaks.

Complete photos from the Paddle Battle and the Junior Paddle Battle are up on our website. You can access both at <https://www.friendsofportsmouthnsm.org/paddle-battle>. Thank you Renee Russell, official Friends Photographer, Morgan

Schools, Junior Paddle Battle volunteer, and the City of Portsmouth for providing photos.



In Search of *Wheelhouse* Editor, Treasurer and Director-at-Large

Newsletter Editor Wanted – Bring *The Wheelhouse* to Life!

Do you love writing, organizing and adding a creative touch? The Friends are looking for a **Newsletter Editor** to help craft *The Wheelhouse*! Assemble a **4-8 page newsletter** each quarter (we provide the main article and one or two supporting articles). Add your creative flair to keep readers informed and engaged. Work with a great team and enjoy the appreciation of history lovers. If you have an eye for detail, and a few hours to spare each quarter, we'd love to have you on board! Contact Gary at gbahena@sprintmail.com.

Treasurer Wanted – Join Our Leadership Team!

The Friends are seeking a **Treasurer** to step into this key Board leadership role as our current Treasurer transitions to another Board position. Experience with **QuickBooks** (or a willingness to learn) is ideal (alternatively, familiarity with **Quicken** or similar financial software will ease learning QuickBooks). Must be **fiscally responsible** and comfortable working with a dedicated, all-volunteer Board. This role requires just a **few hours per month** but makes a big impact! If you're organized, detail-oriented and enjoy working with a great team, we'd love to have you on board. Contact Gary at gbahena@sprintmail.com.

At-Large Board Member Needed

Once the Bylaws Amendment is approved to create the NNSY Liaison position, Danie Larew will be stepping off of the Board to assume her responsibilities as the Liaison. This will open up a Board position. The Board meets 5 times per year for about 1 hour each Meeting. Individual Board members may take on additional responsibilities as they determine. Please consider supporting The Friends by joining the Board.



*The Friends of the PNSM
The Wheelhouse*

Volume 4, No 4

THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD MUSEUM



Friends Go Facebook

Check us out at
www.facebook.com/groups/1188863612579594.

Like us. Follow us. Join the 120 followers who are already subscribers to The Friends' Facebook page and stay current with our happenings, comings and goings.

Want to be a Movie Star?

The Friends are looking for people to be interviewed for the Oral History Project. Are you a long-time (20 years) or retired Shipyarder? Are you part of a family of Shipyarders? Did you grow up in Portsmouth?

The Friends are looking for folks with a Shipyard background to be interviewed as part of our Oral History Project. You will need to complete a short Questionnaire, do a 30-minute telephone interview and then sit for a 50-60 minute taped interview.

**Don't just read about history –
become a part of history!**

A Sample of Photos from the 5th Annual Paddle Battle and the 1st Annual Junior Paddle Battle

Paddle Battle Photos





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The Wheelhouse*

Volume 4, No 4

THE FRIENDS OF THE PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD MUSEUM

Junior Paddle Battle Photos

