



# The Day Book

Volume 1, Issue 4

May-June 1995

A Newsletter for the Supporters of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum

## V-Day Arrives In Hampton Roads



HRNM Docents Remember WWII and V-Day in Norfolk.

by Gordon Calhoun

Many of our museum docents lived through World War II. For five of our volunteers, the war changed life here in Norfolk as they knew it. Gurley Ritter, Miriam Burgess, Jack Robertson, Harrell Forrest and Henry Tarrall were kind enough to share their experiences on the Norfolk home front in World War II.

Of all the changes, rationing affected their daily lives the most. Harrell Forrest explained that, "You could not have more than five tires per car. Most people were not allowed to have more than three gallons of gas per week for their cars, which was just enough to get you to the grocery and back. Cigarettes were very hard to come by and among other things, Ping Pong balls

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Granby Street on V-E Day, May 8, 1945. (Photo provided by Kirn Memorial Library)

## Bringing the Boys Back Home, Operation Magic Carpet

Hampton Roads and the Return of U.S. Servicemen

by Shayne Whiting

During World War II, the U.S. Navy and Army worked closely together to make sure that there was a continuous flow of troops and materials to Europe. The Army was responsible for assembling the troops, maintaining the "ports of embarkation" and acquiring thousands of merchant ships. The Navy then assembled the merchant ships into convoys and provided escorts to ensure the ships arrived safely in Europe and North Africa. The Army grouped the ports in the Hampton Roads area under one authority: the "Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation," or HRPE.

After the war was over, the Navy and the Army used the HRPE to bring American forces home during Operation Magic Carpet. The Navy and the Army modified merchant ships, troop transports and even aircraft carriers to carry out the monumental task of bringing millions of anxious troops home from Europe.

The HRPE was activated on June 15, 1942, with its headquarters in Newport News, Va. because the city offered the yards of Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, major railroad connections and excellent pier facilities. One of the most important tasks assigned to the

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# A Cause for Celebration

## The Director's Column

by Becky Poulliot

**O**n May 18th, the museum community celebrates International Museum Day. We are commemorating the day by preparing for the onslaught of *thousands* of school children who will arrive *en masse* on their traditional Spring field trips. Because of our new location here at Nauticus, we can handle the crowds. With the help and knowledge of our great corps of volunteers, we can also impart naval history to them, and this is truly cause for celebration.

Other commemorative events during the next few months are marked on May 8, and August 14, respectively V-E and V-J Days. This issue takes advantage of our very own docents who serve as "living history" participants and offer reminiscences of the war's end. *The Day Book* then covers the port of Hampton Roads in World War II. Hampton Roads served as a major center for embarkation and debarkation of American servicemen including Operation *Magic Carpet* in which thousands of servicemen were brought back home from Europe and Asia.



The new president of the HRNHF. Edward Wolcott

The museum looks ahead with the recent election of a new Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation, or HRNHF, President of the Board, **Edward W. Wolcott**. HRNHF is the non-profit, fund-raising organization for our museum. Its 20 member board consists of a distinguished mix of naval and business leaders. Their efforts are coordinated by the executive director, **Maj. Gen. Dennis Murphy, USMC (Ret.)**. Over \$300,000 has been raised to offset the cost of our permanent exhibits under Murphy's administration and the able guidance of former board president, **Adm. Ralph Cousins, USN (Ret.)**. Although Cousins will step down from the presidency, he will remain an active member of the board.

Upcoming issues of *The Day Book* will introduce you not only to our HRNHF board members, but other museum personnel, civilian and military.

### About *The Day Book*

*The Day Book* 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. The HRNM is a museum dedicated to the study of 200 years of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

*The Day Book'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. The newsletter takes its name from a 19th century Norfolk newspaper.

Questions or comments can be directed to the Hampton Roads Naval Museum editor. *The Day Book* can be reached at 444-8971, by fax at 445-1867, or write *The Day Book*, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, One Waterside Drive, Suite 248, Norfolk, VA, 23510-1607. *The Day Book* is published bi-monthly with a circulation of 1000.

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# Witness to Pearl Harbor

## A HRNM Docent Remembers the Date of Infamy

by Bob Matteson

**F**or nearly 50 years nostalgia has been surfacing among the generations that lived through the war and the generations that followed it.

Few war crimes were bigger than the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor that fateful December morning. What consequently happened in the Pacific theater is important to everyone who cares about the inevitable force of history.

HRNM docent **Bob Tye** was just one of thousands of sons of anxious parents awaiting news from Pearl Harbor following President Roosevelt's speech to Congress on December 8, 1941. Like his father, uncle and cousin before him, Mr. Tye always wanted a career in the U.S. Navy. On the morning of December 7, and less than a year into his career, the sights and sounds of what took place at Pearl Harbor would become forever impossible for him to escape.

Tye's career in the Navy began in January, 1941. He had planned to become a Hospital Corpsman, but his uncle talked him out of it. Instead, he went to the USS *Whitney* (AD-4) at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

For the next five months, Tye worked as the sternhook on Motor Launch 6 and then was made the coxswain. A month later, he looked forward to going to A-School to become a Signaller/Quartermaster. He thought the school was in San Diego, but as fate would have it, the school was transferred to Pearl Harbor.

He started school in late October, 1941. The A school was at the sub base. "There were two signal towers at Pearl: George 02, where I spent most of my time, and George 01 at the sail piers at the Navy yard," said Tye. George 02, atop Adm. Husband Kimmel's CINCPAC administration building, was the school's signal tower. Normal signaling to major commands and ships was usually carried out from George 01. At Pearl Harbor, all communication was by visual signals.

The night before the attack, Tye had duty. There were many servicemen's clubs in Honolulu offering good entertainment. But that Saturday night at the block recreation center on the Navy yard, over by the gate, Tye could hear the fleet's

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# WAVES Uniform on Display

by Joe Judge



WAVES aviation metal smiths working on a SNJ trainer at NAS Jacksonville. (National Archives photo)

The great hardships of war are always accompanied by great social changes. In World War II, the armed services needed more manpower and one obvious solution was to enroll women in military service. In 1942, Congress authorized the Navy to establish the WAVES: "Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service."

Women had served as naval nurses since the War of 1812, and in World War I, the "Yeomanettes" worked alongside men in shore jobs. The WAVES continued this tradition. The original 1942 act envisioned a force of 10,000 enlisted women and 1,000 officers. However, the Navy was flooded with women recruits who did not want to miss their chance to assist in the war effort. By the end of the war, 70,000 enlisted women and 8,000 officers were working on active

shore duty. Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal praised the WAVES when he said that they "have released enough men for active duty afloat to man completely a major task force."

Once the Navy established the WAVES, they faced the problem of finding proper uniforms for them. The only uniforms for women in naval service were those of the Yeomanettes, which were authorized in 1917 and did not conform to styles of the 1940's. A board of fashion experts convened and the result was the "Uniform Regulations, Women's Reserve, U.S. Naval Reserve, 1943." These regulations were separate and distinct from those of the regular Navy, an indication that some people still considered women in the Navy to be a temporary phenomenon.

The museum recently received a set of uniforms that reflect the variety of dress available to WAVES during World War II. The donor, **Marjorie Grantham**, gave the museum several uniforms that reflect the styles available to Navy women. The service dress blue uniform, a single-breasted jacket with a skirt, was familiar to thousands of WAVES who wore it daily. The officer's hat was a stiffened oval crown with a brim turned up at the sides. The hat was made so that blue or white covers could be used. Grantham's blouse and hat are on display at the museum's exhibit at the Norfolk International Airport until the end of June. A more unusual uniform provided by Grantham is a gray working uniform, a one-piece seersucker dress. This uniform was the least popular of all those available to women during the war.

After the war, the uniforms of women in the Navy came closer in appearance to those of men, reflecting women's greater participation in naval service.



Pictured here is Grantham's WAVES uniform. It is now on display at the Norfolk International Airport. (Photo by Gordon Calhoun)



HRNM docent Bob Tye as an SM2. Bob not only lived through Pearl Harbor, but also through several other campaigns in the Pacific. He made chief petty officer by war's end. (Photo provided by Bob Tye)

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Battle of the Bands competing for the best band in the fleet recognition. "Each major command and big ship had bands in those days. Three bands made the semi-final competition that night: the Marine Corps, Sub Base and the USS *Arizona*."

The next morning, Tye awoke to what sounded like a riveting gun on the fuel tanks behind the barracks. Propelled out of bed by all the noise and running out the lanai, Tye looked up and saw a "meatball" on the side of a plane that was strafing his barracks area and heard a bomb blast somewhere nearby. "I knew right away what it was because we had been studying aircraft recognition-Japanese, German and Italian markings in particular-but I was startled by its sudden appearance," said Tye.

Moments later, someone shot down the plane. "Nobody knew what to do or where to go. People

were running everywhere, there were no battle stations assigned to anyone. So, we started running to the administration building.' I had to duck into the mess hall en route at one point to avoid being strafed. Planes were strafing anyone they saw. I never saw anyone get hit, but it sure got my attention," added Tye.

The armory was on one side of the administration building. By the time Tye got there, the armorer was handing out Lewis machine-guns, Browning Automatic Rifles (BAR) and .30 caliber ammunition. "Some of the guys were already taking guns to the top of the building. We took turns loading and firing. I watched one guy with blazing eyes unload a clip of BAR ammo at a plane. The planes were actually lower than we were. They were so close you could see the expression on the pilot's face and pick him out of

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# News and Notes for Volunteers

## Prepare for Summer!

by Jamie Swanson

We gear up for another season with the reopening of Nauticus on April 8th. During the month of May, Tidewater Rapid Transit (TRT) has arranged to bring students to the museum on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. They will arrive at 10:00 a.m. and want a tour of no more than half an hour because their visit is in conjunction with a Naval Base tour. Along with the students, we can expect the same large crowds that we had last year. So put your track shoes on!

### Student Internships

The museum is currently offering internships in all areas of museum work. The areas include:

1) Administration: Admin interns will work with the director in assembling material for accreditation under the American Association of Museum's standards and in submitting grant proposals.

2) Research: Research interns will help develop a weekly column for the Norfolk Naval Base newspaper, work with the editor of *The Daybook* in article writing, and assist the director in ongoing marketing projects.

3) Collection: Collection interns will assist in cataloging the museum's photographic collection and museum artifacts.

4) Exhibition: Exhibition interns will work with the exhibits specialist in design and fabrication of a temporary display.

5) Education: Education interns will develop a specialized tour using a part of the museum's collection and/or develop an in-house or outreach program on some aspect of naval history for a specific audience.

All interested persons should contact the museum director at (804) 444-8971.

### New 100 hour club members

As of March 25th, the following docents achieved the 100 hour goal:

**Joe Mosier, Betty Jackson and Henry Tarrall.**

We finished up the Interpreter Training Course with Living History Associates on February 24. The following docents successfully completed it:

**Miriam Burgess, Charles Devine, Harold Jarashow, Hunt Lewis and Peter Watson.**

## Summer Reading List

by Ofelia Elbo



The museum prides itself with a specialized research library dealing with 200 years of Navy history in the Hampton Roads region. The library is available to the public by calling 444-8971 for appointments. The hours of operation are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. The following is a partial list of books that the museum currently holds.

### General Background

Hagan, Kenneth J. The People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power. New York, 1991.

### The Battle of the Virginia Capes

Tilley, John A. The British Navy and the American Revolution. Columbia, S.C., 1987: 235-275.

### Norfolk and the American Revolution

Wertenbaker, Thomas J. Norfolk: Historic Southern Port. Durham, N.C., 1962: 48-73.

### The Career of USS *Chesapeake*

Cross, Charles B. The Chesapeake, a Biography of a Ship. Chesapeake, VA, 1986.

### The Battle of Craney Island

Hallahan, John M. The Craney Island: A Matter of Credit. Portsmouth, VA, 1986.

### The British Campaign on the Chesapeake 1813-14

Pack, James. The Man Who Burned the White House. Annapolis, MD, 1987: 138-213.

### Building for Defense in the 19th century

Canney, Donald L. The Old Steam Navy: Frigates, Sloops and Gunboats-1815-1885. Annapolis, MD, 1990.

### Union Strategy and the Anaconda Plan

Reed, Rowena. Combined Operations in the Civil War. Annapolis, MD, 1980. Hereafter referred to as Combined Operations.

### The Battle of Hampton Roads and the USS *Monitor*

Battle and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. 1. Secaucus, NJ, 1887: 692-744.

### The Role of the Navies in the Peninsula Campaign

Combined Operations: 97-189.

### The Fall of Ft. Fisher

Gragg, Rod. Confederate Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher. New York, 1991.

### CSS *Virginia* and other Confederate Ironclads

Still, William N. Iron Afloat. Columbia, SC, 1985.

### The Commerce Raider CSS *Florida*

Owsley, Frank. The CSS Florida: Her Building and Operations. Birmingham, AL, 1987.

### The Development of the post-Civil War Navy

Bradford, James C. Admirals of the New Steel Navy: Makers of the American Naval Tradition, 1880-1930. Annapolis, MD, 1990.

### The Jamestown Exposition of 1907

Hayes, Mark. An Illustrated History of the Jamestown Exposition. Norfolk, VA, 1990.

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were impossible to replace because they came from Japan."

Along with the cutbacks in everyday items, a major recycling effort was put into action by national and local authorities. Everything from scrap paper to cooking grease was saved by American households to hand over to industry. "When you went to buy a tube of toothpaste, you had to bring the used one back to the store before they would let you buy a new one. You saved up little things like the tin foil from the gum wrappers and gave them up as well," Mr. Forrest said. However, **Henry Tarrall** noted that, "No one



*This is Harrell Forrest's Granby H.S. picture. Mr. Forrest assisted the war effort as a Boy Scout. The Boy Scouts held war bond and recycling drives.*

seemed to mind the shortages, people just seemed to roll with the punches."

Household items were not the only thing in short supply. A recurring problem on the American home front was the lack of skilled and unskilled labor. A shortage in nurses led **Miriam Burgess** to join the

newly formed Cadet Nurses Corps program at Norfolk General Hospital in 1943. The Cadet Nurses Corps was a U.S. Public Health Service program that trained women to be nurses with the agreement that they work in local military hospitals. After Burgess graduated, she worked in the Portsmouth Naval Hospital until the end of the war.



*This is Miriam Burgess's 1942 Maury H.S. picture. Ms. Burgess served in the Cadet Nurse Corps during WWII.*

Another solution to the labor shortage was to use prisoners of war that had been captured by the Allies. Norfolk was home to several thousand German

and Italian P.O.W.s who, on a voluntary basis, were allowed to work in Norfolk stores and area farms. Forrest remembers having many conversations with the German P.O.W.s as many of them spoke English. He discovered through these conversations that the P.O.W.s were very well treated. For example, the Germans received two beers a day, a luxury not readily available to most Americans, and the Italians were given their own auditorium and church.

President Truman officially announced the



*Pictured here is Gurley Ritter in 1946. Mr. Ritter was working as a bus boy in Virginia Beach when he heard that the Japanese had surrendered.*

Robertson had just returned from Italy as a crew member of a B-24 bomber in the 20th Army Air Force and was on liberty with his family in Norfolk on V-E Day. "That was my attitude—we knew we were going to be reassigned to the B-29's to bomb the Japanese; so I was not too excited about V-E Day."

When V-J Day arrived on August 14, 1945, however, there was nothing but jubilation across Hampton Roads. Military personnel and civilians alike now knew that everyone could go home and rest easy that there was to be no more fighting. All of our docents remember exactly where they were and what they were doing. For example, Forrest was in downtown Norfolk at the time with his mother. He remembers that several sailors asked to kiss his mother because they were finally getting the chance to go home.

Tarrall said that he was at a community shopping area on Orapax Avenue when "people started throwing toilet paper over telephone and power lines. It was total pandemonium."

When V-J Day finally came, the feeling was not one of animosity towards the Japanese. Rather it was one of relief that the war was finally over. Burgess noted that she "was happy [the war] was over because my brothers would not have to go overseas."



*Henry Tarrall when he was a paratrooper in 1956. WWII inspired him to volunteer for the 82nd Airborne.*

Ritter, however, hinted that this might simply be the feeling of people who had not seen combat. "Soon after the war was over, I went into the Army and was sent to Japan as a part of the 11th Airborne Division which participated as occupation troops. The Army wanted to get the combat veterans out of Japan and replace them with green troops. There had been some incidents involving American troops who had been in combat and Japanese civilians."

For one docent, World War II affected his career choice. Tarrall remembers meeting a paratrooper as a child during the war. Soon after high school, he enlisted in the Army and volunteered for the 82nd Airborne Division in 1956.

*The editor would like to thank HRNM docents Gurley Ritter, Harrell Forrest, Miriam Burgess, Henry Tarrall, Jack Robertson and Bob Tye for their assistance, photographs and co-operation in putting together this issue of The Daybook.*

surrender of Germany at 9 a.m., May 8, 1945. A mild celebration broke out in Norfolk. Confetti was thrown and some people consumed excessive amounts of alcohol. Officially, the war was over for Norfolk as blackout procedures, air raid watches and several other wartime measures were lifted by the city government. However, the V-E Day celebration in Norfolk was somewhat subdued. **Gurley Ritter** explained that, "For some people, it was an excuse to celebrate. However, most people realized that there were troops that had not come home yet."

For **Jack Robertson**, this was all too true.



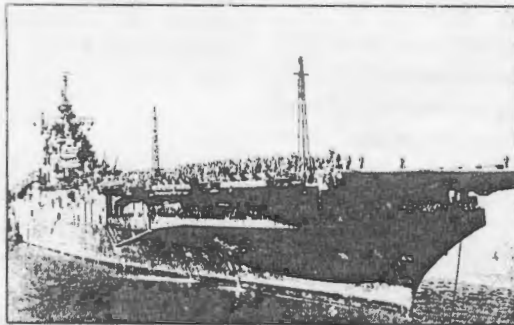
*This is Jack Robertson's gunnery school graduation picture. Mr. Robertson went on to fly in B-24s over Italy in 1945.*

### *Magic Carpet continued from page 1*

HRPE was the transportation of military personnel to and from the battlefields in the European theater of war. The merchant ships were originally cargo vessels that had to be converted in order to transport troops. The U.S. military utilized these ships for the first time to carry American troops to the Mediterranean theater on June 26, 1943. By May, 1944, a total of 562 merchant ships moved over 202,000 men and women out of HRPE. This represented 40% of all troops shipped out of the HRPE.

No single ship prototype was used to accomplish this formidable task because the military's needs were diverse. Troop ships, *Liberty*-class cargo ships and aircraft carriers were used at some point during and after the war to transport American servicemen. For example, the Newport News-built troop transport USS *West Point* (AP-23) was originally a luxury cruise liner called *America*. *America* was converted to a troop transport in June 1941 and served throughout World War II in this role. Homeported in Hampton Roads, *West Point* was one of the largest troopships the Americans used and brought back thousands of troops from Europe to this area during the *Magic Carpet* operation.

The Navy also modified several aircraft

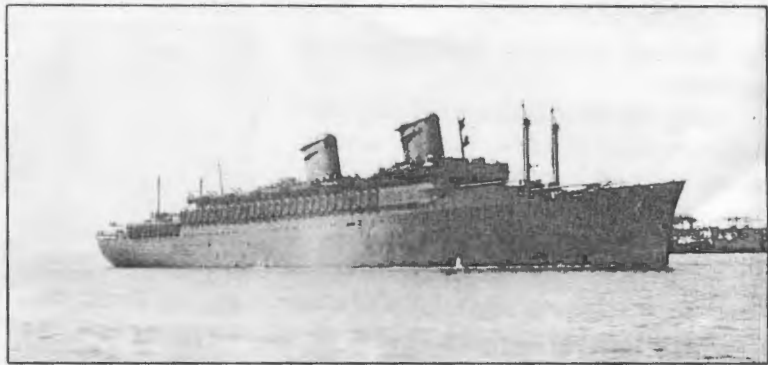


Shown here is the Norfolk-built USS *Lake Champlain* (CV-39) bringing American servicemen back to the HRPE during Operation *Magic Carpet*. (U.S. Navy photo)

### *Witness continued from page 3*

a line-up. Some of the planes went down and everyone shouted, 'I got him!, I got him!' Of course there were only about 20 to 30 guns firing from the top of that building, and who knows how many from the ships, after all the planes were making torpedo run. The men on top of the administration building had a good view of the *Utah* and *Oklahoma* turning over. They could see the *Arizona* blow up and the *Nevada* get under way only to run aground, her main deck a wash, and deep in the water. The Japanese wanted to sink *Nevada* in the channel."

The smoke from the burning ships and hangars was so thick that signal messages from



Referred to by historian Maj. W.R. Wheeler as "America's Finest", USS *West Point* (AP-23) cruises past the yards of Newport News Shipbuilding in June, 1941. *West Point* was formerly the luxury cruise liner SS *America* before the Navy requisitioned it for use as a troop transport. It was the largest troop transport of the war. (National Archives photo)

carriers at local shipyards to be used as troop transports in the *Magic Carpet* operation. Carriers like USS *Randolph* (CV-15) and the Norfolk-built USS *Lake Champlain* (CV-39) were modified to handle up to 5,000 Army troops.

During *Magic Carpet*, Navy transports brought back several famous Army divisions to the HRPE. Among these were the Battle of the Bulge veterans of the 7th Armored Division aboard USS *LeJeune* (AP-74) on Oct. 12, 1945 and the 36th Infantry Division, which spearheaded the invasion of Italy, aboard USS *Admiral W.L. Capps* (AP-121).

The mission of *Magic Carpet* was not only to bring American servicemen back home, but also to repatriate Axis prisoners of war. The Norfolk area was home to several thousand German and Italian P.O.W.s and once V-E Day arrived, ships like *Admiral W.L. Capps* repatriated them back to Europe. More than 120,000 German and Italian P.O.W.s embarked from Hampton Roads' ports for the return home.

The Army officially shut down the HRPE on Jan. 31, 1946. With most of the American servicemen brought back home, the Army and the Navy ended Operation *Magic Carpet* a couple of years later. Most of the aircraft carriers and merchant ships were subsequently decommissioned or returned to their original civilian owners, like *West Point*. Many of the merchant ships were placed in the James River where they remain today. Some of the ships are still on active duty with the Military Sealift Command.

Operation *Magic Carpet* was the last great operation of World War II. As the operation signaled the return of American servicemen from overseas, it was quite possibly the happiest one.

George 01 could not be transmitted directly to ships on the other side of Ford Island. To overcome the problem, messages were relayed through the school tower to those ships. Still, the frenzied atmosphere was rich with rumors such as saying an invasion was imminent, paratroopers were landing at Barber's Point and submarines were inside the harbor. No one knew what to expect.

Once things were somewhat normalized, Tye found himself back in A School until he graduated and made Seaman 1st Class. He went back to the *Whitney* shortly before it was to leave Pearl Harbor for points west. By war's end, Tye served on three different ships, and had supported every major engagement in the Pacific from Guadalcanal to Leyte Gulf. He made the rank of chief petty officer by the end of the war. The award for the best band in the fleet went to USS *Arizona*'s band posthumously. They never made it off the ship.

# Calendar of Events

## Jeffery Ethell

### "The Wings of War"

Wednesday June 14th

7:00 p.m.

Living Sea Theater

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum Lecture Series continues with renowned author, Jeffery Ethell. Please join us as we explore the arena of military aviation. All lectures are free and open to the public.



## May

**1** HRNM open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. until Sept. 9.

**5 & 6 Homefront Days at the MacArthur Memorial**-HRNM is participating in this event. Call 444-8971 ext. 117 for more information.

**8, 1945 V-E Day.** President Truman announces the unconditional surrender of Germany at 9 a.m.

**15, 1862 Battle of Drewry's Bluff.** A Union squadron, consisting of the ironclads USS *Galena* and *Monitor* and the gunboats *Aroostook*, *Port Royal* and *Naugatuck*, engage Confederate guns at Fort Darling, Drewry's Bluff, on the James River. After a four hour battle, the Union ships withdraw back to Hampton Roads.



*The Battle of Drewry's Bluff - The Union squadron withdrew back to Hampton Roads, with USS Galena badly damaged, because of the high elevation of Confederate guns and obstructions in the James River. (Naval Historical Center photograph of Harper's Weekly engraving)*

### May Birthdays June Birthdays

Jud Hill  
Ed Cox

Harold Jarashow  
Charles Watley



## June

**2,3 & 4 Harborfest.** The 19th annual festival of Norfolk's nautical heritage. To be held at Town Point Park. Call (804) 627-5329 for more information.

**8, 1918** The U.S. Navy and the Royal Navy begin to lay over 70,000 mines between Scapa Flow, Scotland and the coast of Norway in an attempt to stop German U-boats. All of the mines were originally assembled at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard and stored at what is now known as the Yorktown Naval Weapons Station.

**17 & 18** The captain and crew of CSS *Virginia* will have a display set up in the museum's Civil War gallery.

**22, 1807** The frigate *Chesapeake* is fired upon and boarded by the British frigate *Leopard*. The incident led to the dismissal of *Chesapeake's* captain and was a factor that led to the War of 1812.

**22, 1813** British forces, attempting to seize the frigate *Constellation* while at the Gosport yards, are repelled by a mix force of American marines, sailors and militiamen at Craney Island.