

# *Scuttlebutt*



***MILITARY SEA SERVICES MUSEUM, INC.***



***Mar – Apr 2025***



**John Cecil**

## **A message from the President**

Well shipmates, 2025 is starting out “gang busters.” January saw 185 visitors to the Museum, and donations have been robust. A tentative date of Friday 14 March is set for our next “Movie at the Museum.” Devotion is the story of a comradeship between naval officers Jesse L. Brown and Tom Hudner during the Korean War. A must see for any military enthusiast. Micha Marsh is ready for another German Firearms presentation, set for 3/21/25. The museum has purchased two new computers and printers, to be utilized in the admin and library areas.

March is “Women in the Military” month. The museum will have a display set up in the flag room featuring female service uniforms adorning our mannequins. A recounting of major accomplishments of female officer and enlisted personnel throughout the military will be posted.

On a sad note, the Museum is again in need of Volunteers. Due to health issues, our Secretary/Treasurer had to resign from the latter half of her duties. Without a Volunteer, the Treasurer duties will fall to the already extremely busy President. Due to a move from the area, the Publisher of the Scuttlebutt must resign. Unless someone volunteers to take over the Scuttlebutt, this issue will be the last. Many of our members, particularly the many who reside outside the area, rely on the Scuttlebutt to keep abreast of Museum news. If you are capable of filling either of these positions, please contact John Cecil at 863-840-3359.

## **Museum Happenings**



The MSSM displays its flags at half-staff in honor of POTUS 39, the late James Earl Carter Jr., who passed on 29 December 2024. Jimmy Carter, a Annapolis Naval Academy graduate in 1946, passed at the age of 100. The oldest living president of the United States will forever be known, more for the humanitarian services after his presidency, then for occurrences that took place, during his presidency.



Maj Thomas B. McGuire Medals at the Florida Medal of Honor Memorial. Thomas Buchanan McGuire Jr. (August 1, 1920 – January 7, 1945) was an United States Army major who was killed in action while serving as a member of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II and posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. He was one of the most decorated American fighter pilots of the war. McGuire was memorialized by the renaming of Fort Dix Army Air Force Base in Burlington County, New Jersey, to McGuire Air Force Base in 1948.

Six members of American Legion Post 69 in Avon Park showed up bright and early on Thursday, January 2nd to help prepare and load the Museum's 1:48 scale model of USS Enterprise CV-6 onto a trailer for transport to the Post for the 3rd Annual Vets Expo. Al Witbeck and Micah Marsh assisted and set up the aircraft models and banners once in position. Numerous vet support groups attended, helping with claims and benefits questions. The traveling Vietnam Wall and Global War on Terror walls were escorted from Lakeland and erected at Post 69.



The first Movie at the Museum was a success as 27 guests watched Tom Hanks in "Greyhound," the story of an Allied convoy fighting their way across the Atlantic during World War II. The movie, although enjoyable, underscores the museum's mission to educate the public about the history of the Military Sea Services of the United States. Moreover, it paid homage to the sacrifices of so many civilian merchant sailors who perished in the terrible war. The Military Sea Services Museum is a non-profit organization located at 1402 Roseland Avenue, Sebring FL. Please visit the place, **"Where history comes alive!"**

## The Battle of the Bismarck Sea

*(2–4 March 1943)*

The conflict took place in the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) during World War II when aircraft of the U.S. Fifth Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) attacked a Japanese convoy carrying troops to Lae, New Guinea. Most of the Japanese task force was destroyed, and Japanese troop losses were heavy.

The Japanese convoy was a result of a Japanese Imperial General Headquarters decision in December 1942 to reinforce their position in the South West Pacific. A plan was devised to move some 6,900 troops from Rabaul directly to Lae. The plan was understood to be risky, because Allied air power in the area was strong, but it was decided to proceed because otherwise the troops would have to be landed a considerable distance away and march through inhospitable swamp, mountain and jungle terrain without roads before reaching their destination. On 28 February 1943, the convoy – comprising eight destroyers and eight troop transports with an escort of approximately 100 fighter aircraft – set out from Simpson Harbor in Rabaul. The Allies had detected preparations for the convoy, and naval codebreakers in Melbourne, Australia and Washington, D.C., had decrypted and translated messages indicating the convoy's intended destination and date of arrival. The Allied Air Forces had detected and shadowed the convoy, which came under sustained air attack on 2–3 March 1943. Follow-up attacks by PT boats and aircraft were made on 4 March on lifeboats and rafts. All eight transports and four of the escorting destroyers were sunk. Of 6,900 troops who were badly needed in New Guinea, only about 1,200 made it to Lae. Another 2,700 were rescued by destroyers and submarines and returned to Rabaul. The Japanese made no further attempts to reinforce Lae by ship, greatly hindering their ultimately unsuccessful efforts to stop Allied offensives in New Guinea.

In February 1942, the RAAF began experimenting with skip bombing, an anti-shipping technique used by the British and Germans. Flying only a few dozen feet above the sea toward their targets, bombers would release their bombs which would then, ideally, ricochet across the surface of the water and explode at the side of the target ship, under it, or just over it. A similar technique was mast-height bombing, in which bombers would approach the target at low altitude, 200 to 500 feet at about 265 to 275 miles per hour, and then drop down to mast height, 10 to 15 feet at about 600 yards from the target. They would release their bombs at around 300 yards, aiming directly at the side of the ship. The Battle of the Bismarck Sea would demonstrate that this was the most successful of the two tactics. The two techniques were not mutually exclusive: a bomber could drop two bombs, skipping the first and launching the second at mast height. In addition, as regular bomb fuses were designed to



detonate immediately on impact, which would catch the attacking aircraft in its own bomb blast at low altitude attacks, crews developed a delayed-action fuse. Practice missions were carried out against the wreck of the SS Pruth, a liner that had run aground in 1923.



In order for bombers to accomplish skip or mast-height bombing, the target ship's antiaircraft artillery would first have to be neutralized by strafing runs. For the latter task, Major "Pappy" Gunn and his men at the 81st Depot Repair Squadron in Townsville, Queensland, modified some USAAF Douglas A-20 Havoc light bombers by installing four .50-inch machine guns in their noses.

The battle was a disaster for the Japanese. Out of 6,900 troops who were badly needed in New Guinea, only about 1,200 made it to Lae. Another 2,700 were saved by destroyers and submarines and returned to Rabaul. About 2,890 Japanese soldiers and sailors were killed. The Allies lost 13 aircrew, 10 of whom were lost in combat while three others died in an accident. There were also eight wounded. Aircraft losses were one B-17 and three P-38s in combat, and one B-25. MacArthur issued a communiqué on 7 March stating that 22 ships, including twelve transports, three cruisers and seven destroyers, had been sunk along with 12,792 troops. Army Air Force Headquarters in Washington, D.C., looked into the matter in mid-1943 and concluded that there were only 16 ships involved, but considered the original account accurate. The victory was a propaganda boon for the Allies, with one United States newsreel claiming the Japanese had lost 22 ships, 15,000 troops, and 102 aircraft. The New York Times, on its front page on March 4, 1943, cited the loss by the Japanese of 22 ships, 15,000 troops and 55 aircraft.

Aircraft attacking from several directions at once had confused and overwhelmed the Japanese defenses, resulting in lower casualties and more accurate bombing. The results therefore vindicated not just the tactics of mast height attack but of mounting coordinated attacks from several directions. The Japanese estimated that at least 29 bombs had hit a ship during the battle. This was a big improvement over the Battle of Wau back in January, when Allied aircraft attacked a Japanese convoy consisting of five destroyers and five troop transports travelling from Rabaul to Lae, but managed to sink just one transport and beach another.



Of the defeat, Rabaul staff officer Masatake Okumiya said, "Our losses for this single battle were fantastic. Not during the entire savage fighting at Guadalcanal did we suffer a single comparable blow. We knew we could no longer run cargo ships or even fast destroyer transports to any front on the north coast of New Guinea, east of Wewak."

## Bay of Pigs Invasion



**04/17/1961**

The invasion was a failed military landing operation on the southwestern coast of Cuba in April 1961 by the United States of America and the Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front (DRF), consisting of Cuban exiles who opposed Fidel Castro's Cuban revolution, clandestinely and directly financed by the U.S. government. The operation took place at the height of the Cold War, and its failure influenced relations between Cuba, the United States, and the Soviet Union. President Eisenhower approved a plan developed by Richard Bissell which included training the paramilitary force that would later be used in the Bay of Pigs Invasion. Alongside covert operations, the U.S. also began its embargo of the island. This led Castro to reach out to its Cold War rival, the Soviet Union, after which the US severed diplomatic relations.

Cuban exiles who had moved to the U.S. following Castro's takeover had formed the counter-revolutionary military unit Brigade 2506. The CIA funded the brigade, which also included approximately 60 members of the Alabama Air National Guard and trained the unit in Guatemala.

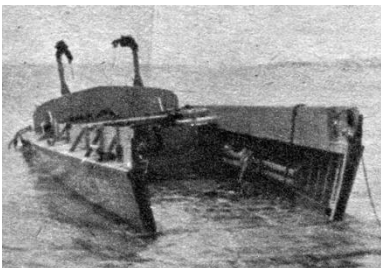
Over 1,400 paramilitaries, divided into five infantry battalions and one paratrooper battalion, assembled and launched from Guatemala and Nicaragua by boat on 17 April 1961. Two days earlier, eight CIA-supplied B-26 bombers had attacked Cuban airfields and then returned to the U.S. On the night of 17 April, the main invasion force landed on the beach at Playa Girón in the Bay of Pigs, where it overwhelmed a local revolutionary militia. Initially, José Ramón Fernández led the Cuban Revolutionary Army counter-offensive; later, Castro took personal control. As the invasion force lost the strategic initiative, the international community found out about the invasion, and U.S. President John F. Kennedy decided to withhold further air support. The plan, devised during Eisenhower's presidency, had required the involvement of U.S. air and naval forces. Without further air support, the invasion was being conducted with fewer forces than the CIA had deemed necessary. The invading force was defeated within three days by the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces and surrendered on 20 April. Most of the surrendered counter-revolutionary troops were publicly interrogated and put into Cuban prisons with further prosecution. The invasion was a U.S. foreign policy failure. The Cuban government's victory solidified Castro's role as a national hero and widened the

political division between the two formerly allied countries, as well as emboldened other Latin American groups to undermine U.S. influence in the region. As stated in a memoir from Chester Bowles: "The humiliating failure of the invasion shattered the myth of a New Frontier run by a new breed of incisive, fault-free supermen. However costly, it may have been a necessary lesson." It also pushed Cuba closer to the Soviet Union, setting the stage for the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

The U.S. initially recognized Castro's government after the Cuban Revolution ousted Batista, but the relationship quickly soured as Castro repeatedly condemned the U.S. in his speeches for its misdeeds in Cuba over the previous 60 years. Many U.S. officials began to view Castro as a threat to national security as he legalized the Communist Party, nationalized property owned by U.S. citizens totaling \$1.5 billion, and strengthened ties with the Soviet Union.

In recently declassified documents, the feelings of the CIA toward Fidel Castro have become clearer. The CIA had written a comprehensive study of the background between the United States and Cuba, beginning with Castro's regime. This study was top secret and around 400 pages in length. At the very beginning of Castro, the CIA needed to decipher the alleged pro-communist beliefs. They had inside men working to make a clear decision on the belief of the new Cuban official. According to Volume III of the *Official History of the Bay of Pigs*, the top-secret CIA document, two agents were placed in the ranks of the communist party of Cuba (*Partido Socialista Popular*). Both agents were either captured or snuck their way into the ranks of Fidel Castro's forces. They explained the so-called 'anti-American' sentiment of the regime.

The Cuban security apparatus knew the invasion was coming, in part due to indiscreet talk by members of the brigade, some of which was heard in Miami and repeated in U.S. and foreign newspaper reports. Nevertheless, days before the invasion, multiple acts of sabotage were carried out, such as the El Encanto fire, an arson attack in a department store in Havana on 13 April that killed one shop worker. The Cuban government also had been warned by senior KGB agents Osvaldo Sánchez Cabrera and 'Aragon', who died violently before and after the invasion, respectively. The general Cuban population was not well informed of intelligence matters, which the US sought to exploit with propaganda through CIA-funded Radio Swan. As of May 1960, almost all means of public communication were under public ownership.



Destroyed Landing Craft



Miami Memorial



Military Patch

# March 2025

<i>SUN</i>	<i>MON</i>	<i>TUE</i>	<i>WED</i>	<i>THUR</i>	<i>FRI</i>	<i>SAT</i>
						1
<p><b>Vietnam Veterans Assn Mtg 1800 Call (860) 480-2550 Tomorrow</b></p>	<p>EST. 1915</p> 	<p>EST. 1925</p> 	<p>HAPPY BIRTHDAY SEABEES 83rd</p> 			<p>8</p>  <p>Daylight Savings Time Begins Tomorrow</p>
<p>9</p>  <p>It's Springtime</p>	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
						
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
<p><b>MSSM Dinner 1400</b></p>						
30	31	<p>9 March 1862</p> <p><b>USS Monitor vs CSS Virginia (the former USS Merrimack.) This clash was the first of ironclads &amp; ended wooden ship building. The conflict took place at Hampton Roads, VA.</b></p>				



# April 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		<b>CPO Grade</b> 1  <b>Est. 1893</b>	2	3	4	5
<b>1917</b> 6 <b>U.S. enters WWI</b>	<b>Vietnam Veterans Assn Mtg</b> 7 <b>1800 Call (860) 480-2550</b>	8	<b>MSSM BOD MTG</b> 9 <b>1630</b>	10	<b>Submarine Force Day</b> 11 <b>Est. 1900</b> 	12
13	14	<b>It's Tax Day!</b> 15 	16		<b>Doolittle</b> 17 <b>TOKYO BOMBED!</b> <small>DAIICHI KAWASAKI MILITARY AND NAUTICAL AREA</small>  <b>Raid 1942</b>	19
20	21	<b>HAPPY EARTH DAY</b> 22  <small>shutterstock.com - 242542879</small>	23	24	25	 <b>CHERNOBYL</b> <b>1986</b>
27	28	29	30			
						
 <b>Great Britian</b>	<b>April 2, 1982</b> This date marks the beginning of the Falkland Islands War as troops from Argentina invaded and occupied the British colony located near the tip of South America. The British retaliated and defeated the Argentinians on June 15, 1982, after ten weeks of combat, with about 1,000 lives lost. The Argentinean cruiser General Belgrano sinking accounted for almost half of Argentina's casualties.					 <b>Argentina</b>

## Yogi Berra's Top Quotes

Never answer an anonymous letter.

Baseball is 90% mental. The other half is physical.

If you don't know where you're going, you might wind up somewhere else.

A nickel isn't worth a dime anymore.

You can observe a lot by watching.

It's Deja vu all over again.

It isn't the heat, it's the humility.

I never said most of the things I said.

You should always go to other people's funerals, otherwise, they won't come to yours.

When you come to a fork in the road, take it.

We made too many wrong mistakes.

Nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded.

He hits from both sides of the plate. He's amphibious.

I always thought that the record would stand until it was broken.

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