



# ALL AHEAD FULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE COUNCIL, NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES

WINTER 2024-2025



## FROM THE BRIDGE

Ahoy, shipmates,

I hope one and all enjoyed the holiday season and are fully prepared for the year just begun. Let me begin by expressing my earnest thanks to all members of the Baltimore Council for your support during my most recent term as president. Without you we would have been unable to fulfill our mission of support to the sea services and all the organizations with which we have forged a lasting relationship. To them, too, go my thanks for their willingness to reciprocate in kind. It is my hope that our commitment will continue in full and even beyond as a new hand takes the helm. Your new president, Bruce Copeland is certainly up to the job. With his many years of membership in the Navy League, and having served as council president in the past, he is most assuredly well prepared to lead us all ahead full.

High on our agenda is the need to develop a meaningful and member friendly series of annual events in which more of the rank and file may become involved. In this issue you read of those activities in which our leadership is already involved. But we need more; occasions that will attract the membership to serve not only this unit and those it sponsors, but the community as a whole. Equally important is the need for new and younger members – including those still in uniform.

Yes, there is lots to be done. But I have no doubt that will be able will meet each and

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## Those Who Serve

# We Need Them. They Need Us.



DiMattia, on the left

The annual November celebration and commemoration of Veterans Day sent officers of the Baltimore Council and many others on missions to ensure that thoughts of those who wear or wore the uniforms of the Armed Forces of the United States remain foremost in our minds. For Council President Joe Nattans, a retired brigadier general, that meant joining his fellow vets from Calvert Hall College to salute their elder comrades, now confined to assisted living quarters hereabouts.

Council Vice President Alan Walden spent part of the day at American Legion Post 2, in Baltimore City, where the heroes gathered to reminisce about the time they spent in service to the nation and to enjoy the fellowship of those who had done the same; who had sworn the oath and borne the burden that has no expiration date.

Down south meanwhile, it was a time for the too often unsung heroes of the United States Merchant Marine to gather and recall that, during World War II, their losses in action were higher, per capita, than in any of the Armed Forces. There it fell to Captain Dru DiMattia, president of the AMMV (Association of Merchant Marine Veterans), with whom this council treasures a close working relationship, to preside over an appropriate ceremony.



Walden and Post Commander Tom Longest

As we needed them, they now need us. Some still suffer the miseries of Agent Orange and PTSD. Too many of the old guard of all the services are homeless. Too many will never fully cover. And not to be forgotten are those still in uniform, the next generation of veterans. And while we cannot fill all their needs, we can try. And not just on Veterans Day – but every day. ⚓



Nattans, standing third from right

## Party Hearty

# Bigger and Better

There was a wintry bite to the wind on the evening of 4 December as members of the Baltimore Council, family and friends, gathered for the annual meeting and banquet, the valedictory event of what was a very challenging year on a number of levels. It would not be an overstatement to describe the 2024 event as the biggest and most elegant we've experiences in many years. First, there was the venue; the spectacular Center Club on the 16th floor of 100 Light Street, overlooking the Inner Harbor. Then there were the attendees. High ranking officers of the sea services, prominent civilian guests and, of course, the officers and members of the board along with their guests. Most of all there was the keynote speaker: Rear Admiral Shannon Gilreath of the United States Coast Guard.



Nattans, Gilreath, Sea Cadets

RADM Gilreath assumed the duties as Assistant Commandant of Capability (CG-7), in Washington, DC, in July 2024. His listed responsibilities include identifying and providing capabilities, competencies, and capacity along with service wide policy for the staffing, training, equipping, and employing Coast Guard forces to meet mission requirements. As such he was front and center in March when MV Dali, a massive container ship, lost power and drifted into one of the main support pillars of the Francis Scott Key Bridge over the entrance to the Inner Harbor. Within seconds the entire span collapsed and triggered a multi-faceted rescue, recovery, and repair effort in which the Coast Guard played a preeminent role. Admiral Gilreath held the audience in rapt attention as he explained what was required and how it was accomplished with a speed, weeks rather than months, and professional zeal than many thought, initially, was hardly possible. At the conclusion of his remarks



Mstr Chief Derrio Foster (USCG), CAPT Al Seeman (USN) and Mrs. Seeman, CAPT Andrew Pecora (USCG)

RADM Gilreath was presented with the council's Distinguished Service Award.

Host for the evening was outgoing Council President Joe Nattans whose term will end on 22 January, our next scheduled meeting, when a full slate of newly elected officers assume leadership roles. Alan Walden, another former council president, assumed his accustomed role as Master of Ceremony for the evening. Nicolee Ambrose was again on

hand to sing a stirring version of the National Anthem, and a great deal of credit must be given to Council Treasurer Chris Costello who was central to planning for the meeting, and to members Joe Casolino, Kyle McDonell, and others who played key roles in the success of the event. Casolino took a few minutes toward the of the meeting to outline the need for an active recruitment campaign which is already underway.

It was truly remarkable evening,



Walden



The long and short of it - RADM Gilreath & Council JAG Molly Seeman

and we hope for an even bigger than better event in the year ahead. ⚓

### From the Bridge Continued from page 1

every challenge with foresight and zeal.

In closing, my thanks, again, for your assistance and encouragement. Happy New Year to all of you and yours. And always remember: Freedom isn't free. The men and women of the sea services and, by extension, all of the Armed Forces pay for it every day. God bless them, and these United States. ⚓

Joe  
BG Arthur J. Nattans, USA (ret)  
President and Life Member

# Then and Now Anniversaries



USCG Taney

By Alan Walden

7 December 1941. “A date which will live in infamy” as President Franklin D. Roosevelt described it a day later in his call for a declaration of war against the empire of Japan. As always, the anniversary of that date was recalled at the Inner Harbor on the deck of the last gunship still afloat that was in action then and there. Baltimore Council President Joe Nattans was on board for the most recent event and took part in the ceremony by helping drop a memorial wreath in the water alongside. Joe, dressed in his uniform as a retired major general, then quickly made his way to the Dundalk Readiness Center where a happier celebration would take place; the 250th anniversary of the founding the Maryland National Guard.

It was in 1774, almost two years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, that Mordecai Gist organized and commanded the Baltimore Independent Cadets, forerunner of the famed 175th Infantry Division a.k.a. “The Dandy Fifth.” And on this December 7th, the 1st battalion was on parade. It was bone chillingly cold for an outdoor event. But few seemed to mind as the troops came



The Battalion



Color Guard - First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry

marching by. Their colors were borne by members of the First Troop of Philadelphia City Cavalry, a truly spectacular unit in their late 18th Century attire. It, too, was founded in 1774 as the Light Horse Troop of Philadelphia and became George Washington’s personal guard.

Major General Janeen Birkland, the Adjutant

General of Maryland, was in command for the occasion. I, as an honorary colonel of the Maryland Line, joined General Nattans among the spectators for an hour of pomp and ceremony followed by an elaborate buffet, mercifully held inside the armory.

The Dandy Fifth has been engaged in virtually every campaign since its founding. And it will continue to serve, with valor, whenever required in the service of the United States. ⚓



Standing tall



Walden and Nattans

## Hail, and Farewell

# He Will Be Missed

By Alan Walden

We lost another of our stalwarts as the year was ending. Eugene Michael Nuth, Sr., former secretary of the Baltimore Council and, for many years, active in the coordination of its youth programs, was 82 years old when he left us. Gene, as he was known to his Navy League colleagues, had a long and distinguished civilian career in law enforcement and was, at one time, warden of the Maryland State Penitentiary. He was also a ship driver, licensed



Gene Nuth

to command vessels of up to five hundred tons.

More than a colleague, Gene was a good friend. He was very helpful to me, personally, during my campaign for mayor of Baltimore in 2016 and we worked closely together on Navy League youth issues; the Sea Cadets and the Junior ROTC programs at Baltimore City and Baltimore County high schools.

A good man, Gene; now safe in the arms of his Lord. ⚓



## Trying Again

# More Bang for the Buck?

Another attempt is being made by the Navy to transform a costly “whoops” into a supership as the first seaborne hypersonic weapon is retrofitted aboard the stealth destroyer USS Zumwalt (DDG-1000).

Commissioned in Baltimore, Zumwalt is at a Mississippi shipyard where workers have installed missile tubes in place of twin turrets of a gun system that was never activated because it was too expensive. Although the U.S. has had several types of hypersonic weapons in development for the past two decades it was recent tests conducted by both Russia and China that added pressure to the U.S. military to speed their production.

Zumwalt was initially designed to provide greatly enhanced land-attack capability for the Marines. But the system featuring 155 mm guns was canceled because each of the rocket-assisted projectiles cost between \$800,000 and \$1 million. Not that the changeover will be cheap. According to the Congressional Budget Office it would cost nearly \$18 billion to buy 300 of the hypersonic weapons and maintain them over 20 years.

Longtime military analyst Loren Thompson



USS Zumwalt (DDG-1000)

says that's not enough bang for the buck, “All it gets you is a precise non-nuclear explosion, some place far, far away. Is it really worth the money? The answer is most of the time the missile costs much more than any target you can destroy with it.” But retired RADM Ray Spicer, CEO of the U. S. Naval Institute points

out that the hypersonic weapons will provide the capability for Navy vessels to strike an enemy from a distance of thousands of miles — outside the range of most enemy weapons — and there is no effective defense against them. And, he adds, “The adversary has them. We never want to be outdone.” ⚓

# The Powerhouse

## The Biggest of All

By Alan Walden

It may be that many if not most of you have never heard of the Sewells Point Peninsula in Virginia. But it's there you will find the largest naval base in the world: Naval Station Norfolk. Four thousand three hundred acres where 46,000 military and 21,000 civilians maintain American sea power.

My companion and I were overdue for a visit with an old friend in Virginia Beach who also just happens to be a highly decorated and distinguished veteran of the United States Navy. Who better, then, than he to conduct the grand tour. CAPT Sam Howard, USN-ret. is no stranger to the Baltimore Council. We commissioned his first command; USS Raven (MHC-61), a mine hunter, in the inner harbor back in 1998. His last command at sea was USS Bataan (LHD-5), one of the largest of our warships.

Sam rang up flank speed as we spent hour upon hour exploring the base. Ships, aircraft, housing, schools, training facilities, everything and anything we could reach in the time available. It was breathtaking. Two of our seagoing giants were in port. The supercarriers USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) and



The "Ike" (CVN-69)

USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78). The latter is the largest warship on the planet. And there were destroyers, landing ships, support vessels, submarines, and a few cruisers in the process of being decommissioned.

We could have spent days there instead of just hours, and I suspect we shall return. Sam, by the way, is still involved with the Navy in a quasi-official capacity. And, like father, like son. Mercer Dickson Howard is now ENS Howard, USN. ⚓



Howard and Walden



USS Gunston Hall (LSD-44)

# Coming Up

- 1/20 Martin Luther King Day
- 2/12 Lincoln's Birthday (Show the colors)
- 2/14 Valentine's Day
- 2/17 Presidents Day (Show the colors)
- 2/22 Washington's Birthday (Show the colors)
- 3/5 Ash Wednesday
- 3/9 Daylight Saving Time (clocks ahead one hour)
- 3/17 St. Patrick's Day
- 3/20 Vernal Equinox (First day of spring)

## Remembering Our Mission

The NAVY LEAGUE came into being in 1902 with the express purpose "to enlighten the people on naval matters and tell them what a Navy means to the country and what it ought to mean to them."

We have always conveyed the philosophy of two of our founders, PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT and ADMIRAL ALFRED THAYER MAHAN that America is a maritime nation and that a strong Navy is the most cost-effective means of ensuring peace.

**PRIDE • SERVICE • PATRIOTISM**

## From the Editor

As always comments and observations regarding this publication are welcomed. They may be sent to the editor at [arwmedia@aol.com](mailto:arwmedia@aol.com) and/or posted in the comments section on our web site: [www.navyleaguebaltimore.org](http://www.navyleaguebaltimore.org). You are also invited to visit the web site to peruse past copies of All Ahead Full and find out more about the Navy League, the Baltimore Council, and our 120 year old mission in support of the sea services.



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