



# ALL AHEAD FULL

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

SPRING 2025



## FROM THE BRIDGE

Welcome to new members and the arrival of spring. Both are welcome! We are also celebrating your new Baltimore Council Board members while, at the same time, mourning the loss of another of our valued stalwarts; Chris Costello. Our sincere condolences to his family, friends and associates. Furthermore, and unfortunately, another of our long-time officers, CAPT Glenn Young, USCG-ret. has had to curtail his participation because of limited mobility.

### New Officers on Board

CAPT Al Seeman, USN is our newly installed treasurer, Mike Houck is acting membership Chair, and Jim Haynes, nominated for board membership, is guest counselor and adviser to the president. The board is fortunate to have these new Navy League advocates on deck as we restructure and grow our council. This brings me to my next point for all our member who, we trust, will "Request permission to come aboard!"

After a labor-intensive and successful ship's commissioning program, your Baltimore Council is structuring to focus on the following:

1. Increase your involvement with local educational and interest events.
2. Support visiting ships.
3. Contribute to successful youth programs – Sea Cadets and JROTC programs.

Baltimore is a seafaring town, one that

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## The Verdict Cause and Effect



By Alan Walden

The National Transportation Safety Board has, without equivocation, affixed the blame for the Francis Scott Key Bridge disaster on the State of Maryland, specifically the Maryland Transportation Authority.

After almost a year of investigation and analysis NTSB chair Jennifer Homendy declared that the MBTA (1) did not run a vulnerability assessment on the Key Bridge, and (2) would have understood the risk had the assessment been undertaken. It then, she said, could have taken the action needed to prevent what occurred when, on 26 March 2024, MV Dali, a heavily laden container ship, lost power and drifted into one of the main support piers of the bridge. In just a few seconds the impact collapsed the entire center span across the mouth of Baltimore Harbor. Six workmen died, a major portion of the Baltimore Beltway was destroyed, and seagoing traffic was

interrupted for the better part of two months.

"Had they run the calculation," Homendy said, "the MDTA would've been aware that the bridge was almost thirty times greater than the risk threshold for critical essential bridges and almost fifteen times greater for Pier 17 which the Dali struck."

As a result of the Key Bridge catastrophe the NTSB has issued urgent safety recommendations to assess the vulnerability of 68 bridges in 19 states.

Maryland Congressman Kweisi Mfume's said he was horrified by the report. "We can do better than this," he said, "and we have to for our citizens."

Freshman Congressman Johnny Olszewski

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## Missing in Action

# One of the Best of the Best

As mentioned in the council president's message we recently lost another of our most valued board members and officers.

More than just the treasurer of the Baltimore Council, Chris Costello was one of the true shakers and movers of this organization. His insight into our needs and how to deal with them was always both welcome and enacted with little or no resistance. Chris was a driving force behind many of our activities up to including the holiday season annual meeting the most recent of which was an overwhelming success; thanks, in large measure, to him.

On 31 January, members of the

Board turned out in force at St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church and the Wild

Lake Interfaith Center in Columbia to take part in a memorial service for Chris and act as a Guard of Honor. That they did him proud was to be expected. He most certainly earned it through his years of dedicated service.



Chris Costello

One of Chris' principal concerns among the many key elements of our mission was support of the Sea Cadets. Anyone reading this who may be inclined to make a contribution in Chris' memory, please send it to them: THE BALTIMORE NAVAL SEA



The Honor Guard

CADET CORPS at the address shown on this issue of All Ahead Full. Please understand that this IS NOT A SOLICITATION OF FUNDS. It is entirely voluntary.



Also in January, the Baltimore Council was represented by Brig. Gen. Joe Nattans USA ret., our immediate past president, at a memorial event in honor of Chief Warrant Officer Spencer Greer who died at his home in Maryland in November of last year. Up

through the enlisted ranks Greer received his warrant in 1971. He always regarded, as the highlights of his 26 years of Coast Guard service, his two tours of duty aboard the tall ship Eagle, first as an enlisted crew member and a "mast captain" then as an officer, serving as the Sail Master, a great title that Spencer loved. He sailed across the Atlantic twice aboard Eagle. We wish his spirit to find "fair winds and following seas." ⚓



Nattans

### The Verdict Continued from page 1

echoed Mfume's concern. "It's disappointing to learn that we missed opportunities to prevent this from happening." But the Maryland Transportation Authority chose to direct the blame elsewhere. In its response it declared that "the catastrophe and the tragic loss of life was the 'sole fault' of the Dali and the gross neglect of her owners and operators who put profits above safety."



The better news concerns the new Francis Scott Key Bridge (Yes, it seems that name will remain as it was). It will be of a wholly different design, longer and higher in



order to accommodate the much larger vessels of recent design; with special attention to the protection of its supports.

Instead of a continuous steel girder truss bridge, one of the longest in the country, the new span will be Maryland's first

cable-stayed suspension bridge. The time frame for construction is somewhat uncertain, but officials say it could be completed in 2028. The cost is estimated at least 1.8 billion dollars.

According to state officials the new Francis Scott Key Bridge, with

its graceful outline, two tall towers with cables radiating down to support the deck, will modernize the skyline at the entrance to Baltimore's Inner Harbor and become "a symbol of resilience, progress and economic growth." ⚓

### From the Bridge Continued from page 1

should invite and encourage all of us to celebrate, educate and support all of the Navy League's essential commitments. Navy – present at the Naval Reserve Center, Marine Corps, Coast Guard – present at the Curtis Bay Yard, and Merchant Marine – present at the MITAG center and other commercial operations and maritime functions.

We count on your support and involvement as we develop these programs. Let your Board know what would interest you, where you see opportunities and – most importantly – become engaged.

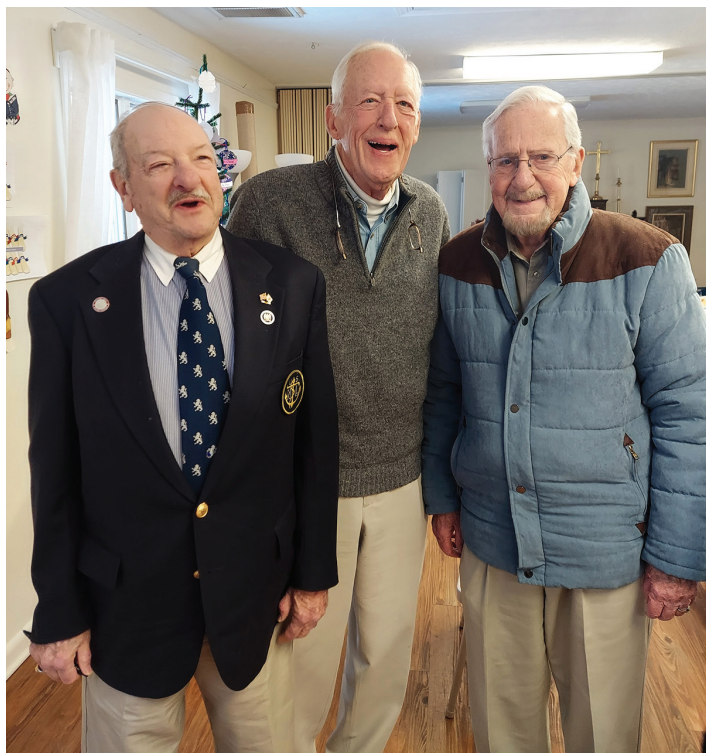
Permission granted, and welcome aboard. ⚓

Best regards,

Bruce Copeland  
President and Life Member



## Short Takes



Since our last issue the Baltimore Council elected its new leadership. Bruce Copeland (center) took the helm as president, succeeding Joe Nattans (left). Alan Walden, also a past-president (right) was there to cast his vote. It was, as you'll see in the photo, a happy occasion for all concerned.



USCGC Eagle (WIX-327), the elegant Coast Guard sail training vessel, is always a feast for the senses wherever and whenever she sails or motors into view. But rarely as fine as she was recently while at anchor; at night.



A new class of frigate will carry an old and cherished name when the lead ship joins the fleet within a few years. USS Constellation will follow in the proud tradition of one of the first frigates built for the United States Navy under terms of the Naval Act of 1797; and, by extension, the circa 1855 Sloop of War Constellation, now a museum ship in the Inner Harbor.



Baltimore Harbor will be home to another not-to-be-missed event in the early summer of 2026. It's not too early to make your plans accordingly.





By Alan Walden

It was June of 1942. The United States Pacific fleet, battered but unbowed, still trying to recover from the disaster at Pearl Harbor six months earlier, was counterpunching with whatever could float or fly against a powerful and determined enemy. There had been raids against Japanese installations in the Marianas, But the fight for control of Guadalcanal was touch and go and the Battle of the Coral Sea was a tactical draw though a strategic victory for preventing a planned enemy invasion of Australia. It also cost us the aircraft carrier Lexington. Then, everything changed dramatically thanks to the code breakers in Hawaii and the aggressive tactics of someone many felt was ill equipped for the job.

Admiral Chester Nimitz, who'd succeeded Husband Kimmel as CincPac (Commander in Chief, Pacific), was persuaded by the eggheads who'd cracked the enemy codes that the next Japanese target was Midway, a tiny archipelago which, before the war, had been a refueling stop for the trans-Pacific clippers. His logical choice for command of a counterstrike was Vice Admiral William "Bull" Halsey. But Halsey had been hospitalized with a raging case of shingles.

Enter our hometown hero. Acting on Halsey's advice, Nimitz chose Rear Admiral Raymond Ames Spruance, Baltimore born and bred, to take command of Task

## Looking Aft

# Hometown Legend – Ray Spruance

Force 16; the aircraft carriers Enterprise and Hornet and their escort of cruisers and destroyers. Ray Spruance was a ship driver and a gunner, a battleship and cruiser commander. He had never before led a carrier strike force. But Nimitz muted the nay-sayers by explaining that Spruance would be ably assisted by Halsey's staff, especially Captain Miles Browning, a gifted ship handler, and by Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher's Task Force 17 including the carrier Yorktown. Badly damaged at Coral Sea, Yorktown had been put back in fighting trim in just 48 hours. Spruance, known to many as "Electric Brain" for his ability to analyze circumstances with remarkable acuity and speed, was more than ready for the challenge. He decided to position his forces northwest of Midway which would allow him to confront the enemy or, if necessary, fall back to cover Hawaii if that was their target. "Let 'em come," he told Nimitz. "If they show up, I'll bushwhack 'em." And that is precisely what he did.

On June 4th, 1942, when the Japanese did show up, Spruance and his carrier aircraft stopped



Spruance and Nimitz

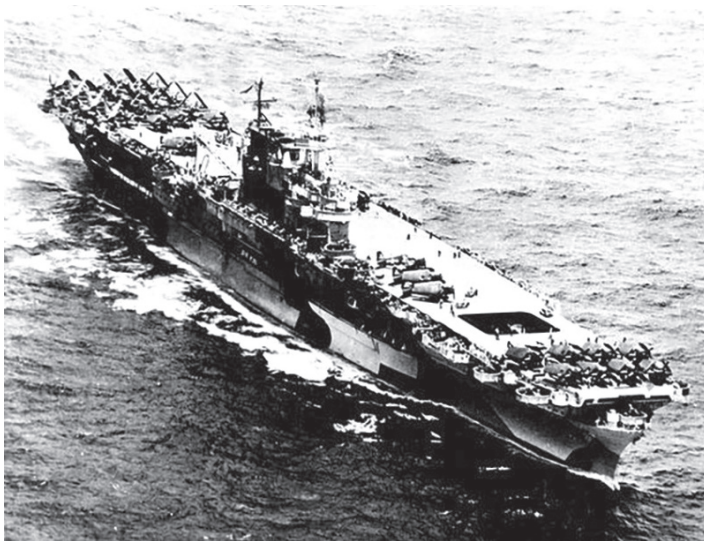
them cold and hard. When the Battle of Midway ended, Japanese Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, who'd led the attack on Pearl Harbor, had lost all four of his carriers (Akagi, Kaga, Soryu and Hiryu). And, though we lost Yorktown, it was a tremendous victory. After that single encounter, the enemy advance in the Pacific was dead in the water, and Baltimore's Ray Spruance had achieved legendary status.

By August 1943, Spruance, then a vice admiral, was commander of the Central Pacific Force. During the Battle of Tarawa in November 1943, he guided Allied forces as they advanced through the

Gilbert Islands. Two months later he led the assault on Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands. After that successful operation Spruance was promoted to four-star rank.

In April, Nimitz divided command of the Central Pacific Force between Spruance and Halsey. While one was at sea, the other would be planning their next operation. As part of this reorganization, the force became known as the 5th Fleet when Spruance was in charge, 3rd Fleet when Halsey was in command. In mid-1944 Spruance landed troops on Saipan and, a few days later, decimated Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa's fleet at the Battle of the Philippine Sea. The Japanese lost three carriers and around 600 aircraft, a defeat that effectively destroyed the Imperial Navy's air arm. Then Iwo Jima and Okinawa. By then Spruance had shifted his flag to a battleship and, when it was struck by a kamikaze, was found helping the crew manhandle a fire hose. It was then he earned another nickname, "The Admiral's Admiral." For his actions at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, Spruance was awarded the Navy Cross. And, on November 24, he relieved Nimitz as CincPac, a post he held only briefly before accepting appointment as President of the Naval War College.

In 1952 President Harry S. Truman appointed Ray Spruance as Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines. And three years later he finally retired to Pebble Beach, California where he died on December 13, 1969. Spruance was buried at Golden Gate National Cemetery near the grave of his wartime commander, Chester Nimitz. But here in Baltimore, he remains a hometown hero, now and evermore. ⚓



USS Enterprise



ORGANIZATIONS, INSTALLATIONS, AND VESSELS SPONSORED  
AND OTHERWISE SUPPORTED BY THE BALTIMORE COUNCIL-NLUS



# Coming Up

4/6	Army Day**
4/12	Passover begins at sundown
4/13	Palm Sunday
4/15	Income Tax deadline
4/18	Good Friday
4/20	Easter Sunday
5/1	National Day of Prayer
5/8	VE Day (1945)**
5/11	Mother's Day
5/17	Armed Forces Day**
5/26	Memorial Day****
6/6	D-Day (1944)**
6/14	Flag Day**
6/15	Father's Day
6/20	Summer Solstice (First Day of summer)
7/4	Independence Day**

\*\* *Show the colors*

\*\*\*\* *Colors at half-staff until midday, full staff thereafter*



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## 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.