

# THE HELMSMAN

A Publication of the Broward County Council – Navy League of the United States

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## *Adopted Unit USS Leyte Gulf (CG55) Decommissioned*

Broward County adopted ship, USS Leyte Gulf CG-55 was commissioned in Port Everglades, Florida on September 26, 1987.

She was the first ship ever to be commissioned there.

Broward Council adopted her on December 1, 1990.



The Leyte Gulf was a Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser. She was named in memory of the World War II Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Pacific. Powered by four large gas-turbine engines, she carried 122 guided missiles for air defense, attack of surface targets at sea and ashore, and anti-submarine warfare (ASW). In addition, she carried two "Seahawk" LAMPS multi-purpose helicopters, whose primary mission is ASW.

After serving in a variety of roles and theaters she was decommissioned on September 20th in Norfolk, Va. Her length of service was 37 years.

Of the 27 ships in her class, Leyte Gulf was one of the longest serving. Only 9 Ticonderoga class cruisers remain with more to be retired shortly.

## *BCNL Observes Veterans Day*



*Past President Larry Ott, President Glenn Wiltshire, Patty Croonquist and Membership Director Richard Fournier*

Accepting an invite from Mission BBQ on Commercial Blvd we set up a recruiting table there on Veterans Day as they observed the holiday by providing free food to veterans who stopped by.

## *Coral Springs Veterans Day*



*BCNL members Charles Schmidt and Tom Melville are pictured here with featured speaker Rear Admiral Douglas Schofield and members of the Coral Springs Veterans Coalition*

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Navy Leaguers,

It's been a busy Fall for the Council. We started in September with the annual joint meeting with the Fort Lauderdale Council where we heard six Sea Cadets from the USS FORT LAUDERDALE Division reporting on their summer training program experiences. I'm always amazed at the experiences offered to those young men and women, who will be our future leaders. In October, we held our traditional informal Oktoberfest gathering at Old Heidelberg and enjoyed the great German food and camaraderie.

Our November meeting was hosted by Council member Graeme Holman at the STAR Center in Dania Beach. The STAR Center is a training facility in Dania Beach off Federal Highway that provides initial and refresher training for US Merchant Marine Deck and Engineering officers for the country's largest maritime officers union, the American Maritime Officers (AMO). We got to experience the bridge simulator, which has been upgraded with high tech video since our last visit. In addition, we were privileged to have the AMO National President, Willie Barrere, join us. He provided some great information on the new training ships being constructed for the Federal and State maritime academies, but also some eye-opening and troubling information about the status of the US Merchant Marine compared to their Chinese counterparts. While we normally focus on our Coast Guard, Navy, and Marine Corps, the Council also supports the US Merchant Marine, and Willie's presentation reinforced the critical importance of that support. We also held elections for our slate of officers for 2025 at that meeting. I am pleased to report that the same team that has guided the Council in 2024 was elected to serve in 2025.



*Welcome Aboard!*

The Council is pleased to welcome new members

**Natalie Bunting .**  
**Paul Schreck**  
**Christian Durante**  
**John Biagi**  
**Gerald Rothwell,**

We look forward to greeting and meeting you in person at a Council social event soon.

We will have two final events in December. On Friday, December 13th (we are not suspicious), we will co-host with the Fort Lauderdale Council and Broward Navy Days our Annual Coast Guard Holiday Party at the Quarterdeck on 17th Street in Fort Lauderdale beginning at 6 PM. This is a fun event, and we look forward to a great turnout by members to wish our Coast Guard men and women and their guests a Happy Holidays! We will close the year with a joint meeting with the Fort Lauderdale Council on Wednesday, December 18th at the Lauderdale Yacht Club, where we bring unwrapped gifts that the Marine Corps Toys For Tots Program will distribute to needy families.

I hope that all of our members have a safe and enjoyable holidays. This is your Council, so please don't hesitate to reach out to me or any other Board member if you have any thoughts on what you want your Council to focus on in 2025.

Very Respectfully,

Glenn A. Wiltshire  
Capt. USCG Retired  
President, Broward County Council



*Thanks for serving!*

Glenn Wiltshire - President  
Tom Melville - First Vice President  
Bruce Gottsch - Second Vice President  
Tom Carney - Treasurer  
Shelley Beck - Secretary  
Robert Marks - Legislative Affairs  
Julie Carlson - JAG



## Friday December 13th

Our annual Coast Guard Holiday Party at the Quarterdeck on 17th Street.

## Wednesday December 18th

Joint meeting at Ft Lauderdale Yacht Club with Ft Lauderdale Council

## April 22-30, 2025

Fleet Week returns to Port Everglades

## June 4-7 2025

Navy League National Convention will take place in Jacksonville

# Oktoberfest

A Council tradition has been to gather for a simply social evening at the Old Heidelberg Restaurant on State Route 84 in Fort Lauderdale in observance of Oktoberfest. This year we gathered on Wednesday October 23rd.



Group photo



Council First Vice President Tom Melville and President Glenn Wiltshire enjoying the evening

This is a casual gathering where we order off the menu, and is intended to be a time for fellowship with our members and friends. We get there by 6 PM to enjoy the festivities and some great German food and beverages.



Viewing the menu Shelley Beck and Larry Ott are all smiles



Council members (and photographers) Diane and Charles Schmidt practicing on each other



# Member Corner

## VP Tom Melville speaks at Cooper City HS 9/11 remembrance event

In observance of 9/11, Council First Vice President Tom Melville was a speaker at the Cooper City High School event.

### Tom's 9/11 address



*Council First VP Tom Melville addressing the event*



*Cooper City High School JROTC cadets*



*JROTC Cadets and distinguished visitors*

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you, Cdr. Testa, Petty Officer Sloan, and Principal Perkovic for inviting me to speak today. Let us remember 9-11-01 and the 2,977 victims of the terrorist attacks that day. 40 of those casualties were in Shanksville, PA Somerset County. That's where passengers on the fourth hijacked plane fought back after learning about the other attacks. Their plane was crashed into an empty field in western Pennsylvania. 184 casualties were at the Pentagon in Arlington County, VA. In New York City, 2,753 casualties from 93 different countries were inside the World Trade Center Twin Towers when they collapsed in a heap of rubble, and twisted steel. First Responders accounted for 403 of those casualties. New York City Fire Department lost 343, New York City Police Department lost 23, and the Port Authority Police Department of New York and New Jersey lost 37.

I was given this medallion/coin in 2014 when I and others rode the USS New York from Mayport, FL to Port Everglades, Fort Lauderdale. The bow of the New York has 7 ½ tons of steel from the Twin Towers forged into it. Cargo ships transported 24 tons of steel recovered from the World Trade Center to Avondale, LA near New Orleans where the ship was built by Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding. They then melted it to liquid molten steel and transformed it into the bow of the USS New York.

The hull number of the New York is LPD 21, Amphibious Transport Dock. LPD 24, USS Arlington, and LPD 25, USS Somerset are also named after the 9-11 attacks. These ships are used to transport and land marines and their equipment and supplies. It lands them ashore with helicopters and landing craft.

When we rode the ship from Mayport, the ship's Chaplain read the biography at night of 2 first responders who both died that day. They were father and son, Joseph Angelini Sr., and Joseph Angelini Jr. ages 63 and 38. The father had 40 years on the job and the son 7 years. I have a hand-out here about them.

Finally, in the motto of the USS New York are the words "Strength Forged through Sacrifice, Never Forget."

Thank you for attending today. God bless you, your families, our country, and God bless our First Responders.

# Member Corner

## Member Rob Latimer Honored by the City of Sunrise



*Rob with wife Lerryn accepting award*

BCNL member Robert Latimer has been honored by the City of Sunrise. They recognized him as a Broward County Pioneer.

For over 44 years Rob has been serving as the official bagpiper for the City at their Memorial Day, Veterans Day and 911 ceremonies as well as serving on the City's Veterans Advisory Board.



*Rob performing at a reception for the USS Leyte Gulf in December of 2007*

# Odds & Ends

**Wow!**

*New member Natalie Bunting was recently recognized by the Commandant of the Coast Guard as the National Coast Guard Auxiliarist of the Year!*

*Congratulations Natalie!*



Don't forget to set your scales back ten pounds this week

# News from our Adopted Units

## USS Leyte Gulf – CG 55

*The following is from DVIDS and was produced by USS Leyte Gulf public affairs*



*Command Master Chief Jedrykowski presents Cmdr. Brian Harrington, the commanding officer of the Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55) with a pennant during the ship's decommissioning ceremony Sept. 20, 2024  
Photo By Petty Officer 3rd Class Erin Watson*

NORFOLK, Va. - The crew of the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55) held a decommissioning ceremony onboard Naval Station Norfolk on September 20th.

Over 500 attendees including plankowners and former crew members joined together to celebrate the ship's distinguished 37 years of naval service. Vice Adm. Eugene Black III, Leyte Gulf's 14th commanding officer, served as the ceremony's keynote speaker, wishing the current crew fair winds and following seas as they bade their ship farewell.

"What a great opportunity to celebrate the Sailors who brought this ship to life, kept her operating at the highest level and ready for a fight throughout her long and illustrious career of service to our nation," he said.

Cmdr. Brian M. Harrington, who served as the 23rd and final commanding officer of Leyte Gulf, led the ship's final crew through the decommissioning process, assuming command following Leyte Gulf's deployment to the Caribbean Sea and South Atlantic earlier this year.

"It's been an honor to lead America's Battle Cruiser and her crew through the final chapter in her storied career. This crew accomplished the final mission with professionalism and dedication that honors all Leyte Gulf Sailors past and present."

The ceremony atmosphere was one of fond but somber remembrance as Black and Harrington shared a few memories created over Leyte Gulf's 37 years of service, inviting shared laughter from crewmembers past and present.

Leyte Gulf was built at Ingalls Shipbuilding Corporation in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and commissioned in Port Everglades, Florida, on September 26, 1987. Leyte Gulf's namesake commemorates the largest naval battle in history, fought from October 23-26, 1944 during World War II.

Since her maiden deployment in 1988, the warship has been vital to America's national defense strategy, leading the way in air defense throughout 17 deployments around the world. After decommissioning, the ship will be towed on October 16th to the Navy's Inactive Ship's facility in Philadelphia, Pa., where it will be in a Logistical Support Asset status.



*Long time BCNL members may recognize this shot of the USS Leyte Gulf underway*

*Once upon a time it was the background image for our website*

# News from our Adopted Units

## Coast Guard Air Station Miami

Council President Glenn Wiltshire recently visited USCG Coast Guard Station Miami to make an Enlisted Person of the Quarter award to AMT1 Josue Valentin.

AMT1 Valentin was recognized for his leadership on aircraft maintenance as well as his volunteer activities in the community.



*Pictured are Station Command Master Chief AETCM McClelland, AMT1 Valentin, Glenn and Station CO Capt Smith*

## Coast Guard Station Ft Lauderdale

Glenn went to Coast Guard Station Ft Lauderdale in order to present BM2 Dylan Slaughter an Enlisted Person of the Quarter award where he was recognized for



*BMS C Thompson, XO LT Truncale, BM2 Dylan Slaughter, CO LT Dadlani, Glenn and MKC Gagnon.*

## Coast Guard Station Ft Lauderdale

More recently Glenn conducted an EPOQ presentation to BM2 Connor Hurley who was recognized for his work as a certified coxswain, Station OOD and Rescue and Survival Systems Petty Officer .



*XO LT Truncale, BMC Hart, CO LT Dadlani, BM2 Hurley, Glenn and MKC Gagnon*

While there he also made an EPOQ presentation to CS2 Kevin Hurley, who was recognized for his work in the Galley at the Station providing excellent food for the Station crew



*XO LT Truncale, BMC Hart, CO LT Dadlani, CS2 Hurley, Glenn and MKC Gagnon*

## odds & ends...

### Support Pup Sage is Popular on USS Gerald R. Ford

Captain Rick “Powder” Burgess took command of the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) just eight days before it was to sail on its first full-length combat deployment. In putting the new ship through its paces he would be employing 23 different new technologies, but his first decision as commanding officer involved a 24th innovation — the Navy’s first-in-class vessel, its largest, longest and most advanced, would have a specially trained dog aboard to boost morale and help the crew go the distance.

The three-year-old female Yellow Labrador named Sage was on board as the Gerald R. Ford left Norfolk in May 2023 for duty that was expected to involve being near the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

“I made the decision to deploy with Sage. That was not directed by admirals or anyone else,” Burgess said. “I wanted to bring her on in an effort to help Sailors with the resiliency piece, which has always been a challenge. And you know it’s probably always been a challenge, but we were coming off a couple years with Covid, and we were having longer deployments.”

While military dogs have seen duty on land and aboard ship doing security duties, Sage was specially trained to bring peace of mind and comfort, both sorely needed by Sailors battling loneliness and stress, close confines and combat tempo. Sage was provided by arrangement with a Virginia Beach non-profit called Mutts With A Mission, founded to provide disability and support dogs for veterans and first responder organizations.

“And I saw her as a free opportunity, honestly, to help out with Sailors. And so, Sage is unique in many ways, she’s the first of the program,” Burgess said.



“Ideally, the way the program is conceived, between the ages of two and three these handpicked dogs will go through training. They will get immersion, they’ll find out or figure out how to climb up and down ladders. They will do all that part of it, the logistical side of it. Then they come to the crew, at the age of three, and they’ll stay until they’re 10 years old.”

Sage’s job is to help Sailors handle immense emotional stress and the Ford’s first journey would prove to be an unanticipated stressor when war broke out in Israel on Oct. 7. A five-month tour turned into an eight-month endurance session of homecomings delayed, including three about-faces from homeward bound back to a Middle East aflame from Syria to Gaza and on down to the Red Sea. That’s also where the second demonstration dog, a male named Demo, served aboard USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CG 69), which replaced Ford on deployment.

While the new ship, new captain, new crew and new dog were all getting their sea legs, the sweet and gentle creature quickly developed a fan base.

“We learned early on too there was a new thing on ‘Green Sheet,’ which has the daily schedule for the crew to look at ... someone came up with the idea to put a paw print by where the events [were] and where Sage would participate. And we immediately saw attendance double, triple, quadruple,” Burgess said. “Come for the dog, stay for the talk,” was the goal of shipboard presentations where Sage held court for groups of sailors, as COMNAVAIRLANT [Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic] PAO Dawn Stankus told Navy Times. The playful pup was center stage as the Navy’s mental health teams aboard ship described the options available for seeking help.



## odds & ends...

### Support Pup Sage – con't



*Sage, a three-year-old female Labrador Retriever, deployed aboard the world's largest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) through Mutts with a Mission, watches the Thanksgiving Turkey Trot 5K on the flight deck, Nov. 23, 2023. U.S. Navy | Chief Mass Communication Specialist Mike DiMestico*

Sage's popularity soon grew to include not only the Sailors and Marines of the attached air wing but also every ship in the Ford Strike Group. This led to Sage being outfitted with proper PPE ['pup protective equipment'] and heading via helo to the guided missile cruiser USS Normandy [CG 60], goggles and booties and all of that, she did great. They fenced off part of their flight deck for her and the crew to come to her," Burgess said with a proud smile.

Burgess asked the cruiser's captain why he wanted Sage to hold court on the flight deck rather than inside the ship. "It was a logistics problem. The entire crew wanted to get in there ... the entire crew wanted to see her."

With both ship and crew back home and preparing for the next deployment, Sage remains on board many days of the week continuing her permanent assignment to the ship. And as her captain is certain, she is very much a member of the crew.

*This article was excerpted from the October 2024 issue of the Navy League Magazine "Sea Power"*

### US Navy Celebrates its 249th Birthday



*The cake from the Navy Ball in Washington DC*

**K U kidding?**

*Nuclear attack submarine USS Boise's last deployment was 9 years ago. In 2017 she lost her dive certification. Since then she has been tied up at a pier. The problem?*

*She is due for a maintenance period but there were no facilities available to take her. Finally the Navy has awarded the contract for the work to a private shipyard. As scheduled she is due to be returned to the fleet in 2029!*

and in closing...



MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR!

# COAST GUARD HOLIDAY PARTY

Friday, December 13, 2024

Sponsored by:

**Broward County Navy League Council  
Broward Navy Days  
Fort Lauderdale Navy League Council**

**HONORS AND WELCOMES  
ALL LOCAL COAST GUARD UNITS and  
GUEST**

**THE QUARTERDECK RESTAURANT  
1035 SE 17TH STREET  
FORT LAUDERDALE  
LOCATED JUST NORTH OF 17TH STREET  
(East of SE 10th Ave.)**

**Festivities begin 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM or ???**

**Please RSVP your Attendance on or before  
December 9th by e-mailing [browardnavyleague@gmail.com](mailto:browardnavyleague@gmail.com) or  
calling Shelley at 954-224-3687**