

TO THE POINT

WINTER 2025

The Quarterly Newsletter for Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum

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CHARTING 50 YEARS REFLECTING ON THE HISTORY OF PATRIOTS POINT

For fifty years, Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum has stood as a home for history. The decks of ships and the stories of combat have made a lasting mark in the Charleston Harbor far greater than ever imagined in 1976. As we begin our 50th anniversary celebration, we honor the stories that transformed historic relics into one of the Lowcountry’s most meaningful institutions.

The Story

Born from the arrival of the USS Yorktown in 1975, the Fighting Lady made her final voyage—this time not to war, but to preservation. Towed up the Cooper River, she arrived at her new post where crews and community members watched history come home.

On January 3, 1976, Patriots Point officially opened its doors as a living museum. A ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the occasion, blending the precision of Navy tradition with the pride of a community that had rallied to make it possible. Dignitaries, veterans, and families alike, gathered in celebration under the shadow of the Yorktown’s towering island, looking out toward the harbor, imagining what this place could become.



Photo sheets from the opening day ceremonies aboard the USS Yorktown, January 3, 1976.



Patriots Point quickly transformed into more than a museum; it became a community of memories as millions of people walked down the pier and into America’s past. The veterans who tell their stories. The volunteers who give their time. The teachers and parents who bring students to experience history. And the visitors who return, again and again, to reconnect with something much larger than themselves.

The Evolution

The decades have seen change come and go at Patriots Point. The Yorktown’s exhibits evolved through the decades with restorations that brought the spaces to life. The USS Laffey joined the fleet, expanding on the power of the U.S. Navy. The Vietnam Experience Exhibit immersed visitors in the sights and sounds of a conflict that defined a generation. The Medal of Honor Museum honored the nation’s highest heroes, ensuring their names and stories endure.

Joseph Campbell, who’s been employed at Patriots Point for over 35 years, says there’s so much to the story. “When I first started here, we didn’t have as many groups coming in, but it has grown so big, and I think it’s great for the community to have the school groups, scouts, etc. come to learn about the history at Patriots Point, the history of WWII veterans - how they sacrificed their lives for us. Patriots Point is a great asset to the community; there’s no question about that.”

From the Operation Overnight camping experience to the Flight Academy and Education programs that guide countless students through our passageways, today’s programs allow visitors to experience history in a way few ever do. Fifty years have brought plenty of evolution to the museum, but the heart of Patriots Point has remained the same: sharing stories so they never fade away.



USS Yorktown CV-10 arriving in Charleston Harbor for docking at Patriots Point as seen from an escort boat.

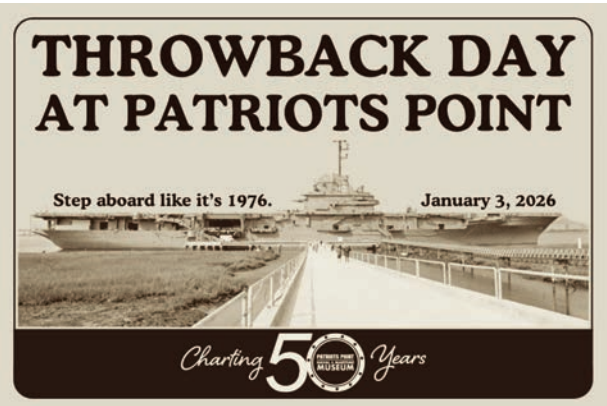
The Future

Looking ahead, the museum is embarking on a new transformation with a \$5 million upgrade designed to reshape the future of the USS Yorktown. Developed with the insight of designers, stakeholders, volunteers, and staff, the plan aims to reimagine the visitor experience. A relocated entrance and revitalized hangar bays will modernize the flow, while new immersive enhancements will bring the ship’s stories to life in contemporary ways. Today, as the area continues to grow and our community evolves, Patriots Point stands ready for the next chapter.

This anniversary marks more than the passage of time. Steel can rust. Paint can fade. But stories, when shared and cared for, can endure. For half a century, this museum has protected living testimony from slipping into silence. This year gives us the chance to honor that legacy while looking toward the future. Together, we can reflect on not only the memories shared, but the ones still waiting to be made.

Throughout 2026, visitors are invited to connect with various 50th anniversary themes and special events, beginning with our Charting 50 Years exhibit opening and Throwback Day event on January 3.

Help us celebrate this monumental milestone! Scan to learn more.



Honoring the Past. Inspiring the Future.
LEARN MORE AT CHARTING50.ORG



FEATURED EXHIBIT

FROM SPACE TO SEA,
THEN FIGHTING LADY

This December, Patriots Point celebrates the 57th anniversary of the Apollo 8 mission — the first manned flight around the moon and one of NASA’s most daring achievements. When the spacecraft splashed down in the Pacific on December 27, 1968, the USS Yorktown (CV-10) served as the primary recovery vessel, a role the Navy fulfilled for all early American space missions.

Apollo 8 launched aboard the massive Saturn V rocket and became the first mission to send humans beyond low Earth orbit. Astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders spent Christmas in lunar orbit, reading the opening verses of Genesis live on television. Anders also captured “Earthrise,” the photograph that helped spark a global environmental movement.

Ahead of the real splashdown, the Yorktown’s crew



Navy Underwater Demolition Team recovering Apollo 8 capsule. The USS Yorktown (CVS-10) can be seen in the background.



Official color NASA photograph, ‘Earthrise’, of the view of the earth from the Apollo spacecraft in orbit around the moon.

trained with a dummy capsule, even pushing through rough weather to ensure they were ready. The spacecraft ultimately landed upside-down in heavy seas, leaving the astronauts seasick until three members of Underwater Demolition Team 12 — Bob Coggin, R.J. Flanagan, and Don Schwab — attached flotation gear and stabilized the capsule.

Once the divers helped the crew out, an SH-3D Sea King helicopter from squadron HS-4, piloted by Commander Don Jones, flew the astronauts back to the Yorktown. They were greeted by Captain John Fifield and a red carpet on the flight deck. Medical officers conducted more than four hours of tests, marking the first opportunity to study how the human body responded to deep space. President Lyndon Johnson called to congratulate them while they were in sickbay.

During their brief stay aboard, Borman, Lovell, and Anders lodged in the admiral’s quarters, dined with the captain, and were presented with a 14-layer, 500-pound cake. The astronauts departed for Hawaii on December 28, and the Yorktown delivered the capsule the following day.

This year marks the first Apollo 8 anniversary without any surviving crew members. Frank Borman died in 2023 at 95. A West Point graduate, Air Force test pilot, and commander of both Gemini 7 and Apollo 8, he later led Eastern Air Lines. William Anders, who died in 2024 at 90, was an Air Force pilot, nuclear engineer, and the mission’s lunar module pilot. His “Earthrise” photo remains one of the most iconic images ever taken. James Lovell, who recently passed away in 2025 at 97, was a Naval Academy graduate, veteran fighter pilot, pilot of Apollo 8, and commander of the dramatic Apollo 13 mission.

Our new exhibit, opening December 13, tells the extraordinary story of Apollo 8 and the Yorktown. Visitors can step inside a replica Apollo capsule and see the original hook and pulley used to recover the craft.



Apollo 8 astronauts addressing crew and media following the recovery of the capsule. Captain John Fifield holds the microphone for Frank Borman.

PEOPLE OF PATRIOTS POINT

Meet Lloyd: Patriots Point’s Longest Standing Volunteer

A proud Pennsylvanian, Lloyd was born in Williamsport in 1943 and entered the U.S. Navy just months after graduating high school. From 1962–1964, Lloyd served as an “Airedale” at Boca Chica Naval Air Station in Key West, splitting his time between aircraft work and fast-pitch softball.

In 1964 he reported to the USS Independence (CV-62), deploying the following year to Southeast Asia. Lloyd says his biggest fear wasn’t the Viet Cong, it was crossing the equator. He recalls the legendary shellback initiation with humor and clarity—one of only two times, he explains, the Navy made him cry.

After his discharge in 1966 as an AK3 Storekeeper, Lloyd returned home to begin a long career in



LLOYD WHITNACK
20 YEAR VOLUNTEER

die-casting and industrial engineering with a company owned by the family of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood star, Fred Rogers. He later earned dual degrees in finance and industrial engineering & labor relations from St.

Vincent College.

Lloyd and his wife moved to Charleston in 1985, where he worked for government contractors on the former Navy Base before joining SPAWAR part-time as a facilities technician, and raised two children. Today, he says one of his greatest joys has been volunteering at Patriots Point. Lloyd joined us in 2005 and recently celebrated 20 years of service; he is now our longest standing volunteer.

We are deeply grateful for Lloyd’s dedication, stories, and the heart he brings to Patriots Point every day.

Thank you for 20 years!

Forget the Hotel,
Sleep among History!

From scout troops to youth groups, Operation Overnight invites YOU to a one-of-a-kind adventure filled with behind-the-scenes tours, hands-on activities, scavenger hunts, and more!



Girl Scouts participating in Operation Overnight, 2003.

The Legacy of Smokey Stover: A Place to Remember

When we examine the history of the USS Yorktown (CV-10), we find the stories of men who risked their well-being and lives in defense of the United States. The tales of their accolades and accomplishments have filled books and movie screens, with plenty of stories still waiting to be told.

One of the first narratives to surface about CV-10 during World War II was that of Elisha Terrill “Smokey” Stover. At just 24 years old, the young pilot became a central figure in the film *The Fighting Lady*, a documentary filmed aboard CV-10 during her first wartime cruise, which began in the midst of the Second World War. The film concludes by noting that several of the young men featured throughout the story did not return from combat, including “That Fightingest Gentleman,” Smokey Stover. It closes with a message that new sailors stand ready to fill the shoes of the brave and gallant men who were lost.

Smokey Stover and the other sailors lost during that first cruise helped establish a standard aboard the USS Yorktown, and they left a legacy that endured beyond the Yorktown’s active military service. As his friend and fellow Yorktowneer James “Jim” Bryan recalled, “During the remainder of the [war], whenever any of us felt lazy or down in the mouth, all we had to do was think of Smokey...and realize what Smokey had sacrificed, and it would snap you out with a jar.”

Elisha Terrill “Smokey” Stover was born on February 9, 1920, to James and Stella

Stover in Dallas, Texas. Before Smokey ever set foot aboard the USS Yorktown (CV-10), he was already a battle-proven naval aviator. He spent the first part of his military career participating in two of the most pivotal battles of the Pacific theater, the Battle of Midway and the Battle of Guadalcanal, as part of Fighting Squadron Five (VF-5). Over Guadalcanal, Smokey put together an impressive combat record and gained four confirmed victories over Japanese pilots, one short of becoming an ace.

Smokey had steadily improved his flying over the course of the war after an admittedly shaky start. When asked how many planes he had destroyed, he would reply, “Four Japanese, and six American!” referring to his own planes badly damaged in combat or during landings. Smokey’s experiences are indicative of an entire generation of Americans who joined the Navy in the lead up to the Second World War, and whose skills were now being tested in combat.

Following his successes over Guadalcanal, Smokey would be rotated out of combat with his squadron for some well-deserved rest stateside. After, Smokey was



Smokey Stover in F6F Hellcat cockpit aboard USS Yorktown (CV-10).

sent to Fighter Director Control School at Naval Air Station Norfolk— a clear sign that Smokey’s time as a fighter pilot was over, and the Navy was shifting him out of the cockpit and into the combat information center. The Navy valued experienced pilots, so Smokey and his squadron would be split up, with the veterans placed in support roles rather than flying combat missions. Smokey’s next assignment would be aboard the USS Yorktown (CV-10), still under construction. As luck would have it, the first fighter squadron aboard the Yorktown would be the new VF-5...

How did this fearless fighter pilot cement his legacy as one of the ship’s defining heroes?

Scan to find out in **Part II** of the Smokey Stover story!



Elisha “Smokey” Stover just before his deployment.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Throwback Day
January 3 | All Day

Pay What You Can Day
January 11, 17, 24 & 31

Second Saturday | All Day
January 10 & February 14

COME SEE US AT:

CofC Men’s Basketball Game
vs The Citadel | December 17
vs William & Mary | January 5

Stingrays Game: Military Night
January 17 | 6:05 PM



Throwback Day

We’re kicking off our 50th anniversary tribute with a blast from the past! For one day only, admission will be just \$2— the original ticket price from opening day in 1976— with several events and activities taking place throughout the day:

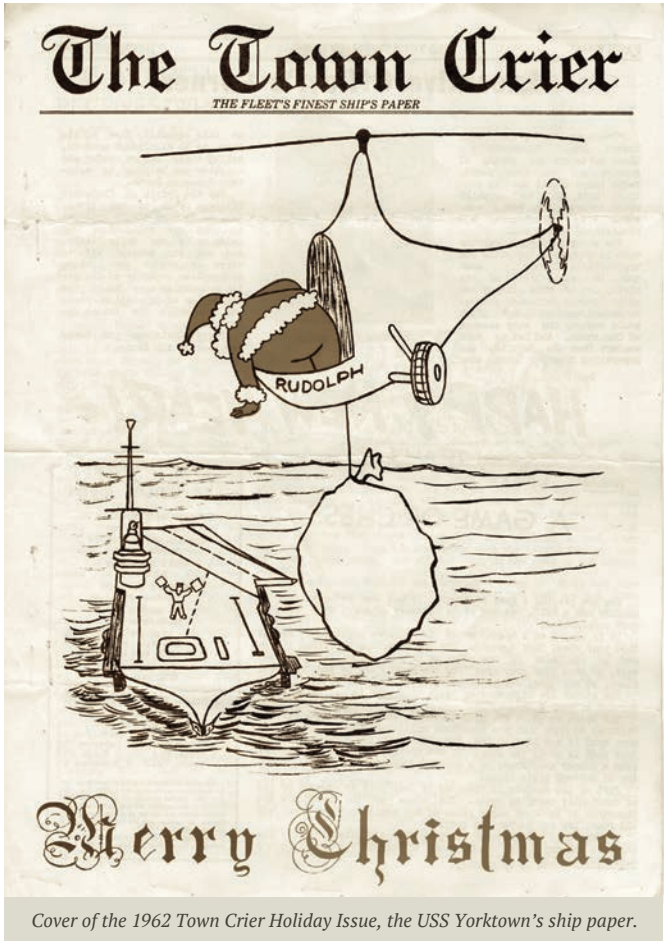
- Charting 50 Exhibit Opening
- Ceremonial Ribbon-cutting
- Celebration cake
- Family-friendly activities
- Special surprises & giveaways
- Historian Talks

It’s a birthday party 50 years in the making—and you’re invited!

DATE: January 3, 2026
TIME: 10 AM–5 PM
TICKETS: \$2



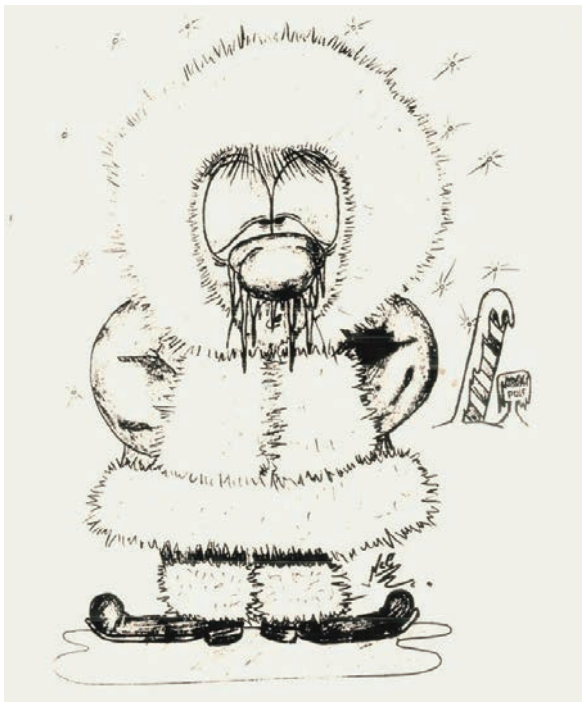
HAPPY HOLIDAYS



Cover of the 1962 Town Crier Holiday Issue, the USS Yorktown’s ship paper.

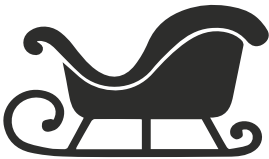
- THE QUARTERLY NEWSPAPER -

DECKSIDE DOODLES



"NORTH POLE" created by a USS Yorktown crew member in the 1960's showing the enlisted man in an Eskimo parka.

HOUSEKEEPING



MUSEUM CLOSED:
Christmas Eve | December 24
Christmas Day | December 25

Open Daily: 10 AM - 5 PM
Ticket Office Closes: 4 PM

CAPTAIN'S CHAIR

Hello, friends!

As the holiday season settles over Patriots Point, there's a special spirit that fills our historic ships. This time of year reminds us how meaningful it is to welcome families, veterans, and visitors from around the world to share in the stories preserved here. The dedication of our staff and volunteers keeps that spirit alive, making this museum feel truly heart-warming during the winter season.

As we look toward the new year, we prepare to embark on a remarkable milestone—Patriots Point's 50th anniversary. Over the next twelve months, we will honor five decades of preservation and progress with a series of exciting exhibits, programs, and events that highlight how far the museum has come and where it is headed. I can't wait to celebrate this landmark year with our community and to showcase the evolution of Patriots Point as we chart the course for the next fifty years.

From all of us at Patriots Point, we wish you a happy holiday season and a wonderful New Year!

Sincerely,

Allison Hunt

Allison Hunt
Patriots Point, Executive Director



SEASON OF GIVING



GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership at Patriots Point means more, especially as we prepare to celebrate 50 years in 2026! Members not only support our mission, but they also enjoy exclusive experiences, event invitations, special discounts, and more. Plus, membership helps us preserve our historic ships, fund educational programs and scholarships, and support exhibits throughout the museum.

Members can look forward to exciting programs and exclusive events all year long, including:

- Member Month
- Member Flight Academy
- Member Movie Night
- Swing into Shore Leave:
A Night of Liberty & Lindy Hop
- Trivia at Westbrook Brewing

This holiday season, give the gift that keeps on giving - a Patriots Point Membership!

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

A Legacy Reunited:
The Powell Family

Battling cancer and given only a few months to live, Michael Powell Sr. hoped to finally witness the place his father, a WWII hero KIA just six days after he was born, once served and sacrificed. Given his health and residence on West Coast, a journey to the USS Yorktown seemed nearly impossible...

But on December 5, those odds were defied, and a son's tenacity to honor his father was fulfilled when both Michael Powell Sr. and his son, Michael Powell Jr., climbed the long awaited steps aboard the USS Yorktown.

Michael's father, Aviation Chief Radioman Alton Carroll "Blackie" Powell was a dedicated combat aircrewman, a survivor of the Battle of



Alton Carroll "Blackie" Powell

Midway, and a recipient of both the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart. Serving with Air Group Nine, Powell flew his final mission on March 24, 1945, off the Yorktown, targeting runways at Naha Airfield in Okinawa to prevent kamikaze launches against U.S. forces. His SB2C dive bomber was hit by ground fire, taking out the pilot. Though he managed to exit the aircraft, he was fatally struck by additional fire as he descended. He died just days after his son was born, leaving behind a legacy Michael Sr. never had the chance to know.



Michael Powell Sr. receives plaque in honor of his father Alton Powell, presented by volunteer and retired Navy Captain Thom Ford.

Powell was inducted into the Enlisted Combat Aircrew Roll of Honor in the late 1990s, but at the time, no next of kin could be located to accept his plaque. Now, through the help of the community and despite significant medical challenges, Michael Sr. made the trip to receive his father's long-awaited recognition and see his name displayed outside the Smokey Stover Theater.

For the Powell family—and for all of us at Patriots Point—the visit was a powerful reminder of why historical preservation matters. Moments like these serve as powerful reminders of the remarkable stories behind each name etched into our walls. Stories that not only share flickers of the past, but evoke the enduring human desire to find clarity through their testimony of the lives that came before us.

FUELING THE MISSION

Welcome to our newest Corporate Partners!

Gecko Robotics is a leader in advanced robotic inspection technology, helping protect and preserve critical infrastructure across the country—a mission that aligns with our own commitment to safeguard history.

Joe Cunningham Law is a Charleston-based firm dedicated to serving the Lowcountry community with integrity and advocacy, proudly supporting efforts that honor service and preserve our shared heritage.

gecko

JOE CUNNINGHAM
LAW