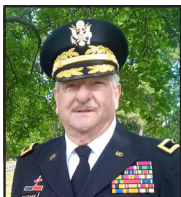




ALL AHEAD FULL

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

SUMMER 2024



FROM THE BRIDGE

Greetings Shipmates,

Good news! The shipping lanes in Baltimore Harbor are open. A truly remarkable accomplishment following the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. And, yes. The Baltimore Council had a hand in supporting those responsible. More about this, in greater detail, in the articles that follow.

Even before things returned to some semblance of normalcy there were maritime activities underway. Those, too, will be explored extensively in this issue. And there were patriotic events in abundance in which members of the Baltimore Council were involved as the seasons changed, and a sense of distress rooted in the disaster of late March, was replaced by the heady anticipation of hope for an even brighter future for the Port of Baltimore, historically one of the busiest and most important in the nation.

As always, we continue to fulfill our mission and seek new avenues of participation for the Navy League membership. Last month, at a plenary session of the board, initial steps were taken to involve more of our members in the full panoply of Navy League activities. We need new volunteers if we are to continue to properly serve the men and women of the sea services. And, at the same meeting, the issue of stronger communication and greater participation of the Sea Cadets was high on the agenda.

In conclusion I wish you all a safe and pleasurable summer and, as always, pray that the Lord will bless you and our republic which, for all its trouble, remains "One nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for All." ⚓

Joe
Brig. Gen. Arthur J. Nattans, USA (ret)
President, Baltimore Council - NLU

Open For Business Welcome Back

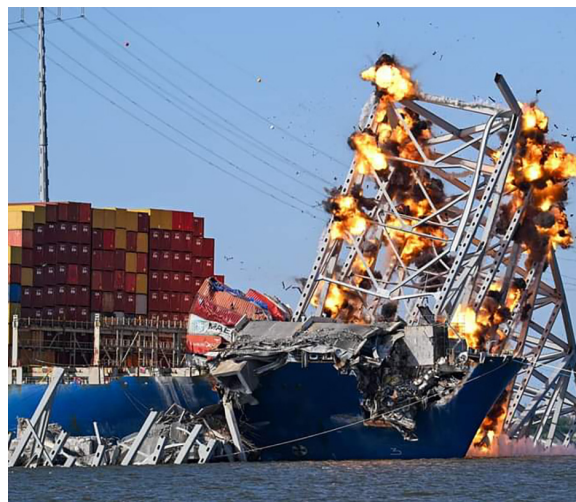
By Alan Walden

It didn't take many months as some had forecast. Only a matter of eight weeks. The maritime disaster that struck on 26 March when a heavily laden container ship plowed into one of the main supports of the Francis Scott Key bridge, toppling its center span and effectively closing the Port of Baltimore, is mostly history. Thanks to the tireless efforts of hundreds of highly skilled workers and the best of salvage equipment, which arrived at the site with remarkable speed, the main channel is open for even the largest of cargo and passenger vessels Baltimore is able to accommodate. The Army Corps of Engineers led the way. But not alone. The tugs, the crane operators, the steel and iron workers, explosives experts, the Coast Guard, all had a hand in dealing with a calamity of the first magnitude.

The biggest problem was moving the ship, MS Vida, atop which thousands of tons of debris, girders, portions of the Jersey Wall and the roadway, had fallen. Some of the steel was cut away. Some was blasted off



Before The Blast



Ignition



M/S Vida at Seagirt Marine Terminal

Open for Business
Continued from page 1

the deck. And great care had to be taken because of the volatile cargo in a number of containers near the

It wasn't easy. But it was fast; accomplished with such speed and skill that those who doubted it could be done were left slack jawed in awe.



As we, the Charm City boosters, are inclined to say, "This is Baltimore, Hon. And we're back in business."

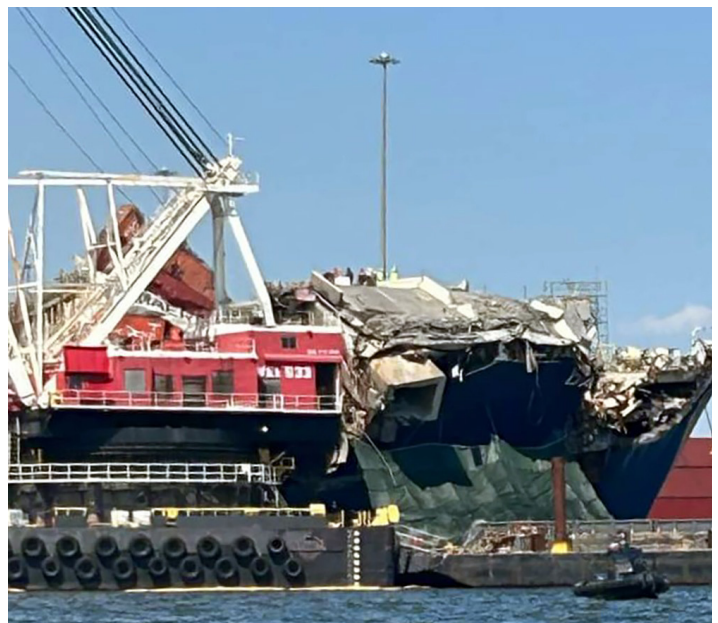


Though we, of the Navy League, couldn't do any of the heavy lifting, we wanted to help those directly involved. That's where Coast Guard Liaison Bruce Copeland

bow. But, on 23 May, an armada of tugs arrived and the ship was moved, ever so slowly and gently, to the Seagirt Marine Terminal. There she'll remain for several months before being taken down the Chesapeake Bay to Norfolk for major repairs.

led the way. At a shift change for USCG personnel Bruce arranged for and delivered a full array of breakfast snacks for those on deck. He, and Baltimore Council JAG Molly Seeman, spent a good deal of the time with the crewmembers of Station Curtis Bay, the all-enlisted unit of small craft handlers charged with security of the harbor; including Iggy, a canine member of the crew. And the men and women of the unit, led by Chief Bosuns Mate Mike Singer, made clear their gratitude for their appearance and the gesture of support. It is, after all, the mantra of the Navy League's mission: "Support of the Sea Services since 1902." Even when we aren't asked for assistance, we are there to provide it. ⚓

Freighters are, once again, moving in and out of Baltimore. In anticipation of MS Vida's removal, the two major cruise lines that serve Baltimore announced they would, once again, be sailing from here. The tall ships are back. And the celebration of Fleet Week, which had been somewhat in doubt, was back on the calendar. The full story of Fleet Week will appear in the fall issue of this publication.



Damage to the ship



Seeman and Copeland, right side of line

A Bittersweet Occasion Toward a Brighter Future

This year's commemoration of National Maritime Day, on 19 May, wasn't quite as celebratory as in the past. From the quarterdeck of N.S. Savannah, the only nuclear-powered cargo/passenger vessel ever to sail the seas, now a museum ship, the gap created by the Francis Scott Key bridge collapse was clearly visible in the near distance. There were the approach ramps. But between them, nothing. Everyone took turns to look, and shake their heads, and wonder, as do we all, how it happened. Investigations by the National Transportation Safety Board and the FBI are likely to continue for the remainder of the year. Mention was made of the 21 members of the crew of M.S. Vida who, because of questions regarding the crash and about their status, may have to remain on board for some time to come.

That's not to say there wasn't ample cause for celebration. 2024 is the 60th anniversary of Savannah's arrival in Baltimore as a port of call on her maiden voyage. It's also the 75th anniversary of the Military Sealift Command whose fleet of support vessels for the Armed Forces, though owned by the Navy, are crewed by civilians; merchant mariners. As is usually the case Alan Walden, vice president of the Baltimore Council of the Navy League, was at the helm as master of ceremony. And as a USAF junior ROTC unit presented the colors the audience rose to recite



Opening remarks



N/S Savannah



S.S. John W. Brown



the Pledge of Allegiance and join Denise Vrablic in singing the National Anthem. The keynote address was presented by Armand Patella, Chairman of the Baltimore Port Alliance. It is under the

combined aegis of the BPA and the Maryland Port Administration that Savannah came to Baltimore and, it is hoped, will remain here. MPA Executive Director Jonathan Daniels was also one of



Bridge of Savannah



Engine Room/Reactor Compartment

the speakers as was Commander Baxter Smoak of the USCG. As you might well imagine most of the comments centered on Baltimore's efforts to overcome the challenges created by the disaster of 26 March.

The most moving moment of the event occurred when a memorial tribute was paid to the six men who died in the bridge collapse, and to their families. By then all of the bodies had been recovered. And, as the ceremony came to an end and the ship's bell was rung, a wreath was carried to the starboard side and dropped into the harbor in memory of them and those of the Merchant Marine who lost their lives in service to the nation. It should be noted that, during WWII, the Merchant Marine suffered more casualties per capita than any of the Armed Forces.

Horns blew, a salute gun was fired, a fireboat sent plumes of water into the air, and the audience was invited on a series of tours of Savannah and to visit the World War II vintage Liberty Ship S.S. John W. Brown, tied up just across the pier. Not the happiest of events. But one filled with hope for the future. ⚓

Semper Paratus

Marking The Spot



The brass was out in force on 22 May as the Coast Guard Cutter James Rankin pulled away from her berth at Curtis Bay and headed out to the entrance to the Inner Harbor on an annual mission. Each year, in the spring, Rankin (WLM-555) is tasked to place the Francis Scott Key buoy at the spot from which Key, on board a truce ship in September of 1814, watched the bombardment of Fort McHenry and, when heard the morning gun and knew “our flag was still there,” wrote the poem that, when set to music, became the National Anthem of these United States. Leading the Coast Guard contingent on board was Rear Admiral Shannon Gilreath, commander of the Fifth Coast Guard District which includes Baltimore. And our host for the event was Lieutenant Kyle Sutschek, commanding officer of the cutter/ buoy tender whose nickname is “Keeper of the Bay.” The ship’s, not Captain/LT Sutschek’s. The Navy League was well represented by

Copeland, Seeman, Nattans

Baltimore Council President Joe Nattans, Vice President Alan Walden, JAG Molly Seeman, and CG Liaison Bruce Copeland. And there were uniforms everywhere among the crowd of guests: Army, Navy, State Police, National Park Service, Sheriff’s office and others. Also some very special guests led by Hon. Ellen Sauerbrey, former Minority Leader of the House of Delegates, former Ambassador to the United Nations on Women’s Issues, now the Grande Dame of the Republican Party in Maryland.

It took about half an hour to make our way out of Curtis Creek and to the appointed spot. There, the giant Star-Spangled buoy was winched out of its cradle on the well deck. And, as the National Anthem was played and sung, and the crew, at attention, rendered a hand salute, lowered over the starboard gunwale and into the harbor. There it will remain until retrieved in the fall; a constant reminder of

Hand Salute

the defense of Baltimore 210 years ago. That story, by the way, was told to one and all by Robert Johnson, acting superintendent of Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine.

On the way back to Curtis Bay the galley crew of James Rankin did themselves proud with a buffet lunch worthy of five stars. Guests had their choice of dining al fresco, at tables set up on the well deck, or in the air-conditioned comfort of the dining room adjacent to the galley.

The cruise lasted about three hours from start to finish and everyone, even those who’d attended the event in the past, seemed very well pleased with having been there. ⚓



Hoist Away



“What So Proudly We Hailed”



Johnson and Walden

Never Forgotten For the Fallen



Families and Special Guests

The most solemn of our patriotic holidays began dim and damp this year as the faithful gathered to remember those who gave “their last full measure” to the republic and its people. But the threat of rain failed to dampen the spirits of the men and women at Dulaney Valley Memorial Gardens in Timonium to honor the fallen. It is one of the largest and most elaborate of Memorial Day ceremonies in Maryland thanks to the efforts of John and Jack Mitchell, owners of the property. The specific venue, as always, was the Circle of Heroes, surrounded by monuments and plaques that recall those times when Americans gave their lives in action against the enemy.

For the 35th consecutive year, Baltimore Council-NLUS Vice President and Colonel of the

Maryland Line Alan Walden was Master of Ceremony. His mostly extemporaneous opening remarks, solemn and measured, focused on the sacrifices made by Marylanders since even before the nation was founded, set the tone for the event. Then the 229th Army National Guard Band, the adjutant general’s own, entertained the audience with the music of all the Armed Forces. The applause of the audience echoed across the scene as veterans of each service were invited to rise for recognition.

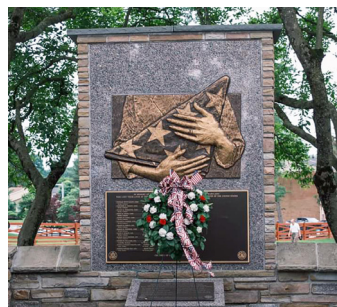
The keynote speaker, Governor Wes Moore, picked up the essence of Walden’s opening message as he spoke of the lives lost, not only by Marylanders, but by all of those who have died so that Americans may breathe free, now and forever. Governor Moore is, himself, a combat veteran. He served in



Walden with Gov. Moore



Nattans and Mangione



Afghanistan as a captain/company commander of the famed 82nd Airborne Division.

Joe Nattans, president of the Baltimore Council of the Navy League was there. And among the special guests was Hon. Nino Mangione from the House of Delegates. Music was provided not only by the band, but by the Sweet Adeline Chorus from Dundalk, Maryland who sang, beautifully, songs appropriate to the occasion. The wind blew harder as the ceremony reached its conclusion.

And the rains finally came, swiftly, in a series of cloudbursts. But no one left until it was over.



There was a similar ceremony a few days earlier at Calvert Hall College High School. There the focus was on the sacrifices made by its alumni in service to the nation. Council President Nattans, in his uniform as a retired Army brigadier general, was the keynote speaker. And his message was similar to those heard at Dulaney Valley – never to forget the loved and lost; always to remember they gave everything they had, everything they were, for us. General Nattans is, himself, a distinguished alumnus of Calvert Hall.

One final note: It is perhaps understandable but nonetheless unfortunate that too many of our citizens treat the Memorial Day weekend as just a time to celebrate the beginning of summer. The phrase “Happy Memorial Day” is wholly inappropriate. It is not and should not be treated as a happy occasion. It is rooted in solemnity and a sense of loss and hurt. Remember that. Remember them. ⚓



Brigadier General Nattans



Faculty, Alumni, and Students

Coming Up

- 7/4 Independence Day — Hoist the colors
- 8/7 Purple Heart Day — Hoist the colors
- 9/2 VJ Day (1945)
Labor Day — Hoist the colors
- 9/11 Patriot Day — Hoist the colors
- 9/20 POW/MIA Recognition Day — Hoist the colors
- 9/22 Autumnal Equinox (1st day of fall)

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 and/or posted in the comments section on our web site: 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.



Executive Editor
Navy League-Baltimore Council
9 Hamill Road, Unit E
Baltimore, MD 21210-1751