

CLOSING ON A SURFACE NAVY MUSEUM

By Rear Admiral Mike Shatynski, U.S. Navy (Retired)

During my many years in uniform, I often wondered why there wasn't a National Museum of the *surface* navy. The National Museum of the Navy in Washington, D.C., covers the service's history in general, and there are separate museums for naval aviators, submariners, SEALs, Seabees, and most other Navy communities. The Marine Corps has its extraordinary museum in Quantico, Virginia. The surface navy always has been the face of our great nation, providing visible, pervasive, and persistent presence around the world—where was the museum recognizing its contributions?

Then, in 2019, the Naval History and Heritage Command licensed the Battleship *Iowa* Museum to become the National Museum of the Surface Navy. The USS *Iowa* (BB-61), the premiere artifact for that museum, is answering all bells.

WHY A BATTLESHIP?

A battleship is the perfect setting for the surface navy to tell its story. During the buildup to World War I, 13-year old Marjorie Sterrett contributed her dime allowance and then helped raise 200,000 more dimes from other schoolchildren to build a battleship named *America*. To Marjorie and the youngsters of America, a battleship symbolized what was great about our country.

For President Theodore Roosevelt, the battleships were his “Big Stick.” For President Ronald Reagan, they represented “Peace through Strength.” During the 20th century, battleships served as unequalled symbols of U.S. power and resolve. The *Iowa* was activated three times, serving in World War II, then in the Korean War, and finally during the Cold War.

Each year the *Iowa* hosts some 425,000 visitors and provides STEM education for 20,000 students from the Los Angeles Unified School District. Most of the 350,000 volunteer hours spent restor-



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For museum visitors, built in to the *Iowa*'s shipboard spaces will be team-building interactive experiences, such as a 1980s-vintage combat engagement center.



One of the themed exhibit areas will highlight the Navy's missions, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.



The “Today's Navy” exhibit will show the surface navy deployed around the world.

ing and maintaining her were provided by veterans who found a new calling and a home on board. American Legion Post 61 was stood up in 2017 to formalize these veterans' relationship with the ship. In 2019, the Battleship *Iowa* chapter of the Surface Navy Association was stood up to emphasize her significance to the surface navy.

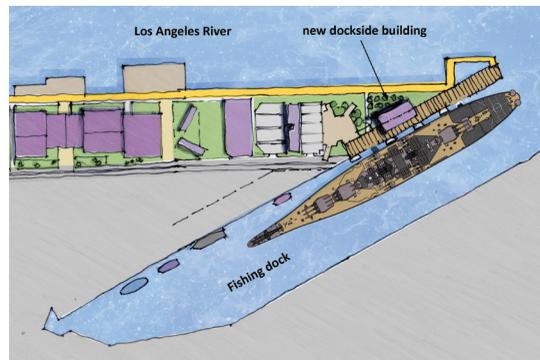
WHY LOS ANGELES?

Los Angeles is truly a maritime city. The USS *Iowa* is permanently docked in the Port of Los Angeles, one of the busiest ports in the world and once home to the storied U.S. battleship fleet. Sited there, the new Surface Navy Museum will be able to reach millions of Americans who need to learn about the U.S. surface navy. As an added benefit, the site is close to San Diego, home of the second largest concentration of surface warships in the country, as well as the Commander, Naval Surface Force. The Battleship *Iowa* Museum already rou-

tinely hosts surface navy junior officers attending the Basic Division Officer Course and chief petty officer selectees for instruction in the history and heritage of the surface navy.

The ten-year, three-phase plan for the physical expansion of the Battleship *Iowa* Museum will start with a move to the anchor location for a redeveloped Ports O'Call village on the LA waterfront. A veterans' park and 5,000-seat amphitheater will be built overlooking the ship. Next, 15,000 square feet of additional exhibit space will be cleared on board by removing berthing spaces. (Ocean explorer Robert Ballard's new "Lost at Sea" exhibit has been installed in the existing 5,000 square feet of cleared berthing spaces.) Finally, a building ashore will provide an additional 20,000 to 50,000 square feet of exhibit space.

At the Battleship *Iowa* Museum, we are building a world-class museum for all past, present, and—most important—



The *Iowa* will be moving to the old fishing slip in San Pedro to anchor the new Los Angeles Waterfront development.

future surface navy sailors and the American people.

■ **REAR ADMIRAL SHATYNSKI**, a retired surface warfare officer, served on surface vessels ranging from small coastal riverine patrol boats to the battleship USS *New Jersey* (BB-62). He currently serves as chairman of the board of the Battleship *Iowa* Museum and is a cofounder and director on the board of the LA Fleet Week Foundation. For more information, visit surfacenavymuseum.org.

