

USS Wahoo Mare Island Memorial Event

A project of Arc Ecology
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For immediate release

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Tribute Planned for Crew of Famous WWII Submarine USS Wahoo (SS 238)

Former Navy memorial chapel a fitting place to commemorate the vessel
built at Mare Island and its crew



VALLEJO, CA – For more than 63 years the final resting place of the legendary World War II submarine USS Wahoo (SS 238) and her crew remained unknown. Then, on October 31, 2006, the Commander of the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet issued a press release confirming that a wreck located in Soya (La Perouse) Strait between the Japanese island of Hokkaido and the Russian island of Sakhalin had been positively identified as USS Wahoo, lost at sea on October 11, 1943 with her crew of eighty men. On October 11, 2007, the 64th anniversary of the ship's loss, a memorial service will be held at St. Peter's Chapel on Mare Island in Vallejo from 2-4pm. A flag-raising ceremony is planned at Commander Dudley "Mush" Morton Field on Mare Island at 1pm. A reception held nearby will follow the service at St. Peter's Chapel. At 5:30pm a wreath will be placed in the Mare Island Strait in a dockside service in which the WWII Submariner Veterans, Vallejo

Chapter will participate. The Mare Island service coincides with another memorial event, ***“On Eternal Patrol – Memorial Ceremony for the Men of USS Wahoo (SS-238)”*** planned on that date for the families, friends and former crew members of the USS Wahoo at the USS Bowfin Submarine Museum & Park at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. www.bowfin.org. Relatives of men lost on USS Wahoo may contact the Bowfin Submarine Museum & Park directly by visiting www.bowfin.org USS Bowfin Submarine Museum & Park, 11 Arizona Memorial Drive, Honolulu, HI 96818. Phone (808) 423-1341.

The memorial service at St. Peter’s will feature a historical digital image presentation, music, an invocation by John W. Berger, Chaplain, USN (ret), Chaplain for the USS Hornet Museum, and an opportunity for those in attendance to share memories and recollections. In addition to honoring the crew of the Wahoo, the Mare Island service will honor all submariners who have served in the U.S. Navy and especially those who have been lost in submarines. “We have a privilege and responsibility to remember the crew who were lost aboard the Wahoo and to honor all of those who have served our country in the submarine force. And as importantly, we owe the men and women who built and maintained ships like the Wahoo at Mare Island, a debt of gratitude,” said Myrna Hayes, Wahoo Mare Island Memorial organizer.

Already under construction at Mare Island Navy Yard when Pearl Harbor was attacked, Wahoo joined the fight against the Japanese in August 1942. After completing 5 successful war patrols, she returned to Mare Island in May 1943 for retrofitting and repairs. The ship left Mare Island on July 21, 1943 after a period of post-repair trials and training ending with a U.S. Navy award presentation to members of the crew. Returning to Pearl Harbor, she completed a 6th patrol before being lost on her 7th and final patrol to the Sea of Japan. Wahoo was last heard from on September 13, 1943, as the Gato-class submarine departed the island of Midway en route to the “dangerous, yet important,” Sea of Japan patrol area. Under strict radio silence, Commander Dudley W. “Mush” Morton and his crew proceeded as ordered. Radio contact was expected to be regained with Midway in late October upon Wahoo’s departure from the Sea of Japan, but contact was never made. Following an aerial search of the area, Wahoo was officially reported “overdue, presumed lost” on November 9, 1943. At the time, the loss of Wahoo was believed due to mines or a faulty torpedo. But Japanese records obtained after the war indicated that one of its planes had spotted an American submarine in La Perouse Strait on October 11, 1943 and initiated a five hour combined sea and air attack with depth charges and aerial bombs that finally sank Wahoo.

According to Pacific Fleet records, while comprising only 1.6% of Naval personnel, the USS Wahoo and other Pacific Fleet submarines accounted for 54 percent of all enemy shipping sunk during WWII while supporting all major fleet operations and completing over 1,560 war patrols. However, the submarine force paid a heavy price for its success; more than 3,500 men and 52 submarines did not return, the highest loss rate (22%) of any U.S. military service in WWII.

The discovery of Wahoo in 2006 was the culmination of more than a decade of work by The Wahoo Project Group, an international team of experts headed by Bryan MacKinnon, grand-nephew of Wahoo’s last Commanding Officer, Dudley W. “Mush” Morton. Dedicated to finding the ill-fated submarine, the group researched Japanese wartime

records, with the assistance of Japan Maritime Self Defense Force retired Vice Admiral Kazuo Ueda, and identified the probable location where Wahoo had been sunk. In 2004, the group arranged for the Sakhalin Energy Investment Corporation, a major international energy company, to complete side-scan sonar surveys of the site in conjunction with other oil-exploration surveys in the same area. An object visible on sonar records matched the general characteristics of a U.S. Gato class submarine. The Russian dive team "Iskra" photographed wreckage at the site in July of 2006, which lies in 213 feet of water in La Perouse (Soya) Strait between the Japanese island of Hokkaido and Russia's Sakhalin island.

U.S. Navy historians reviewed the dive photos provided by the Bowfin Museum and concluded that the characteristics of the wreck are consistent with USS Wahoo at the time of her loss. This analysis, together with records showing only one U.S. submarine was in the general area at the time of the sinking, provided conclusive proof that the wreck was Wahoo. Photographs are available at www.warfish.com and www.OnEternalPatrol.com. General information about the USS Wahoo Project is available at www.usswahoo.org. According to Navy press releases, the Navy has no plans to salvage or enter the Wahoo wreck. A long naval tradition has held that the sea is a fitting final resting place for sailors lost at sea. The Sunken Military Craft Act also protects military wrecks from unauthorized disturbance. The U.S. Navy held a memorial [Ceremony-at-Sea](#) for USS Wahoo on July 8, 2007, at the wreck site in La Perouse Strait.

This summer also marks the 100th birthday of Commander Dudley W. "Mush" Morton, born July 17, 1907. After the Wahoo's loss, Mare Island honored the commander by naming Morton Field, the sports field still in use today at the entrance of Mare Island, after the famous World War II submarine skipper. Morton was credited with sinking 24 ships totaling nearly 110,000 tons during his five patrols in command of USS Wahoo. During Wahoo's last daring foray into the Sea of Japan, Morton reportedly attacked and sank at least four Japanese ships. For the patrol, Morton was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross – his fourth.

The USS Wahoo Mare Island Memorial is hosted by Arc Ecology, a San Francisco based non-profit organization working within the community of Vallejo and throughout the region to raise the public's awareness of, and access to, Mare Island. Arc Ecology hosts the annual San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival, the Daffodil Tea—a fundraiser for the restoration of St. Peter's Chapel, and most recently, was the sponsoring non-profit organization for the Mare Island Naval Ammunition Depot 150th Anniversary Commemorative Celebration. Weston Solutions, Inc. is a corporate sponsor of the USS Wahoo Mare Island Memorial and Lennar Mare Island has provided in-kind contributions of Quarters H for the reception and Berth 6 for the wreath-laying ceremony. The memorial service planned at Mare Island is free of charge and will be followed by a reception held nearby. Seating in the Chapel is limited, so confirmation of attendance is suggested. More information about Mare Island ties to the USS Wahoo and the planned memorial at Mare Island can be found at www.mareisland.org or by calling 707-557-9816 or 707-649-9464.

Travel Directions

Auto access to Mare Island From Region

- From I-80 east or westbound, exit on Tennessee St., continue west to the entrance to Mare Island. Follow directions above and ***USS Wahoo Mare Island Memorial*** signs.
- From Napa and Sonoma
Travel south on Highway 29 to Tennessee St., turn right and follow directions above.
- From Contra Costa County
Cross the Benicia-Martinez Bridge on I-680. Take I-780 west toward Benicia and Vallejo. Continue on I-780 for approximately 8.5 miles. Exit at I-80 east. Continue on I-80 toward Sacramento. Exit on Tennessee St. and follow directions above.
- From Marin and Sonoma
Travel east on Highway 37 to the Mare Island exit just before the Napa River Bridge. Turn right at the north gate to Mare Island; follow directions above.

Directions to Morton Field, Corner of Walnut Ave. and G St., Mare Island USS Wahoo Flag-raising Ceremony 1 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- From the main entrance to Mare Island at the corner of Mare Island Way and Tennessee St.: continue across the Wichels Causeway through the flashing red stoplight at Railroad Ave. Continue one block to Walnut Ave. Turn left and then turn right immediately into the parking lots next to and in front of Rodman Center. The entrance to Morton Field is on Walnut Ave.
- From the Mare Island Exit from Hwy 37: From the north gate entrance to Mare Island continue on Walnut Ave. to stop sign at G St. Continue through the intersection and turn right immediately into the parking lots next to and in front of Rodman Center. The entrance to Morton Field is on Walnut Ave.

Directions to St. Peter's Chapel, Corner of Walnut Ave. and Bagley St., Mare Island USS Wahoo Mare Island Memorial Service 2 p. m. to 4 p.m. Reception to follow immediately nearby the Chapel

- From the main entrance to Mare Island at the corner of Mare Island Way and Tennessee St.: continue across the Wichels Causeway and turn left at Nimitz Ave. the first left turn. Continue along the waterfront past 10th St. to Bagley St. Turn right. Continue across Railroad Ave. to Walnut Ave. Turn right and continue to the Chapel parking lot on the right.
- From the Mare Island Exit from Hwy 37: From the north gate entrance to Mare Island continue on Walnut Ave. to stop sign at G St. Turn left. At the flashing red

light at Railroad Ave. turn right. Continue past 10th St. to Bagley St. and turn right. Follow the directions above.

Directions to Wreath-Laying Ceremony

Corner of Nimitz Ave. and A Street Mare Island

USS Wahoo Mare Island Memorial Wreath-laying Ceremony, Mare Island Strait 5:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

- From the main entrance to Mare Island at the corner of Mare Island Way and Tennessee St.: continue across the Wichels Causeway and turn left at Nimitz Ave. the first left turn. Continue a short distance to A St. Turn left. Meet at Berth 6 next to the large green crane B-2.
- From the Mare Island Exit from Hwy 37: From the north gate entrance to Mare Island continue on Walnut Ave. to stop sign at G St. Turn left. Continue through flashing red stoplight to Nimitz Ave. Turn right. Follow directions above.

Bus and BART

Vallejo Express BARTLink Monday-Friday bus from El Cerrito Del Norte BART station to Vallejo every 30 minutes from 5:15am to 10:54pm. At York and Marin terminal, transfer (free) to #5 Redwood bus to the Mare Island main gate. Buses accommodate bikes. Adult fare: \$4.50 each way. Senior/Disabled fare: \$2.10 each way. Casual carpool(as in hitchhike!) from Mare Island entrance to the ceremony sites. Return Express BARTLink service from Vallejo York and Marin terminal to El Cerrito Del Norte every 30 minutes weekdays 4:25am to 10:30pm; Call 707-648-4666 M-F 8am-5:30pm or visit www.vallejotransit.com.

Ferry/Express Bus to/from SF Ferry Building

The Vallejo Ferry and an Express Route 200 Bus service to and from San Francisco Ferry Building from Vallejo Ferry terminal is approximately 1 hour each way.

- Vallejo Ferry departs San Francisco Ferry Building weekdays: 6 times beginning at 6:35am through 11:10am and 12:40pm. Express Route Vallejo Baylink Bus departs San Francisco Ferry Building weekdays: 5 times from 6:05am to the last morning departure at 8:30am.
- Return to San Francisco by Vallejo Ferry, Express Route 200 Bus or regular BARTLink service to El Cerrito Del Norte BART using Baylink Daypass(see purchase locations below). Afternoon ferry departures from Vallejo Ferry terminal to San Francisco: weekday; 5 departures 2pm to 5:35pm.
- Afternoon departures to San Francisco Ferry Building from Vallejo Ferry terminal by express bus Route 200 Vallejo Baylink Bus: weekday; 8 departures 3:00, 3:45, 4:30, 5:15, 6:30, 7:00, 8:00 and 9:30pm.

Bikes allowed on ferries and buses. Tickets must be purchased in advance at Bay Crossings-SF Ferry Building and Vallejo Ferry Terminal. One-way fares: \$12.50 for adults, \$6.25 for youth, senior, disabled, free for children age 0-5. Roundtrip Baylink Daypass for Vallejo ferry, Express Route 200, local Vallejo buses and BARTLink 80 service to and from El Cerrito Del Norte BART fares; \$23.00 for adults, Reduced half fare price for \$12.50 senior(65+), Juniors(6-12) and disabled. Age 5 and under: free. Call 877-64-FERRY, 707-64-FERRY or visit www.baylinkferry.com.

To **pre-arrange prior to Thursday, October 11** transportation to and from Vallejo Ferry terminal to the ***USS Wahoo Mare Island Memorial***: Call 707-557-9816 or 707-649-9464.

Taxi Service

Ferry or bus passengers wishing taxi service the 2-mile distance from the Vallejo Ferry or bus terminal to the ***USS Wahoo Mare Island Memorial*** may request the ferry captain or bus driver call ahead for taxi service or call 707-643-3333 or 707-642-4421 upon arrival in Vallejo.

Lodging

Contact the Vallejo Convention and Visitors Bureau for additional information: call 1-800-4-VALLEJO or 707-642-3653 or visit www.visitvallejo.com

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