

# NM NAUTICAL NEWS

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE  
NEW MEXICO COUNCIL  
NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES



[www.nmnavyleague.com](http://www.nmnavyleague.com)

October 2025

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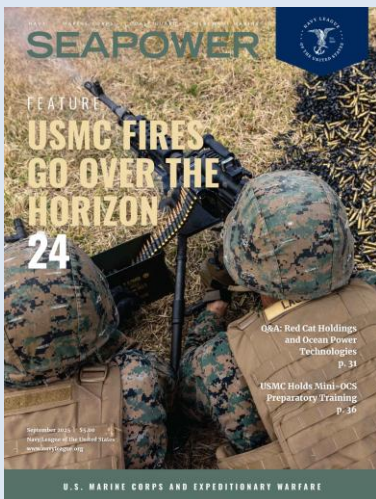
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<https://seapowermagazine.org/>



## After 80 Years, We Remember the Men of USS Bullhead (SS-332)

*by Mark Schaefer, newsletter editor*

West Mesa High School Navy JROTC Color Guard, members of the Bullhead Base of the United States Submarine Veterans Inc, members of the Navy League, and our local KRQE news station all pitched in on August 2<sup>nd</sup> to remember the USS Bullhead (SS-332) which was lost at sea 80 years ago. It was a somber day with gorgeous weather as the names of the lost were read out loud and the bell was tolled for each of our fellow veterans.



*New Mexico submarine veterans honor the men of the  
USS Bullhead, lost at sea 80 years ago.*

The memorial at Albuquerque's USS Bullhead Park is the only marker in the United States specifically dedicated to the 84 men who gave their lives on USS Bullhead on August 6, 1945. The last Navy ship sunk by enemy action during World War II, she was sunk on the same day that an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. 21-inch torpedoes, similar to those carried on board Bullhead, are on display at the park.

**Thank You!** When you keep your dues up to date with the Navy League national office, our New Mexico council receives a stipend for each active member. This makes a big difference in our ability to help support our namesake ships, our youth, our Sea Cadets, and the local active and reserve.

Join or renew at [members.navyleague.org](http://members.navyleague.org)

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**Donations to the USS Albuquerque Memorial are now being accepted at this City of Albuquerque web site:**

<https://one-albuquerque-fund.snwbll.com/uss-albuquerque-memorial>



## President's Message



David F Williams

*President, New Mexico Council*

### Attention All Hands...

New Mexico's Navy League and Naval Reserve Center are jointly sponsoring the **2025 NM Navy Ball - 250 Years of Defending Freedom, Protecting Prosperity**. It will be held the evening of Saturday, October 18, 6-11 PM at the Isleta Resort and Casino. Our guest speakers will be RADM Richard Lofgren, Acting Chief of Naval Reserve and CAPT Jeff Bacon, USN (Ret.), creator of the *Broadside* Cartoon Series. To purchase tickets, check the link on our website at [nmnavyleague.com](http://nmnavyleague.com). Donations welcome.

Speaking of honoring our service members, the New Mexico Department of Veteran's Services is scheduled to honor one of our own members, Raymond Bonde, with its Centurian Award. Ray is a WW2 and Korean War Navy veteran who recently turned 101 years of age. With our help and that of the NMDVS, he is finally applying for his veteran's benefits. Don't wait so long!

Our fall is going to be busy. Navy Week is being planned by NAVCO with support from our own Council members including Ron Oleksak and Kristelle Siarza Moon. It is scheduled for November 10-16 in Santa Fe, NM. We are hoping several crew members from either or both USS New Mexico (SSN 779) and USS Santa Fe (SSN 763) will be joining the festivities. The

Navy Band will be performing during the week. Love that Navy Band!

Our Annual Meeting and election of new officers will be held Sunday, December 7. Please consider volunteering for committee and officer positions. It has been very satisfying being your President, but it will be time to pick a new one, and possibly others will want to shift to new roles.

Reviewing our past two months, I should note that John Glynn put together another interesting Navy Network Event with New Mexico State Representative Alan Martinez as our speaker. Representative Martinez addressed a topic of keen interest- new State veterans' benefits.

Ron Oleksak has been acquiring his sea legs. He recently spent several days at sea aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) on a Navy VIP outing.

CAPT Kent has been making progress getting a Sea Cadet program restarted in Albuquerque. This edition has volunteer information.

At the request of NAVCO, several of us helped arrange a visit to the USS Albuquerque sail and dinner afterwards with a Navy VIP, Jose "Mario" Miranda, Director, Navy International Programs Office. He was escorted by LCDR Jill Brown, PAO, NAVCO, who we hope to see again for Navy Week.

I have saved the biggest news for last. Thanks to newsletter editor Mark Schaefer and all of our amazing newsletter contributors, our council again won the Gold Mackie Award. Congratulations and thank you!

In the meantime, I wish all of you "Fair winds and following seas".

**Dave Williams**

*Commander, U.S. Navy (ret)*





## Navy 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday Ball – October 18, 2025

The 2025 Navy Ball will be held on Saturday, October 18th, 2025, at the Isleta Resort & Casino from 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm.

This year's ball will celebrate the 250th birthday of the U.S. Navy. Tickets are now available for purchase on our Navy League of the United States, New Mexico Council website at [nmnavyleague.com](http://nmnavyleague.com)



## Ray Bonda – Navy Leaguer and War Hero *by Dick Brown, Navy League New Mexico Council*



*Navy veterans Ray and Dick with their walkers. Photo by Carole Bonda.*

Navy Leaguer Ray Bonda is featured in this year's Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta official program, including a full-page image of Ray in 1974. The 4-page article highlights Ray's participation in the early days of the Fiesta as propane czar, balloon pilot, and balloon co-owner. Ray joined three others in crewing for the Irish team during the First World Hot Air Balloon Championships at the State Fair grounds in February 1973. The foursome also founded the Buffalo Chip Chapter of the Dublin Ballooning Club in Albuquerque. Ray was born in Manhattan in July 1924. He is the remaining living member of the Buffalo Chip Chapter and turned 101 years old this year. Both Ray and Dick Brown are veterans of the U.S. Navy and the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta. Dick, former Navy League National Director and involved in the Fiesta since its 1972 beginning, was inducted into the Fiesta Hall of Fame in 2016.

Ray's naval service included serving in WWII as an aviation metalsmith and welder aboard the seaplane tender *USS Gardiners Bay (AVP-39)* in the West Pacific. After the war, his ship journeyed to the Marshall Islands to participate in Operation Sandstone, the atomic bomb tests on Bikini and Eniwetok Atolls where Ray observed three detonations.

After six years of active duty, Ray switched to the Navy Reserves. He was recalled to active duty in June 1950 when the Korean War broke out. He was assigned to the Air Wing aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Princeton (CV-37)* where he plugged bullet holes in battle-damaged F4F and F9F fighters.

Ray had a long career with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service. He served as the Director of Social Services at the hospital on Zuni Pueblo where he met Carole. They were married in 1983.

The Buffalo Chip Chapter's club balloon featured Winnie the Pooh, star of many children's stories, on the balloon skirt. This lovable bear hung onto a balloon by a rope as it ascended to a tree limb with a buzzing beehive full of honey. One of Winnie the Pooh's favorite sayings is all about being one hundred years old. He used to say, "If you live to be a hundred, I hope I live to be a hundred minus one day, so that I never have to live a day without you."

# Local New Mexico News



## Make a Lasting Impact: Volunteer with the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps in Albuquerque

*CAPT Thurraya Kent, Strategic Growth Director, U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps*

The U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps is excited to announce a collaboration with the New Mexico Council of the Navy League and the University of New Mexico to establish a new Sea Cadets unit at the UNM NROTC facility.

This collaboration offers local youth a unique opportunity to grow through hands-on skills training and leadership development. By partnering with the UNM NROTC program, Sea Cadets will benefit from periodic engagement with midshipmen—college students who embody the honor, respect, commitment, and service the program seeks to instill.

But before we can begin welcoming cadets, **we need you**. “We’re ready to launch, but we need a few adult volunteers to get the unit started,” said Capt. Thurraya S. Kent, Strategic Growth Director for the Sea Cadets. “Once we establish that core team, we can start recruiting cadets and create something remarkable for the youth of Albuquerque.”

Whether you have a military background or not, your time and talents can make a meaningful difference. Volunteers are the heart of the Sea Cadet program—contributing thousands of hours nationwide to shape the leaders of tomorrow.



The Sea Cadet experience can assist cadets in identifying their career goals. Former Sea Cadet Michael J. Jacobs joined Sea Cadets at the age of 16 in 1968 and discovered his future career.

“When questioned about my Sea Cadet days, I always have a grin on my face,” said Jacobs, a professional photographer.

“I had the time of my life,” he said. “The most important trip I took as a Sea Cadet was a cruise on the U.S.S Coral Sea (CV-43) where I met Photographer’s Mate First Class Moon Mullins. I spent most of the trip in the ship’s photo lab and I was hooked.”

None of this impact is possible without a cadre of dedicated volunteers. “Our program works because volunteers are willing to share their time and skills with cadets,” Kent added.

Each unit meets for about 12 hours per month, usually on weekends, and provides cadets with a mix of classroom instruction, physical training, field trips, guest speakers, and more. During summer and winter breaks, cadets have opportunities to learn and work alongside U.S. Navy and Coast Guard professionals in over 20 career fields such as aviation, construction, food service, medical, law enforcement, photography, music, small boat handling, cyber, and robotics.

Volunteers will undergo a background check and participate in both online and in-person onboarding to ensure a positive and safe experience for everyone. Volunteers may fill key roles such as unit commanding officer, executive officer, administrative officer, physical fitness leader, training officer, and finance officer.

If you’re passionate about youth development and ready to make a real impact, contact Capt. Kent at [tkent@seacadets.org](mailto:tkent@seacadets.org) to learn how you can get involved.

**Albuquerque, NM**  
**Thurraya Kent**  
[tkent@seacadets.org](mailto:tkent@seacadets.org)





## From the Sea Chest — by Greg Trapp, JD, Chapter Historian

*Author's Note: This is the next in a series of articles about the sailors who served on USS New Mexico (BB-40). The battleship was known as The Queen, and during World War II, her ship's newspaper was named "The Queen's Daily." The newspaper published a regular article called the Queen's Men. Each article highlighted the life and service of one of the ship's sailors. Among the many notable sailors who served on the Queen was Hyman George Rickover.*

### The Queen's Men: Hyman G. Rickover – The One Person Who Was Responsible by Greg Trapp, JD

**"He's a lone wolf,"** Representative Chet Holifield, Democrat, California.

**"He's a nonconformist in uniform,"** Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat, Washington.

**"He's the greatest engineer who ever lived,"** President Jimmy Carter, Democrat, Georgia.

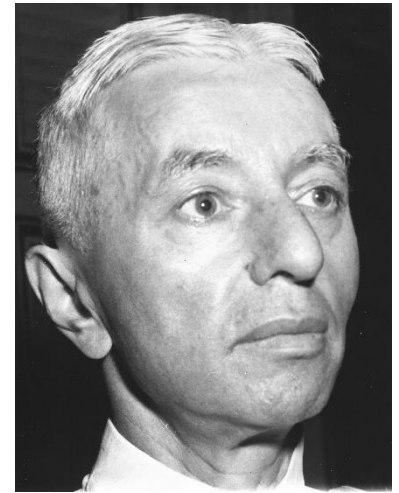
**"He's not very friendly."** Those were the understated words of Rear Admiral Albert G. Mumma as he described his rival. Mumma was the chief of the Bureau of Ships, and the rival was Rear Admiral Hymen G. Rickover. However, Rickover was not just any irascible Navy officer; he was the one officer who was most responsible for the burgeoning nuclear Navy. That responsibility would cause Rickover to earn the moniker of the "Father of the Nuclear Navy." In future years Rickover would say, "Unless you can point your finger at the one person who is responsible when something goes wrong, then you have never had anyone really responsible."

One of Rickover's early and most formulative responsibilities was to serve as an assistant engineering officer on the battleship USS New Mexico. The battleship had recently been modernized, and the prestigious assignment would prove an ideal challenge for the brash but brilliant engineer.

The man who would eventually transform the United States Navy began his unlikely path to becoming the father of the nuclear Navy as the son of impoverished Jewish immigrants from Poland. According to Marc Wortman, author of *Engineer of Power*, Rickover was born on December 24, 1899, not on the usually-ascribed date of January 27, 1900. Wortman writes that Rickover was born Chaim Godalia Rykower, the son of a devoutly Orthodox Jewish family. Rickover's parents immigrated to America in 1906 to escape the antisemitic violence that was spreading in czarist Russia. His parents changed their name to Rickover soon after they arrived in America, and the young Chaim became Hyman. Rickover adopted the middle name George when he was admitted to the Naval Academy in 1918. There, Rickover found himself in a system that was far from welcoming to the short and slightly-built Jewish immigrant. Rickover also acquired a distaste for the rituals and conformity that were so much a part of Navy tradition. Despite the hardships he faced, Rickover graduated from the Academy in 1922, and ranked 107th in a class of 540. What Rickover did find in his Academy studies was that he had a proclivity for engineering, a talent that would change the course of naval history.

Rickover's first assignment upon graduation from the Academy was to the Clemson-class destroyer USS La Vallette. The new graduate immersed himself in the ship's complex machinery and propulsion systems. The young engineer was soon designated the destroyer's engineering officer. Rickover's next assignment was to the battleship USS Nevada in 1925. The battleship gave Rickover further opportunities to demonstrate his talents in electrical engineering and project management. Rickover's drive and insistence on quality had a substantial influence on the battleship's engineering team and civilian contractors. Rickover's technical director and future biographer Theodore Rockwell would later label this outcome the "Rickover Effect" in a book of the same name.

Rickover returned to the Academy for additional studies in 1927. After that he went to graduate school at Columbia University to study electrical engineering. The time Rickover spent at Columbia University had a profound impact on the young engineer. This included his meeting Ruth Masters, whom he described as the smartest person he ever met.



*Rear Admiral Hyman G. Rickover at age 59. Rickover once famously responded to a question asking why submarines were no longer named after fish by saying, "Fish Don't vote." (Seattle Times, September 7, 1958, AP News Feature Photo)*



Masters was an Episcopalian, and Rickover would outwardly convert to Episcopalianism. The couple were married in a small church ceremony in 1931. Despite his conversion to Episcopalianism, Rickover would donate the proceeds of his future writings to Jewish charities. The extent to which his career was hindered by the antisemitism that was especially prevalent at the time is an open question. However, there is no question that it was his prickly personality and failure to follow Navy protocol that were usually his greatest obstacles.

Rickover volunteered for submarine duty in 1930. Although he was considered old for submarine duty, Rickover managed to be assigned to the submarines S-9 and S-48 through the intervention of his former commanding officer from USS Nevada. While on S-48, Rickover earned a letter of commendation after he dove into the sea to save a fallen sailor from drowning. Rickover also single-handedly saved S-48 from abandonment due to what was mistakenly believed to be a dangerous battery fire. As Wortman described it, Rickover donned a gas mask and “descended into the smoke-filled battery compartment where he discovered the batteries were not actually on fire.” His service on the poorly-engineered and dangerous S-9 and S-48 helped motivate Rickover to ensure that future nuclear submarines were designed to be safer and more comfortable.

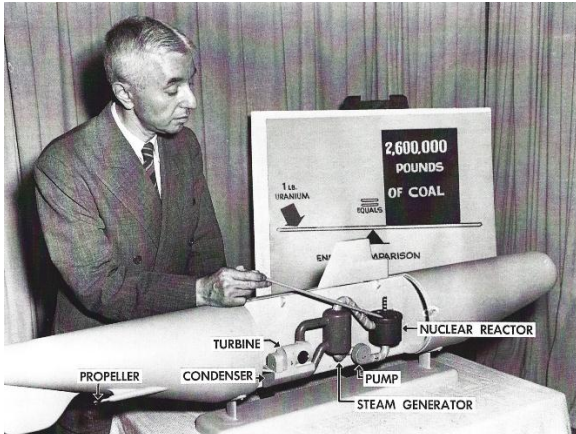
However, crew comfort was not Rickover’s top priority when he assumed his duties as assistant engineering officer aboard USS New Mexico. The Queen had been a frequent winner of competitions for fuel efficiency in the 1920s, but when Rickover came aboard on April 13, 1935, he discovered that his new ship had slipped from her prior lofty highs in the area of fuel efficiency. The vast distances that a battleship needed to traverse made oil consumption an area of critical concern. According to Rockwell, The Queen had fallen to sixth out of fifteen in the competition amongst battleships for fuel efficiency. As Rockwell describes it, when Rickover discovered that his ship was only ranked sixth, “he promised his boss that by the following year they would be number one.” Oil was used to generate heat, lighting, and fresh water, and Rickover knew he would need to sacrifice crew comfort to fulfill his promise. The battleship’s area of responsibility extended to the frigid waters of the North Pacific, and any reduction in heating would inevitably prove unpopular. According to Rockwell, “It was easy to reduce the temperature in all the living spaces and ignore the outraged protests of the crew.” As Rockwell put it, “the entire ship’s crew wore coats most of the time.” Rickover also had his engineering team, who were called “georges,” remove light bulbs and repair leaky faucets. The georges also reduced water pressure and installed flow gauges to track water usage. According to Rockwell, this resulted in the crew taking “the world’s shortest showers.”

USS New Mexico had a weekly newspaper called The Salvo during the 1930s, and signs of crew discontent over water rationing soon splashed onto the pages of The Salvo. The June 1, 1935, issue of The Salvo contained an article on page 3 titled “Water.” The author (G.E.K.) mocked the water critics by saying, “To listen to some of the sad tales and cracks made on the Good Ship New Mexico, the freshwater situation is deplorable, in fact terrible.” Responding to the protestors the author bluntly opined, “It seems to me that what we need more than water hours on here are petty officers and leading seamen with guts enough to speak up and clamp down on the water hogs.” Through Rickover’s continued efforts and despite the protests, USS New Mexico was ranked number one for fuel oil efficiency the next year. The Queen continued to retain her number one ranking even after Rickover transferred from the battleship. This ongoing adherence to the highest standards of excellence was another manifestation of the “Rickover Effect.”

When Rickover came aboard USS New Mexico, he did several things that would be hallmarks of his future career. For one, Rickover persuaded the chief engineer to give him responsibility far beyond that normally given to an assistant engineering officer. Another hallmark action that Rickover took was to establish an engineering school for the new ensigns that were assigned to the battleship. Rickover also reviewed their records, conducted interviews, and selected each ensign he wanted to be assigned to engineering. As Wortman notes, Rickover “institutionalized this rigorous selection process more than a decade later at Naval Reactors.”

Rickover left USS New Mexico in 1937. In March of that year, he was promoted to lieutenant commander. He was given command of the decrepit minesweeper USS Finch, and in characteristic fashion set about whipping the rusted vessel and its crew into shape. The minesweeper was on duty with the Asiatic Fleet when war broke out in China. Although Rickover was praised for bravery when he evacuated civilians out of Shanghai while under fire, he was also criticized for using the minesweeper to transport a dangerous cargo of gasoline to Shanghai. After his time aboard USS Finch, Rickover decided to transfer to Engineering Duty Only (EDO).

Rickover was assigned to the Electrical Section at the Bureau of Ships in 1939, where he found his true calling. The Navy was rapidly expanding, and the critical demands of World War II created the fertile grounds for Rickover's talents to flourish. Rickover repeatedly got results that fulfilled the critical needs of the war. Those successful results meant that his personality and often unorthodox methods could be overlooked or forgiven. Rickover's success was due to a mixture of drive, incredible organizing talent, good fortune, and the ability to make powerful friends. Rickover also had the ability to make powerful enemies, but he could always count on having friends that would be better positioned to intervene at the opportune moment. One of those powerful friends was Admiral Earle Mills, who was chief of the Bureau of Ships. After the war Mills remembered how Rickover had out maneuvered the Navy bureaucracy during World War II, and Mills thought Rickover could do the same for the Navy's fledgling nuclear reactor program. As a result, Rickover was assigned to the reactor program at the Oak Ridge Naval Group in 1946.



*Captain Hyman Rickover is shown explaining nuclear propulsion in 1952 when in charge of nuclear reactors at the Bureau of Ships. (Official Navy Photo)*

Once at Oak Ridge, Rickover began to assume increasing responsibility for the development of the world's first nuclear reactor. Rickover recognized the potential for how a reactor could power a submarine, and he also understood the absolute need for robust engineering and massive shielding of the reactor to keep crew radiation exposure at safe levels. In November of 1946, Rickover sent a report to Admiral Chester Nimitz saying that a submarine powered by a nuclear reactor could be achieved in five to eight years. That seemed at the time to be an impossible goal, but it was a goal that was famously met on January 17, 1955. That was when USS Nautilus (SSN-571) cast off her moorings and headed down the Thames River into the Long Island Sound. It was also when the commanding officer of USS Nautilus, Eugene Wilkinson, ordered transmission of the famous message "Underway on nuclear power." On the sail standing next to Wilkinson was Rear Admiral Hyman G. Rickover.

The sight of Wilkinson and Rickover standing next to each other on the sail of USS Nautilus almost did not happen. The Selection Board had declined to promote Rickover to admiral in 1952 and again in 1953, and under Navy rules he was to be retired from active duty on June 30, 1953. It was Rickover's friends and associates who came to the aid of Rickover. According to Wortman, a group of associates from Nuclear Reactors that included Theodore Rockwell took up the challenge, meeting with Illinois Representative Sidney Yates to plead Rickover's cause. Rickover had been publicly heralded as being responsible for the successful development of nuclear power, including being featured on Time magazine. With the help of Rockwell, Rickover's cause was soon picked up by the media. Representative Yates also introduced legislation which would reform the Navy promotion process. Rickover's wife Ruth had researched the Navy promotion system, and she pointed out to Rockwell that it was possible for a third Selection Board to be convened. The Secretary of the Navy relented, and in March of 1953 recommended that a special selection board be convened to retain an EDO with experience in atomic power. No one could have foreseen at the time that Rickover would reach the rank of four-star admiral and spend another thirty years on active duty, least of all the nine members of the Selection Board or the Navy brass that Rickover had so often irritated.

Hyman Rickover would ultimately become a Navy legend. He spent a total of 35 years as the chief of Naval Reactors. Rickover was responsible for the first nuclear power generation, which was achieved when the Mark I Submarine Thermal Reactor was powered on May 31, 1953. Since that date, the United States Navy has never had a reactor accident involving the uncontrolled release of radiation. This compares to the records of the Soviet and Russian navies, which have had numerous uncontrolled reactor accidents that have caused serious radiation exposure and deaths. The safety record of the United States Navy is due to the priority that Hyman Rickover placed on ensuring crew protection and reactor reliability, and his insistence that it should always be possible to "point your finger at the one person who is responsible when something goes wrong."

#### ***Bibliography and Recommended Reading***

1. Wortman, Marc. *Admiral Hyman Rickover: Engineer of Power*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022
2. Rockwell, Theodore. *THE RICKOVER EFFECT: How One Man Made a Difference*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1992

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#### **2025 Upcoming Events for Navy League, New Mexico Council**

October 13	Navy League, New Mexico Council board meeting via Zoom
<b>October 18 1800-2300</b>	<b>Navy 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday Ball – Isleta Resort and Casino</b>
October 18 1730-2100	Blue Star Mothers – Mardi Gras in New Mexico, Marriott Pyramid
October 25 1800	UNM NROTC Ball – Sandia Casino
November 10	Navy League, New Mexico Council board meeting via Zoom
<b>November 10</b>	<b>Navy Week Santa Fe</b>
<b>December 7</b>	<b>Annual Meeting - Navy League of the United States, New Mexico Chapter</b>