

THE VISITOR'S BATTLESHIP: A VISITOR STUDY OF THE BATTLESHIP
NORTH CAROLINA

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A Thesis Submitted to the
University of North Carolina Wilmington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Department of History
University of North Carolina Wilmington

2010

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ABSTRACT

The Battleship *North Carolina* indicates that a naval ship can be effective as a museum by enabling a variety of visitors to have powerful experiences. This happens because the Battleship organization allows them to invest the ship with their own purpose and meaning. In recent years, as a result of declining visitation, the organization began to subtly shift away from its function as a memorial and moved towards serving as a family friendly museum and tourist-attraction in an effort to increase visitation that provides needed admission, gift shop, and program revenues.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks go to Dr. Tammy Stone-Gordon whose guiding hand as my thesis advisor through this process was invaluable. I will never forget her patience, insight, and wisdom. I am also thankful to my committee members, Dr. William Moore and Dr. Taylor Fain, whose feedback and suggestions helped me to craft a more a cohesive work.

This work would have been impossible without the Battleship visitors who allowed me to interview and observe them. My deepest thanks to them all.

To the Battleship *North Carolina* staff whose enthusiasm and support for this project was both inspiring and helpful.

Special thanks goes to Captain Terry Bragg, Executive Director of the Battleship *North Carolina*, and Roger Miller, Assistant Director, for the countless conversations on the Battleship, her visitors, her history, and for their encouragement and trust.

To my friends, Martha Latta and Kathy Pinnick, who always believed in me and never tired of keeping me on track to finish this project.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, John and Jo Anne Wallace, who have always shown me unconditional love and support in everything I have chosen to do. To Lucky, my dog, for his loyalty and companionship is constant and dear to me. And to the Battleship *North Carolina*, my own ship of dreams.

INTRODUCTION

The Battleship *North Carolina* appears to be a silent and blank steel canvas as it sits in Wilmington, North Carolina, waiting for a new day of visitors to experience her. When they come, they walk through the ship and see huge machines that no longer work and small iron bunk beds (or berths) where most of the crew slept during World War II. They read quotes from crew members that were spoken years after they had served onboard the ship. They climb down ladders and smell a mixture of diesel oil and dust. Battleship staff members ring in visitor admissions, sell them souvenirs, maintain the ship by replacing lightbulbs and keeping the steel ship from rusting, place interpretative and directional signage on the tour-route, make reservations for school groups and weddings, and develop programs like Easter egg hunts and behind-the-scenes tours.

For the Battleship, this is a regular day. So why should public historians, scholars, and museum professionals care about the Battleship *North Carolina*? They should care because of this question: can battleship memorials effectively function as a museum? By studying the Battleship, its visitors, and its organization, this study will answer that question. The Battleship *North Carolina* is important because it indicates that a battleship memorial can be effective as a museum by enabling a variety of visitors to have powerful experiences because the

Battleship organization has created an environment that allows visitors to invest the ship with their own purpose and meaning. The Battleship organization acts as a protective steward of the ship by focusing on the financial and preservation issues that are necessary for keeping the ship open as both a museum and memorial. Because this financial need is so great and important for the Battleship's survival, the organization is subtly shifting away from its memorial identity and is focused on creating a family-friendly museum and tourist attraction. This shift is driven by the financial need to increase visitation, and thereby admission, gift shop, and program revenues.

In his analysis of the *Intrepid*, an aircraft carrier located in New York harbor, James Loewen raised serious objections concerning its ability to function as a museum. In *Lies Across America*, he wrote "the *Intrepid* is a feel-good museum that would rather exhibit anything but the realities of war."¹ And because any mention of the ship's service during Vietnam is left out of the ship's historical narrative, the museum "does violence to the ship's past and brings no honor to its veterans."² Loewen would probably describe the Battleship *North Carolina* as a "feel good museum" that does not exhibit the "realities of war" because there is little or no mention of

¹ James Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1999), 404.

² Loewen, 407.

World War II as a major conflict on exhibit panels. However, this could change as the need for such dialogues becomes apparent in a way that was similar to how a new social history was introduced at Colonial Williamsburg in the 1970s.

In *The New History in an Old Museum*, Richard Handler and Eric Gable wrote that "social history came to Colonial Williamsburg...out of the turmoil of the previous decade as a new way of telling the American story. And it was brought...at a time of declining visitation."³ For museums like Colonial Williamsburg and the Battleship *North Carolina*, declining visitation numbers tend to dictate important narrative changes which make it important to understand the visitor experience at museums.

And though Loewen, Handler, and Gable focus on a museum's or historic site's narrative, Gaea Leinhardt and Karen Knutson argue in *Listening in on Museum Conversations* that museums should function as "environments in which to experience the indefinable power of authentic artifacts to resonate with us...Museums present narratives...about what we know about our world. And these narratives are presented in a highly designed environment that creates a unique and powerful physical

³ Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 4.

experience for visitors.”⁴ By adding the importance of the “designed environment” to a museum’s function, it allows battleship museums countless opportunities to use their artifacts in effective ways that may eventually depict the realities of war.

Primarily through their interactions with artifacts in its “highly designed environment” do Battleship *North Carolina* visitors get a strong sense of purpose and meaning through the “artifact-historical past-me” process that is shared between Battleship curatorial staff and visitors.⁵ How this process contributes to a powerful and meaningful experience for visitors is only one way that the Battleship *North Carolina* functions effectively as a museum.

The Battleship *North Carolina* is an example of a battleship memorial, and exhibits both similarities and differences with other institutions in this category. Currently, there are eight battleship memorials: the *Alabama*, *Arizona*, *Massachusetts*, *Missouri*, *New Jersey*, *North Carolina*, *Texas*, and the *Utah*.⁶ They all belong to the *Historic Naval Ships Association* (HNSA). As of 2008, the HNSA fleet that is known as the “world’s third

⁴ Gaea Leinhardt and Karen Knutson, *Listening in on Museum Conversations* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 45.

⁵ The “artifact-historical past-me” process is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2.

⁶ Please see Appendix 1 for a more detailed account of the different battleship memorials. This will include when they became memorials, 2009 visitation, their location, and other helpful comparative information. The *Wisconsin* is noted but it should be understood that it is not a memorial, only a museum.

largest navy" had members from twelve nations, 115 organizations, and 175 ships. Organized in 1966, the intention and purpose of HNSA was to create a forum where organizations could exchange ideas, deal with problems, and provide support for each other. HNSA is an important organization because it serves as the cohesive organization that brings a variety of ship museums together with the joint purpose of honoring individuals who performed naval service through education and inspiration.⁷

Knowing how these eight battleships became memorials is important. These ships and Civil War battlefields (or battleparks) have similar memorial origins because they were both preserved by the efforts of veterans. Civil War veterans were motivated because they wanted "the parks to be reconciliatory items, object lessons, patriotic icons, and most of all, memorials to the living and the dead that had fought in the war."⁸ In ways similar to Civil War veterans, World War II veterans were motivated

by nostalgia and memory and myth and tradition. For these men, their battleship as a ship embodies the habits and values formed when they were young men. Their battleship as a memorial holds their dreams and expectations now that they are

⁷ Edward J. Marolda, "HNSA Visitor's Guide Introduction," *HNSA*, <http://www.hnsa.org/intro.htm>.

⁸ Timothy B. Smith, *The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation: The Decade of the 1890s and the Establishment of America's First Five Military Parks* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2008), 9.

old men with hopes of being remembered after they are gone. Their battleship as a museum represents a conversation between their past and their descendants future.⁹

Though their motivations were essentially the same, how these veterans were able to fund their memorials are not. Luckily for the Civil War battleparks, the 1890s "was still a time when Civil War veterans dominated Congress (who would fund the parks) and state legislatures (who would appropriate money for monuments to their states' units)."¹⁰ Though Civil War battleparks enjoyed government patronage, battleship memorials are almost all self-funded and receive no state or federal government funds.¹¹ For most ships, their only connection to a state is through their name and by being part of that state's park or historic site department. Knowing the motivation and funding for a memorial helps a historian to understand how they continue to affect it today.

Do the similarities between these memorials mean that they are the same? Battleship memorials fall into two different categories. In the article, "War Memorials as Political

⁹ Angus Kress Gillespie, "The U.S.S. *New Jersey* (BB62): Name, Image, and Identity," *The Salad Bowl* 25 (2000): 13.

¹⁰ Smith, 7.

¹¹ The *Arizona* Memorial (which also includes the *Utah*) is funded by the National Park Service and is operated by the US Navy. It is unique among battleship memorials because the ship was destroyed on December 7, 1941. All other battleship memorials are self-funded, however, they may receive some state appropriations for major preservation projects. Jeff Nilsson (Executive Director of HNSA) in a phone conversation with the author, April 7, 2010.

Memory," James M. Mayo described two different types of war memorials: the sacred and the non-sacred. He wrote that "non-sacred memorials may also have high utility, such as enterprises related to war or actual war artifacts."¹² The battleship memorials, except for the *Arizona* Memorial, would be nonsacred memorials according to Mayo because "their practical purpose is not sacred commemoration but rather profitability or utility".¹³ The battleship memorials must be profitable because they are self-supported and must be able to afford the expense of maintaining such a large ship.

When many of the battleship memorials were established in the 1960s, or what can be called the "golden age of battleship memorials," these ships gained the added role of "museum." Their educational and interpretative role was an important one because the ships were not originally designed to serve as a museum. Angus Kress Gillespie noted that "critics argue that the aging *USS New Jersey* cannot function well as either a museum or a memorial...By its very nature, the ship can function only as a highly specialized museum with exhibits on military history or naval technology."¹⁴ Though this criticism could refer to most battleship memorials, it can also be dismissed since the ships have functioning exhibits, programs, and special tours on a

¹² James M. Mayo, "War Memorials as Political Memory," *Geographical Review* 78, no 1 (January 1988): 64.

¹³ Mayo, 64.

¹⁴ Gillespie, 11.

variety of subjects. The success of a ship's ability to serve as museums may seem to be clear from the "Guide to the Naval and Maritime Museums of North America" by Channing Zucker who noted that "museum ships welcomed record numbers of visitors in 1999. More than 10 million persons boarded the vessels in the US and Canada."¹⁵ However, visitation alone does not determine if a battleship museum has been effective or not.

A visitor study provides one means to determine effectiveness. That is why a visitor case study was needed to propel this scholarship forward. The current scholarship on battleships is dominated by military history or reference books which focus on their role in the war, their technology, or life at sea.¹⁶ Because there is limited literature on battleship memorials, a visitor study of the Battleship *North Carolina* will be important for public historians because they will be able to learn and understand what motivates visitors, how they behave, what they remember, and how they invest these atypical museums with their own unique meaning.

Some scholarly works that offered insight into visitor experiences at the Battleship *North Carolina* included *American*

¹⁵ Channing Zucker, "Sea Classics Millennium Guide to the Naval and Maritime Museums of North America," *Sea Classics* (2000): High Beam Research (April 10, 2010), <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-4979449.html>. Reported visitation numbers represent all naval ship museums: carriers, battleships, submarines, destroyers, and many others that are part of the HNSA fleet.

¹⁶ Some examples of the works on battleships are: *The American Battleship* by Samuel Loring Morrison, *An American Battleship at Peace and War: The U.S.S. Tennessee* by Jonathan G. Utley and *Battleship at War: The Epic Story of the U.S.S. Washington* by Ivan Musicant.

Artifacts edited by Jules David Prown, *Performing the Pilgrims* by Stephen Eddy Snow, *Destination Culture* by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *The New History in an Old Museum* by Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The Museum Experience* by John Falk and Lynn Dierking, and *Presence of the Past* by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen.

In *American Artifacts*, Jules David Prown believes that an object always has some kind of functional, original purpose. As time passes and the object is no longer needed for its original purpose and function, it can become a piece of "art" or an "artifact". Its purpose and meaning then changes to suit that of a particular institution or viewer.¹⁷ The Battleship *North Carolina* is one huge artifact. During the war, its purpose was to be a modern, strong war machine enforcing the will of the US government. Today, she represents fun, a tourist destination, a memorial, and a National Historic Landmark to the thousands of visitors who see her each year.

In *Performing the Pilgrims*, Stephen Eddy Snow explains how the recreated Plimoth pilgrim village is always 1627 for visitors. The living history performers who act as the village's pilgrims interact with visitors as they go about their daily routines of cooking meals, farming, and getting married.

¹⁷ Jules David Prown and Kenneth Haltman, ed, *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2000).

Plimoth Plantation is a complete physical experience driven primarily by the Pilgrim performers.¹⁸ At the Battleship, visitors interact with a silent ship and cause it come alive with their own voices, laughter, and confusion. The ship, though the tour-route and exhibits focus almost entirely on its role during the war, shifts to become whatever a group or visitor wants it to be through their own experiences or intentions for it.

In *Destination Culture*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines the visitor experience as being a shift in the museum field away from artifacts and exhibits to encompass an entire experience that uses the senses and the imagination. Part of that experience includes ways that the experience "pushes back" at visitors in how they interact with the objects. Visitor experiences are based on doing things rather than seeing or reading.¹⁹ The Battleship is a total immersive physical experience for visitors. They crawl all over the guns and climb up and down ladders. Different experiences are available at different price points.

In *New History in an Old Museum*, Richard Handler and Eric Gable look at Colonial Williamsburg's concerns with authenticity

¹⁸ Stephen Eddy Snow, *Performing the Pilgrims: A Study of Ethnohistorical Role-Playing at Plimoth Plantation* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1993).

¹⁹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).

and how the institution's professional historians attempted to include realistic portrayals of slavery, gender roles, and different social classes for visitors. Despite these efforts, Colonial Williamsburg's corporate management continues to focus on what will make the visitor happy and how to exceed their expectations. To accomplish this, they have branched out in merchandise, resorts, and commercial relationships (like with *American Girls*).²⁰ Like Colonial Williamsburg, the Battleship's financial bottom line is the basis for developing special events and programs because they are intended to increase visitation and revenue. New efforts to have merchandise as a tie-in to the programs are being pursued and have proved to be profitable for the Battleship.

The Museum Experience by John Falk and Lynn Dierking gives museum professionals a visitor's perspective of zoos, exhibits, and museums while trying to understand why they go to these institutions, what they do when they are there, and what they have learned from their visit.²¹ This work was crucial in developing the interview questions that a group of random Battleship visitors were asked regarding their experience for this study. Their responses revealed definite patterns of

²⁰ Handler and Gable. *American Girls* is a line of merchandise, books, and accessories that are based on pre-teen girls from different periods of history with their stories told from their point of view.

²¹ John Falk and Lynn Dierking, *The Museum Experience* (Washington, DC: Whaleback Books, 1992).

motivation and expectations that presented Battleship visitors as regular people who had meaningful experiences on a physical, sensory, and emotional level.

In *Presence of the Past*, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen examine how people relate to the "past" and not "history", which is perceived as being a mixture of names and dates of important men and events. They found that people create strong connections to the past which make up their cultural, family, and personal identities. They argue that people live with their "pasts" everyday.²² The Battleship tour is a mixture of the past and history. On exhibit panels, the descriptions of the artifacts are very factual. This is appropriate because facts and dates are part of what Rosenzweig and Thelen argue is what people consider to be history. Also on the panels are recollections by crewmembers which serve as glimpse into the ship's "past" which easily enable visitors to relate to the sailors.

The purpose of this work is to analyze the visitor experience at the Battleship *North Carolina* by examining the ship as an artifact, the professional goals and needs of the organization, and the fiscal realities of operating the ship as a museum in an attempt to determine if it is functioning as an effective museum. Chapter two answers the following questions:

²² Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998).

what is the Battleship about as a prime artifact? How do visitors relate to the ship as an artifact? And how does the Battleship as an organization maintain the artifact? Public historians can learn how a physical and sensory experience can quickly become an emotional experience that is very personal and meaningful for visitors as they relate to different artifacts. Historians can also recognize that the Battleship is not led by public historians but by an organization of businessmen, and their decisions affect every aspect of the organization.

Chapter three answers the following questions: who are the Battleship visitors? What is known about these visitors? What are some of their motivations for visiting? How do they behave once they arrive? And how do they find personal meaning through their Battleship experience? Public historians can learn more about visitors by being aware of their behaviors and how they relate to, and connect to the Battleship. Visitors do work very hard at finding meaning during their visit. This meaning results from behaviors that are at times ritualistic, nostalgic, and imaginative. It is important to understand the importance and significance of a visitor's experience.

Chapter four argues that the professional goal of the Battleship organization is to generate revenue. This goal has led to a variety of relationships that benefit the Battleship in different ways. Besides relationships, the Battleship has found

other ways to generate revenue through rentals. The revenue that comes from different groups is important because it pays the bills but it also allows different groups of visitors to invest the Battleship with their own purpose which is very important and meaningful to them. These experiences are just as important and meaningful as regular visitors; they are just different in their motivation, scope, and purpose.

THE BATTLESHIP *NORTH CAROLINA* AS A PRIME ARTIFACT

Steven: Really, what's this all about? You know? I've never seen a battleship up close.²³

Steven, a regular Battleship visitor, asks a great question: what is this all about? How does the Battleship as an organization maintain the artifact? What is the Battleship about as a prime artifact? How do visitors relate to the ship as an artifact? This chapter will explore all of these questions by showing how the Battleship's original purpose was to be a floating war machine but now, visitors invest it with their own meaning as they interact with the spaces and smaller artifacts onboard the ship. This visitor interaction comes at a high organizational cost that has to financially maintain such a large artifact.

In *American Art and Artifacts*, Jules David Prown wrote "in our culture, we appropriate objects from other cultures that belong to other categories—clothing, jewelry, weapons, masks, architectural details, boats, etc.,—and install them in our museum as 'art', drained of their original purpose and invested with ours."²⁴ This is certainly the case at the Battleship. Throughout her history, the Battleship has served as a metaphor.

²³ Steven, interview by author, 14 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*, Wilmington.

²⁴ Jules David Prown, *American Art and Artifacts*, x.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, she was a symbol of military strength and superior technology - a floating machine. She also represented the society that planned and constructed her: the lines and shapes of the ship are made of steel, making them rigid and unforgiving. The Battleship has a similar "landscape" of spaces the Dell Upton described in an article on southern landscape architecture. He wrote "the white landscape...was both articulated and processional."²⁵ The ship's spaces served similar processional functions because decks are color-coded because areas of the ship were segregated between enlisted men and officer's areas. This system mirrored the era's attitudes regarding class structure, race, education, and official rank. Yet, despite these rigid lines of class structure, the ship represented opportunity to some.²⁶ Crewmen could advance in rank quickly if they worked hard, which is the essence of the American dream.

In 1947, she was decommissioned and placed in a Reserve Fleet with several other important ships from the war including the USS *Enterprise* and the USS *Franklin*. They were left and mostly forgotten as Americans tried to put the war behind them.

²⁵ Dell Upton, "White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," in *Material Life in America, 1600 - 1860*, edited by Robert Blair St. George (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 363.

²⁶ If an enlisted man was willing to learn his assigned work area along with other trades or areas, he could work himself up to the rank of Chief, which is a position of great respect in the Navy. During World War II, this opportunity did not apply to women or certain ethnic groups.

In the late 1950s, the US Navy declared that the *North Carolina*, along with several other ships, were to be sold as scrap. This news spurred veterans James S. Craig and Hugh Morton, both of Wilmington, North Carolina, into action. With the support of the North Carolina governor, they launched a state-wide campaign to raise the necessary funds to bring the ship to Wilmington. In 1960, a campaign that involved thousands of state citizens and schoolchildren raised \$330,000 to save the ship. In September 1961, the Navy transferred the USS *North Carolina* to the State of North Carolina. She opened for public touring in October, 1961. The Battleship *North Carolina* was now going to serve a new purpose: as a memorial for the North Carolinians who had died in the war.²⁷ The ship was dedicated as the State's World War II Memorial in April 1962.²⁸

The prime artifact is the entire ship; it consists of millions of smaller artifacts (guns, chairs, berths, gears) that make up the ship. The sheer size of the prime artifact, or ship, makes it difficult to see it as one object. In fact, three decks are below water and are in the mud! Visitors can look at elements, or different artifact pieces, of the ship (the guns, a tool, a room) and slowly piece them together into a big steel

²⁷ If a ship is not in active service and has been decommissioned, it is no longer referred to as USS. This explains the name, Battleship *North Carolina*.

²⁸ Captain Ben Blee, *Battleship North Carolina* (Wilmington, NC: Battleship *North Carolina*, 2005), p. 145-150.

puzzle. This inability to look at the ship as a single object does not detract from the overall ship because it is by going through these artifact pieces that the visitor actually experiences the ship.

--The Battleship Organization--

The first question to be addressed is how is the Battleship set up as an organization to maintain such a large artifact? Today, the Battleship *North Carolina* is a part of Department of Cultural Resources (DCR) for the State of North Carolina with all of the staff members being state employees. The Battleship is also still a part of the US Navy and the ship is inspected by the Navy once a year. The Battleship also has a staff of special Commissioners who are appointed by the state's governor. These Commissioners consist of lawyers, elected officials, and businessmen from across the state. The primary function of the Battleship Commission is to help guide and handle major Battleship campaigns and issues while ensuring that the ship is properly maintained as North Carolina's World War II memorial.²⁹ Examples would be in the issue of a possible upcoming dry-docking of the ship, a lawsuit where the Battleship is suing a

²⁹ "USS *North Carolina* Battleship Commission-duties," (P.L. 143B-73.1.) North Carolina General Statues, 1961.

company hired to replace the teak deck, and major renovations to the ship. The Battleship Commission is also tasked with having the final say in overseeing the Battleship funds in various stock and money market accounts and how that money will be spent.³⁰

The Battleship's executive director has traditionally been a retired Navy captain and the assistant director, who supervises the maintenance department, has also traditionally served in the Navy. These positions "are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Commission."³¹ The Battleship, though a part of DCR, does not receive any funding from the State.³² Therefore, the Battleship is dependent on visitor admissions, gift shop sales, rentals, programs, and donations to cover operating expenses. The Battleship operates under a budget that is approved by the Commission. For 2010, the overall operating budget is 2.9 million dollars. The maintenance budget for 2009 was \$380,720, not including payroll. The majority of that budget was for replacing and repairing dead ventilator motors, replacing lightbulbs, spot painting, and replacing signage. The

³⁰ The Battleship Commission is not involved in the day-to-day activities of the ship. They are involved with issues concerning millions of dollars. As part of their membership, they are not permitted to benefit in any way from the Battleship—they are not given any free admission passes or discounts on programs or rentals.

³¹ "Contained in the Battleship Legislation," Article IX: Amendments to the Bylaws, Authority North Carolina General Statutes 143B-73, 1984.

³² The only sites that are a part of DCR that do not receive any state funding are the Battleship, Tryon Palace, and The Lost Colony.

electric bill averages to be a little more than \$800 a month or \$9,600 a year.³³

A major concern for the Battleship in maintaining her as a prime artifact is the issue of the starboard hull repair. The ship has not been in dry dock since the late 1950s and some leaking has occurred. The hull needs to be repaired before the problem becomes much worse. The options before the Battleship staff and Commissioners are: do nothing and let it get worse, build a coffer dam, or to take the Battleship to Norfolk, VA, or Charleston, SC, to be dry docked where the hull could be repaired. The cost for a coffer dam or dry docking is anywhere from 5 million to 40 million dollars.

Maintaining the "Battleship in such a manner that it will not cast discredit upon the Navy or upon the proud tradition of this historic vessel and not allow it to become a menace to navigation, public health or safety" is how the Navy allows the Commission and the state of North Carolina to take charge of the Battleship.³⁴ This directive means that the ship must be maintained to a certain level or else the Navy will reclaim the ship. This arrangement causes issues like the hull repair to be taken seriously by the Battleship Commission and organization.

³³Battleship Commission Meeting Budget Report, May 25, 2009.

³⁴"Contained in Contract with the Navy," Article IX: Amendments to the Bylaws, Authority North Carolina General Statutes 143B-73, 1984. Please see Appendix 3 for the complete list of mandates to the Commissioners and Executive Director from the Navy.

These are very serious maintenance issues for the Battleship staff and Commissioners to handle and solve. It makes keeping visitation up very important because admissions, program & rental revenue, and gift shop sales all pay for these maintenance projects. The Battleship is managed like a small for-profit business with its product being the ship and its consumers are the visitors.³⁵ Simply put, the Battleship, though it is the state memorial, would have to close its doors if the Commission failed to meet their fiscal responsibilities, as any other small business would have to close. It costs a lot of money to maintain such a large ship.

-- The Battleship Tour-Route: Artifacts as "Touch & Play"--

Woman: Ya'll going up to the very top of the ship?

Man: Yep.

Woman: Oh, Lord. (*As she follows her family up the ladder to the bridge*).³⁶

As Jules David Prown said in *American Art & Artifacts*, an object is taken from its original purpose and placed in museums, "drained of their original purpose and invested with ours."³⁷

The same is to be said of the Battleship: once an active and

³⁵ Visitation includes regular day-time visitors, program participants, and rental functions.

³⁶ Overheard visitor conversation by author, July 3, 2009. For the visitor walkthrough, I am going to refer to areas and parts of the ship by using naval terms, as that is their correct name since the Battleship is a ship. For example, *stairs* are referred to as *ladders*, and the *floor* is the deck. I will make a notation when referring to a particular area to explain its meaning in case the naval terms are unknown to the reader.

³⁷ Prown, x.

busy warship, it is now available to her visitors to invest it with their own purpose. Visitors give their own meaning to the ship and the many artifacts and rooms within her as they go through the tour-route. However, the physical aspects of the ship have not changed since her "original purpose". The physical challenges of the ship for visitors is the same as it was for the sailors before them, who had to climb up and down ladders, fit into tight, claustrophobic spaces, and not benefit from a climate-controlled environment. When the woman wondered if her family were "going up to the very top of the ship", it meant going up several sets of ladders on a hot, July day, much like a sailor would have done in the South Pacific.

Daniel, a Battleship visitor, said in response to whether his tour was different from what he expected, said: "just the vastness of the ship, I guess. I wouldn't imagine that there would be that much on a battleship including, you know, clothing, repairs, and things of that sort."³⁸ Debra is another visitor who related to the Battleship through the objects she encountered. In response to what she would remember from her visit, she said: "how small the quarters were. The large guns and how large the ship actually is." Because the visitors relate to the Battleship as an object on such a physical level

³⁸ Daniel, interview with author, 13 December 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

by actually going through the spaces, this enables them to relate to the ship and the crew on an emotional level.

How visitors relate to objects and artifacts on a sensory level is the subject of "Making Sense of Touch: A Multisensory Approach to the Perception of Objects" by Charles Spence. He wrote:

that there is more to the sense of touch than simply what is going on at the skin surface. In fact, a large body of cognitive neuroscience research now supports the view that our tactile/haptic perception of both the structural and surface properties of objects, as well as their perceived functionality, can be profoundly influenced by what we see, as well as what we hear—and even, on occasion, what we smell—when touching, interacting with, or evaluating an object, product, or artifact.³⁹

Brian A. is an example of how a visitor related to the ship at first on a physical and then on an emotional level when he was in the ship's engine room where he was surrounded by objects. Being in the space, he used all of his senses to experience them which enable him to have a greater understanding of their functions. When asked what he would remember from his visit, he said:

Probably how amazing the engineering of the ship was before computers and before digital communications. How many cables ran through it and how, you know, so many things needed

³⁹ Charles Spence, "Making Sense of Touch: A Multisensory Approach to the Perception of Objects" in *The Power of Touch: Handling Objects in Museum and Heritage Contexts* edited by Elizabeth Pye (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.: 2007), 56-57.

to be designed and maintained, and you know, so many people had to know how to use all of these things like huge switchboards and which switch to throw when there were like, an emergency or something and then probably also the fact that the ship quarters were so cramped and everything really was designed for optimizing the ship's battle performance and very little consideration was given to the crew.⁴⁰

He was impressed by the ship's cables and "huge switchboards" and all the "things [that] needed to be designed and maintained". He could physically see and touch the ship's equipment and experience the cramped quarters. This enabled him to relate to the crew on an emotional level of having to know "which switch to throw" during an "emergency or something" and how "little consideration was given to the crew" implying their stress and sacrificed comfort.

This section will detail the Battleship *North Carolina's* visitor experience by exploring the Visitor Center and tour-route and will include visitor observations and conversations that were overheard by the author. A major focus will explain how visitors are relating to the ship on a physical and then emotional level.

In *Destination Culture*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes Plimoth Plantation as "more than an embodiment of history, the village is an imaginary space into which the

⁴⁰ Brian A., interview with author, 2 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, Battleship *North Carolina*.

visitor enters. Gone is the fourth wall. Immersed in a total environment, the visitor negotiates a path through the site, both physically and conceptually."⁴¹ This is, and is not, the case for visitors at the Battleship. The fourth wall is gone in that visitors are completely immersed in the environment of the ship and they are responsible for making their way through the tour-route. However, it is not an imaginary space because the ship is the prime artifact. Their senses of touch, sight, smell, and hearing all contribute to their overall experience. For example, when visitors sit at the guns and work the mechanisms to make them move, they are touching an artifact. The relationship between visitors and artifacts on the Battleship is: artifact (through the senses), leads to relating to the historic past of the sailors who occupied that space or worked that artifact, to imagining themselves occupying that space or working with the artifact (or, artifact - historic past - me). Visitors do go through the space both "physically and conceptually" like the visitors at Plimoth Plantation, but they also take that one step further by relating the historic past of the artifacts and crewmembers to themselves in the present. This relationship between artifact (ship) and visitors is effective because they are investing the ship (or particular

⁴¹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 192.

artifacts) with their own purpose and meaning which results in meaningful experiences for them.

In 1996, Kristin Szylvian reviewed the Battleship *North Carolina* in the *Public Historian* periodical. She noted that

The USS *North Carolina* Battleship Memorial is at a crossroads regarding interpretation... Efforts to upgrade the self-guided tour, the most important part of the visitor experience, are on-going. The existing interpretative labels emphasizing the technology employed on the USS *North Carolina* are gradually disappearing. New labels are currently being installed which seek to balance the needs and interests of the the veteran or military history enthusiast and the more casual visitor. An effort has been made to minimize the use of specialized naval terminology and present more information about the daily life on board the USS *North Carolina*.⁴²

The current tour-route has been in place since the 1980s and exhibit labels are replaced or updated every two - three years. Both tour-route and exhibits works for visitors and Battleship management. A major challenge of the tour-route is that a lot of spaces are repetitive. Battleship staff has tried to include exhibit spaces that visitors have requested as long as the space can be easily added to the tour-route. Visitors often request to see the brig, or ship's prison. Due to its location, it would be very difficult to include it on the tour-route. The space is only accessible on special tours given by

⁴² Kristin M. Szylvian, "Untitled Review", *Public Historian* 18, no 2 (Spring 1996), 115.

Battleship staff.⁴³ So far, visitors have not asked for more technologies (interactive exhibits or iPod tours) and so the tour-route and spaces have remained essentially the same, though Battleship staff is looking into costly additions and renovations.⁴⁴

As visitors drive up to the main entrance of the Battleship *North Carolina*, they are able to see the ship on their left. The ship is very tall and large, taking up almost the entire length of the road. Visitors go up to the Visitor Center and after paying admission, there is a fifteen minute orientation film in an auditorium. The film is hosted and narrated by actor, Pat Hingle. Mr. Hingle explains that he had seen the *North Carolina* in action during World War II because he was on a destroyer, the *USS Marshall*, and they often sailed together with the fleet. He goes on to say about the *North Carolina* that "her story is the very history of the war."⁴⁵ The film is made up of a mix of historic footage and photographs, and highlights the ship's coming to Pearl Harbor in 1942, the torpedo hit, and crew life. It is only in the orientation film that the visitor is able to understand the Battleship's role in context of World War II.

⁴³ Roger Miller (Battleship *North Carolina* Assistant Director) in a discussion with the author, June 2009. This tour is a part of the *Hidden Battleship* program. Sometimes, an individual visitor request to see the brig can be granted if a staff member is available and willing to take them to this area.

⁴⁴ Renovations for the Overnight Camping Initiative include having the entire second deck be air-conditioned and restoring the Ward Room to its original design and purpose. This project has a projected price tag of \$4 million dollars.

⁴⁵ Battleship *North Carolina* orientation film excerpt.

The war is not discussed, interpreted, or mentioned in any other exhibits because it is technically not part of the organization's mission statement which is to preserve the ship as the state's memorial and to interpret all ship's named *North Carolina*.⁴⁶

Visitors exit the auditorium into the Visitor Center which features two exhibits: *USS North Carolina 777* and *Legacy of the Ships Named North Carolina*. In May, 2008, a Virginia-class submarine was commissioned in Wilmington. It is the newest ship to have the name, *North Carolina*. The exhibit features a model of the submarine with the champagne bottle used to christen the submarine, banners with general information (speed, weaponry, crew, etc.), the submarine's nose guard banner, and a silent film that details the submarine's construction, christening, and shakedowns.⁴⁷

The exhibit, *Legacy of the Ships Named North Carolina*, feature models of the Battleship (1941-1947), an armored cruiser (1908-1921), a Confederate Ironclad (1863-1864), and a Ship of the Line (1821-1867). These models also include a wooden cutout of a sailor dressed in the appropriate Navy uniform for the period. All of the artifacts that the visitor has encountered at this point have been inside a case or have been a recreation.

⁴⁶ " Battleship *North Carolina* Mission Statement," Battleship *North Carolina*, http://www.battleshipnc.com/lucky_bag/mission.htm

⁴⁷ A shakedown is a naval term for the various sea trials that a ship undergoes before it is commissioned into official service.

The feeling is that of a standard museum where visitors view artifacts from a protected distance. A difference from a standard museum is that there is little or no interpretive signage to aid the visitor in understanding what they are viewing.

The visitor then exits the Visitor Center and walks up a 90 foot gangway ramp onto the Battleship *North Carolina*. The gangway is the first place where visitors can get a good glimpse of the entire length of the ship. Walking up the gangway ramp to the ship gives a visitor the unmistakable feeling that they are now on a ship. Viewing and understanding all of the ship's parts is like studying the human body: the body contains different organs that are contained by skin and muscle, each part having its specific function. The Battleship's organs consist of machines, dials, and gears.

Along the tour-route are exhibit panels that explain the purpose of a particular area or object. The panels are made up of photos, crew memories (designated by a blue section), and an occasional cartoon. Once on the ship and on the tour-route, the feeling of being in a museum completely vanishes for visitors. Though historic homes are other examples of immersive experiences, the tour is typically led by docents in small groups. Some rooms and furniture have "do not touch" signs as a way of preserving the space. At the Battleship, visitors are

left to make their own way, or their own experience, undirected by any docent other than directional signage. The only "do not enter" areas on the ship are unrestored, making them dangerous and unsafe for visitors, or administrative spaces.

The ship's fantail is the first part of the tour. The space is large and open. It features several 20 millimeter (mm) guns, the "big" 16-inch guns, closed hatches, the ship's bell (from the armored cruiser) and the Kingfisher plane.⁴⁸ The turret that supports the gun barrels is wide and made of steel. The guns are all made of steel. If they were to fall they would immediately crush anyone, or anything, beneath them. The big steel guns seem to make the ship impenetrable and their strength is noticed by visitors. Two men were overheard to talk about the 16-inch guns.

Man 1: These are some big guns.
Man 2: Yeah.
Man 1: That'll give you a concussion.
Man 2: No kidding.⁴⁹

With all of the different types of guns on the fantail, visitors become acutely aware that the ship originally was built for war

⁴⁸ The "fantail" is the stern, or back end of the ship. The "foc'sle" is the bow, or front end of the ship. The Battleship's deck was made out of teak wood because it absorbed shrapnel better than most other woods. The gangway leads to the "main" deck. It is considered the first deck. The deck below it is referred to as second deck, third deck, and so on. The part of the ship above deck is considered part of the "super structure". It is referred to as 01 deck, 02 deck, etc. Doors on a ship are referred to as "hatches". And guns are referred to by the size bullet or projectile they fire. For example, the 20 millimeter guns shoot a 20 mm bullet. The "big" guns shoot a 16-inch projectile.

⁴⁹ Conversations overheard by author, July 3, 2009.

with guns that will "give you a concussion". The ship and the gun's original purpose now seems distant because the spaces are now occupied by visitors with their children casually walking around on the deck.

One of the most notable artifacts on the fantail is the Kingfisher plane. There are only six Kingfisher planes left in existence and the one on exhibit is not original to the ship.⁵⁰

A mother and her son discussed the guns on the Kingfisher:

Child: Mommy, how do these guns work?

Woman: They move it to where they can shoot.

This is an old ship.

Child: Old ship?

Woman: Yeah.

Child: And the guys sleep down there.⁵¹

The guns are the dominant artifact type on the fantail, and it is not out of context that the child would ask about the guns on the Kingfisher. The mother gives a direct answer and then, as if to excuse the guns, explains that "this is an old ship." This comment does appear to be out of context compared to the question. Perhaps her answer may be meant to explain that guns had to be aimed by a person on "old ships" rather than fired and aimed by computers on new ones. Her statement is followed by a factual statement by the child, "the guys sleep down there" (meaning below deck), that again, seems out of context.

⁵⁰ Kim Sincox and Mary Ames Booker (Battleship *North Carolina* Historians) in a discussion with the author, July 2009. Roger Miler (Battleship *North Carolina* Assistant Director) in a discussion with the author, July 2009.

⁵¹ Conversation overheard by author, July 3, 2009.

However, it does show that the child connected the plane artifact to people. The child seems to already be developing a sense of sympathy, or an emotional connection to the crew.

After seeing the guns and the Kingfisher plane on the fantail, visitors can crawl up into a "big" gun turret. The only access to this area is to go single-file by climbing up a ladder.⁵² The ladder is very petite and it would be very difficult for big or tall individuals, or anyone with a mobile disability, if not completely impossible for them. In the turret men worked to change the gun's direction, aim and fire the projectiles. Once inside, the visitor encounters more steel, this time comprising machinery, gears, and dials which are the organs of the ship. All of the artifacts are accessible to the visitors to touch and "play sailor" with while also experiencing a cramped and hot physical space. Some of these artifacts have been handled and played with so much that the steel, especially around gear wheels, have become smooth and worn. The turret is the first "battleship specific" place on the tour-route that allows visitors to experience a once working space filled with artifacts.

To exit the turret, visitors go down the same ladder they came up where they continue the tour below decks by going down a 15-step ladder single-file. From this point on, a great deal of

⁵² "Ladder" is a naval term for "stairs".

the tour is below decks. Strollers, wheelchairs, and walkers are difficult, if not impossible, to maneuver down below. This results in people either carrying small children through the ship or limiting a person's tour to the main deck. Once down the ladder, visitors are now in a mess deck which features the bake shop and chapel.⁵³ At this point, visitors become aware of a distinct smell; this smell is hard to identify, but is perhaps a mixture of oil, dust, and old machines. One may venture to say that if something can smell old, the Battleship does. The odor is so distinctive that it inadvertently enhances guest experiences by immediately placing them in a distinctive place by engaging their sense of smell.

Visitors follow the directional signs to the engine room by going down another ladder to the third deck. They enter a narrow passageway that is painted silver with wiring and gauges on the bulkhead.⁵⁴ An industrial feel pervades this space with a steel grating floor, boilers, and turbine engines. The space could easily be a setting from a science-fiction movie. The silence of all of these generators and engines is somewhat chilling and inappropriate because machines are meant to be operated and working. Close observation of the dials reveal

⁵³ A "mess deck" is where enlisted sailors were served their meals and where they ate.

⁵⁴ "Bulkhead" is the naval term for "walls".

that they were left at the same setting as when the engines last operated.

This, along with the silence, lends itself to the idea that the ship has died or is in a deep sleep. The space can be overwhelming because it is one of the first times, other than perhaps the gun turret, where one is inside a dormant machine. Perhaps the addition of sound effects, like steam hissing, whistles, and engineers giving orders, would enhance this space for visitors because it would be playing to the hearing sense and their imagination.

Visitors exit the engine room and enter the butcher shop and are directed through one of the ship's galleys.⁵⁵ Everything about the galley is oversized: big pots, grills, and ovens. The pots and ovens can be opened and closed and one can hear other visitors banging on the pots and slamming doors closed as if to test if they were actually real. Visitors explore, look, pull, and exchange comments about how big everything is.⁵⁶ The size of these pots and ovens are appropriate for preparing meals for 2,300 crewmembers originally assigned to the ship. In *Listening in on Museum Conversations*, Leinhardt and Knutson note that "the conversations that take place in a museum are mediated by the environments developed and constructed by museum staff."⁵⁷ The

⁵⁵ "Galley" is the naval term for "kitchen".

⁵⁶ Visitor observation by author, July 3, 2009.

⁵⁷ Leinhardt and Knutson, 146.

Battleship staff selects the objects that visitors can interact with which results in environments that engage visitors and elicit conversations.

Like in the engine room, the space seems asleep or dead because no food is being cooked, and instead of smelling dinner, one smells the Battleship's distinctive odor. In this space, visitors hear old radio broadcasts of various shows and commercials. These audio programs help in removing the visitors from their usual time and place.

The mess decks are one of the first examples on the tour-route of where the space has been stripped. Many of the small items, like cooking utensils, were either removed by the Navy when the ship was placed in the Reserve Fleet or they have been relocated to secured storage by the curatorial or maintenance staff. Only large artifacts remain in most spaces along the tour-route. One staff member described the motivation for this policy by saying, "anything not nailed down will be taken off the ship by visitors."⁵⁸ Artifact theft is an important issue for staff and they have installed security cameras to help ensure that visitors do not deface, steal, or destroy the artifacts on the ship.

Visitors move through the galley and into another area

⁵⁸ Conversation with maintenance staff member, July 3, 2009.

where they see the scullery, the ship's store (where sailors could buy shirts, ink, extra uniforms), and the fountain.

Today, the fountain is being used as a place where visitors can buy water and sodas.

Visitors are directed into another section by stepping over a combing and climbing down another ladder to see where laundry was cleaned and re-issued, the barber shop, and the cobbler shop.⁵⁹ These rooms are behind plexiglass and visitors can view the space along with giant historic photos of sailors using these spaces during the war. These photos are effective to visitors, as this conversation amongst a family shows:

Pointing to a picture of men in their underwear

Child: Look! They are in their underwear!

Woman: Oh, it is so hot they are ironing in their underwear.

Man: It says they slept where they worked. It must have been really hot!

Photos add a different element to the artifact that visitors are viewing because it enables them to see how it was originally intended to be used: busy, active, and operated by sailors. These photographs emphasize the point that these artifacts are machines that are now quiet and still. Now, they

⁵⁹ On a ship, a door is referred to as a hatch. The hatches could be sealed and become water tight. Therefore, they did not go all the way down to the floor. The lower part of the hatch that you stepped over is referred to as a "combing". In some areas of the tour route, these combings have been cut out. In other areas, they have been left to emphasize the physical space of the ship.

serve as a staged space for visitors to view and wonder at as they go along the tour-route. Another element of the photos is that they seem to ease the transition for visitors between the artifact--historic past--me process because they immediately see how the artifact was originally intended.

The next section along the tour-route is the ship's post-office. It is the first space that has been interpreted by the Battleship's Living History Crew (LHC), a collection of dedicated volunteers. The rooms they have interpreted contain period uniforms, magazines, cigarettes, or pin-up girls in an effort to showcase the rooms as close to their original state and purpose as possible. These rooms tend to have the same affect for visitors that the historic photos have because they enable visitors to go through the artifact-historic past-me process quickly.

The tour-route has photographs, fully-interpreted rooms and also, a bizarre Gumby-like figure positioned to represent sailors (referred to by Battleship staff as the Gumby men after the clay stop-motion character from the children's television show of the 50s and 60s).⁶⁰ These unrealistic figures cause visitors to snicker and question their presence rather than

⁶⁰ "Gumby" men is the term for these human-like forms that serve to represent sailors throughout the ship by the Battleship staff. The name comes from the children's TV show, *The Adventures of Gumby and Pokey*, that began in 1957

enabling them to relate to the artifacts or the tasks they are meant to represent.

Visitors exit the mess decks and enter into a berthing area and an enlisted men's head, where toilets, sinks, and showers were once shared. Some of the berths, or bunks, have mattresses which allow visitors to climb into the berth and experience the close quarters. The berths provide another opportunity for visitors to experience their functionality through the senses. The process of artifact-historic past-me is played out in the following way: visitors see, and perhaps, lay down on the bunks. They think of the sailors who slept there and then imagine themselves as a sailor who would be sleeping there.⁶¹ This relationship between artifact and visitor gives visitors authority and control over their own participation that results in meaningful experiences.

The tour-route continues down a passage past the Chief's mess to another ladder that directs one to go down to the third deck.⁶² The Chief's mess is not on the tour-route because it is the office and archive space for the Battleship's Museum Department. However, there is an exhibit panel on the bulkhead explaining the purpose of the rooms.

⁶¹ More examples of how visitors go through this process are in Chapter 3.

⁶² "Berth" is a naval term for "bed". A "head" refers to a "toilet". A "chief" is a naval rank. They would have separate quarters for eating and sleeping than the enlisted men and officers.

After climbing down the ladder, visitors are in the machine shop, a room filled with big tools, vices, and machinery. Like so many spaces on the tour-route, the machine shop offers visitors a chance to touch and interact with the objects that occupied that space during the war. Again, the relationship between artifact and visitor is available to be played out. The tour goes through the machine shop and down another ladder to fire control. Fire control is the room from where all of the 16-inch and 5-inch guns were aimed and fired. The computers used to fire the guns are behind plexiglass while "Gumby" men interpret sailor roles.⁶³ This space is very cramped and hot and is another space where visitors need to pass in single-file. The tour-route continues back up another ladder, through another berthing space, to the barbette.⁶⁴

The barbette is a large, circular space that occupies two levels for visitors to tour. This space, like the engine room, is very industrial and resembles something out of a science-fiction movie. There is a humming sound of air blowers and one cannot help but feel small in such a large, open space. The circular space of the barbette is several decks below the gun turrets. Understanding that this is the space where projectiles

⁶⁴ The barbette is part of the "big gun" system. The "big guns" actually goes down three decks from the turrets on the main deck. The barbette is used to load powder kegs and projectiles up to the gun turrets where they can be fired.

were loaded up to the gun turrets emphasizes the ship's size and its original purpose as a warship. Gumby men demonstrate how the 90 pound powder kegs and the 2,500 pound projectiles were moved into position. A notable comparison of the projectiles' size and range is a small exhibit which displays the amount of powder required to fire the guns on the Confederate ironclad, the armored cruiser, and the Battleship. This is the only comparative exhibit of the *North Carolinas* on the tour-route.

Plenty of places offer the opportunity to sit and rest along the tour-route, but the space is not air-conditioned and it can become hot and uncomfortable. Fans have been placed throughout the ship to circulate air, but this does not relieve the heat problem.⁶⁵

From the barbette, the tour-route leads back up to the second deck and sick bay. Sick bay includes various rooms (dentist office, pharmacy, surgeon office, operating room) that have been interpreted by the Living History Crew. As visitors come into the sick bay berthing area, the berths are noticeably bigger than in any previous area, and were intended to make a patient more comfortable. These rooms and spaces are full of period medicine bottles, cots, and needles. The irony of the rooms is that the idea of comfort and health does not come to

⁶⁵ In the winter months, the problem is reversed: the ship is cold and is not heated.

mind. Instead, the artifacts appear to represent archaic weapons of torture. An exhibit on what it meant to be sick or wounded during World War II would be a nice supplement to this space.

From sick bay, visitors are directed to view various officer staterooms that have been restored by the Living History Crew. The difference between these rooms and the enlisted men's berths are obvious: the officer's have privacy, space, and furniture. Enlisted men have the exact opposite with a single locker for their possessions and no sleeping or restroom privacy. These spaces represent the different class structures of the day, and sailors had to know their place on board the Battleship during the war. After viewing the staterooms, visitors climb up another ladder and are back on the main deck of the Battleship.

At the top of the ladder, visitors are near the bow of the ship and the public restrooms. These are the first restrooms available on the tour-route other than those in the Visitor Center. The route continues into the Ward Room, which is the only air-conditioned room on the tour.⁶⁶ The Ward Room is divided into three main exhibit sections, and is referred to as

⁶⁶ The Ward Room is where the officers ate their meals. They were served by black or Filipino porters on china. Enlisted men ate off trays in the mess decks and were served cafeteria style. One major difference between officers and enlisted men is that officers had to pay for their meals and all services (laundry, barber shop, etc.). Meals accounted for 10% of their monthly pay. Enlisted men did not have to pay for any service or food.

the "museum" by Battleship staff. The exhibits include *Saving the Showboat*, which are photographs that detail the ship coming to Wilmington, *This Roll of Honor*, which include the names of all of the North Carolinians who died during World War II, and *Through Their Eyes—State Veterans Remember World War II*, which features photographs of various veterans and their stories. Visitors continue back out onto the main deck and around to the starboard side of the ship where visitors can play on a 40-mm gun and crawl inside a 5-inch gun turret.⁶⁷

At this point in the tour-route, visitors begin to see the "super structure", or the part of the ship above the main deck. This area includes the Captain's Cabin, the Admiral's Quarters, combat information center, plot, and the bridge. The higher on the ship a sailor or officer worked, the more important he was to the ship. Like the officers' staterooms, the super-structure represents the Naval class (or rank) structure of World War II. For example, the bridge is three decks above the main deck. As with everywhere else on the ship, visitors must use the ship's ladders to access these areas. The space becomes much smaller and tighter in and around the bridge and it will only admit approximately twelve visitors.

⁶⁷ If you are looking to the bow (or front of the ship), port will be on your left and starboard will be on your right. An easy way to remember this is to think that "left" has four letters, the same as "port".

The bridge is like the grand finale of the Battleship tour. It is one of the last spaces to see and go through, and also contains the objects that people tend to associate with ships: the Captain's chair, the ship's wheel, and compass. While remaining on the bridge for about ten minutes, three very notable visitor behaviors and conversations were captured. They all detail how visitors interacted with the various objects in the room, then reflected upon the sailors who used them, and then likened that experience to themselves, the artifact-historical fact-me process. The first was between a father and his daughter.

Man: Come up here. Look at that. *He is sitting in the Captain's chair. He has her climb into his lap.*

Girl: The window is missing.

Man: It just comes down. *It is a porthole that swings down to open.* Look at that out there. I would really like to be the captain of this ship.

This man's desire to be like the ship's captain clearly shows an emotional and romantic connection to the Battleship through his desire to take on the Captain's role from the ship's historic past. It is interesting that his daughter does not seem to be as affected by her surrounding since she can only note the obvious: the window is missing, which is a rational and real observation. This girl, like the child who asked about the Kingfisher plane on the fantail, only seems to be able to relate

to the objects on factual terms. This man, since his knowledge base is broader, easily makes the transition from artifact to sailor to himself. The second observation of visitor behavior on the bridge was an exchange between a mother and daughter at the ship's wheel.

Child: Why does the wheel move but the ship doesn't move?

Woman: The ship's not moving right now. It's just kinda stuck.

Child: *Playing with the wheel.* This is a lot of ship to handle.

Like the first example of the girl on the bridge and the adolescent at the Kingfisher plane, this girl uses reason to try to understand what she is experiencing by asking why the ship does not move with the wheel. The adult with her is content to not further confuse the child by giving a simple explanation to her question. It is interesting that this woman's response, like the woman's response to the child about the Kingfisher, is almost a way to placate the child by giving them a simple answer. Both visitors were women and they were asked about complicated mechanical workings (how guns worked or how the ship is steered).

The last visitor observed on the bridge exhibited a very playful attitude. As he was turning the ship's wheel, he said: "where's the rear view? I need to back up. Oh, we're at 'Full Stop'. No wonder. *He notices me watching him.* You caught me!

laughs." Just like the visitors who related to the sailors in doing the laundry in their underwear from the photograph, this visitor related to the object (the ship's wheel) by playing with it which ultimately led him to connect to the ship in his own, personal way which was through humor.

I ended up in a conversation with this visitor about how hot it was and he went on to tell me that the heat made him remember what it would have been like for the guys—"how it would have been so much hotter". He even referenced the laundry room picture on the tour-route where the men were in their boxers. He then went on to say that the Battleship was great because there were so many places to see and touch and play with. "At other museums, you can't do that."⁶⁸ In this one statement, this visitor expressed the very essence of the Battleship's relationship between artifacts and the visitor experience. In "Making Sense of Touch: A Multisensory Approach to the Perception of Objects," Charles Spence advised museum professionals to "optimize the multisensory nature of our tactile experiences with objects/artifacts in the future [because] multisensory experiences are generally richer, more pleasurable, and more memorable than unisensory experiences."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Visitor observations by author, July 3, 2009.

⁶⁹ Spence, 57.

This visitor's experience was richer and enabled him to make important connections because he did not have to imagine the heat because he felt how hot it was which made him think of the ship's reality during the war. The sensory connection he made to the past by the heat of the day made it easy for him to sympathize with Battleship sailors. Though he does not believe that the Battleship is a "museum" and therefore, in his mind, the ship is not an "artifact" because it is not behind plexiglass, the experience of being in those spaces and "playing" with the artifacts brought about for him the artifact-historic past-me process which was meaningful, memorable, and fun for him.

After the bridge, visitors exit the super structure by climbing down to the main deck, which leads to the Executive Officer's office.⁷⁰ On this particular day, a member of the Living History Crew had opened the office (it is usually closed and visitors can only peer inside) for visitors to come inside the space. The volunteer answered questions and explained the original purpose and importance of the various objects in the room. A group of visitors was already in the room and engaged in a conversation with the volunteer. A woman was telling the group (two separate families) about how she found out

⁷⁰ The ship's captain was primarily responsible for the ship's role as it related to the naval fleet. The executive officer (XO) was responsible for the day-to-day running of the ship.

information about her father during the war through locating his records. Then, another woman shared a similar story by telling the group about her father during Vietnam and the Bay of Pigs crisis. She spoke of how she preserved his medals and bronze star because she wanted something to remember him (apparently, he had died when she was very young). The group stayed and talked together for over ten minutes with subjects ranging from how to locate records to genealogy when one woman joked about calling her family "Heinz 57" because of the blend.⁷¹

In *Presence of the Past*, Rosenzweig and Thelen wrote "almost every American deeply engages the past, and the past that engages them most deeply is that of their family."⁷² These visitors are sharing stories with each other about their family histories because it is through their families that they feel connected to the Battleship and each other.

The last exhibit on the tour-route is a 40-mm gun that visitors can climb on, turn the wheels to make the gun turn and go up and down. The following was observed visitor behavior on the guns:

Man: Whee! We have almost blown up half of downtown Wilmington!

Woman: I guess these are anti-aircraft guns.
The couple then makes gun-firing sounds.

Man: Can you imagine: 'Faster, row faster!' and how I'd be struggling and freaking

⁷¹ Visitor observation by author, July 3, 2009.

⁷² Rosenzweig and Thelen, 22

out. *They continue to play on the guns and mimic gunfire sounds.*⁷³

Again, the artifact-historic past-to me identity process was played out. This couple was playing on the 40-mm guns pretending to blow up the City of Wilmington. The man imagined the pressure that a sailor may have felt under pressure, "faster, row faster" and then relates that to himself by saying that he would be "struggling and freaking out". The connections that these visitors made from object to sailor to themselves may not have been possible if they were not allowed to "play" with the prime artifacts.

Handler and Gable wrote in *New History in an Old Museum* that "objects are not a sufficient or even necessary condition of history making. We can imagine creating histories without objects, but not without language."⁷⁴ The Battleship's story is told to visitors through the objects, not language. Language is used but objects and the ability to interact with the objects leads to enriched and meaningful visitor experiences at the *Battleship North Carolina*.

In conclusion, the *Battleship North Carolina* organization is mandated by the state and Navy to maintain the ship as an artifact. The organization consists of different bureaucratic elements that work together to plan how to continue to generate

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Handler and Gable, 224.

revenue to be able to pay for the ship's maintenance and operation costs.

As a prime artifact, the Battleship's original purpose was to serve as a modern, floating war machine during World War II. The ship was segregated like the society that constructed her and offered opportunity to some. Then, in 1961, the ship came to Wilmington, North Carolina, to serve as the state's war memorial after being saved from the scrap heap by the state's citizens who raised money to bring her to North Carolina.

Today, the Battleship's primary purpose as an artifact is as a tourist attraction, museum, and memorial. Visitors are allowed to experience the ship on a physical and sensory level by seeing and going through the ship. They see the ship as one primary artifact that is made up of thousands of other parts that fit inside the ship, like the machine that she still is. This physical and sensory experiences lead visitors to an emotional and meaningful personal experience.

BATTLESHIP VISITORS

Who are the Battleship visitors? What is known about these visitors? What are some of their motivations for visiting? How do they behave once they arrive? And how do they find personal meaning through their Battleship experience? These are the questions that this chapter will answer. In *The Museum Experience*, John Falk and Lynn Dierking divide visitor motivation to museums into three broad categories: 1) social-recreational reasons, 2) educational reasons, and 3) reverential reasons.⁷⁵ Battleship visitation is described by this analysis.

Visitation between 2002 and 2009 averaged 196,000 visitors a year. Though the Battleship is open year-round, peak visitation occurs between March - October, with between 850 - 1,150 visitors a day. The "off" season usually has 100 - 300 visitors a day.⁷⁶ In a marketing survey conducted by the Battleship in 2001, the results showed that visitors consisted of 67% adults, 15% children, 7% senior citizens (62 and above), 7% groups, 3% military personnel, and 1% complimentary. These admission categories correlate to pricing structure that the Commission created for these different groups. 69.2% of those surveyed were first time visitors to the Battleship, while 30.8%

⁷⁵ Falk and Dierking, 14.

⁷⁶ Battleship North Carolina Commission Meeting Budget Reports, January 2002 - January 2010.

were repeat visitors. Of the repeat visitors, 60.6% had visited twice while 39.4% had been to the Battleship 3 or more times.⁷⁷

The survey showed that 88% of the Battleship visitors were on vacation while 12% were not on vacation when they visited. 68.7% planned to visit the Battleship before their vacation and 31.3% did not. Those on vacation cited that their final destination were local beaches (38%), Myrtle Beach (24%), other (21%), and Wilmington (17%). Those who were not on vacation were on a day trip (75%), were a Wilmington resident (16%), or were here on business (9%). The survey also showed who the visitors came with: 71% family, 13% couples, 11% friends, 3% alone, and 2% organized group.⁷⁸

Though this survey shows that visitors come from all over, every day of the year, this work will focus on twenty-seven (20 men and 7 women) who were interviewed for this visitor study at random in the Battleship canteen. Visitors were asked the same questions and their responses were digitally recorded and then transcribed. Of these twenty-seven respondents, twenty were first-time visitors to the Battleship while seven were repeat visitors. The average group size of those being interviewed was 3.3 people.⁷⁹ Though these twenty-seven visitors are all

⁷⁷ Monique Faust, "Battleship North Carolina Marketing Plan" (Wilmington, NC: Battleship North Carolina, 2002), 34-36.

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ The first question in the interview asked if this was a first or repeat visit. Repeat visitors were asked slightly different questions from the

different, they are alike in their basic motivations for visiting the Battleship. They wanted something that was fun and recreational but also had a little bit of history.

--Visitor Motivation--

DW: Why did you visit today?

Daniel: Because my friends asked me to and I thought it would be nice.⁸⁰

Daniel's reason for visiting the Battleship *North Carolina* was almost as if it came straight from *The Museum Experience*, in that he came in a group for recreational reasons.⁸¹ When asked why they came to see the Battleship, 74% of the interviews cited recreational reasons. Falk and Dierking also note that "many people feel obligated to depart from normal leisure patterns to see displays, such as King Tut...or national monuments."⁸² And like the people that Falk and Dierking refer to, many visitors make it clear that their reasons for visiting were because of a sense of obligation to see the Battleship. Kristen said that "we've been living in Wilmington for a while and never got around to it and we had a friend here this weekend, so it was a

first-time visitors. Only the first name of the visitor will be used in this study.

⁸⁰ Daniel interview

⁸¹ Falk and Dierking, 3 & 14.

⁸² Falk and Dierking, 15

good excuse."⁸³ Her main purpose was recreational but it also hints at a personal sense of obligation to visit the Battleship (never got around to it) and that she felt as if she needed an "excuse", as if it were required of all new-comers to Wilmington to visit the Battleship. Steven did not express a sense of obligation, but like Kristen, he was a new-comer to Wilmington who made it a point to visit the Battleship shortly after having moved. Steven said, "I was in the area; just something to do. I got a brochure and when I first got here a month ago and I thought, 'I want to go see that.' And it just happened today, finally."⁸⁴ Steven's visit is recreational (just something to do), while also having been influenced by the brochure that going to the Battleship was important to him (I want to go see that). Perhaps the size of the ship as presented in the brochure added to his attraction to see the ship.

Informal pre-visit planning methods played a decision-making role in Brian A.'s motivation to visit the Battleship.

He explains:

We have been meaning to visit for awhile. We were in the area, we are actually from Raleigh and we were down in this area and we just decided, sorta, coming back up from Southport that, 'hey', this would probably be a good day to do that [visit the Battleship] because you kinda wanted to come here when it wouldn't be

⁸³ Kristen, interview by author, 13 December 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

⁸⁴ Steven interview

so crowded and it wouldn't be so hot.⁸⁵

Going to the Battleship for Brian A. was a quick and sudden decision that used the reasoning of "off season" crowds and weather to be the motivation for his family's visit. For Simon, Eugene, and H. Deane, coming to the Battleship was just something to do. Simon said, "we were here with my wife and just passing around. We had been to Wilmington a couple of times but we have never been inside the actual USS *North Carolina*. So, we decided just to come by today."⁸⁶ Simon's response makes it clear that the Battleship benefits by being highly visible attraction from Wilmington, which attracts drive-by visitors. Eugene came to the Battleship because "I'm a transient here and we had nothing to do better so we thought we'd see the Battleship."⁸⁷ He feels the need to explain that he is a transient in the area (unlike the locals, Kristen and Steven), but instead of obligation or a true desire to visit the ship, he seems to want to ward off boredom (nothing better to do). H. Dean simply explained that he chose to visit because "well, just a nice day."⁸⁸ Apparently, going to the Battleship

⁸⁵ Brian A. interview

⁸⁶ Simon, interview by author, 2 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, Battleship *North Carolina*.

⁸⁷ Eugene, interview by author, 14 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, Battleship *North Carolina*.

⁸⁸ H. Dean, interview by author, 2 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, Battleship *North Carolina*.

with friends and family is a worthwhile and fun way to spend part of the day.

Some visitor motivations for coming were both recreational and family or group-centered. Leinhardt and Knutson wrote in *Listening in on Museum Conversations* that

visiting groups enter the museum with a rich sense of identity as families, couples, or friends; with a cluster of purposes that may gradually morph over the course of a visit from casually passing the time or getting in out of the rain to profound interest in learning or sharing some particular kind of knowledge; and with a set of background information that filters and colors the experiences that they have.⁸⁹

This visitor trend was made quite evident through the visitor interview responses. Harold came because of extended family who was visiting, "we had relatives that would like to see it, so we came down."⁹⁰ Activities for family guests are prime motivators for people to visit local attractions and museums, like the Battleship. Akira, who is from Japan, explained that he came to the Battleship because "basically, I came here to this city for business purposes. And our business partners recommended us to come here."⁹¹ He came with a group of fellow Japanese businessmen because of the recommendation of

⁸⁹ Leinhardt and Knutson, 74.

⁹⁰ Harold, interview by author, 13 December 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

⁹¹ Akira, interview by author, 2 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

another. George, like Akira, came to the Battleship as part of a specialized group. George explained that he came "to bring a group of individuals to do ghost hunting."⁹² George's motivation is unique in that it is a highly personal and specialized motivation. He is leading a paranormal group to tour the ship because of its reputation of being haunted, which points to George's personal hobby and/or pass time. Also, it is unique to the Battleship because it is reputed to be haunted rather than just being a random place to go and visit on a nice day.

The Battleship's role and importance in history counted for 16% of the interviews as the motivation for visiting the ship. A key element in understanding the significance of this motivation is that it was cited from all of the return visitors to the Battleship. Therefore, the mission and story of the Battleship appears to be clearly understood by the visitor by the time they leave. Steven D., who had brought a youth group from his church, explained that "we wanted to take the kids on an outing and coordinate it somewhat with our military and history and we thought this would be a good way to do it."⁹³ His intentions are numerous: recreational (an outing), pre-determined agenda (coordinate trip with military and history) which is educational, and carefully selected location because he

⁹² George, interview by author, 2 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

⁹³ Steven D., interview by author, 20 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

felt a trip to the Battleship accomplished all of his visit goals (a good way to do it).

Jeremy was another repeat visitor who came because of his sense of the Battleship's history. He said that "the Battleship is just something that is part of our history in our state. So, it just something neat to go see."⁹⁴ Again, recreation is a motivating factor (something neat to go see) but it is recreation that has historical meaning. This meaning plays an important role in his identity of being a North Carolinian (part of our history in our state). The Battleship is something that has taken on a kind of historical ownership for Jeremy. He is not alone in this sense of historical meaning. Deb, who has visited the Battleship over thirty times, came because she "wanted to see a little bit of history that I haven't seen in a while in Wilmington."⁹⁵ The Battleship serves as one of the historic symbols for the community. For visitors like Deb, who have visited regularly, Wilmington seems to serve as a fast-food restaurant where she can select history from the menu and leave with a fresh order of Battleship.

Finally, 10% of the visitors interviewed stated that their motivation for visiting the Battleship had emotional or personal military connections. Debra said, "it was an outing for us.

⁹⁴ Jeremy, interview by author, 20 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

⁹⁵ Deb, interview by author, 2 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

[He's] active duty marine at Lejeune, Camp Lejeune, and he just came home from Iraq and I thought he might enjoy seeing this."⁹⁶ The purpose for her visit is recreational with the purpose of experiencing patriotism because of the ship's history and role as the state's war memorial, and as a way to feel connected to and identify with a larger historical picture. The young marine's experience in Iraq automatically earns him a sense of a shared military experience with the past. Debra's motivation in coming is an example of what David Thelen wrote in his afterthought to *Presence of the Past*. "What we have in common as human beings is that we employ the past to make sense of the present and to influence the future."⁹⁷

Cynthia's purpose in visiting the Battleship varies from Debra's because she is seeking to connect to her grandfather's war experience.

Just to have something to do. I really like history, myself, and I had two, well actually, three grandfathers who served in World War II and two of them were in the Navy. So, this just kinda brought it more alive to me.⁹⁸

Cynthia's motivations are multifaceted: recreational (just to have something to do), her personal connection because of her grandfather's Navy and war experiences, and historical identity which all combined to bring "it more alive" for her by

⁹⁶ Debra interview

⁹⁷ Rosenzweig & Thelen, 190.

⁹⁸ Cynthia, interview by author, 1 February 2009, Wilmington, voice recording, Battleship *North Carolina*.

connecting her to the larger historical narrative of her family and World War II. The Battleship acted as the glue that brought these different elements together for her.

If anything can be made clear about visitor motivation to the Battleship *North Carolina*, it is that their reasons are uniquely personal. All of them share some recreational sense of something to do and experience. New-comers and tourists to Wilmington and the area see it as destination, groups see it as an educational or specialized destination (whether that be for ghost hunting, church youth groups, or Japanese businessmen), and of historical importance through its military identity enables visitors to connect to a larger shared experience or collective.

--Visitor Behavior--

In *Presence of the Past*, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen conducted a survey in an effort to find out how people related to history. Their results showed that "experiences did not come to respondents with prefabricated lessons; their meanings had to be made...they had to be approached through each of the senses, poked and handled...respondents worked hard to make meanings: to

recognize, recall, interrogate, and empathize.”⁹⁹ Like their survey respondents, Battleship visitors work hard to create their own meanings through their experience in many different ways: they take pictures as a way of recording their experience, they feel a sense of nostalgia as a way to relate and empathize with the Battleship crew, some actively put themselves into the past by using their imagination, others recall their own military experiences as a way to access the Battleship’s historic past. Some visitors recall past visits to the ship as children and how those experiences have become a part of their family’s history. All of these behaviors will show that visitors work hard to find meaning in what they see, feel, hear, smell, and touch at the Battleship.

Taking pictures is a visitor behavior that can be observed on the Battleship at any time of day, any day of the year. Popular picture taking locations include on the gangway, on the fantail (looking back up to the ship), the ship’s bell, and the bow to name a few. Of the twenty-seven visitors interviewed, only three took no pictures at all. Five took pictures inside the ship of a particular space or object, eight took pictures of just the ship, and eleven had people in their pictures in a variety of spaces on the ship. This common behavior is significant because it acts as a way for visitors to record

⁹⁹ Rosenzweig and Thelen, 38.

their own history. Taking pictures has become so natural as to be a shared ritual with everyone. Nancy Martha West in *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* connects the beginning of this visitor/tourist phenomenon to the first personal cameras.

Kodak taught amateur photographers to apprehend their experiences and memories as objects of nostalgia, for the easy availability of snapshots allowed people for the first time in history to arrange their lives in such a way that painful or unpleasant aspects were systematically erased.¹⁰⁰

The camera only shows what the camera sees. Any previous disagreements or complaining about the heat below decks all are forgotten temporarily when the camera comes out and the family, friends, or group stops and smiles in front the Battleship. Susan Sontag in *On Photography* describes the picture taking ritual as being a source of unconscious comfort.

Most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter. Unsure of other responses, they take a picture. This gives shape to experience: stop, take a photograph, move on. The method especially appeals to people handicapped by a ruthless work ethic—Germans, Japanese, and Americans. Using a camera appeases the anxiety which the work driven feel about not working when they are on vacation and supposed to be having fun. They have something to do that is like a friendly imitation of work: they can take pictures.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 1.

West's and Sontag's arguments are continually played out by Battleship visitors who take pictures as part of their experience. "Did you take any pictures" was one of the interview questions. If the answer was "yes", they were asked to explain of what. Cynthia took "a lot of the inside. The bunks and medical areas and the kitchen and store with all the old candy bar boxes and just really nostalgia kind of pictures mostly. But then, I took some of the ribbons on the outside that show how important this role was for the ship."¹⁰² Cynthia seems to be creating her own kind of Battleship scrapbook, with the "nostalgia kind of pictures" having the most meaning or appeal to her, probably because the "old candy bar boxes" and the ship ribbons validates her idea of historical importance which appear to be connected to a high sense of worth to her.

Debra took pictures "mostly of the kids all over the ship and different places in the front. A lot of the flags and ribbons. I didn't realize the ship was decorated just like a person."¹⁰³ Debra's primary interest is to create memories of her family's visit (mostly of the kids), which is person-motivated rather than object-motivated. When she saw that the ship had been humanized (just like a person), she felt compelled

¹⁰¹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1973), 10.

¹⁰² Cynthia interview

¹⁰³ Debra interview

to take a picture of the ship. Knowing what visitors are taking pictures of opens a window into understanding their behavior and experience. Cynthia leaves the Battleship with a scrapbook of "nostalgia" pictures of historic significance, where Debra sees the ship on a very personal level, remembering the "kids" and how the ship is "like a person".

Casey "definitely [took pictures of] the ship, itself. The cannons, the guns, and pictures of me and my fiancé and stuff like that."¹⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that for Casey, the most important task of picture taking would be in capturing the ship on film (definitely the ship, itself). Due to the nature of being a battleship, the guns are prominent along the decks. By taking pictures of these guns it appears that she did not put a lot of thought into the picture locations, because her selections were all obvious and easy. She wants to document her visit (definitely, the ship) but is perhaps more motivated by remembering the trip with her fiancé. This may be why she did not really care where the picture was taken, as long as they would have pictures of themselves together. But it is significant to note that she mentioned the ship first, which could lead one to think that the main objective for picture

¹⁰⁴ Casey, interview by author, 14 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, Battleship *North Carolina*.

taking is to document the object of historical importance before one's personal memories.

Samuel and Brian A. are also examples of personalizing their visit to the Battleship with ritual-like pictures of their family. Samuel said that "most of [his pictures] were just my daughter in front of stuff on the ship."¹⁰⁵ Brian A. said "we took a couple on the bow facing back towards the guns and towers and stuff. One of each of us."¹⁰⁶ Taking pictures of people in front of the ship seems to be a visitor rite of passage. As Sontag argued, it proves that they were there which validates their experience. Their trip had value because it was centered around an object of historic importance.

Jeremy's pictures were of him and his girlfriend physically engaged with the ship. He took pictures of "us portraying the action of the men, that sort of thing. Sleeping on the bed or at the guns. That sort of thing."¹⁰⁷ Jeremy's pictures are significant because it shows that he wants to engage in the past by "portraying the act of the men" in a playful, meaningful manner while recording the moment with a picture. Meaningful and playful activities and "that sort of thing", brings the visitor physically and emotionally closer to the sailors which ultimately leads to visitor sympathy and empathy toward them.

¹⁰⁵ Samuel, interview by author, 13 December 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

¹⁰⁶ Brian A. interview

¹⁰⁷ Jeremy interview

Steven D., who brought a youth group from his church to the Battleship, said "the boys wanted a lot of pictures taken with the guns, of course. But, quite a few different pictures. Different areas."¹⁰⁸ The playful boys at the guns wanted their picture taken because a picture would record forever that they were acting out the role of a World War II battleship gunner. The picture acts as a kind of proof that could not be refuted by others. An interesting point is the Steven D. says that "of course" the boys wanted their pictures with the guns, seeming to say that boys will be boys in their playing with the ship's guns. The ability to "play" with the artifacts allows visitors to become immersed in their own historical storyline through their imagination. And these moments are popular to record and preserve through picture taking.

Richard came to the Battleship with his fellow Navy corpsmen.¹⁰⁹ Like Jeremy and Steven D., the pictures he chose to take show how he was engaged with part of the ship. Richard said:

I took a lot of the medical department...it's what we do. So, I thought it was neat to see the surgical kits and everything like that. All the old...like the dentist's office. Like that crazy chair with all the different

¹⁰⁸ Steven D. interview

¹⁰⁹ A Navy corpsman is responsible for providing basic medical care to Marine units or may even work onboard Navy ships or work in Navy hospitals. They are the equivalent to an Army "medic". In the field, they are responsible for providing enough medical care to someone until a doctor can be provided. During World War II, the "corpsman" was known as the "pharmacist mate".

tools on it. The surgical room where its
just like a flat wooden board in the middle
of the room. I thought that was neat.¹¹⁰

He was able to identify with the medical department because
"it's what we do". His engagement with the objects in the sick
bay is significant because he is aware of how they have changed
over time due to the nature of his current profession. Seeing
the difference in time (old) objects have added to his enjoyment
in seeing them (the crazy chair) and can describe it as being
"neat". Though Richard's pictures did not have any people in
them, they are highly personal. He documented the objects that
sailors like him used to have, thus connecting him to a larger
historical narrative and ensuring his place in the present.

Pictures are such a common visitor practice on board that
it is easily overlooked as visitor behavior. Visitors stop and
take pictures everywhere: at the sign on the road, on the road
leading up to the ship, on the gangway, from the parking lot, on
the fantail, on the bow, along the tour route. These pictures
are significant because they serve as a way of recording a
moment with their family, an object that has particular meaning
(whether for nostalgia or personal identity), and that their
trip was worthwhile because it was centered around a ship that

¹¹⁰ Richard, interview by author, 10 January 2009, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

is of historical significance, and to record memories of themselves having fun with each other and with the ship.

Nostalgia is another way that visitors relate to and identify or empathize with the past. At the Battleship, this nostalgia usually takes the form of visitors relating to crewmembers by seeing them as a unified group who they believe was a big part of "our past". They envision the crew as a group who worked seamlessly as a team with a specific purpose. In *Yearning for Yesterday*, nostalgia is defined "as a kind of telephoto lens on life which, while it magnifies and prettifies some segments of our past, simultaneously blurs and grays other segments."¹¹¹ With the idea of a telephoto lens, nostalgia is a way that the mind takes pictures, creating what it wants to portray. In answer to the question, "what do you think you will remember from your visit today?", Jessica said: "Just exactly what the guys went through in the Navy. Just how everything worked out and how they fought for our country."¹¹² It is impossible for Jessica to know "just exactly what the guys went through", yet she believes that by going through the tour-route, that she does know. Her sense of nostalgia is apparent in her optimism and patriotism(how everything worked out) and it is

¹¹¹ Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 31.

¹¹² Jessica, interview by author, 20 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, Battleship North Carolina.

this image that she is taking with her when she leaves the Battleship.

Russ was also affected by a sense of nostalgia. He said that he would remember "life on a ship because I've never been on a ship...also, like being in the Navy and not being on a ship it is nice to see how our fellow shipmates used to live and have everything. How life was for them."¹¹³ Russ is a member of the Naval corpsmen group who visited. This explains his feeling connected to "our fellow shipmates" and the larger historical narrative of World War II sailors. The tour-route features objects, crew memories, and spaces but it is his own sense of nostalgia that enables him to imagine how the Battleship sailors "used to live and have everything". The experience of being on a ship, even though it is no longer a working ship and is not at sea, was enough to give Russ the feeling that he had experienced "life on a ship". The original crew is long gone; only some of their thoughts and possessions remain. But this does not keep his sense of nostalgia from knowing "how life was for them."

Brian T. is another visitor who will remember "the way the sailors lived on the ship."¹¹⁴ By now, a theme of how the physical & sensory experience of relating to different artifacts leads to an emotional experience from the tour-route is again

¹¹³ Russ, interview by author, 10 January 2009, Wilmington, voice recording, Battleship *North Carolina*.

¹¹⁴ Brian T., interview by author, 13 December 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, Battleship *North Carolina*.

emerging in what visitors are going to remember from their visit. "The way the sailors lived" is a human story, and nostalgia since it is a way to view "our past" is ultimately a story of people and what they experienced and what the objects were that made up their lives. Kristen said "I would probably never be able to live on a ship (laughs). I don't think I could handle living in close quarters (laughs)."¹¹⁵ In this example, she uses her own experiences as a way to relate to the past and instead of it being better than the present, it was worse because she does not like the living conditions.

Akira was a Japanese businessman who came to visit the Battleship with his group. His experience, and what he related to is unique since the Battleship engaged in many battles with the Japanese Imperial Navy. When he was asked what he would remember from his visit, he responded:

So many things. I am from Japan and so it was mixed emotions. One thing was that we should not have started the war (laughs)... It is interesting because I am looking at that and I don't know how to operate that kind of thing on the sea...it's moving...it's very interesting.¹¹⁶

His experience as the "enemy" brought him "mixed emotions" while the Battleship's tour message of military strength was received by him (we should not have started the war). He also tries to

¹¹⁵ Kristen interview

¹¹⁶ Akira interview

imagine working technology that he is unfamiliar with under real sea conditions. Though he may not be able to completely relate to life as an American sailor, he can imagine and wonder at the working conditions and skills required to "operate that kind of thing on the sea". Eugene, like Akira, used his imagination as a way to relate to the past. In response to what his favorite exhibit was, he said "probably the dentist. Just the archaic things and anticipating that if I had to go there with a toothache or something that it was going to hurt."¹¹⁷ Eugene's imagination gets him worked up over just "anticipating" what it would be like to have a tooth pulled. And this imagination is driven by simply seeing the objects on display in the dentist's office.

Cynthia and Richard were both struck by the living conditions on the Battleship. In answer to the question, "was the tour different from what you expected?", Cynthia responded "there were a lot more areas that we got to see, like the medical center where the surgical unit was (laughs). I was like these poor guys. What they had to live through if they had an operation but that was the time back then, so..."¹¹⁸ On a practical level, she was surprised by the extent of the tour-route (more areas that we got to see) while on an emotional

¹¹⁷ Eugene interview

¹¹⁸ Cynthia interview

level, she related and identified with the "poor guys" if they required medical attention. This is an example of almost reverse nostalgia in that present day medical equipment is better than that of the past from her perspective. However, she accepts the historic value of the equipment because "that was the time back then" which can be interpreted as a nostalgic notion because although the medical equipment is inferior to the present, it is what was available at the time.

Richard's favorite exhibit was "the berthing areas, where they all slept and all the bunks. They slept one on top of each other like that, all cramped in. It's horrible. I'd never want to do that. I thought that was cool."¹¹⁹ Like Cynthia, he exhibits a kind of reverse nostalgia in that present conditions are better than those of the past (it's horrible). Yet, he also accepts it as a historical truth and since that truth does not affect his life, it can be "cool". An interesting fact about the Battleship is that the crew did not sleep "one on top of each other." Enlisted men slept in bunks and were often "cramped in", but officers had staterooms and were fortunate enough to experience better living conditions. These staterooms are on the tour-route but that is not what he took away from him since he did not mention them at all. Richard is an enlisted man himself as a corpsman, and his present life condition shows

¹¹⁹ Richard interview

how he focused on what would have been the conditions comparable to what he would have experienced (I'd never want to do that). Richard's behavior shows how he is strongly identifying with the larger historical narrative of World War II sailor and himself in both positive and negative aspects of real life.

The social aspect of the Battleship tour, which highlights where the crew ate and slept, are aspects of the war and the Navy that many visitors can relate to because of the human element. In answer to what was her favorite exhibit, Rebecca said "I think the coolest part was seeing, like, the beds. Seeing how many people slept there and the conditions and stuff."¹²⁰ Sleeping is a part of everyone's daily life and so can be easily comprehended. Maybe because sleeping is such a natural part of life today, seeing different sleeping arrangements becomes the "coolest part" of the Battleship tour. When she was asked if the "tour was different from what you expected", Rebecca said "there's a lot more to the ship than I thought. I mean, I'm not in the Navy or anything. I know a little bit about it but not to the extent of what's in there."¹²¹ What she does know about is sleeping and she was able to relate to that part of tour. She differs from the corpsmen visitors because she does not feel part of the larger historical

¹²⁰ Rebecca, interview by author, 2 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

¹²¹ Rebecca interview

narrative (I'm not in the Navy or anything), as if to fully understand the Battleship required military experience.

However, Rebecca does seem to have taken away with her a fuller picture of how a World War II battleship would function during wartime (there's a lot more to the ship than I thought).

Daniel is a visitor who was impressed with the social aspects of the Battleship but was ultimately practical in his thinking. When asked what he would remember, he said "probably the way of life and how there were so many different aspects of the ship including medical quarters and laundry room. They almost had to have everything you would normally need because they were so far away from home."¹²² He appears to have been less intimidated than Rebecca about the "different aspects of the ship" and recalled a major curatorial message, that of the "floating city" by expressing that they "had to have everything" because they "were so far away from home". Daniel is also relating to the past on a human, emotional, and practical level.

Visitor nostalgia depends heavily on their ability to relate to the crew as a single group by seeing their living spaces and understanding their responsibilities at sea. This understanding causes the visitor to feel closer to the crew and the Battleship's historic past.

¹²² Daniel interview

Some visitors make their Battleship experience meaningful by working hard at imagining themselves in the role of various sailors while the ship was at war. This is different from nostalgia because it is not seeing the past from a distance but it is an attempt to join the past by imagining themselves as a part of it. Their imagination depends on a connection with an artifact or a specific space on board the ship.

In *The Origins of Knowledge and Imagination*, Jacob Bronowski argues that the imagination is essentially visual. "Almost all the words that we use about experiences of the kind that go into visions or images are words connected with the eye and with the sense of sight. 'Imagination' is a word which derives from the making of images in the mind."¹²³ So imagination is closely linked to nostalgia except it does not only select objects to "magnify and prettify." And like personal photographs, imagination is primarily visual.

Visitors can use that visual imagination to identify with heroic historic Battleship figures. Loewen wrote in *Lies Across America* that "human beings live by stories. Individuals who have not forged a heroic narrative of their own can nonetheless feel part of something important...by identifying with others who performed heroic deeds."¹²⁴ Imagining themselves in Battleship

¹²³ Jacob Bronowski, *The Origins of Knowledge and Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 10.

¹²⁴ Loewen, 25.

sailor roles enables them forge an emotional connection to that past.

One space on the Battleship that tends to inspire visitor imagination and identity is the bridge. It is the place where people sit in the captain's chair and pretend to steer the ship's wheel. Jeremy had an extremely imaginative experience on the bridge. He was so affected by it, that he told me about it after his interview. He agreed to share his experience on tape.

Going through the ship, I believe the part of the ship that had the most impact on me—sitting on the bridge in the captain's chair—and you look out to the front of you and the side of you, you see what the captain would have saw—and you just see the immensity of the ship ahead of you—and you're only seeing half the ship—and it had to be quite a feeling to know you commanded so many men, and such a massive vessel—and foreign waters—it had to be quite a feeling for a man to have that control and do a job like that.¹²⁵

Here, Jeremy seems to express it all: he is actively engaged with an object (the captain's chair) by being able to actually sit in it. Nostalgia in that he is inferring the past as wonderful (it had to be quite a feeling to know you commanded so many men), and his own imagination (you see what the captain would have saw). When in reality, the ship is not in the open sea and the view from the bridge looks directly out onto a highway. Despite all the land around him, Jeremy's imagination

¹²⁵ Jeremy interview

puts him back into the past to what he believes the captain saw and felt (it had to be quite a feeling). His imagination serves as his bridge into a historic past of his own creation.

George is another visitor who was affected by the bridge. It is his favorite exhibit because "the view and the sense of history, where the Battleship had been, who might've been sitting in the Battleship at the time when it was out to sea and at war. I always just have an awestruck feeling when I'm up there."¹²⁶ George uses his imagination to complete a broader historical picture (who might've been sitting in the Battleship at the time) which suggests his ability to identify with the human aspect of the past. And like Jeremy, he is affected by "the view and the sense of history." Perhaps this "sense of history" is enhanced for visitors because they can physically engage with the objects by sitting in the chairs and by standing in the same spaces of those who "might've been" there "when it was out to sea and at war". The bridge setting is first an visual experience (imagination) and then an emotional experience (identity).

For some visitors, the most meaningful way they can recognize, recall, and empathize with the Battleship's past is either through their own experience or that of a family member. In each case, they take what they know and relate that to the

¹²⁶ George interview

ship's crewmembers. As a result, a sense of "shared experiences" created an almost immediate bond and sense of connection between the crew and these visitors.

In *The Museum Experience*, Falk and Dierking say that "visitors try, often quite desperately, to relate what they are seeing to their own experiences."¹²⁷ At the Battleship, those experiences that visitors relate to center around military experiences. Harold's interview consisted of a lot of "yes" and "no" answers. It was after the interview when he began to talk more and he agreed for that conversation to be recorded.

Harold: I was on a destroyer.

DW: You were on a destroyer?

Harold: Yeah. 1964-1968. We done shore bombardments in Vietnam and a couple of tours in Europe. I'm familiar a little bit with battleships.

DW: Ok. So...

Harold's wife: The Navy's in his blood.

DW: Do you think having served in the military and being a veteran and having served on destroyers that it skews your perspective at all of what you see on the Battleship?

Harold: Well, yeah. I know a little, yeah...you know 'bout what goes on and how they lived and everything else by doing it myself on a lot smaller ship.

DW: Does it bring back memories from your own experiences?

Harold: Oh, yeah. Most definitely.

DW: Would you mind sharing with me one of those experiences?

Harold: Well, just the living quarters and then when we was doing shore bombardment,

¹²⁷ Falk and Dierking, 74.

combat zones. Stuff like that.
DW: What did you do on the destroyer?
Harold: I worked in the boiler room.
DW: So you were in the area that was very hot all the time.
Harold: Extremely hot. It was 100+ most of the time.
DW: Okay. Well...
Harold's wife: They're obsolete now (laughs).
Harold: Yeah. My profession is gone. Just like the battlewagons. Everything's smart bombs.¹²⁸

Through his own naval experiences, Harold is able to relate on a very personal level to the Battleship sailors (know 'bout what goes on...by doing it myself). It is interesting that it related the most to the living conditions and shore bombardments. Perhaps he remembers these experiences because social life and the guns are the prominent exhibits on the Battleship. There is a definite hint of loss or remorseful nostalgia in Harold's words as he talks about serving in the boiler rooms. His wife reminds him that it is "obsolete" and then laughs, while he agrees. However, he connects his being "obsolete" with the Battleship "My profession is gone. Just like the battlewagons." The Navy world has changed (everything's smart bombs) but this change has not broken the bond Harold has by virtue of his own experiences because the "Navy's [still] in his blood".

¹²⁸ Harold interview

Another example of a visitor's military experience is Richard. He is an interesting case because he is currently serving in the Navy and his grandfather is a Navy veteran.

DW: What do you think you will remember from your visit today?

Richard: I think the antiquity of everything. I really enjoy that. Being in the Navy now and seeing how it used to be. I really enjoyed that and how everything has changed and everything like that. My grandfather was on a ship way back when in World War II and I'd hear a lot of neat sea stories. See how they lived and everything like that.

DW: Was he on a battleship?

Richard: Yes, he was.

DW: Out of curiosity, which battleship was he on?

Richard: The *Arizona*.

DW: Was he there at Pearl Harbor when the...

Richard: He was on leave. So, that's why I'm here (laughs).

DW: Lucky him.

Richard: He was on leave, yeah.¹²⁹

Richard was impressed with the "antiquity of everything" and "seeing how it used to be". He is able to view the "antiquity" from a purely nostalgic point of view and appreciates "how everything has changed". Unlike Harold, there is no hint of remorseful nostalgia because his profession is not "obsolete" and Richard likens the past directly to his present circumstances (being in the Navy now and seeing how it used to be). He also is connecting his experience to that of his grandfather who did live and serve in conditions that are

¹²⁹ Richard interview

interpreted on the Battleship. And again, living conditions are listed as what the visitor remembers from their tour (see how they lived and everything like that). Richard's ability to connect to both the past and the present is no doubt affected by the fact that his grandfather served on a battleship, so what he would have seen would be very similar to what his grandfather would have experienced (so I'd hear a lot of neat sea stories).

Kenneth is another visitor whose personal military experience had an affect on his visit to the Battleship. When he was asked if his visit met his expectations, he replied: "Yes, and then some. I was very impressed with it. The top guns, the turrets, and then watching such an old ship. Since I was in the military and I'd seen a modern ship this was one of the first times I'd seen something this old. I was impressed with it."¹³⁰ As ships go, the Battleship is not that old and was the product of the newest technology when she was built in the late 1930s. Kenneth's reaction of "watching such an old ship" is remarkable in that it clearly shows how important a role technology plays in determining that something is old, like Harold's "old battlewagons" to the new "smart bombs". Kenneth, because of his previous military experience, cannot help but compare his present to the Battleship's past. He is "impressed

¹³⁰ Kenneth, interview by author, 14 November 2008, Wilmington, voice recording, *Battleship North Carolina*.

with it" because old or new, all ship's have some things in common (living spaces, engines, navigation, to name a few).

Steven is an example of a visitor whose military past had a clear affect on his visit. When he was asked what he was going to remember from his visit, he responded: "well, what I would remember is that I am a retired First Sergeant. And all of these places are on that ship for a soldier to hide out. That's what kinda struck me."¹³¹ Based on his comment, it is easy to imagine that Steven had a problem with soldiers "not being where they're supposed to be" and he brought that personal experience with him to the Battleship.¹³² He even makes it as if the ship wants to make things difficult for him and easy for the soldiers (all of *these* places are on *that* ship). For Steven, the Battleship presents a unique challenge for him as a person in charge.

But though some visitors were able to relate to the Battleship on a personal level due to their military experience, other visitors were able to relate to the Battleship, itself, and other objects on the Battleship on emotional and physical levels. According to many of the visitor interviews, the Battleship is full of "interesting stuff" that they were typically unaware of before they went through the tour. Brian

¹³¹ Steven interview. A First Sergeant is part of the Army.

¹³² Ibid

T. and Dave both thought of their visit as an experience. Brian T. said "there was just a lot of interesting stuff to see and there was definitely something that you could fill a day with."¹³³ His visit seems to have been very task-oriented, in that there were things to see while also being worthwhile because he could "easily" spend the entire day at the Battleship. Dave said he would remember "the fact that there's no more battleships and you don't get to see them very often." Dave enjoyed seeing something rare and meaningful, almost like a dinosaur of the sea; perhaps for Dave the Battleship is like a mythological sea beast, and lucky is the individual who "gets to see" one.

While some visitors related their visit to the Battleship to their past military experiences, some related it to a past visit to the Battleship with a family member or when they were young. These visitors recognized how the Battleship had become a part of their past because it had become a part of their family's memory and experiences. These visitors shared a connection to specific times, places, and activities that brought back these memories as they toured the ship.

Jeremy had visited the Battleship when he was a little boy with his family. He described his visit like this:

DW: Was your visit today similar to the

¹³³ Brian T. interview

visits from the past?

Jeremy: It was but it was a lot better this time. I can remember everything. I can understand it a lot better than I could when I was a little boy, you know? Then you see stuff, you really don't understand how it works.

DW: Was your tour today different from what you expected?

Jeremy: It was but in a good way. It was better than I thought. I knew it would be good but its better than I thought it would be.

DW: Can you elaborate a little on that?

Jeremy: I like the detail when I was young. Going through the tour, you seem to remember. You just see stuff but it seems like you see more. You get all the bits and pieces. The barber shop, the salon, and the kitchen and the bed quarters, you know, sleeping quarters. Just all that put together you see what the men actually went through. The day to day life on the ship.¹³⁴

Jeremy is clearly nostalgic about his visit when he "was young" and a "little boy" but at the same time, he can recognize that his maturity and life experiences enable him to get "all the bits and pieces". As a young boy, he remembers seeing "stuff" but did not "understand how it works". The significant part is that he did remember his visit as a boy. That visit had become a part of his past. As an adult man, he creates an experience for himself that puts it "together" in a way that for him causes him to "see what the men actually went through". He mentions very specific part of the ship (the barber shop, etc) and that

¹³⁴ Jeremy interview

is all that he needs to formulate the "day to day life on the ship". He does not mention any aspect of that life which would include keeping to a very strict schedule and of fighting at sea with enemy planes and ships, which was definitely part of the day to day life of the ship.

Deb's experience seems to echo Jeremy's. She has been to the Battleship over thirty times. When asked if her visit was similar to those from the past she replied:

Deb: Well, in the past I came with my father when I was [a] younger child. So it was quite a bit different seeing things at a different perspective and being a lot older than before.

DW: Was your tour different from what you expected?

Deb: Yes. I was able to see different things in a different perspective and pay attention to things. I understood things a lot better than before, being older.¹³⁵

It seems that for Deb, her visits as a child are associated with her father where with Jeremy, he associates it with remembering the "stuff". She clearly expresses being able to appreciate viewing the Battleship from a "different perspective" because she is "older". H. Dean is like Jeremy and Deb in that he is a repeat visitor. He did not recall any past memories of the Battleship but instead talked about a family memory that had happened that day. His primary focus had been on his children and watching them experience the ship for themselves. He was

¹³⁵ Deb interview

asked if he thought his children experienced what he had experienced when he was ten years old. He replied, "oh, yeah, yeah. The little one was all excited. He wanted to sit in the big gun turret and stuff. It was cool for him."¹³⁶ The "little one" experienced the ship in a purely physical (and most likely) imaginative way by sitting in "the big gun turret and stuff." Watching his child, H. Dean can relive his own childhood experience, his own history. And though the "little one" may be like Jeremy and not understand all of the "bits and pieces" of the Battleship, an important memory was created for the boy and H. Dean, who got to watch him experience (it was cool for him) the Battleship.

To conclude, Battleship visitors consist of people who visit in families or other social groups. They come from all over the country (and sometimes the world) and visit while they are on vacation, have family or guests in town, or because seeing the Battleship is important to them. Battleship visitor behavior showed how they attempted to have effective and meaningful experiences through their efforts to recognize, recall, and empathize with the ship's historic past. They did this by taking pictures of themselves on the ship and of artifacts as a way to record their visit. They used nostalgia as a way of understanding the crew and their responsibilities as

¹³⁶ H. Dean interview

a unified group. Sometimes, when they saw a particular artifact, they used their imagination to transport themselves to identify with someone from the ship's past. Others used their personal experiences in the military as a way of understanding past crewmembers experiences while others use their past visits to the Battleship to recognize elements of their own families past and traditions. These behaviors significantly contribute to a Battleship visitor's experience as being powerful, effective, and meaningful because of the emotion it brought up within them. Visitors, through their words and actions, clearly demonstrate that the Battleship *North Carolina* functions effectively as a museum.

BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS AND THE OTHER-KIND OF BATTLESHIP VISITOR

The Battleship *North Carolina* offers a great visitor experience: they go through the tour-route and experience the artifact-historical past-me process. They come and take pictures, enjoy a sense of nostalgia, allow their imagination to take them into the past or to relive a part of their own past as they go through the ship. These different aspects of the visitor experience are wonderful: but it would not mean a thing if the Battleship had to close because the organization could no longer afford to "keep" the ship.

Operating the ship as a small for-profit business has been essential in being able to keep the doors open for today's and tomorrow's visitors. The organization has been successful in generating revenue, obtaining corporate sponsorships, and by allowing the ship to be rented out for a variety of functions. This hard, financial bottom line keeps the balance of power with visitors, sponsors, and special groups. These special groups are willing to pay for the privilege of associating their group with the Battleship's name and special location options. This chapter will look at how the Battleship operates as a small for-profit business and how these special groups invest the ship with their own purpose and meaning.

--The Business Side of the Battleship--

The Battleship staff consists of 25 full-time employees and 5-15 part-time staff, depending on the season. The departments include Administrative and Accounting, Maintenance, Museum, Programs, Promotions, and Gift Shop.¹³⁷ Though these departments are different, their professional goal is the same: to contribute to generating revenue for the Battleship. The Administrative and Accounting department is charged with guiding all the departments and managing all of the billing and accounting needs of the Battleship. The Accounting staff made the decision to update their technologies and software to include *Macola* and *CounterPoint*. Though costly, these software programs work together to cut down the work-time for staff by better enabling them to determine the true cost of projects. This system provides measureable profit/loss figures that will determine if an event or project will be renewed for the following year. For example, for years the Battleship hosted a "hootenanny" music event as a fund-raiser. With this new accounting system, it was easy to see some costs that had heretofore been hidden, or not previously connected to the event (like promotions and staff labor). With the information that

¹³⁷ Please see Appendix 5 for an organizational chart of the Battleship's organization.

this system provided, it was seen that the costs far outweighed the revenue and the event was cancelled. The system also tracks successes: *Ghost Ship* was a haunted house event that had projected revenues of \$33,050 when actual revenue was \$79,593. Therefore, this event has been expanded for 2011. The system also tracks busy days and slow days which aids in scheduling part-time staff members to work.¹³⁸

Maintenance is needed to ensure that the ship is ready, open, and safe for visitors while also working to keep the ship from deteriorating. The Maintenance staff focuses on the daily upkeep of the ship. By keeping a close eye on the ship's condition, they can alert other staff members before potential problems, like leaking or power failures, occur. They are also responsible for small projects like restroom renovations and A/V installations. The Maintenance Department outsources big projects to other companies. They oversee the work being done and assist in any way. These staff members are in charge of visitor and staff safety, which includes modifying some areas of the tour-route, making them more accessible, while also preparing the ship for any weather situation.¹³⁹

The Museum Department is responsible for the tour-route, its exhibits, and maintaining the ship's archival objects while

¹³⁸ Elizabeth Rollinson (Battleship *North Carolina* Comptroller) in discussions with the author, May - August 2009.

¹³⁹ Roger Miller (Battleship *North Carolina* Assistant Director) in discussions with the author, May - August 2009.

producing revenue programs like *Hidden Battleship*, a 4-hour behind-the-scenes tour of the ship.¹⁴⁰ The Museum Department is a great example of a shared authority relationship at the Battleship. Michael Frisch argues that it is essential for museum professionals and public historians to practice with visitors. He stressed the importance of working together, that history should be shared between those who participated in historical events, or view it as exhibits, and those professionals who interpret the history.¹⁴¹

The Battleship's Museum Department has worked hard to develop this shared relationship between their department and the remaining original crewmembers of the ship. They have collected oral histories, video-taped their stories, and have acquired many of their personal items, such as uniforms, journals, and photographs.¹⁴² This shared authority relationship is important to the ship because it helps keep crewmembers coming back to the ship while providing the Museum Department with artifacts and stories that can become part of interpretation. The benefits of this relationship are felt by

¹⁴⁰ Examples of these programs would be *Hidden Battleship*, a 4-hour behind-the-scenes tour and *Power Plant*, an all-day program about the ship's engineering systems.

¹⁴¹ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).

¹⁴² Kim Sincox and Mary Ames Booker (Battleship North Carolina Historians) in discussions with the author, May - August 2009.

regular visitors who relate so much of what they experience on the ship to the crew.

The Programs Department develops family programming and runs the ship rental program. These programs include an Easter Egg hunt, *Ghost Ship*, *Fantail Film Festival*, and *Batty Battleship's Halloween Bash*. These programs, though outside the scope of World War II, serve as important revenue sources for the ship. The ship's fiscal year is October 1st - September 30th, and by December 2009, the department was already ahead of projected revenue by \$46,543. Embracing family events has been critical because it provides visitors with another reason to come to the Battleship. As a result, visitation and revenue have increased.¹⁴³

The Promotions Department works to advertise the Battleship and the various special event programs throughout the year. Battleship advertising includes billboards, general ads, commercials, special event ads, and media coverage. An important element of the Promotions Department is to track the effectiveness of ads, etc., to determine if they will advertise again in a certain publication. An example was a \$1 off coupon with ads that were targeted in Myrtle Beach, SC. By tracking the returned coupons, it was determined that a \$1 off coupon did

¹⁴³ Battleship *North Carolina* Operating Statement for December 2009, Battleship Commission Budget Report, January 23, 2010.

not sway visitors to come or not come, so the campaign was dropped and efforts were focused elsewhere, like sponsoring web banners on newspaper and TV station websites.¹⁴⁴

The Gift Shop is in charge of Battleship admissions and gift shop purchasing and sales. Over the years, the store manager was able to determine which items sold regularly and which did not. Expensive World War II era items did not sell regularly, but little, inexpensive souvenirs did. So, the staff's collected a variety of mementos for visitors to choose from. Some surprising best sellers were replica cannons, guns, ship wheels, and aircraft carrier pencil sharpeners which retailed for \$3.49. These appealed to children and by the end of 2009, the gift shop had sold over 3,300 sharpeners (\$11,517 in sales). The Gift Shop has also obtained a variety of special event merchandise, like *Ghost Ship* t-shirts and mugs, as a way to tie-in gift shop sales with special events. Merchandise tie-ins boost revenues for both the gift shop and programs.¹⁴⁵

All of these departments cater, in one way or another, to Battleship visitors in that they work hard to give visitors what they want. This business focus keeps visitor needs in the forefront in all development and planning for Battleship projects

¹⁴⁴ Heather Loftin (Battleship North Carolina Promotions Director) in a discussion with the author, August - September 2009.

¹⁴⁵ Leesa MacFarland (Battleship North Carolina Sales Director) in a discussion with the author, May - August 2009.

and programs. The organization will eliminate any program, store item, or ad that is found to not be productive or effective. The Battleship is structured to effectively function as a business and has been able to keep the doors open to visitors since 1961.

One business function of the Battleship is to obtain corporate sponsorships. A very visual example of this is Pepsi-Cola. When visitors exit the ship, they arrive in the canteen where soda and vending machines are located. The canteen has period Pepsi merchandise and memorabilia featured on the wall has some pictures of the Battleship incorporated into it. Some of the graphics are old Navy propaganda or sailor photographs. One is of three sailors drinking Pepsis. The shape of their bottles is not Pepsi bottles but beer bottles. The graphic has been manipulated to showcase the Pepsi product. This is an example of how a historic photo had its original purpose completely changed to reflect the needs of Pepsi who is exhibiting and showcasing the photo as a way to promote their product and then make that product "fit" into the Battleship setting.

All monies from the soda and vending machines go directly to the Battleship. As part of the sponsorship agreement, Pepsi provides all of the tables and chairs for the canteen but only Pepsi products can be sold or used at any Battleship event,

including rental functions. Having sponsorships are important to the Battleship because they provide revenue while also building business relationships in the community.

--The Living History Crew--

The Living History Crew (LHC) is a Battleship visitor subgroup. Stephen Eddy Snow offered an example of what he called the "existential tourist" in *Performing the Pilgrims*. He described some visitors who had what he called a

strong psychological or spiritual connection to Pilgrim culture and so make regular trips to Plimoth Plantation, which has come to 'symbolize ultimate meanings' for them. These include some *Mayflower* descendants, some religious persons, some plantation members, and other individuals who deeply identify with some aspect of the Pilgrim story.¹⁴⁶

Like Snow's "existential tourists," LHC members display a strong desire and commitment to be a part of the Battleship's story by actively engaging in various World War II navy roles. The LHC gives the Battleship a great deal of specialized volunteer labor in the form of historic interpretation, restoration of spaces, and interpretation of the restored spaces.

The LHC is self-governed and is supervised by the Battleship's assistant director. They take their educational

¹⁴⁶ Snow, 168.

and interpretative role very seriously. The LHC has their own website where their goals and standards are clearly expressed.

The Battleship has sponsored a 'Living History' weekend every year since 1997. 'Living History' attempts to bring historical events, places and persons 'alive' by demonstrating various aspects of the past with real people as opposed to static 'museum' displays. In a 'living history' program the public gets a chance to interact with the interpreters rather than be a passive recipient of information via signs and displays behind glass in a museum.¹⁴⁷

The LHC take great pride in their ability to recreate the past for the Battleship visitor during *Battleship Alive!*, which is an event that occurs three times a year. Their objective of "demonstrating various aspects of the past with real people" is apparent in their exhibit displays because of its realistic approach.¹⁴⁸ There is also a sense of their belief that "living history" is of great importance because they "demonstrate various aspects of the past with real people as opposed to static museum displays." For visitors, they provide opportunities for shared experiences because they engage the visitors through conversations, like the women in Chapter 2 who

¹⁴⁷ "Living History Crew," USS *North Carolina* WWII Living History Crew, <http://www.usnclivinghistory.org>.

¹⁴⁸ See the section in the previous chapter where visitors relate to seeing the authentic objects on the tour and taking pictures of them and relating to how they lived. A lot of these exhibits were the work of the Living History Crew.

talked about their fathers, result in information, stories, and memories for both parties.

The LHC takes the responsibility of nourishing these shared experiences very seriously. John Whitley is an active member of the LHC who has a long relationship with the Battleship *North Carolina*. He was asked to share his experiences and thoughts about both the Battleship and the LHC. John's first experience with the Battleship was as a fifth-grader who was part of the state-wide campaign to give their lunch money to "save the Battleship". Years later, when he moved to Wilmington he came to the ship because of an ad for *Battleship Alive!* in 2000. He was so impressed that he joined the LHC and has been an active member since 2001. He regularly speaks to visitors and groups at the Battleship and looks forward to telling children "how school children from North Carolina saved this ship [because] I was one of those school children." He believes that the ship is so important to himself and other LHC members because "many of the living history historians have a personal connection or interest with a specialized aspect of the Battleship. Every single member of the Engineering Division has an interest or connection to engineering." The connection that John is describing is not unlike the physical immersive experience of regular visitors. Regular visitors relate to the ship, the crew, and the past through the artifacts from experiencing the

ship on a very physical level. The LHC are doing the exact same thing except they are taking the experience even further: they are taking what they do in their real-life and transferring these skills to the Battleship's historical past by actually attempting to re-create the experience fully, through dress, crew duties, and functions. John goes on to say that "there is also a sense of fellowship and camaraderie among the LHC. There is a shared purpose and a shared experience. It takes a lot of work to put together an authentic kit and to learn enough about the ship to do an authentic impression. It takes a sense of commitment built around a common goal."

Some of his experiences as a member that have particular meaning for him include when he met a woman whose father had been a machinist mate during World War II. He had been killed when his ship was torpedoed, so she never knew her father. When she met John in the engine room, she told him her story and how she had always wanted to see where he would have worked and what his duties would have been. He recalls how he "took her to the chief's desk and explained the chief's role in supervising and running the watch. It was a touching moment to share this experience with a woman who had been a young girl when she lost her father."

John relates another experience of a regular visitor who related to his own past through touching parts of the ship. He

says, "I remember a blind veteran who visited the ship with his adult son. The veteran had made it a point to visit the engine room because he had been an electrician's mate...I placed his hands on the controls and gauges and watched his face light up as he touched each control, each gauge." These "regular" visitor experiences were changed and enriched through their interactions with John Whitely, a LHC volunteer. By focusing on the chief's desk for the woman, and the controls and gauges for the veteran, they both became connected to a shared physical space. The woman's lost father may have seemed closer to her than ever before, and the veteran "saw" and remembered his own past experiences through the physical objects and space of the Battleship's engine room. Even though it was not the same ship for either of them, the space and objects would have been similar to what the woman's father knew and what the veteran remembered. Perhaps for these "regular" visitors, on that day with John's help, it was the same space.¹⁴⁹

Dave Carpenter is another long-time member of the LHC. For him, the LHC has been allowed him to connect with the original crew members of the Battleship that has been both very personal and meaningful for him. He says that he "cannot recall a single day on board when, at some point, I have not thought of some conversation with Paul Wieser, or Chuck Paty...[and as] the

¹⁴⁹ John Whitely, email message to author, June 8, 2009.

numbers of the living crew members have dwindled, I have become more aware of the need for individuals to learn the stories, the history, to pass along to future generations."¹⁵⁰ He continues to say that he was not completely sure how the remaining original crew members felt about the LHC until after a crew reunion onboard the ship, "Chuck Paty commented to a group of us commented that we were the future of the crew [and] that was a very special moment." For Dave, that history is real and not imagined. Through his friendship with original crew members and his participation in the LHC, he truly believes that he has become "the future of the crew". Like many of the visitors who experience the regular tour, the Battleship has become a symbol of a historic past that he, and other visitors, can relate to on a personal level, regardless of their real or re-created military experience.

The LHC benefits the Battleship because they provide a wonderful service for free-restoration projects and historical interpreters. In return, they have the opportunity to have shared experiences between visitors and themselves. As a way of compensating them for their work and contributions, the Battleship allows them to stay onboard for free and provides them breakfast and lunch during *Battleship Alive!* The LHC contributes to the visitors ability to recognize and relate to

¹⁵⁰ Dave Carpenter, email message to author, June 6, 2009.

the past, either by seeing the spaces they restored or meeting an interpreter.

The LHC's participation enriches the visitor's experience. For visitors, the Battleship may not be the ship a grandfather, father, or brother served on, but it has the ability to "be" that ship through sharing similar physical spaces, objects, and stories. And although becoming a member of the LHC is a serious commitment for volunteers that requires time, study, and sincere dedication, it can afford them with unique opportunities to connect with regular visitors and original crew members in that it has been very meaningful and emotional for its members.

--The Battleship Ghosts--

Over the years, the Battleship staff has kept an open-mind to possible revenue sources. The most surprising source has been in the form of ghosts. At the Battleship, ghosts have become big business. Ghost rumors, sightings, and encounters have swirled around the Battleship for years. These rumors and sightings are so common, that Captain Terry Bragg, Executive Director of the Battleship, refers to the ship's ghosts as the "non-living history crew."¹⁵¹ Stories of the Battleship ghosts

¹⁵¹ Danny Bradshaw (Battleship *North Carolina* Nightwatchman) in a discussion with author, February 8, 2009.

have been propagated by Danny Bradshaw, night watchman at the Battleship for over thirty years. In 2002, Danny wrote a book, *Ghosts on the Battleship North Carolina*. The book is a collection of thirteen stories. The book begins in a very dramatic way: "there are ghosts on the Battleship North Carolina. I know that for a fact. I've felt their presence in icy artic blasts of cold that penetrate a room and wrap around me like a polar wind loose from the wilderness."¹⁵² Danny's book is the top-selling book in the gift shop. During the summer months, they sell around 1,000 books, retailing for \$12.95. In 2009, the Gift Shop sold over 1,900 books (\$24,605 in sales). Visitors come and want to meet Danny and listen to him tell his ghostly stories. The ghosts have become a popular "unseen" exhibit that people want to hear and then get "spooked out". This is not hard to believe with passages like this in his book:

The ghost appeared by the door...he looked at me. There was a blank appearance to his face as he stood there, gazing at me...then he disappeared. I was horrified. I turned off the television. I turned off the heat. I grabbed my jacket. I ran out the door and off the ship...I stayed in the car till the sun came up...but I always go back to the Battleship.¹⁵³

With thrilling and dramatic stories like these, it is little wonder that Danny and his ghosts serve as a popular

¹⁵² Danny Bradshaw, ed. Blonnie Bunn Wyche, *Ghosts on the Battleship North Carolina* (Wilmington, NC: Bradshaw Publishing, 2002), 1.

¹⁵³ Bradshaw, 71.

visitor draw to the Battleship. Danny's book and the rumors of ghosts eventually found Jason Hawes and Grant Wilson, who star in the Sy-Fy channel's hit show, *Ghost Hunters*. In 2005, the team came and filmed a paranormal investigation on board the Battleship. In their book, *Ghost Hunting: True Stories of Unexplained Phenomena from The Atlantic Paranormal Society*, they described their visit to the Battleship.

We could hear the *North Carolina* groan like a wounded whale, as if the brig was a place it would rather have forgotten. Had something happened there? Was that why we kept hearing banging?

We had to conclude that something was going on—something supernatural, though that was all we could say for now. Bradshaw seemed happy that he had gotten some corroboration of his experiences. He no longer had to wonder if he was crazy.¹⁵⁴

When the Battleship episode aired on *Ghost Hunters*, visitation went up an average of 400 visitors a month.¹⁵⁵ The desire to experience the Battleship ghosts, and eerie pull of a haunted ship, became an important motivator for visitors. Danny has noticed that more and more visitors seek him out to share with him their own paranormal experiences. He believes that their shared ghost experiences have forged a bond between them,

¹⁵⁴ Jason Hawes and Grant Wilson with Michael Jan Friedman, *Ghost Hunting: True Stories of Unexplained Phenomena from The Atlantic Paranormal Society* (New York: Pocket Books, 2007), 176-177.

¹⁵⁵ Monthly Battleship *North Carolina* Executive Director reports, March 2005 - March 2006.

perhaps because they know the other would be likely to believe their stories.¹⁵⁶

In January 2009, the *Ghost Hunters* came back to the Battleship as part of a private event. *Ghost Hunting with the Ghost Hunters* allowed visitors who paid \$265 each to investigate the ship with the paranormal celebrities from the TV show.¹⁵⁷ The event sold out the first night within two weeks. The second night was sold out in less than a week. Visitors came from California, Maryland, Florida, Texas, Denver, and all over the country.¹⁵⁸ The business arrangement with the ship was that the promotional company would give the Battleship 15% of their ticket sales. This brought in over \$12,000 for two evenings, and all the Battleship staff had to do was to provide access to "active" paranormal spaces.

The Battleship allows private groups to investigate the ship. These groups bring special cameras, infra-red devices, and revenue. The cost for groups to conduct an investigation is \$750 for tour-route spaces, \$1,000 for off tour-route spaces.

¹⁵⁶ Danny Bradshaw (Battleship *North Carolina* Nightwatchman) in a discussion with the author, April 4, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ In September 2009, a spin-off *Ghost Hunters*, *Ghost Hunters Academy*, was filmed at the Battleship. The show will air on the Sy-Fy channel and will premier in November 2009.

¹⁵⁸ Marc Tetlow, email messages and conversations with the author, Fall - Winter 2008-2009. Marc said that he often coordinates events with the *Ghost Hunters* at locations where they have investigated. He said that they all sell out but usually within a couple of months. He was very surprised by how quickly the Battleship event sold out. He believes that the draw for the visitors was the opportunity to investigate the Battleship more than meeting Jason and Grant. Marc has made arrangements for the *Ghost Hunters* to come back for a second event at the Battleship in September 2009.

These groups have become a major revenue source for the Battleship.¹⁵⁹

It would be easy to stress how different a paranormal group, as a Battleship visitor, *seems* to be different from regular visitors. But that is the thing: they only seem different where they are actually very much the same. They use the space in the same way as regular visitors; they sympathize with and focus on a sailor's life (or perhaps more truthfully, their death). The real difference between paranormal groups and regular visitors is that they use expensive technology to actively communicate with the past rather than being content with imagining the past.

--Military Ceremonies, Weddings, and Other Group Events--

Ship rentals have also become big money-makers for the Battleship. Rentals bring with it a unique set of visitors who are coming to the Battleship because of a party, wedding, or other special event. They are willing to pay for the privilege of investing the ship with their own, unique purpose.

The most popular rental type (excluding paranormal investigations) are: weddings and receptions, real estate

¹⁵⁹ Roger Miller (Battleship *North Carolina* Assistant Director) in a discussion with the author, September 2009.

dinners, *Azalea Festival* parties, fraternity and sorority parties, and corporate dinners.¹⁶⁰ Some have wanted the rent the ship purely for its "battleship" name. *Red Bull* rented the ship for a special skateboarding competition and built ramps on the fantail. It worked for them because the fantail provided an exciting place to have skaters be filmed twisting and jumping over the guns and hatches. The Battleship provided the extreme challenge that *Red Bull* wanted to create for its brand, similar to how Pepsi manipulated a historic photo to show the sailors drinking out of Pepsi bottles rather than beer bottles.

Home Depot, who chose to have a regional management meeting at the Battleship because their theme was "battling the competition." A Thunderbird car club had their *Carolina Battleship Thunder* luncheon on board the fantail and even had special t-shirts designed for the occasion.¹⁶¹

These groups chose the Battleship because it fit into the purpose they had for their group members and visitors. Others choose to rent the Battleship for some personal motivation. This is often the case for wedding ceremonies and receptions held at the ship. The trend that emerges is that the couple has a military connection which makes the Battleship a logical and special choice for their event. Vernon Porterfield, who is a

¹⁶⁰ Battleship *North Carolina* confirmation rental letters, January 2007 - December 2009.

¹⁶¹ Ibid

Navy veteran, has arranged to have his wedding on board the Battleship in the spring of 2010 with a Navy chaplain and captain presiding. He wrote about choosing the Battleship for his wedding for several reasons, which include his past Naval experience and their both being native North Carolinians. He states that "both her father and mine served in the Pacific theatre during World War II, and the Battleship *North Carolina* is a museum to them and others who were in that conflict from North Carolina....All of them have passed on, but we felt it fitting we marry on board the Battleship in recognition of their service, and our deep appreciation for all things Navy."¹⁶²

Vernon makes it very clear that his past and identity are very important to him. For his wedding, the Battleship's original purpose has changed to suit his purpose.

Military ceremonies are the only free rental functions the Battleship allows.¹⁶³ These ceremonies include re-enlistments, retirements, reunions, and memorial services. This is another business decision the Battleship's organization has made because they want to maintain a good relationship with the military. Local military groups have assisted in the past by performing for free at the Battleship's annual Memorial Day service. In this sense, the Battleship's relationship with the military is

¹⁶² Vernon Porterfield, email message to author, July 27, 2009.

¹⁶³ In this context, military ceremonies do not mean military wedding ceremonies. The Battleship charges a rental fee of \$200 for all wedding ceremonies, military personnel or civilian.

similar to the relationship with the LHC: in that services are provided by one group in return for other services by the other group. These military ceremonies include re-enlistments, retirements, reunions, and memorial services. They are available to groups and individuals. As with paranormal investigations and weddings, these military personnel also invest the ship with their own purpose.

For example, Ivan Dump chose to have his retirement ceremony from the Coast Guard on board the Battleship. When asked why he chose the Battleship as his event location, he said, "to me, the ship meant looking at the past as you venture off into the future. It is a reminder of the old boats that I sailed on and it brought back a bunch of wonderful memories."¹⁶⁴ Not unlike the regular day-time Battleship visitors, he expresses a sense of nostalgia that is reflective of his own personal experiences. For Ivan, the ship's purpose was to be a symbolic representation of his entire military career.

In conclusion, to survive, the Battleship must ensure sufficient revenue. The various departments are organized to be efficient and cost effective. The accounting tools that the ship uses enabled the different departments to track this effectiveness through ads, programs, and sold (or unsold) merchandise. The ship receives financial support through

¹⁶⁴ Ivan Dump, email message to author, June 4, 2009.

corporate sponsors who are willing to re-interpret history by manipulating artifacts in order to make their product more visible. The LHC provides service and interpreters that add considerable restoration projects to the ship's tour-route while providing the opportunity for shared experiences that are very personal and meaningful between LHC members and visitors.

The ship has also found revenue sources through the Battleship ghosts; the extra publicity, merchandise, and visitation all comes from people wanting to experience the "ghosts" for themselves. Rental functions similarly provide extra money for the ship. The groups or individuals who rent the ship invest it with their own purpose, making their event special and meaningful to them. LHC members, paranormal investigators, and individuals coming for a special rental event represent the wide variety of Battleship visitor who invest the ship with their own purpose and meaning. Through their experiences, these visitors also show how the Battleship functions effectively as a museum.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this study, the following question was asked: Can battleship memorials effectively function as a museum? By conducting a thorough visitor study of the Battleship *North Carolina*, evidence in the form of visitor observation, visitor interview answers, and Battleship organizational records have conclusively shown that a battleship museum can be an effective museum by enabling a variety of visitors to have powerful experiences. The Battleship *North Carolina* is a successful museum because the organization has created an environment that allows visitors to invest the ship with their own purpose and meaning.

How does this information help public historians? What is next for the Battleship? How will the Battleship adapt to changing visitor needs? What can the Battleship do to function more effectively as a museum? The main scope of this work is to serve as a visitor case study for public historians to learn how visitors interact with exhibits, artifacts, and objects in an atypical museum setting. Visitors at all types of museums, attractions, and exhibits are important to understand. Public historians can take some of the goals and practices that were explored in this study and utilize them at their own museums to have a stronger understanding of their own visitors. Having a

good understanding of today's visitor will give invaluable insight into anticipating their needs for tomorrow which may result in continued strong visitation and revenues.

What is next for the Battleship *North Carolina*? The Battleship will always need to find ways to generate revenue as a way of staying in business. Rentals will continue, and will probably experience a significant increase. One initiative that is currently being developed is Overnight Camping for scouts and groups. Renovations include adding showers, restrooms, restoring the Ward Room back into its original state, adding a caterer's kitchen, and providing 150 berths. Potential revenue for Overnight Camping could be a million dollars a year.¹⁶⁵ The Battleship organization and commissioners also have to address the issue of the starboard hull repair. Whatever solution the Battleship Commission and organization chooses, it will be expensive. This may mean increased admission fees, another state-wide campaign to "save the ship", or increased efforts to obtain corporate sponsors as a way to secure the necessary funds to have the ship's hull repaired.

How will the Battleship adapt to changing visitor needs? Future visitors may relate to artifacts in completely different ways than present-day visitors because of their potential dependence on technology. Today's youth are accustomed to

¹⁶⁵ Battleship Commission meeting minutes, October 23, 2009.

virtual identities they are allowed to control through a variety of games and devices. Their dependence on these devices and identities may become so strong, that they have difficulty in relating to something that is real. As a way to relate to their visitors, the Battleship may need to create virtual sailors who accompany visitors as they go through the tour-route. These sailors could be available as a download on a device (like a cell phone) and could act as interpreter to help them relate to the artifacts and the ship's history.

What can the Battleship do to function more effectively as a museum? A significant addition to the Battleship experience would be if the organization had their visitors consider the big questions of World War II. Examining how did the war changed lives, the emotional and psychological impact on servicemen and people on the homefront, and an understanding of the enemy by exploring similarities and differences. These questions would have visitors confront the realities of war that James Loewen believes are so important for naval ship museums to discuss.

Another way for the museum to be more effective would be take advantage of their visitor photos and stories. With the Battleship organization acting as a "house" for their memories and stories (which is what museums already do) it would provide opportunities for visitors to relate to other visitors by prompting a forum for stories in an attempt to create a shared

environment. The Battleship will act as the steward of these photos and stories by collecting and displaying them. The Battleship is moving a little in this direction with its Facebook page but it can be expanded to have visitor experiences on their organizational website and displayed in the lobby or on the tour-route.

How the Battleship will relate to future visitors will be the big, fascinating question as the ship continues to be a tourist attraction, museum, and war memorial into the 21st century. Because things can be learned from the past, the Battleship's history as museum and memorial shows that it will do what is necessary in order to remain financially healthy so that the ship can continue to be maintained as the symbol she has become to so many different visitors.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Battleship Memorials & Museums Comparative Information

Ship	Commissioning Date	Decommissioning Date	Memorial Date	Funding	2009 Visitation
Alabama	1942	1947	1965	Self-supporting	240,540
Description: It consists of a military park that also has a submarine, an aircraft hanger, and tanks on exhibit.					
Location: Mobile, AL		Website: http://www.ussalabama.com		Admission: \$12 (adults)	
Arizona	1916	Destroyed 1941	1962	National Park Service (NPS) & US Navy operated	1.6 million
Description: The ship was destroyed on December 7, 1941 and over 1,700 crewmembers were killed. The memorial and museum consists of a special building over the submerged ship where she sank.					
Location: Honolulu, HI		Website: http://www.arizonamemorial.org		Admission: Free	
Massachusetts	1942	1947	1965	Self-supporting	95,000
Description: It is located at "Battleship Cove: the World's Largest Naval Ship Museum." Other ships on exhibit consist of a submarine, a destroyer, a submarine, a German ship, a cruiser, and PT boats.					
Location: Fall River, MA		Website: http://www.battleshipcove.org		Admission: \$15 (adults)	
Missouri	1944	1992	1998	Self-supporting	316,511
Description: The Missouri was the ship where the Japanese surrendered to General MacArthur. It is located near the Arizona Memorial.					
Location: Honolulu, HI		Website: http://www.usssmissouri.org		Admission: \$20 (adults)	
New Jersey	1943	1991	2001	Self-supporting	175,000
Description: Served in World War II, Korean War, Vietnam, and the Middle East					
Location: Camden, NJ		Website: http://www.battleshipnewjersey.org		Admission: \$18.50 (adults)	
North Carolina	1941	1947	1962	Self-supporting	206,965
Description: The most decorated battleship of World War II and the main ship of this study.					
Location: Wilmington, NC		Website: http://www.battleshipnc.com		Admission: \$12 (adults)	
Texas	1914	1948	1948	Self-supporting	250,000
Description: Texas became the first battleship memorial in the US. It is located					

in a park with the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site and San Jacinto Monument.					
Location: LaPorte, TX		Website: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/battleship_texas/		Admission: \$10 (adults)	
<i>Utah</i>	1911	Destroyed 1941	1962	National Park Service (NPS) & US Navy operated	1.6 million
Description: The <i>Utah</i> was destroyed at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. It sank and is a part of the <i>Arizona</i> Memorial.					
Location: Honolulu, HI		Website: http://www.ussutah.org		Admission: Free	

Special Note: The Battleship *Wisconsin* was not included because in this table because it is not a memorial and only opened as a museum in 2009. It is currently being operated by *Nauticus* and is funded by the City of Norfolk, VA. (<http://www.nauticus.org>).

Appendix 2

Battleship Visitation History, 2002-2010

Battleship Visitation History, 2002-2010								
2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
216,626	192,380	189,858	188,249	190,048	195,928	191,206	206,965	20,272 YTD

Appendix 3

"Contained in Contract with the Navy," Article IX: Amendments to the Bylaws, Authority North Carolina General Statutes 143B-73, 1984.

- Maintain the Battleship in such a manner that it will not cast discredit upon the Navy or upon the proud tradition of this historic vessel and not allow it to become a menace to navigation, public health or safety.
- Maintain the Battleship in a condition satisfactory to the Department of the Navy.
- Maintain insurance on the vessel.
- Secure permission from the Navy through its agent, the Naval Sea Systems Command, before opening areas for public visitation.
- Do not transfer or otherwise dispose of the vessel or any part thereof or any interest therein without prior consent of the Navy through its agent, the Naval Sea Systems Command.

Appendix 4

Battleship Rental Functions, 2007-2009

Year	Day events	Military ceremonies	Evening events	Weddings	Paranormal investigations
2007	17	Memorials: 5 Re-enlistments: 6 Retirements: 1 Misc. ceremonies: 2	35	5	3
2008	23	Memorials: 6 Re-enlistments: 15 Retirements: 5 Misc. ceremonies: 0	15	10	10
2009	8	Memorials: 4 Re-enlistments: 9 Retirements: 2 Misc. ceremonies: 0	15	14	7

Appendix 5

Battleship North Carolina Organizational Chart

