

# SPRING 2015

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## THE BATTERY

### TWO SUBMARINES BROUGHT WWII TO DELAWARE

Dr. Gary D. Wray



The history of Fort Miles and the Fort Miles museum is closely linked to the story of two famous German WWII submarines, U 853 and its sister, U 858. Both were launched in Bremen, Germany, in 1943, and each is a key part of Fort Miles and our Fort Miles museum. This is that story.

Of all of Germany's forces in World War II, its navy submarines got closest to U.S. shores. While one of the smallest segments of the huge German war effort, the German submarine force was one of the most potent, sinking thousands of ships and killing thousands of world sailors, including many off the coast of the United States. The German submarine force suffered the highest loss rate of the war, with more than 30,000 men lost of a force of 40,000.

*Operation Drumbeat by the Germans was the first major attack on our homeland. We are telling that story at our Fort Miles museum, through the prism of U 853 and U 858.*

Because of their effective and consistent attacks on the American homeland, German submariners were heroes at home for taking the war directly to the enemy coast.

#### Few know how close WWII came to U.S. mainland

Most Americans do not know that during the winter of 1941-1942, soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Germany sent five submarines to attack the East Coast of the United States. The attack, codenamed Operation Drumbeat by the Germans, lasted more than six months, killed more than 6,000 sailors and sank more than 300 ships. It was an Allied disaster, one that most Americans know little about to this day. It was the first major attack on our homeland and the first serious threat to our homeland security in the 20th century.

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# 3 WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

**1 BE AN ACTIVE MEMBER  
AND VOLUNTEER**

**2 GIVE A DONATION  
TO SUPPORT OUR  
RESTORATION WORK**

**3 REMEMBER A HERO  
ON THE WALL OF HONOR**



## FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT — DR. GARY D. WRAY

### Volunteers complete jobs over tough winter months

Winter has been grueling but your Fort Miles Historical Association and its Delaware State Parks partners have been very busy. The Bunker Busters, led by John Roberts, moved our work area from Battery 519 to Battery Smith, freeing more display space inside our museum. FMHA bought a new heat pump for Battery Smith that John and the Bunker Busters installed in the north gun block, which was home to one of the huge 16-inch guns, then a gym and later a movie theater. Now that area is a workroom where our Bunker Busters can work their "magic!" John will talk more about this in his article in this newsletter.

An important job this winter was the removal of the post-1945 floor in the museum. An addition to the World War II floor hampered our efforts to make the floor level, as it was during WWII, and caused step-downs at both ends of the casemate. Thanks to grants by Crystal Trust and Delaware Community Foundation, we were able to employ Croll Brothers from Georgetown to remove the concrete addition and return the floor to its 1943 look. The floor was substantially thicker than we first thought, which made the job much more labor-intensive.

Our Bunker Busters did a great job sealing the museum from concrete dust and cleaning when Croll finished. The job took about three weeks and involved the removal of about 150 tons of concrete. See John's article for details.

### Plans march on for new gun park and static gun display

We have also been busy planning the new gun display area with our Delaware State Parks partners. Thanks to Becker Morgan Architects, we are closer to completed plans for the development of our gun pads and the huge pad for the static display of our 16-inch Missouri barrel. All the necessary parts for the Missouri barrel (for those who don't know, our barrel was made at the Washington, D.C., Naval Yard Foundry and was the middle barrel of Turret One of BB-63) arrived from Dahlgren Naval Weapons Center in Virginia last fall.

The plan is for our Bunker Busters to start to prep the parts for display in spring and summer 2015, with the 16-inch to be installed first. When completed, the 16-inch gun with all its necessary parts (yoke, slide, girder, breechblock), the proof steel with the huge 16-inch hole and the 2,700-pound Yamato shell will make one spectacular display. Nothing else like it will be on display anywhere in the world! Another first for The First State! The cost for this project has been funded by the Delaware Legislature and private donations. The final display, with the barrel pointed toward Cape May, N.J., should be complete next year.

### April open house set for April 25

Fort Miles is also preparing for our spring event, scheduled for Saturday, April 25, with the entire complex open for tours, including our museum. Read more in this newsletter.

### FMHA hosts Coast Defense Study Group annual banquet

The Fort Miles Historical Association and Delaware State Parks will also host a visit of the Coast Defense Study Group on May 2 and May 3. CDSG is a national group that studies coast defense around the world. It has been a great supporter of FMHA and directly helped us to locate and bring the Missouri barrel to Delaware. We are extremely pleased that CDSG has asked us to be part of its May event. The group will tour upstate fortifications such as Fort Mott, Fort DuPont and Fort Delaware, travel south and visit Fort Saulsbury (thanks to Lewes resident Sam Burke), then spend two days with us at Fort Miles.

On May 2, Fort Miles will host the CDSG annual banquet in the South Gun Room of our museum, which will be the first time in its history that the CDSG has held its annual banquet inside an actual casemate! If you would like to attend this event (seating is limited), let me know ASAP to reserve a seat for \$30. We expect a wonderful evening with dinner and speakers. If you are interested in seacoast fortifications and would like to know more about them, CDSG is the premier organization to join.

Send me an email at [gdwray@hotmail.com](mailto:gdwray@hotmail.com) to register for dinner or give me a call at 302-645-0753 for details. If you would like to attend the entire CDSG four-day conference (April 30-May 3), let me know or visit the CDSG website for information or registration.

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## MISSION

The Fort Miles Historical Association is a nonprofit group that has its mission to preserve, protect, and defend all aspects of Fort Miles working with community and state stakeholders and other interested parties. The FMHA also has its goal to work as an active partner with the State of Delaware to develop the historical potential of Fort Miles.

To learn more, visit  
[www.fortmiles.org](http://www.fortmiles.org)

## NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY — MIKE DUNKES

### Fort Miles wants you! Please, lend a hand.



Fort Miles Historical Association needs your time, your energy, your smarts, your enthusiasm and your help. Please volunteer.

Volunteers are the gasoline that runs the FMHA engine. Last year, volunteers contributed nearly 10,000 hours to the effort to convert Fort Miles into a world-class World War II museum.

The Bunker Busters are always looking for brains and brawn for their Thursday and Friday projects to drive the restoration and construction work that is constant at the fort. John Roberts and his crew have big plans for 2015 and beyond.

We need the Bunker Busters to hammer the nails. And we need volunteers to help with sales.

### You can be a Fort Miles Historical Association contact with the public — a source of information and a valuable aid

Last summer, our Fort Miles gift shop in the Orientation Building was open for business three days a week and onsite during outside events for six weekends. They were a huge hit and a big moneymaker. This year, we need more volunteers to sell Fort Miles merchandise at the OB shop and at off-site festivals.

Working at the OB and the off-site events is fun. Last summer, volunteers introduced hundreds of newcomers to the fort at the Sea Glass Festival in Lewes, on the boardwalk in Bethany and at other events, and encouraged those who hadn't been to Fort Miles lately to return to see the progress that's been made.

OB staff welcomed guests, answered questions, persuaded visitors to tour Battery 519; they sold shirts, hats, tote bags, license plates, DVD's, playing cards, kid stuff, books and other "fort-a-bilia" to raise several thousand dollars.

Remember: It isn't just he who saws who helps the cause. Become an expert on FMHA history and share your expertise with visitors. We also need docents to guide tours of Battery 519. Plans are in the works to increase the number of tours from two to three a day and to expand the number of days that tours are offered.

Docent training will start soon. This is an opportunity to share all your Fort Miles knowledge.

### If you like Facebook, we have a job for you!

Do you have IT and graphics skills? Please volunteer your talent to help the fort enhance its presence on social media. Fort Miles might be a World War II facility but we can always use help to haul it into this century.

FMHA will work with you to find a fun volunteer niche that matches your skills. We need you. Volunteer at Fort Miles today. Contact Mike Dunkes on line at: [mdunkes@verizon.net](mailto:mdunkes@verizon.net) or by phone at 302-381-8800.

## WORLD WAR II WEEKEND KICKS OFF BUSY SEASON ON APRIL 25

### Shawn Heacock



Just this morning I saw the first iris blooming in my garden, and that means that Spring is in the air. There are lots of exciting things happening in the Fort Miles area that I'm sure you have read about elsewhere in the newsletter. I'm going to focus on a few events and changes that are coming in the spring and summer for Fort Miles.

On April 25, Fort Miles will be hosting the 11th annual World War II weekend.

Every year the event gets bigger and, with the hope of good weather, this year will be no different. There will be American living historians who represent the 261st Coastal Artillery unit that was stationed here at Fort Miles, German living historians who will show both infantry and kriegsmarine displays, artillery demonstrations, period vehicles, live music, kids' games, guest speakers and small-arms demonstrations throughout the day. In addition volunteers from Fort Miles Historical Association will be manning Battery 519 all day.

To make April 25 happen, it takes about 100 staff and volunteers; we can always use a few more hands, so feel free to contact me!

#### Summer program features the popular Battery 519 tours and the new Cold War Bike Tour

Once we wrap up the April event, we shift into high gear for our summer programs. This year, I plan to offer tours of Battery 519 Tuesday through Saturday at 2 p.m. Last summer, our battery tours were almost at capacity all summer long, so I believe we need to increase the number of tours we offer. Of course, we will still be offering our lantern tours on Wednesdays and Saturdays and kids' games on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

New for the summer is the addition of a Cold War Bike Tour. The staff of Fort Miles will be taking visitors around the park on bikes to talk about some of our remaining Cold War structures. I hope it will be an interesting extension of the Fort Miles experience.

During the winter, we placed two new informational waysides in the Fort Miles cantonment and there are three more in the final stages of production. The new signs cover the many uses of the buildings within the cantonment and give an idea of the overall use of the Fort. One sign will be placed at Herring Point to discuss the uses of that gun battery from World War II through the Cold War. The signs are giving Fort Miles some more visibility within the park, which is a very good thing.

If you are interested in volunteering to help out with our educational programming or research, feel free to contact me at 302-644-5014 or [shawn.heacock@state.de.us](mailto:shawn.heacock@state.de.us). We always need fresh faces and a few more hands around here.

### FMHA RECOGNIZES NEW WALL OF HONOR INDUCTEES AFTER APRIL 25 OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, April 25, at 3 p.m. is a special time. Enjoy our Open House and afterwards, join us in Battery 519 in the North Shell Room for the recognition of our newest Wall of Honor Inductees. Each paver represents a story that has contributed to our history. By purchasing a paver you can honor a loved one's memory and contribute to the restoration of Fort Miles. A paver application is included in this newsletter.

### VISIT THE NEW, IMPROVED FMHA GIFT SHOP

#### George Ward



The Fort Miles gift shop is getting ready for a blockbuster summer of sales in the Orientation Building.

In addition to T-shirts, polos, hoodies, tote bags, books, license plates, DVD's, tower posters and 261st insignia pins, we're selling kids' items, including child-size T-shirts, playing cards, glider

models, camo bracelets and kids' helmets. We shall again be selling our most popular item: bottled water.

New this year are Fort Miles challenge coins with General Miles on one side and the Fort Miles Historical Association logo on the other. These are the brainchild of board member Joe Johnson and have been popular during their limited exposure.

Also making their inaugural appearance this year are long-sleeve denim shirts with a choice of two designs embroidered on the front: the FMHA logo or a fire-control tower and the words Fort Miles, Lewes, DE.

We've added pink children's T-shirts on a trial basis, and are trying women's T's with the two-tower logo on the back on a limited basis.

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## FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

### April open house set for April 25

The day will begin at 10 a.m., with tours until 3 p.m., when we will have our Wall of Honor Induction. I will be giving a walking tour of the Missouri barrel and its parts, which will include a view of the permanent place for the static display. See more information on this important day in articles by Mike Dunkes and Shawn Heacock.

We are also pleased to announce that our membership is fast approaching 400 because of the efforts of Mike Dunkes, our FMHA secretary. Mike has done yeoman service building the membership and also chairs the Wall of Honor committee. George and Ann Ward have been working to improve our FMHA store and have ordered new apparel, including newly designed T-shirts, hoodies and denim shirts. The entire FMHA Board of Directors has been working diligently to bring more attention to the Fort Miles effort.

### FMHA will better accommodate large groups with new lavatory facilities

An important project FMHA and our parks partners have been working on diligently has been adding comfort facilities in the Fort Miles Historical Area. One of our basic needs always has been lavatories for our visitors, including school field trips. Thanks to a generous grant from the Longwood Foundation, we have purchased a prefab facility and will be working to get it installed for 2016. We are working closely with our parks engineering division to get this job completed. Without the support of the Longwood Foundation, this important project would not be possible. Again, much of the ground preparation and finishing will be completed by our FMHA Bunker Busters. The two grants from Crystal Trust and Delaware Community Foundation for floor work in the museum, and this \$245,000 Longwood grant, show the support your FMHA has received from important Delaware foundations. We also appreciate the support we have received from our Delaware State Parks staff to make these important Fort Miles upgrades.

We have been working hard to raise the funds we will need from private sources for our Fort Miles museum inside Battery 519. Led by board member Frank Ali, our FMHA Fundraising Team has been working with Horizon Philanthropic Services (Mike Rawl and Mark Chura) in Lewes. We anticipate the need for more than \$5 million to accomplish our goal to establish the best WWII museum inside a WWII facility in the country. Our fundraising share will be a third of what we will need, with the rest from the Delaware legislature and foundations. We see this project taking at least two years to raise the money and two to three years after that to complete the museum. But remember that we are a museum right now with plenty of interesting exhibits (see my article on the key artifact we have on exhibit from U 853) and last year our Fort Miles team gave more than 10,000 visitors!



Dr. Gary D. Wray, right, president of Fort Miles Historical Association, presents a plaque of appreciation to former state Sen. Robert L. Venables Sr. at an awards dinner held in Lewes Dec. 12.

### First FMHA banquet honors those committed to Fort Miles's preservation and growth

Finally, FMHA held its first awards banquet at Irish Eyes on the canal in Lewes on Dec. 12, 2014. It was a great evening to honor all the hard work and effort of those who have done so much to build FMHA to a position of importance in the story of Delaware history. We recognized our Bunker Busters, led by John Roberts. They were presented a Certificate of Achievement for all their efforts by Linda Jennings, wife of the late Park Historian Lee Jennings. State Sen. Robert Venables was recognized for his strong support of Fort Miles during his years in the Delaware Legislature.

Other FMHA board members recognized for their important and valuable contributions are Ted George, Harry Winn, Jack Goins, Bob Fellows and Brian Lindsay. Chazz Salkin, the recently retired Delaware State Parks leader, was recognized for his support of the association. Lastly, I was honored and humbled to be selected by the FMHA Board of Directors to receive the first annual Lee Jennings Memorial Award, presented by Linda Jennings. It was a wonderful event that gathered many of our parks partners, led by DNREC Secretary David Small and Delaware State Parks Director Ray Bevins. We plan to make the banquet an annual event.

We look forward to an exciting 2015. We have come a long way since FMHA began under Towers 3 and 4 at Dewey Beach in August 2003, but much remains to be done. We are well on our way to making Fort Miles a Delaware destination and our museum inside Battery 519 the best WWII museum inside a WWII facility in the country. We thank all of our supporters and we look for you to join us April 25 for our big event at Fort Miles!

# RESTORATION TEAM CONTINUES WITH MISSION

## John Roberts



We've had a very busy fall and winter. Our crew has been diligently working to advance this project significantly over the past several months. The work has been dirty and backbreaking, and the days seemed to never end. But here we are! Progress as promised! This is our reward.

### The rail system replication to be completed by summer

The crew, led by Fred Noll, has been replicating and installing various components of the rail system. This was used to move shells from the shell room to the gun.

After WWII, the Army had cut off many of the steel studs used to support the rail system. Fred came up with an ingenious way to drill and tap what was left in the concrete and install threaded stud extensions. Thanks to Mike Workman and the machine shop at Dover Air Force Base. Their automatic screw machine produced more than 100 of these extensions.

Next was the fabrication of the numerous brackets used to attach the rail hangers to the ceiling. These have been completed and installed. The next step was fabricating the hanger clamps. Again, Dover Air Force Base shop came to the rescue. Their CNC milling machine has been busy replicating these pieces, at a tremendous cost savings. The originals are still in production, but at over \$200 each, and with 140 needed, we decided to replicate these parts. And, the shop at Dover gets to practice!

The bent sections of one beam, used to make the various turns in the rail circuit, have been made and delivered to the Battery.

As parts arrive, we will be cutting, fitting and installing these pieces. Completion of the rail system is expected to be sometime this summer.

### Concrete demolition in Battery 519

After WWII, the Army decided the sloped flooring in the corridor and powder rooms was unacceptable for the next use of the Battery. Their solution was to pour concrete to level the floors.

For us, this presents three problems. First, this made a significant section of the building out of compliance with ADA regulations, due to all the steps. Second, it altered the building from its original figuration, making interpretation difficult.

Finally, the concrete in the south corridor interfered with the operation of the rail system, by creating a 14-inch step in the path of anyone pulling shells overhead.

We put this project out for bid, and A.P. Croll won. Demolition started in early February. We ran into some problems, as the amount the original floor was cut down exceeded the original estimate. Instead of removing 130 tons of material, the amount was closer to 200 tons. And, instead of 9 cubic yards of concrete to restore the original grade, we needed 26 cubic yards. This ran over budget considerably, from \$21,400 to approximately \$38,000. Fortunately, we received a grant from Crystal Trust for \$35,000. This was unexpected and enabled us to complete this project.

The next step was the cleanup. There is dust everywhere! We did install 10,000 CFM worth of blowers at the north end, pressurizing the building, and that kept the environment workable and safe, but not enough to totally exhaust all the dust. Our crew has been busy vacuuming, sweeping and operating our floor scrubbing machine to remove all the post restoration debris.

Finally, we are repainting the now exposed areas and repairing the floor from several divots from the jackhammering.

Now this work is complete, and we can start building on the new and final floor. Also, now the entire building is ADA compliant, allowing our less mobile visitors full access to all the exhibit space.

### Moving our shop to Battery Smith

As the number of visitors has increased, it became clear we need to vacate 519, as our work and the tours interfered with each other. With the help of Parks, we have secured the north end of Battery Smith for our shop space. FMHA has purchased a 4-ton heat pump to keep this space warm and dry. Parks has purchased for this project a new roll-up door to replace the rotted wooden wall at the north rear entrance. We can now move vehicles into and out of our shop, along with any large exhibits we will be constructing.

Along with the move of the shop to Smith, we have also acquired from one of my friends a Monarch lathe and an Excello milling machine. These were originally came from Boeing Vertol in Pennsylvania. These are high quality machine tools, and now we have the in-house capability to do serious machining of part for our displays and equipment. Already these are being used to make pieces for the rail system.

Our guys demolished the old wall and prepped the opening for the new door. This was a serious project, as we had to reinforce the old wall temporarily as we moved into Smith.

## VISIT THE NEW FMHA GIFT SHOP (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

A new Bunker Buster, Irv Eberhart, is making tower night lights for us to sell. Irv showed us his prototype at the February board meeting and it's fantastic: more faithful to the look of actual towers in color and appearance, a better size, well-done all the way around.

Irv is filling a real need: tower night lights have been attention-grabbers in the past but people frequently balked at the price. Irv can make the lights for a cost that gives us a profit without scaring people away. Welcome to FMHA, Irv.

We'll be selling Fort Miles refrigerator magnets for the first time. These round, shadow-box magnets feature a fire-control tower along the beach and are made by a Rehoboth resident.

What we most need for the OB gift shop — and for open houses and off-site events — are volunteers. FMHA Secretary Mike Dunkes has spelled out that need in his article for this newsletter, but it bears repeating here.

Please help us sell Fort Miles merchandise. We're in the early stages of our gift shop.

It was a success last summer and a real money-earner. We can do better in 2015 with your help. The OB probably will be open more days and more tours probably will be offered.

Every day the OB gift shop doesn't open is a day that money for the fort is lost. The 2014 gift shop volunteers were Army Strong but stretched thin. We need your help.

Volunteering in the OB gift shop last year was fun. We met many friendly people from across the United States and from foreign countries who were very interested in the Fort Miles history and the efforts to keep that history alive. Many thanked us for volunteering. That was very gratifying.

## RESTORATION TEAM (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

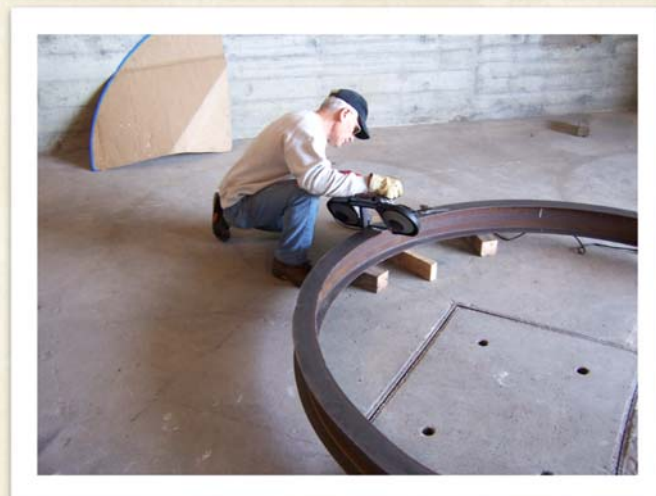
We also demolished an interior wall, again, due to rot from years of neglect and water leaks.

We installed the heat pump ourselves, and the place is comfortable. Respecting the energy consumption, we have it set at 65 degrees. The thermostat is also WiFi enabled, allowing remote monitoring and change of the set point. High tech!

With the help of Shawn and other park people, the north powder room in Smith was cleared out, a lot of junk disposed of, and we installed robust steel shelving for all the artifacts. Thanks to a dedicated dehumidifier and a climate monitor, this is the most stable space for such storage at Cape Henlopen. We will be moving all the artifacts from Battery 519 to this room in the coming weeks.

### Reorganizing the interior of Battery 519

With our shop out of the Battery and the floors restored to their original level, we will be moving our exhibits around. Thanks to all the additional floor space, we can now move all the WWII related materiel to the south rooms of the Battery. The north rooms will be for the Wall of Honor, the Diorama, the submarine displays and other items beyond what Fort Miles was originally built for. We are starting to work on telling the post war story. Lots of people too young to remember WWII will remember the military police patrolling the still secure areas, the large dish antennae on top of Battery 519 and Battery Hunter, SOSUS, the recreational facility at Battery 519's cantonment area and other activities far too numerous to mention at this time. This is important, as the last military presence at the Cape was as recently as 1996!





## JOIN THE FORT MILES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**Help us preserve, restore and protect this remarkable site.**

**Become a member of the Fort Miles Historical Association simply by filling out the form below and mailing it with your check to the address listed.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check in the amount of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make Checks payable to:

Fort Miles Historical Association

Dr. Gary Wray, President

120 E. Wild Rabbit Run

Lewes, DE 19958

### PLEASE CHECK ONE

- General level, (life member) \$1,000.
- Colonel level, \$500.
- Major level, \$250.
- Captain level, \$100.
- Small Business \$75.
- Dual/Family \$20.
- Individual \$15.
- Student \$10.





## TWO GERMAN SUBMARINES (. . .CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

This is an important story that needs telling. We are telling it inside our Fort Miles museum through the prism of two German U boats that took part in the attack, U 853 and U 858.

If most Americans don't know about the German submarine attack on the East Coast in 1942, fewer Americans know that the German navy launched its final attack (codenamed Operation Seewolf) on our East Coast in the closing days of WWII. A few months before Hitler was to take his life and the war ended May 8, 1945, the German navy sent six boats from bases in Norway to attack our coast and, the Germans hoped, to repeat the successes of Operation Drumbeat. U 853 and U 858 were part of that attack. While U 853 sank one of the last ships destroyed in WWII, the collier Black Point, near the entrance to Long Island Sound, it was attacked May 5-6, 1945, by four American hunter-killers and became the last U boat destroyed in U.S. waters. On May 14, 1945, its sister, U 858, surrendered at Fort Miles.

### How a U-boat weapon landed in a Delaware forest

On a snowy February day in 2004, I was teaching a college American history class in Georgetown, Del. After class, a school custodian approached me about a "machine gun" found in the woods behind the college. We drove in his truck to the woods. There, with its twin barrels down in the mud, was an almost complete German Flak 38! I told the custodian that it was not a machine gun but something much more deadly, a twin-barreled 20mm German anti-aircraft weapon. Examining it carefully, I read the "byf" code and knew that it was made at the Mauser factory for a U boat, but which boat? That would be the real surprise. I called Joe Johnson, a FMHA board member, and asked him to send a tow truck to the college to pick up the weapon. We took it to Joe's shop in Lewes, then I started to research the weapon.

The German Flak 38 was a potent weapon, feared by all Allied pilots flying lower than its 6,000-foot (2000m) range. It was a crew-served weapon, firing almost 900rpm (rounds per minute) of 20mm shells from its two barrels. It was noted for its excellent sights and was the most popular German low-level weapon of ships and airfields, protecting both from low-flying, strafing Allied planes. Many an Allied pilot was shot down by this weapon, and most U boats were armed with it for offense (shooting enemy ships on the surface) and for defense against Allied air attacks. This actual weapon, I was to learn, was a vet of Allied air attacks.

These two U boats were peers built as a six-boat contract by AG Weser in Bremen in 1943. They were a new model of the older Type IX long-range boat and had emerged as the key weapon for attacking the U.S. East Coast. They were built for extended range (more than 12,000 miles) and were designed to dive faster than other submarines to better avoid destruction by its most feared enemy, Allied aircraft.

Many U boats had been destroyed in the critical one minute it took to dive the boat. The new Type IX C/40 boat had a streamlined bow to allow the boat to submerge quicker after being seen by enemy aircraft. This new boat could disappear in about 30 seconds, saving the critical time it took to determine the life or death of a sub. The boat was armed with two twin 20mm Flak 38 cannon and a 37mm cannon to fight off enemy planes and ships. It was also armed with a 105mm deck gun but that was removed to allow the boat to dive quicker later in the war. During WWII, the Germans built 111 Type IX boats (out of almost 1,200 accepted into service) and sank more than 25 percent of all the Allied tonnage sunk during the war. They were, without a doubt, the most dangerous and effective of all WWII German stealth weapons.

### U 858 and U 853 had contrasting histories

Both German submarines had exciting careers. U 853 chased the *Queen Mary* in 1944 when it was taking U.S. soldiers to England but the *Queen Mary* was too fast and eluded attack. U 858 was the first enemy combatant to surrender to the continental United States since the War of 1812.

U 858 was laid down Dec. 11, 1942, and commissioned Sept. 30, 1943. KptLt. Thilo Bode was its captain for its entire war career. It was Bode who surrendered U 858 to the United States at Fort Miles on May 14, 1945. After working the submarine up on sea trials in the Baltic, Bode took it on two uneventful war patrols before its 61-man crew arrived at Fort Miles and internment. Other than in practice, U 858 never fired a torpedo in anger nor did it sink a ship on its two war patrols.

After its surrender, U 858 was tied at the Mine Wharf (now the Cape Henlopen State Park fishing pier) for months, toured by local residents and schoolchildren. It was towed to the Philadelphia Navy Yard, where it was stripped. In 1947, the U.S. Navy destroyed U 858 with several other German submarines in an exercise 300 miles off Cape Cod, sinking them in thousands of feet of water. We know quite a bit about the final patrol of U 858 because we interviewed crew member Karl Heinz Bahr in 2001 and have his written and oral history.

The story of U 853 is a more exciting than that of U 858. It was laid down before its sister, Aug. 21, 1942, and was commissioned June 25, 1943, under command of Kptlt. Helmut Sommer. U 853 conducted three war patrols, sinking two ships for 5,783 tons. On its second war patrol in May 1944, after sighting and chasing the *Queen Mary*, U 853 was attacked on the surface by three British Swordfish aircraft. Its captain at that time (KrvKpt. Gunter Kuhnke, winner of the Knights Cross) engaged the enemy on the surface with its antiaircraft weapons, including two Flak 38 mounts.

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## TWO GERMAN SUBMARINES (. . .CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

Its gunners were very effective, hitting all three of the slow Swordfish and damaging one so badly that it was jettisoned overboard when it returned to its carrier.

Its last war patrol, however, was not as successful as U 853 continued its attack on the East Coast as part of *Operation Seewolf*. U 853 attacked USS *Eagleboat 56* near Portland, Maine, and destroyed it. The submarine spotted the collier *Black Point* near the entrance to Long Island Sound and torpedoed it, blowing off its stern and killing 14 of its 46-man crew. The *Black Point* became the last ship sunk in U.S. waters in WWII. U 853, in shallow water, ran to reach safer deep water to elude American warships but lost the race.

Unknown to U 853, a recent convoy had just arrived in American waters and its three antisubmarine warfare (asw) escorts were immediately ordered to find the escaping U boat and attack it. DD *Ericsson*, DE *Atherton* and PF (Patrol Frigate) *Moberly* immediately took up the hunt for U 853. Seven miles east of Block Island, R.I., the American hunter-killers found the U 853 and the attack began the night of May 5, 1945. Joined by two blimps from Lakehurst, N.J. (K-16 and K-58) with their 7.2-inch rocket bombs, the American force unleashed a withering attack on the submerged boat. After raining down 264 Hedgehogs, 195 depth charges and six rocket bombs from the two blimps, the U 853 was finally destroyed May 6, 1945, and became the final resting tomb in 121 feet of water for its crew of 55.

### Local businessman Mel Joseph leads effort to recover sunken boats and their artifacts

That could have been the end of the story for U 853 except for the efforts of an enterprising Delawarean, Mel Joseph of Millsboro, Del. Joseph, a Southern Delaware businessman (M.L. Joseph Construction Co.), was well-known for supporting scuba expeditions. His most famous expedition was that of Mel Fisher on his quest to find the famous Spanish galleon *Atocha*, the most important ship of the 1622 Plate Fleet sunk off the Florida Keys. With the support of Joseph and others, including Frank Perdue, Mel Fisher found the *Atocha's* treasure in 1985 and much of its precious cargo, including gold, silver and jewels. Fisher also found several bronze *Atocha* cannon, some of which are on display in the Treasures of the Sea exhibit at Delaware Technical and Community College in Georgetown, Del., donated by Joseph and his family.

Joseph also was interested in raising U 853. He worked directly with the German government to get permission to dive the destroyed boat and attempt to bring it up. Many divers over the years have explored the sunken boat and it was a popular but dangerous dive site because the current is strong and the waters are murky at best. Several divers have been killed diving at the wrecked submarine.

Joseph received permission of the German government to dive the boat and, hopefully, bring it up. But after seeing the condition of the submarine and the dangers involved, the dive team decided that it would be impossible to bring up the boat in one piece. The backup plan became to bring up as many artifacts as the dive team could.

The largest of those artifacts was the submarine's complete Flak 38 gun tub, which was unbolted from the "wintergarden" near its conning tower and brought to the surface. The team could only find one of the two Flak 38 guns, with the other most likely blown off (with the 37mm gun) in the attack that destroyed the boat. Its 105mm had been removed after U 853's trials in the Baltic when it was decided not to repair the gun after a crew member forgot to clear it after a dive. The big gun also slowed the time it took to dive the boat so it was removed as it was from most Type IX boats.

### From the bottom of the ocean to a college campus

But how did the Flak 38 get to Delaware Technical and Community College in Georgetown, Del.? The best guess is that Mel Joseph, at one time on the college's board of directors, donated the weapon to the college for its use and historical interpretation as he had done with his *Atocha* donations. And then this author entered the story on that winter day in 2004.

How and why the gun got to the woods behind the school is unclear, but fortunately for American history and the history of Fort Miles, I discovered the gun. It was almost karma, putting a WWII historian who knows German weapons well and can read German manufacturing code, looking down at a Mauser factory-made weapon with its twin barrels (one lacking its flash hider) in the Delaware woods.

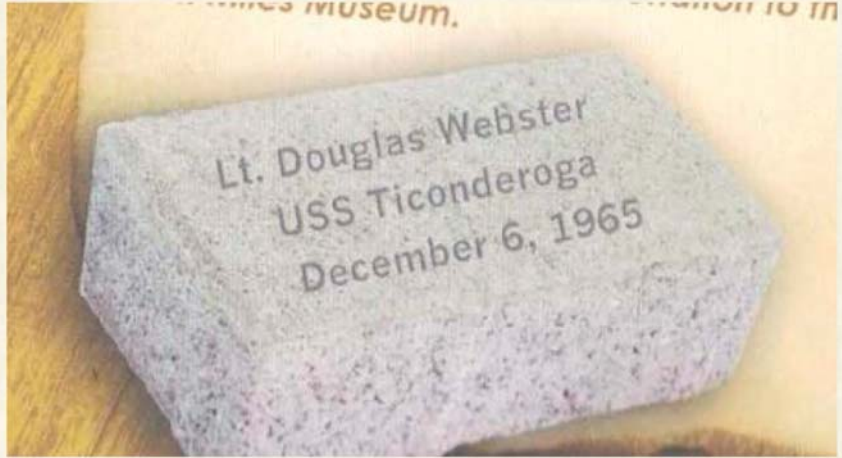
Researching the gun and working with Mel Joseph's family and the staff of Delaware Tech, we pieced the story together and rescued the Flak 38. Bringing it to our Fort Miles museum, our enterprising team led by Joe Kosoveach set to work to repair the gun and put it on display. After sending a team to Chicago to take a close look at U 505 on display there, and its Flak 38, our restored Flak 38 is certainly the best in the United States and most probably the best in the world. After seven years of careful restoration by our team, the Flak 38 from U 853 has been on display for three years inside our Fort Miles museum, side by side with photos of the surrender of its sister U 858 on May 14, 1945.

So the two Bremen submarines are united 3,000 miles away at one of the United States' great forts of WWII. Their story is told to thousands of visitors to the Fort Miles museum as part of the German attack on the American homeland in World War II.

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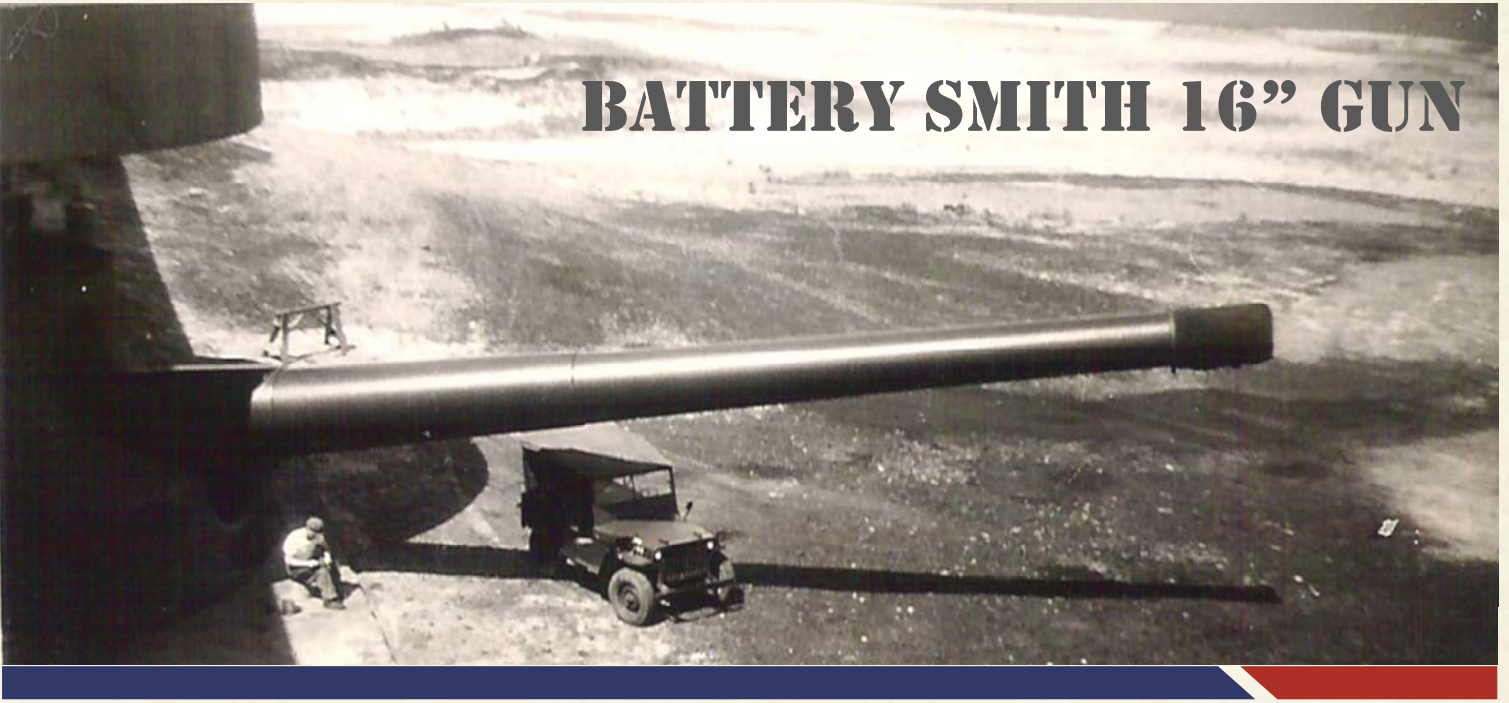
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