



USS WISCONSIN, BB64 "The Last Battleship"

THE



BADGER

Volume 17, Issue 2

AUGUST 2007

A Look at the U.S.S. Wisconsin

by Brian Fair

Director of Development
Nauticus

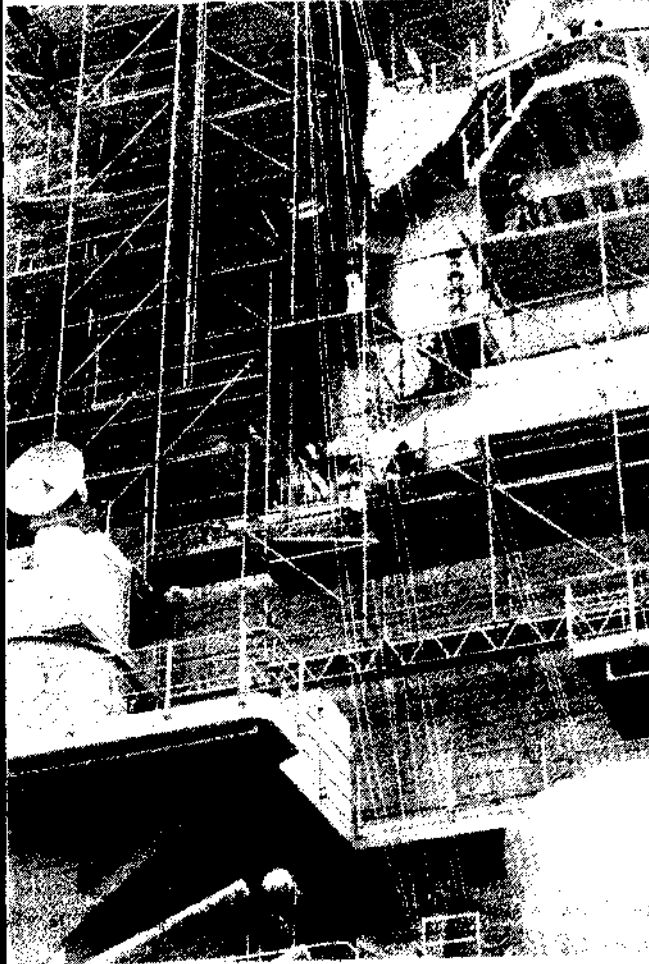
Special points of interest:

- Docents Luncheon, Oct. 1, 2007 at Nauticus
- August, 2008—11th Reunion, 20th Anniversary USS Wisconsin Association, Norfolk, VA



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The Battleship – she looks a little different as there is extensive scaffolding around parts of her because she is undergoing a regular painting "touch up."

On May 4, 2007, Nauticus and the Battleship Wisconsin were honored to host Prince Phillip of England. The Prince toured the new Half Moon Cruise & Celebration Center, ate lunch, and then took a brief tour of the Battleship *Wisconsin*. Prince Phillip and the Queen were visiting the Hampton Roads area as part of the 400th Jamestown celebration activities being held throughout the area.

Preparations also continue to transfer stewardship of *Wisconsin* from the Navy to Nauticus. It appears likely that the transition will be completed sometime this fall. This means that very soon guests and all of the Association members will be able to enter the interior of the ship! The first area planned to be open is the Wardroom, Combat Engagement Center and the spaces forward up to Turret #2.

With the opening of the *Wisconsin* comes a great opportunity for Nauticus to design engaging and inspiring exhibits and multi-media experiences that preserve the ship's historic integrity, while at the same time relating its importance back to the general public.

A comprehensive "hull survey" has been completed and the results are very positive. The *Wisconsin* is in excellent condition and the detailed maintenance planning will keep her this way! Additionally, the opening of the ship allows us to begin fun and educational experiences like Girl and Cub Scout Overnight Camps, and guided tours of the highlights of the ship available to the public. When this happens, we will need your support more than ever! Look for updates in upcoming issues of *The Badger* on YOUR battleship.

★★★

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Riding Out the Typhoon— aboard the USS Wisconsin

by Charles Wiggins '44-'46

The dates are etched in my mind as if on a tombstone: Dec. 17 and 18, 1944.

On those two days, I was an 18-year-old seaman aboard the Battleship USS Wisconsin in the far Western Pacific, somewhere between the Caroline Islands and the Philippines.

A few weeks earlier, the Wisconsin had joined Admiral William F. Halsey's 3rd Fleet at Ulithi in the Caroline Islands.

The deepwater lagoon at Ulithi had been full of ships of every description when we arrived, including battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers, destroyers, supply ships, tankers and ammunition ships.

It looked like the largest armada of fighting ships ever assembled.

We weighed anchor and set a westerly course for the Philippines, which were still held by the Japanese.

The massive fleet seemed to stretch from horizon to horizon as we sailed a vast Pacific void.

The job of the battleships, cruisers and destroyers was to protect the aircraft carriers from enemy planes and ships as our pilots flew attack missions.

The battleships carried enough fuel to cruise around the world if necessary.

Almost every day, destroyers would pull alongside the Wisconsin to take on fuel as we cruised at about 15 knots.

The operation could be dangerous because the destroyer and battleship had to get close enough to allow flexible fuel lines to be stretched between ships.

If the weather was bad and the seas were rough, the fuel lines could come apart. Or, worse, the destroyer could crash into the battleship.

We were undertaking such a fuel transfer when we were advised that a typhoon was approaching.

Several fuel lines had broken as the weather grew worse and worse.

Our captain reluctantly gave the order to discontinue. The destroyers pulled away and resumed their positions in the fleet formation.

As the sun set, heavy rain squalls were becoming more frequent.

I climbed into my bunk that night and the Wisconsin started to roll and pitch.

It made creaking sounds like we had never heard before.

By dawn, our ship was rolling and pitching so badly that it was impossible to move

unless you held onto something and took a step while grabbing something else.

Waves were estimated to be 60 to 70 feet high; visibility was down to almost zero; and rain was coming down in sheets.

Wind blowing through the rigging made such a high-pitched, foreboding sound that I wanted to put my fingers in my ears to shut it out.

You could tell that tremendous pressure was being exerted on the hull from all the strange sounds that came as the ship's bow went into a trough and plowed into the next big wave.

Sometimes we heard a loud, cracking noise: It was welds in the bulkheads splitting when they could no longer stand pressure.

We feared for our lives and wondered whether the Wisconsin was strong enough to survive a typhoon.

All we could do was stay below in our quarters, hold on and pray.

Manning The Foretop

Then the chief boatswain's mate reminded me that I was scheduled for duty on the Wisconsin's foretop, an open lookout station at the highest point on the ship, just forward of the main mast.

The lookout station could be reached only by an outside ladder.

I asked the chief if the foretop could be left unmanned because the storm was so intense, but he replied, "You will stand your watch."

When I reached the foretop's ladder, the wind was howling, and driving rain pelted my face like bee stings.

The waves surrounding the ship looked like mountains.

I clung to the base of the ladder and wondered how I could ever climb to the top without being flung into the raging water below.

I waited until the ship was momentarily vertical as it went through a wave, in the hope that I could reach the top before it started rolling back onto its side.

But when I was halfway up, the ship began to roll.

Before climbing higher, I looked down and was terrified to see nothing but sea below me.

I froze, clinging to that ladder for dear life and closing my eyes.

It seemed like an eternity before the ship slowly started to roll upright again.

When it was vertical, I lost no time climbing the rest of the way.

I found the lookout on duty anxious to turn the watch over to me but apprehensive to start down that ladder.

He waited like I had for the ship to become vertical before starting his perilous descent.

Up in the foretop, the storm's fury and the rolling of the ship seemed even worse.

Lost Lives and Destruction

The destroyers in the fleet took a terrible punishment.

They would completely disappear in the deep troughs for what seemed like a full minute, then come into view again to ride the crest of the next mountainous wave.

Sometimes they rolled so far that it seemed their stacks were dipping into the water.

At the height of that awesome typhoon, three destroyers capsized and sank. The crew of a destroyer numbered approximately 260 men.

Only 24 survived the sinking of the USS Spence; six were alive after the USS Monaghan went down; and 63 survived when the USS Hull sank.

The 3rd Fleet was caught up in that monstrous typhoon for two days.

Hundreds of crewmen were so seasick that all they could do was lie in their bunks and moan.

After the third day, the winds and seas started to subside and we could venture out onto the main deck.

The damage we saw was overwhelming. All of our whaleboats had been smashed to matchwood. The barrels of 20-mm guns were twisted into grotesque shapes. Most of the life rafts secured on the main deck had been swept away, along with three seaplanes.

Each ship in the fleet was severely mauled, including the carriers, which lost planes overboard.

When the seas calmed, ships in the fleet cruised back to where the destroyers went down.

Some sailors had miraculously survived and were picked up.

In all, 851 lives had been lost.

The 3rd Fleet returned to Ulithi, where we licked our wounds and made repairs.

We then continued a relentless attack on the enemy, from the Philippines to Tokyo Bay, where victory finally came on

Sept. 2, 1945.

★★★

Chaplain on USS Wisconsin

The story of a Navy Chaplain who was wounded at Pearl Harbor and then was in the Tokyo Bay area at the end of World War II—epitomizes the danger chaplains can be in while ministering to the soldiers and sailors in the military. The chaplain was Raymond C. Hohenstein and this is his story:

Raymond Charles Hohenstein was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on August 13, 1907. He attended Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis and graduated in 1930. He served as a pastor in Chicago and Park Ridge, Illinois until he was commissioned into the United States Navy as a chaplain in 1940.

He was stationed on the *USS California* at Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, on that fateful day in December 1941 when Japan attacked and the war began for the United States. Here is Chaplain Hohenstein's account taken from Chaplain Milton S. Ernstmeyer's book¹:

"While I stood and watched, general quarters was sounded aboard. I proceeded immediately and on the double to my battle station [forward battle dressing station] on the third deck just aft turret number 2. I shouted, 'This isn't practice! This is a real raid' to everyone I passed.

When I reached my battle station, the men were already closing the watertight doors. A few moments later the ship shook violently from an explosion that seemed to come directly beneath us. Before long, we smelled fumes. No one knew what they were, but we all felt dizzy. We must find our gas masks!

We broke open the watertight door on the starboard side to the passageway around the barbette (armor shield) of turret number 2. But once the door opened, we forgot all about the masks. We saw men knee-deep in fuel oil, some already overcome by the fumes. We worked to help these men over the high coaming (a raised frame around the hatchway) into our compartment, where the starboard side was still dry. The ship already had listed to port.

Before long, though, the fumes affected us all. When my legs no longer supported me, I tried to get out of the way so others could work. I lost consciousness.

I don't know how much time elapsed. When I came to, I was lying on the starboard quarterdeck directly outside the door of the crew's lounge. I remember someone saying that all the injured must be moved inside. The Japs² were strafing the ships.

In the passageway stood one of our Guamian mess boys, also semiconscious from the fumes. When he recognized me, he clung desperately to me. In that moment, all color, creed, and military differences vanished. We were simply two Christians praying for God's mercy and professing our common Christian faith in the Apostles' Creed.

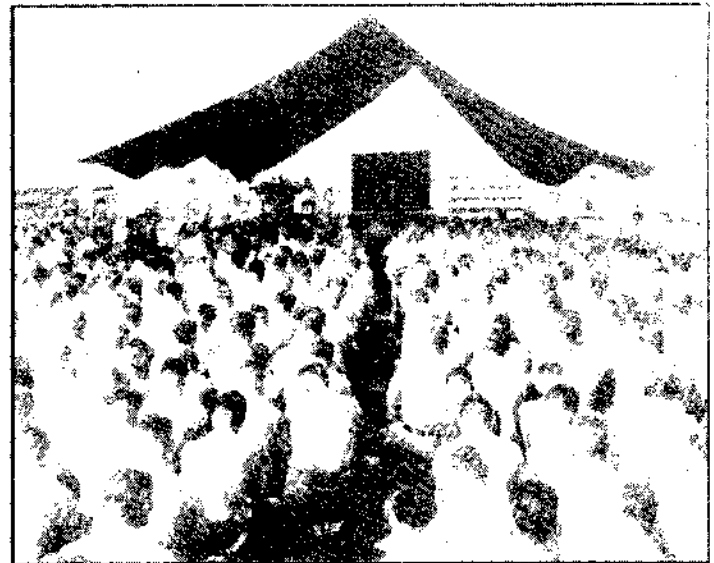
During this moment of prayer, another terrific explosion shook the ship (evidently the bomb amidships) and filled the passageway with smoke and debris. I lost consciousness again.

*When I awoke, I was lying again on the starboard quarterdeck. Thinking the ship might capsize (as someone said the *USS Oklahoma* had), I kicked off my shoes, ready to leap into the water. But we, the injured, were taken off ship."*

The *USS California* was severely damaged and eventually sank. Chaplain Hohenstein's injuries consisted of flash burns to the face, scalp, and right arm. He was awarded the Purple Heart in 1943 for wounds received at the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was the first living navy chaplain to receive the award.



Pearl Harbor Raid, *USS California* after being hit by Japanese aerial torpedoes and bombs, December 1941. (US Navy Photo)



Chaplain R. C. Hohenstein conducting a service aboard the *USS Wisconsin* during WWII.

Chaplain Hohenstein went on to serve as senior chaplain on the *USS Wisconsin* during World War II. He served on the *USS Wisconsin* from 1944 to 1946; this service included being ashore in the Tokyo Bay area on September 2, 1945, when Japan officially surrendered. He was the only navy chaplain to be present at both the beginning and end of the war with Japan.

Following WWII, he continued his chaplaincy ministry until retirement in 1961. Chaplain Raymond Hohenstein died of a heart attack on December 3, 1983, in Bethesda, Maryland, after a long service to God, church, and country.



¹ M.S. Ernstmeyer, ed., *They Shall Not March Alone: Glimpses into the Life and History of the Chaplaincy of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990), 27-28.

² In order to maintain the original tone of these reports, now-embarrassing pejorative terms have not been changed.

Article from CHS "Historical Footnotes" Vol. 52, Issue 1

SPECIAL MEETINGS - 20 YEARS APART

Christmas Eve, 1987, USS Iowa was anchored several hundred yards from the USS Midway in the North Arabian Sea and a few hundred Iowans were preparing to boat over to the carrier to attend Bob Hope's USO Christmas Show. I was one of those lucky sailors. The ride over was uneventful and everyone was excited to get to our appointed seating area. The hanger deck was decorated with a huge picture of Bob Hope (this was not his first visit to the Midway) and a stage was set up at one end. Sailors could be seen on, under and in any opening that was available.

The show was a wonderful mix of songs, pretty girls, dancing, pretty girls, skits, Mr. Hope's hilarious comedy and of course pretty girls! It was over much too soon and then we loaded up and were headed back to the Iowa. We experienced a little drama on the return trip; our boat lost power and we could not raise the Iowa quarterdeck with the boat's radio. On top of it all, the tide was going out and we were slowly heading out to sea. Finally, contact was made with the Iowa, a tow was sent to the rescue and we were all singing carols as we came along side Iowa.

Christmas Day Iowa went to flight quarters early and began receiving helicopters with the entire Bob Hope entourage. Mr. Hope and company were visiting the battleship to look around and later in the afternoon, entertain the crew.

A short time after flight quarters secured, BT1(SW) Steve Tucker and I left the Repair Office and stepped out onto the port side main deck. As we walked forward we noticed Barbara Eden and Lee Greenwood looking up at Turret 2. We approached and asked if we could answer any questions and the next thing we knew Steve and I were giving the two celebrities a ship's tour that ended with lunch in the First Class Mess. Too soon, Miss Eden and Mr. Greenwood, two of the nicest people you could imagine, had to depart to get ready for the show. As we began to leave, Miss Eden asked me if the Ship Store was open so she could get a ship's ball cap for her hat collection. It was Christmas Day, even the SH's had the day "off" so I offered my ball cap. Although she tried to beg off, Miss Eden did accept my cap and after autographing pictures of the ship for us she and Lee Greenwood, were off.

Fast forward twenty years. I'm sort of "retired" and work part time Security at The Lakeland Center in

Lakeland, Florida. The Center is an entertainment venue and on Valentine's Day, 2007 the headliners were Barbara Eden and Hal Linden in the play, "Love Letters." When I heard Miss Eden was going to be appearing, I approached Brandon, my supervisor, about assigning me to dressing room security hoping I might be able to meet her again.

Two hours before curtain time I was in position and Brandon took the Iowa ball cap I had brought with me (a USMC cap this time) to give to Miss Eden. Technically, as Security, I am not supposed to make contact with the performers. Brandon met Miss Eden in the hallway and as he was telling her about the ball cap and why it was there for her she looked in my direction, said, "Oh my goodness," and came down the hall toward me. She gave me a hug and told me it was very nice to see me again. I was floating... As we spoke, she mentioned that she still wears my ball cap on occasion as does her husband. Make-up, sound checks and such had to be taken care of so our conversation was short but Miss Eden left with the promise of getting together after the performance. While she was on stage, I had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Jon Eicholtz, Miss Eden's husband. He told me how much his wife enjoyed her trips with Bob Hope and what they went through to entertain the troops involved with Operation Earnest Will in the Persian Gulf/North Arabian Sea. They certainly did not go First Class! Transportation was supplied by the military - a nineteen hour flight on a C-130 with in flight refueling.

True to her word, Miss Eden called me into her dressing room after her curtain call. We spoke some more about her visit to the Iowa and the wonderful memories she had of that trip. She looked at a few pictures I had taken those many years ago and autographed each one. After being introduced "officially" to her husband, her agent, assistants and Mr. Linden, we posed for a picture and I escorted them to the hotel adjacent to the Center and said good night.

I don't remember the drive home and Debbie said there was a smile on my face all night long and well into the next day. It was truly A Very Special Evening.

IMPORTANT REUNION INFORMATION

The reunion will be held at: Adam's Mark Hotel Buffalo Niagara
120 Church Street
Buffalo, NY 14202
Direct Dial: 716-845-5116
Toll Free Reservations: 1-800-444-2326
Fax: 716-856-5538

We have reserved rooms for crew members: September 4 through September 8, 2007

Guaranteed room rates: \$85 per night plus tax. Active duty and retired military receive a discounted rate to \$81 plus tax.

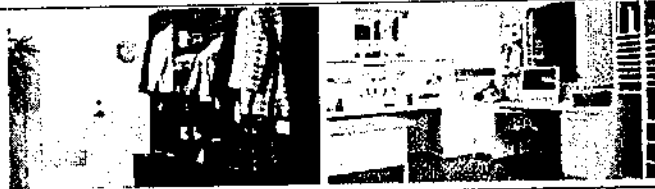
Reservations due date: Make your Hotel reservations NO LATER THAN AUGUST 15 to qualify for the guaranteed rate. Be sure to identify yourself as a member of the USS IOWA reunion!

THE BROTHERHOOD

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who suffered and were stripped of their humanity. I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades.. Such good men."

Author unknown

bedroom
garage
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News

Saturday, March 3, 2007

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Battleship Down

The *USS Iowa* was once considered a lock as a San Francisco tourist attraction. So why is the historic warship rusting in Suisun Bay?

By **Ron Russell**

Published: January 10, 2007

The *USS Iowa*, the last great battleship from World War II to be mothballed by the Navy, holds a special place in military lore.

Kit Bonner



The Iowa's once-gleaming teakwood deck is largely rotted.

Kit Bonner



The *USS Iowa*, nearly three football fields long, is among World War II's most decorated ships.

Subject(s): [Russell on the USS Iowa](#)
become a floating museum, the battleship that was once the

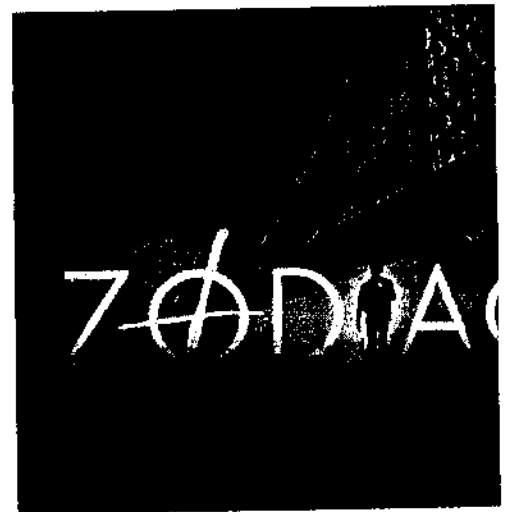
It helped the U.S. military win in the Pacific after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. It was the ship on which President Franklin D. Roosevelt sailed to Africa in 1943 en route to back-to-back summits with Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin in Tehran, and Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek in Cairo. And it was anchored in Tokyo Harbor the day the Japanese surrendered, ending the war.

But five years after being towed to the West Coast under the presumption that it would someday

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expectation that, even if it had San Francisco's blessing, the Navy would respond favorably to its idea to park the *Iowa* at Pier 48.

"Our aim is simply to get a foot in the door in the event that the Navy says no to everyone this round. We'd like to be part of the game in the future," says the Fremont firefighter and Navy veteran, who served on the *USS New Jersey* in the 1980s.

His split with Wong and Stephens was less than amicable.

Wong accused Morariu of making off with proprietary information and briefly threatened to sue. Morariu scrambled to meet the Navy's application deadline. In the process, his group ruffled feathers at the USS Hornet Museum by drafting a proposal, which it subsequently had to replace, implying that the Hornet Museum was ready to throw in with the *Iowa* if the Navy were to endorse Pier 48.

"There were no hard feelings," says Bob Fish, the *Hornet* trustee. "We'd actually love to be part of a maritime museum with the *Iowa* in San Francisco, but, as you could understand, it was never our intention to be part of someone else's bid."

While Morariu's group has had trouble getting off the ground, the city of Stockton's effort appears to have taken a spectacular nosedive.

With Pombo's backing, the Stockton bid was timed to take advantage of the resistance Wong and Stephens were having in San Francisco. Looking for a chance to jump-start development of a former naval facility at Rough and Ready Island in the San Joaquin River, near its downtown, Stockton port officials made a generous offer. The port would make available a pier, an adjacent 15,000-square-foot building for use as a visitor center, and enough parking to accommodate thousands of cars.

The sponsoring group, the Battleship Iowa Museum & Memorial Foundation — headed by Jim Dodge, commanding officer at the closed naval air station in Alameda — heralded the "gift" as worth \$33 million. Sponsors confidently predicted that if the city were willing to kick in another \$10.9 million to tow the ship from Suisun Bay and prepare it as a museum, the *Iowa* could be theirs.

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By Bob Norman

But Pombo's attempt at legislative fiat to circumvent the Navy's role in deciding the ship's fate rankled and influential members of California's congressional delegation. Sens. Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, as incoming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, had been instrumental in appropriating more than \$3 million to tow the *Iowa* to California in 2001, at a time when it was widely expected that the ship would end up in San Francisco.

Having the *Iowa* brought to the West Coast from Rhode Island was part of an elaborate battleship swap. Feinstein and others helped engineer, after former Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-South Carolina) exerted political muscle to get the *Iowa*'s mothballed sister ship, the *New Jersey*, relocated from Bremerton, Wash., to the West Coast.

In late 2005, Feinstein interceded to ensure that the Pombo move went nowhere.

Last September, the Stockton effort suffered a critical blow. That's when a consulting firm commissioned by the City Council concluded that the price tag for turning the ship into a museum would be \$38 million — not the \$10.9 million that the ship's backers had earlier estimated. Elected officials have since backed away from subsidizing the project.

All of which has fueled speculation that, despite the Navy's presumed preference for seeing the battleship become a museum, military brass may face some unpleasant alternatives.

"I really don't see the Navy donating it, based on the proposals on the table," says a well-placed source who maintains close contact with Navy officials. Others express a similar view. Fretting that the *Iowa* could become a reef, Bonner, the historian, notes that the Navy is spending half a million dollars a year on it, including electricity to keep its interior humidity controlled. "If no one comes up with the funds necessary to make it as a museum, the Navy probably doesn't have a choice."

Floating at the end of a row of dormant ships, the *Iowa* is hidden in plain view at the National Defense Fleet in Suisun Bay at Benicia.

Administered by the U.S. Maritime Administration, the facility is where surplus military vessels — currently more than 70 — have been mothballed since the end of World War II. Although some have been set aside during a national emergency, for most of the ships brought there, Suisun Bay represents the next-to-last step before being sold for scrap, hauled to sea for use as target practice, or sunk as a fishing reef.

The ghostly vessels clustered along the shore to the east of the Benicia Bridge provide a haunting — if only in view for motorists whizzing along I-680. Buffered by marshland, the facility is inaccessible to the public. A narrow road that leads to the moored ships and a Maritime Administration office is off-limits. Even sightseeing boats aren't allowed within 500 feet of the fleet.

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