

Heritage Committee Spotlight: Battleship IOWA Museum ~ Vicky's Doghouse

By Marann Fengler, Executive Assistant, Battleship IOWA Museum



The Pacific Battleship Center, known as the Battleship IOWA Museum, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, a Top 5 TripAdvisor Museum attraction, and the only battleship on the West Coast. As a historic naval ship museum, we inspire civic engagement through Education, Veterans, and Community efforts - our three core pillars. Since the ship's arrival to the Los Angeles Waterfront in 2012, nearly two million visitors have "celebrated the American spirit" through self-guided and guided tours. Guided tours include our gun tour, engineering tour, and a special, in depth look at the Captain's Cabin, where FDR stayed during World War II. Plus, an interactive exhibition of "undersea museums" called Lost at Sea - shipwrecks discovered by ocean explorer Dr. Bob Ballard. Adjacent to Lost at Sea is the only art gallery you'll find on a battleship, which showcases the artwork of veterans and crew members.

When John McCrea brought home an adorable little dog, his wife didn't exactly take to it. She is reputed to have exclaimed, "Get that thing out of here!"

"My sister named the dog 'Victory,'" McCrea's daughter Annie recalled years later, "but we all called him Vicky. He was just a mutt."

And John McCrea just happened to be the first captain of the then brand-new battleship USS Iowa (BB-61). His solution to his wife's distaste for the dog? He took Vicky to the Iowa to be the ship's mascot.

The "mutt" would go on to sleep at the foot of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's bed, hobnob with the greatest American military leaders of the 1940s, log over 205,000 miles of travel at sea, and be accorded full military honors when he finally left the ship.

Fast-forward to Pacific Battleship Center rescuing the ship from the "ghost fleet" in 2011 and turning her into a museum. The organization decided to preserve Vicky's legacy in the form of a scavenger hunt for kids. The scavenger hunt proved such a hit, that when the notion was taken to develop a food and beverage option for the venue, another role for Vicky presented itself: the food would be gourmet hot dogs and the eatery would be called "Vicky's Doghouse."

Thanks in no small part to donations from the Navy Supply Corps Foundation, IOWA's team was able to transform a small shipping container into a cafe that resides on the ship's stern. They toiled for months cutting doors and windows into the container's sides, helping hoist it aboard the ship, laying flooring and adding equipment, painting, and affixing signage.

Meanwhile, Chef Cesar Olvera was busy crafting a [menu](#). From Nathan's hot dogs to spicy Italian dogs, to fries, onion rings, and tater tots with decadent dipping sauces, to salads and vegan options, weekly specials like jalapeno poppers, to sodas, beer, and wine, he concocted culinary delights that please every palate.

Work progressed for months, and on Friday, October 8, 2021, all that effort culminated in a ribbon cutting ceremony and grand opening. Vicky's Doghouse is available to the public, regardless of whether they tour the ship or not. It's free to come hang out on IOWA's fantail, chill with a hot dog and drink, and enjoy the best view of the busiest port on the west coast. Vicky's hosts patrons from 11 AM - 5 PM on weekdays and 11 AM - 6 PM on weekends.

The Battleship IOWA Museum would like to thank the Navy Supply Corps Foundation for your generous support.

