



**20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

**1992 USS 2012**  
**LEXINGTON**  
**MUSEUM ON THE BAY**  
★ ★ ★





# HUMONGOUS MILESTONES

**PROPOSAL TO THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY**  
TO TRANSFER THE USS LEXINGTON TO CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS  
TO ESTABLISH THE



From The  
Corpus Christi Area Convention & Visitors Bureau  
and The Lady Lex Museum on the Bay Association  
AUGUST 1991

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS  
CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI    STATE OF TEXAS    PORT OF CORPUS CHRISTI  
CORPUS CHRISTI AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION    CHAMBER OF COMMERCE    TEXAS STATE AQUARIUM

## Package also will fund projects OK'd by voters

By Rosemary Barnes

STAFF WRITER

The City Council on Tuesday unanimously authorized staff members to begin preparing for a \$15 million bond sale next month.

# Lady Lex bond sales authorized

increasing revenue sources.

Garza stopped short of advocating a property-tax increase. The majority of bond debt is financed with property-tax revenues.

Council members said that as the summer budget sessions approach, the council should decide whether major program cuts or a tax increase would be the best way to finance the 1992-93 fiscal budget.

"Do we increase services and increase taxes, or do we even consider a tax decrease?" asked Council

“Even if we do not make one additional dollar from the ship, we have enough money to maintain it.”

— Rob Earley,  
president, Corpus Christi Area  
Convention and Visitors Bureau

debt obligation.

A marketing survey conducted by the Lady Lex Museum on the Bay Association projected that the vessel will make \$2.8 million in its first year of operation and \$2.6 million in subsequent years. Annual maintenance and operating costs are estimated at \$2.2 million, according to the survey.

The visitors bureau will form a special foundation to oversee the operation and maintenance of the aircraft carrier.

"Even if we do not make one additional dollar from the ship, we have enough money to maintain it," Earley told the council.

Most council members said there was no reason to doubt the bureau's financial ability to finance the debt service on the Lexington bonds.

Currently, the city's hotel-mo-

Friday

**FORECAST**



Partly Cloudy  
Cool  
High 63. A4

**WEEKEND**

**Historic films**  
CCSU festival.  
F3



**BELOW**

**Marked for murder**  
Local hit list  
targets women. A1

# Corpus Christi Caller Times

35 Cents

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More than 172,767 daily readers

★January 24, 1992

# The Lex is landed

## Corpus Christi wins battle for famed 'Blue Ghost'

**USS LEXINGTON**

**PROPOSED EXHIBITS**

**Flight Deck Display**  
Potential Aircraft

A-6 Attack Bomber  
A-4 Jet Trainer  
T-2 Jet Trainer  
SH-3 Helicopter



### Quincy may renew fight in Congress

By William Garland

HARTE-MARKS WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON - The USS Lexington floating museum was awarded to Corpus Christi Thursday, ending a yearlong national competition for the historic aircraft carrier.

The Lexington is scheduled to be towed today from Pensacola, Fla., en route to

■ How the Navy decided/A6  
■ The route to victory/A6

## Planning commission backs zoning change for museum

By William Garland

HARTE-HANKS WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Legislation clearing the way for the opening of the Lexington museum in Corpus Christi Bay was on its way to President Bush Wednesday night after unanimous approval by the Sen-

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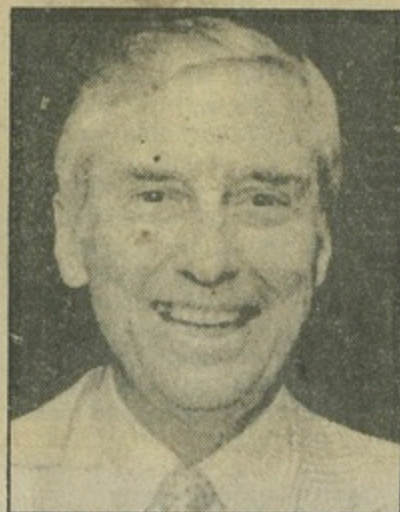
vessel will  
on as Bush  
law, waiv-

ing a 60-day congressional review that could have postponed the museum's opening. The review period, counting days when Congress meets, could have stretched into May or June.

"I am pleased that we were able to pass this bill without any delay," said Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas.

"This Senate vote clears the bill for the president," Bentsen said. "The long effort to transfer the ... Lex to Corpus Christi is just a signature away from reality."

Officials with the Corpus Christi



**Sen. Lloyd Bentsen:** "The long effort to transfer the ... Lex to Corpus Christi is just a signature away from reality."

cy, Mass.

Officials from Alabama supported the Navy's action after a bid by Mobile, the only other competing city, also was passed over in favor of Corpus Christi's proposal.

The measure waiving the 60-day legislative review, sponsored by Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, passed the House Tuesday on a 414-to-0 vote. Lawmakers from Alabama voiced support for the bill on the House floor, and Massachusetts congressmen voted in favor of the legislation.

Senate passage of the bill came

# Lexington bill clears U.S. Senate

# Aircraft carrier next attraction

The *USS Lexington*, the aircraft training carrier decommissioned last year by the U.S. Navy, arrived at Naval Station Ingleside this week en route to becoming a floating museum.

The *Lady Lex* came through the jetties at Port Aransas in a shroud of mist Wednesday morning, Jan. 29, after four days under tow by a Navy tug. The *USS Edenton* pulled the *Lex* across the Gulf of Mexico on a journey that began last Friday (Jan. 24) in Pensacola, FL.

The former aircraft training carrier was

craft carrier before she was decommissioned last year. Commissioned Feb. 17, 1943, she was built by the Bethlehem Steel Co. in Quincy. She was nicknamed the *Blue Ghost* by the Japanese during World War II because she repeatedly re-surfaced after reports that she had gone down. Afloat through the war, the *USS Lexington* downed in excess of 1,000 enemy planes.

Longer than three football fields, the *Lady Lex* measures 220 feet by 103 feet. With a full crew of officers and 1,400 enlisted

Museum will be operated by the Bay Association, a sub-branch of the Corpus Christi Area Visitors and Convention Bureau. Retired Rear Admiral is the association.

Available through pledges of \$100 or more, the fund is expected to total \$3 million. The money is expected to fund construction of the site, access pier and modifications for opening it to the public. The fund is needed to fulfill plans for displays. A fund drive to raise

advantage points in Port Aransas.

The carrier will not be open to the public while at NSI, however, she can be seen from the tour bus during the regularly scheduled Tuesday tours. (Call 512-776-4204 for tour information.)

When permanently berthed off Corpus Christi Beach (beyond the north end of the Harbor Bridge) near the jetty at the beach's southern end, the *Lady Lex* museum will be "divided" into three sections. The sections will depict the carrier's history, modern naval aviation training and the *Lady's* role in World War II.

The *USS Lexington*, built as an Essex class carrier, was the country's oldest working air-

craft carrier before she was decommissioned last year. Commissioned Feb. 17, 1943, she was built by the Bethlehem Steel Co. in Quincy. She was nicknamed the *Blue Ghost* by the Japanese during World War II because she repeatedly re-surfaced after reports that she had gone down. Afloat through the war, the *USS Lexington* downed in excess of 1,000 enemy planes.

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another \$1.5 to \$2 million will be activated to reach those goals. Among proposed exhibits are propeller airplanes used to fight Japan's forces, including F6F Hellcats, TBF Avengers and SBD Douglas Dive Bombers. Another aircraft display will include T-34s, single-engine propeller driven trainers used for primary flight training.

In addition to the various other aircraft, the museum may feature videos of the daily routine of pilot trainers.

The museum may also include an exhibit detailing the history of the five ships bearing the name *USS Lexington*. The first was a 1770s-vintage warship, a 16-gun brig used to

See 'LADY LEX,' Page 2

## Johnson released on bond

Electronic device to check movements

By Brian Pearson  
STAFF WRITER

Jeffrey Johnson, charged with murder in connection with the multiple-stabbing death of his neighbor, will be electronically monitored following his release on bond Wednesday.

During a hearing Monday, 347th District Judge Joaquin Villarreal declined to increase Johnson's

■ Electronic monitors/A10

\$100,000 bond. Villarreal ordered that the 40-year-old Johnson, if released on bond, must be fitted with a electronic monitoring device while awaiting his April 20 trial.

Johnson was arrested Jan. 10 in his Chandler's Mill apartment, 6350 Meadowvista Drive, after Shockley's body was found in her apartment directly downstairs. Police said Shockley, 28, who was 7½ weeks pregnant, had been stabbed more than 130 times in the neck and abdomen.

A handwritten note found Jan. 13 during a police search of Johnson's apartment detailed the killing of the "girl downstairs." Other papers found describe plans to kill other women.

During Monday's hearing, family, friends and acquaintances of Johnson described the unemployed bartender as polite and mild-mannered.

His mother, Joanne Johnson, 61, testified at the hearing that her son planned to stay at her Corpus Christi home after being released on bond.

Capt. J.D. Brewer of the Corpus Christi Police Department said he had several telephone calls Tuesday from citizens expressing dissatisfaction over the possibility of Johnson's release.

Brewer said police were not planning to provide special protection for the women listed in other notes found in the suspect's apartment.

"No one has requested protection," Brewer said.

He said police still are investigating the case and awaiting results of tests taken on blood samples found

# The Lex comes home

## Dignitaries welcome Blue Ghost

### Ship may be open for tours by July 4

By Cindy Tumiel  
STAFF WRITER

INGLESIDE - The USS Lexington entered its new home of Corpus Christi Bay Wednesday, where the famed Blue Ghost was warmly welcomed by a host of dignitaries.

The decommissioned aircraft carrier, destined for new life as a floating museum, arrived at its temporary berth at Naval Station Ingleside about noon Wednesday. It is expected to stay at the base for one to three months, until a permanent docking site is prepared at Corpus Christi Beach.

"We were up against some big guns in this project," a beaming Joe Jessel, chairman of the Lady Lex Museum on the Bay Association, told a group of about 75 people at a welcoming ceremony. "Somewhere in my heart of hearts, I knew from the beginning... that we were going to win."

Behind him, the behemoth aircraft carrier rose like a gray metal wall, blending into steel-colored clouds and the murky green water of Corpus Christi Bay.

The museum association, which headed the successful drive to bring the aircraft carrier to Corpus Christi, expects to have the ship open for tours by July 4.

A total of five tugboats, including one brought in from Galveston, aided in docking the Lexington.

Two tugs pushed the Lexington from its port side toward the docks. Long, thick ropes fell from openings in the carrier's starboard side, as ground crews pulled them taut to anchor the ship.

Spectators, taking advantage of an open house on the new naval base, lined up behind a chain-link fence and stood on a grassy rise behind the wharf, watching tugboats push and shove the powerless aircraft carrier toward the shore.

Lt. Cmdr. Bruce Cole, base public information officer, estimated about 800 cars, most with three passengers each, came down the Ingleside homeport gates in advance of the aircraft carrier's arrival.

Another crowd gathered before dawn in Port Aransas, waiting to watch the Lex-



GEORGE GONGORA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

People line the shore to get a good view of the USS Lexington as the aircraft carrier passes the Port Aransas jetties Wednesday on its way to the Corpus Christi Ship Channel and temporary anchorage at Naval Station Ingleside.

## Carrier attracts crowds on land, at sea

### Reactions range from 'magnificent' and 'historic' to 'just another day'

By Becky Ball  
and Jeffrey Ball

STAFF WRITERS

PORT ARANSAS - From the jetties in Port Aransas, it was a gray silhouette in the white morning fog.

The 79 passengers of the Wharf Cat, a chartered fishing boat, rushed to the bow and upper deck of the red-and-white boat to see the USS Lexington take shape as they approached.

"Isn't she magnificent," said Jack Dignum as he gazed at the Lexington while the Wharf Cat circled the aircraft carrier. His hands were dug into the pockets of his tan jacket, but periodically he removed them so he could lift the binoculars and his neck for a better

Dignum, who lives in Colorado, served in the Navy and was stationed in Corpus Christi in 1945 when he was 18. He wanted to be a pilot, but World War II ended before he was able to be trained.

"It (the Lexington) was part of the Navy," Dignum said, as cold winds whipped across the deck. "When you're in the Navy, you're always in the Navy."

As the Wharf Cat circled the large, gray mammoth ship in disbelief, Jody Gabbert stared at the ship as it approached.

Gabbert woke up at 4:30 a.m. to drive to Port Aransas from Kingsville to see the Lexington arrive.

A long chain connected the 889-foot-long Lexington to the USS Edenton, a naval rescue, salvage and tow ship. Gabbert

used similar anchor chains on the ranch. She said she cannot lift a single link because each is so massive.

Five smaller tug boats hugged the side of the Lexington to push it through the Corpus Christi Ship Channel to Ingleside, where it will be temporarily docked until its home at Corpus Christi Beach is prepared.

The Lexington was like a magnet to smaller boats, which rushed to greet the carrier and fell in behind to follow it. The boats looked like gnats as they swarmed around the enormous carrier.

"This is the best deal I've found in town," said Marion Miller as his leather gloves clasped the white railing of the

1993

CORPUS CHRISTI BAY AREA  
**VISITORS**  
*Guide*

CORPUS CHRISTI  
PADRE ISLAND  
PORT ARANSAS  
ROCKPORT-FULTON  
REFUGIO COUNTY  
KINGSVILLE  
ARANSAS PASS



1.05



Capt. F.W. Montesano

## Former N.A.S. Commander named Executive Director of U.S.S. Lexington

Captain F. W. "Rocco" Montesano, who served as commander of Naval Air Station-Corpus Christi from July 1994 to August 1996, has been appointed Executive Director of the USS Lexington on the Bay. The announcement was made Wednesday by Robert Lacy Jr., president of the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay Association, at a press conference aboard the Lexington.

Montesano, who is presently assigned as Assistant Chief of Staff for Manpower and Administrative Services for the Chief of Naval Air Training, will soon be retiring from the Navy and will assume his new duties on the "Lex" on May 1, taking the position formerly held by Jerry Chipman who resigned in January to join a flight simulator company in Florida.

When the Lexington was in use as a training carrier, Montesano, in July 1973, completed his first carrier landing on the ship. He later served aboard aircraft carrier USS Saratoga, USS Midway and USS Forrestal. He has logged over 5500 flight hours and 900 carrier landings.

Montesano was raised in Hackensack, New Jersey and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1971.

During Desert Shield/Desert Storm Montesano served as

# Minister, an ex-Navy man, is millionth visitor to Lex

Alabama pastor gets a lifetime membership, a personal tour of the ship and a tote bag of souvenirs

- Minister, wife were on their first trip to Corpus Christi.
- Schmidt won a lifetime membership and Lexington memorabilia.

By CHRISTINE LAUE  
Call-Times

Baptist minister Walt Schmidt usually bypasses Corpus Christi on his yearly trip from Decatur, Ala., to a mission in Mexico with his wife Jackie.

So call it luck that his detour this year earned him the distinction of being the one millionth visitor to the Lexington Museum on the Bay.

"We're going back (to U.S. Highway 77) and putting up a sign that says, 'Walt Schmidt says turn here. Visit the Lexington,'" Schmidt said.

Schmidt, pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Decatur, received a lifetime membership to the aircraft carrier museum, a personal tour led by guide Mary Holzhauer and a Lexington tote filled with other memorabilia including a brass anchor paperweight, brass keychain, mugs and T-shirts.

"I was on five different ships but they never welcomed me like this,"



David Adame/Call-Times

Walter Schmidt (left), the Lexington's one millionth visitor, walks through the naval museum's turnstile Tuesday followed by his wife Jackie.

Schmidt said.

He said he served eight years in the Navy and was stationed in two-year assignments in the Philippines, Italy, San Diego and Virginia. He flew a four-engine antisubmarine airplane but was never stationed on

an aircraft carrier such as the Lexington, he said.

"These big ships like this always amaze me," he said.

Schmidt also was amazed by winning, he said. "You got to be kidding," he said after Lexington board

president Mike Carrell congratulated him on being the millionth visitor.

The Schmidts had gotten to the museum after a few minor delays. They had walked back to their hotel to get Jackie Schmidt's sunglasses and then trailed behind a large group of children walking up the long ramp to the museum.

Lexington officials at the gate kept an anxious eye on the group of children in green T-shirts, guessing which of the next visitors would be the winner.

"Right behind this group of little kids, it's going to be it. I know," said Sandi McNorton, the museum's marketing director.

She was right.

McNorton said that before the Lexington came to Corpus Christi in October 1992, a study projected that the number of visitors to the museum at this time in July would be 750,000.

"So achieving this membership obviously well ahead of time shows that the ship was destined to be in Corpus Christi and that we're fulfilling our commitment to the city and the Navy," McNorton said.

## Lexington placed on historic register



Photos by Michelle Christenson/Caller-Times

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi students Will Jensen (from left), Jason Feriend and Joe Carlin wait this week to share historical accounts

from the USS Lexington with history teachers. Today the ship will be added to the National Register of Historic Places.

## Ship is a national landmark

BY ALISON ZIELENBACH  
*Caller-Times*

After 10 years of waiting, and repeated applications, the Lexington Museum on the Bay will be added today to the National Register of Historic Places.

Interior Secretary Gale Norton will designate



of the honor.

The National Register of Historic Places is an official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation.

Under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the designation extends more protections to the Lexington, and may make it eligible for funds for its preservation.

Executive director of the

## Bringing history to life

The U.S. Department of Education, through a Project Teaching American History grant of \$1 million to the Education Service Center-Region 2, is sponsoring seminars aboard the USS Lexington to help teachers learn non-traditional methods to take to their classroom.

See story

## Lex's 2 millionth visitor



Paul Iverson/Callar-Times

Carol Green, along with her family, is bombarded with attention after becoming the 2 millionth visitor to the Lexington Museum

on the Bay. The family, from Liberty Hill, received gifts and a lifetime membership to the museum. **See story, Page B1.**

# Lex vets laud honor

## It is longest serving ship in its class

By ALISON ZIELENBACH  
Call-Times

The Lexington Museum on the Bay joined 2,365 historic landmarks on the National Register of Historic Places Thursday.

At a signing ceremony at the Capitol, Interior Secretary Gale Norton and two Republican senators from Tennessee, Bill Frist and Lamar Alexander, honored

18 new Historic Landmarks, which included rock 'n roll's legendary Sun Studios. The Memphis studio first recorded Elvis Presley, B.B. King and Carl Perkins, among hundreds of other music stars. Sun Studio's founder, Sam Phillips, died Wednesday.

Norton said honoring non-typical landmarks like an aircraft carrier or a recording studio pays homage to the "rich texture of American culture ... not simply the things you usually think of as historic landmarks."

People around the nation were pleasantly surprised by the designation.

Irvin D. Walker, 81, served as Aviation Ordnanceman, first class, on the ship from February 1943 to November 1944.

"Well, I'm very prejudiced towards the Lexington, but I think it's a great honor," he said.

Judith Whipple, the ship's historian,



Omar Omselas/Call-Times

The Lexington Museum on the Bay is located off of Corpus Christi Beach, across the ship channel from downtown.

said she was delighted that the Lexington's turn had come.

"It means a great deal," she said. "The ship deserved it, and so did the men who

served on her."

Texas Republican Sen. John Cornyn

Please see LEX/B11

# USS Lexington Museum celebrates 13 years of ins



From left: MF  
Jeffery Row  
reenlistment  
the Navy's bi



Visitors to the Lexington Museum on the Bay can save a little "wear and tear" on their legs by enjoying a free shuttle ride up the concrete pier to the museum entrance.



# COLOSSAL ATTRACTIONS

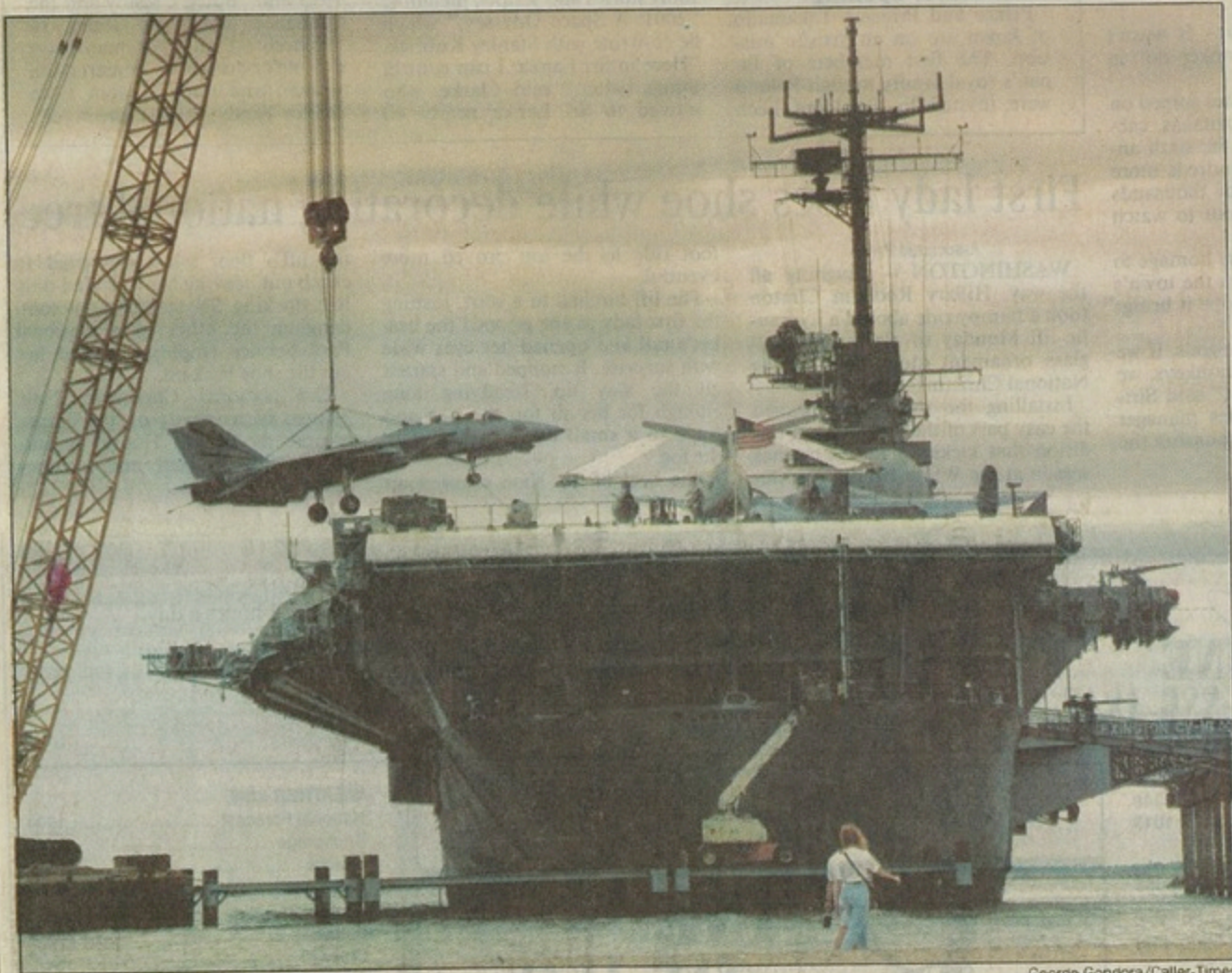


Tom Fox/Calder Time

## Landing on the Lex

osenberg's Grant Lane lands an Air Tractor, a cropduster airplane, on the flight deck of the Lexington on the Bay Museum Friday morning as part of the Texas Agricultural Aviation Convention. It was the first landing of a fixed-wing plane on the old USS Lexington since the aircraft carrier was decommissioned in 1991.

## Growing by a plane



George Gongora/Caller-Times

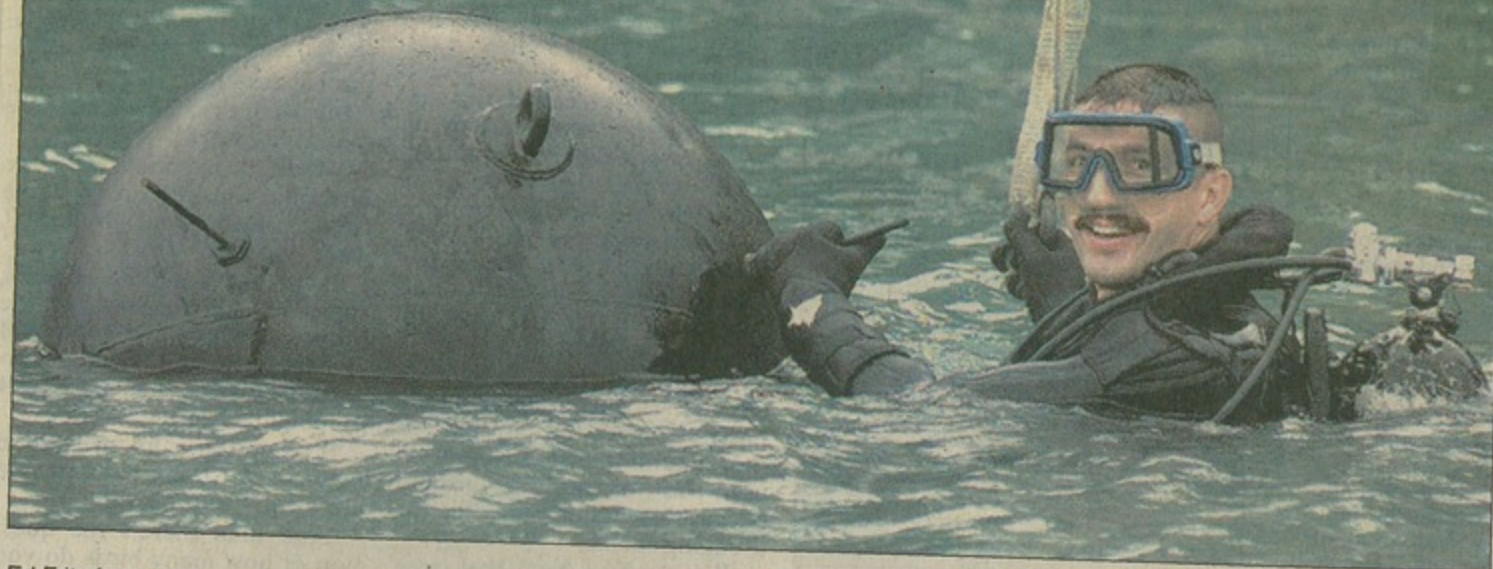
The Lexington Museum on the Bay welcomes its newest acquisition, a Grumman F-14 Tomcat fighter, on Monday. The fully com-

bat-qualified aircraft, which underwent a complete demilitarization, is on permanent loan from the Navy. Story/B1

## Big guns for the Lexington



# LOCAL



Ed Fritz frees a mine from a hook after a crane lowered it into the water near the Lexington Museum on the Bay.

David Pellerin/Caller-Times

## Mines added to attractions of Lexington

Mines floating in water are among  
items in exhibit at aircraft carrier

By GUY H. LAWRENCE  
Caller-Times



## SECTION B

# LOCAL

### ► Family affair

When it comes to lowriding, Danny Alaniz doesn't go it alone.

Page B2



★ Corpus Christi Caller-Times, Friday, October 8, 1999/B1

ella Danielson, 888-3600

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## Lexington museum considers IMAX-like theater

By RUTH COCHRAN ESCAMILLA  
Caller-Times

Float effortlessly in space or climb Mount Everest.

These are just some of the adventures that could be available if officials at the Lexington Museum on the Bay IMAX-like theater.

Rocco Montesano, director of the museum, said officials have been considering adding an IMAX-like theater system for several years to help bolster education.

### Large-screen system would offer educational films

grams on the ship.

"I don't have a price yet, and that's why the board has not committed to it," Montesano said. "The price will determine what we can do."

pass a sales tax increase. Voters rejected the plan.

Montesano said museum officials are considering funding the project through a bond issue.

large-screen format films with surround sound are made primarily for educational purposes.

dent and director of the Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Imagine the school kids. Think of the presentations they could do there. They could do real things, and if it's an IMAX, it's a big screen. They're in the right place. Lexington, Texas, World War II.

### Big screen coming to Lexington Museum on the Bay



# Three-story movie screen to open on Lex

theater in ship's  
main elevator to be  
unveiled Thursday

By GUY H. LAWRENCE  
Caller-Times

Officials with the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay will unveil a three-story tall movie theater in an old elevator pit will give Coastal Bend residents a whole new view of the historical craft carrier.

The USS Lexington Museum on the Bay will unveil its new 189-foot theater, boasting a 30-foot high screen, during a reception Thursday.

The new theater, open to the public Friday, will have a six-channel digital sound system with 10,000 watts of power. Large-format films will be projected on a 30-foot wide screen.

The theater, located in the ship's main elevator, cost the museum \$5 million, said Rocco Montesano, the museum's executive director. The theater is expected to provide the museum another revenue source, as well as give local residents another reason to visit the ship, he said. About 10 percent



Paul Iverson/Caller-Times

Rocco Montesano (left), executive director of the Lexington, holds the 70 mm film that will be used in the museum's new movie theater. Steve Kerly, from

MegaSystems, the company that is installing the projection equipment, holds the standard 35 mm film that movie theaters use.

appeal to the local community and increases our tourist value,"

The theater's first films will be "To Fly!" and "Mysteries of

the westward exploration of America and the nations' rural



EXPLOR

EXPERIENCES

★ Sunday, November 20, 1994

► HEALTH

# Children have sleepover – military style

- The trip is a first for the hospital's young cancer patients.
- Military ceremonies, guided tours and a camp fire were on the agenda.
- The intent of the event is to get the children into the mainstream.

By ROB HARRILL  
Caller-Times

Eight-year-old Celeste Cantu could hardly wait to get aboard the aircraft carrier Lexington Saturday afternoon.

With her backpack strapped to her shoulders, the former Driscoll Children's Hospital patient charged up the long concrete ramp leading to the museum's main entrance, occasionally stopping and turning to call over her shoulder in an attempt to cajole her parents into picking up the pace.

"Come on," shouted Celeste, whose leukemia is in remission. "Walk faster. Hurry – please."

Cindy Cantu, clutching her daughter's sleeping bag and pillow under her arm, grinned at her husband, Gilbert. The two walked a little faster.

The hurry was for a military-style sleepover aboard the Lexington with 24 friends – fellow cancer patients, siblings and Driscoll staff members.



George Tuley/Caller-Times

Jessica Good, 10 (left), holds her hat while walking up the ramp to the Lexington Museum on the Bay where she and other cancer patients from Driscoll Children's Hospital spent the night Saturday. Her sister, Elizabeth, 12; mother, Julia; brother, Steven, 2, and father, Todd, follow closely behind.

The event is the first of its kind for the hospital's cancer patients, said Paige Cooper, a nurse who works with the children undergoing treatment.

The children have gotten together as a group to go fishing, hunt Easter eggs

and have parties, Cooper said. "But this is the first time we've done this."

The intent is to get the children out to socialize and experience things they

**Please see SLEEPOVER/B4**

## Middle school students get real-life lessons aboard Lex

New classes are in addition to those for elementary students; program for high-schoolers may be added

- Hamlin was the first school to use the middle school program.
- Elementary schools have booked up most of the month.
- A physics program for high-schoolers may start by Christmas.

By KAREN LISTER  
Caller-Times

The mess hall aboard the Lexington where sailors used to dine was lined with eighth-graders Monday afternoon.

The young teens had a history and geography lesson on the retired aircraft carrier Monday, as part of the Lexington's first program for middle school students.

Since the Lexington staff began offering educational programs last year, interest has grown immensely, according to Ann Garipey, education coordinator for the Lexington. Elementary schools from throughout South Texas and as far north as San Antonio have booked up most of the month.

This week, the staff began offering a two-hour program for middle school students that focuses primarily on map-reading skills.

Hamlin Middle School was the first to use the Lexington's new program and incorporated it into the school's annual series of educational field trips throughout the area.

Since the Lexington staff entered the education arena, they have expanded the number of elementary school science programs to three. They hope to initiate a special physics program aboard the carrier for high school students by Christmas.

The staff teaches by using the different rooms of the ship. In the middle school class, for instance, students use maps and globes to determine the coordinates and path taken by the Lexington and other vessels.

"What I like is, we are able to provide an educational situation where they can take what they are learning in the classroom and apply it to real life," Garipey said.

As an added bonus, students in the classes get to tour areas of the Lexington that are not open to general tours.

Staff members said they have

Please see LEX/B2



David Adame/Caller-Times

Hamlin Middle School students (from left) Peter MacCallum, David Mendoza and Buck Morgan listen as Ann Garipey, Lexington education coordinator, talks Monday about the Pilots Ready Room on the vessel.

## LEX

FROM PAGE B1

been impressed with the change they see come over the students during the class. Participants often aren't impressed at the beginning of the session, but that usually changes during the program.

"They start to realize all the things that took place on this ship," said Michael Plowman, education assistant.

Some students listened intently Monday at the beginning of the program while a few chatted quietly. But their attention and focus increased as the instructors provided more details about the Lexington's legacy.

Eighth-grader Wanda Menton, who said she wanted to be a pilot, described the Lexington as "an exciting intellectual experience."

A classmate agreed. "You have to study really hard if you want to do something cool like fly a plane," said Jessica Kelley, an eighth-grader.

The Lexington charges \$4 per

student for the class. The cost often is covered by parents or PTA groups.

The carrier's staff had always planned to use the vessel as an educational tool, according to Jerry Chipman, executive director of the Lexington Museum.

"We just felt it was a rather perfect fit to use the ship to satisfy learning objectives of schools," he said.

The USS Lexington was commissioned Feb. 17, 1943, as the Navy's second Essex-class aircraft carrier. It was the country's fifth vessel to be called the USS Lexington.

It participated in nearly every Pacific Theater operation during 21 months of World War II combat.

On Dec. 29, 1962, the USS Lexington began a new mission as a training carrier for naval aviators. The Lexington was decommissioned on Nov. 26, 1991, and Corpus Christi was selected on Jan. 23, 1992, as the permanent home for the carrier. The museum opened on Oct. 15, 1992.

## Camp Lex 2002



# Lexington's tight spots help train rescue teams

By NOVELDA SOMMERS  
Caller-Times

Ropes and pulleys spider-webbed across parts of the Lexington's lower levels Thursday as rescue workers from around the country set up mock rescues in the ship's depths.

The Refinery Terminal Fire Company and Roco Rescue, a training company based in Baton Rouge, La., sponsored the ninth annual Confined Space Rescue Challenge at the museum in Corpus Christi Bay. The challenge continues through today.

The challenge, which was in Corpus Christi two years ago, is meant to sharpen the skills of firefighters and rescuers who work in areas where people could be trapped during a medical emergency, said John Voinche, vice president and general manager of Roco Rescue. "The Lexington is a floating

**Please see TRAINING/B3**



George Gongora/Caller-Times

International rescue teams held confined space rescue training missions Thursday aboard the Lexington.

# Lexington Volunteer Welcomes All Visitors

## Allan Marsden, 59, is proud to be a part of the 'best attraction in the state'

By SUZANNE RISLEY  
CALLER-TIMES

"All aboard for the Lexington! Save your legs for the 2 1/2-mile tour!" If you have visited the Lexington Museum recently, you may have noticed Allan Marsden making this proclamation.

The volunteer regularly greets visitors in a eight-passenger golf cart that he donated to the museum.

"There are a lot of places I could have spent the money, but the Lexington really needed this cart," Marsden says. "I feel that this is the best attraction in the state and I'm happy to be a part of it."

The Lexington is also very happy to have him, according to Barbara Cooper, communications manager.

"He is generous not only monetarily but also with his time and efforts," Cooper says. "He is one of our most regular and faithful volunteers."

Marsden, 59, is a Corpus Christi native and a charter member of the Lexington Volunteers. His first day on the job was also the first day the Lexington opened to the public.

"My favorite part of the ship is the foc'sle, the front of the ship where the anchor rests, because it was my first tour when the ship opened," he says.

Marsden conducts guided tours, group briefings and as-



Allan Marsden drives Lexington Museum visitors in the golf cart he donated.

COURTESY PHOTO

"People from all over the world visit the Lexington, especially from Asia, Mexico and Australia," he says.

Many retired military personnel who were actually stationed on the Lexington or stationed in Corpus Christi

heads, but World War II interrupted the completion of the last L-head.

He also recalls how the old Nueces Hotel on Water Street had a catwalk that stretched across the street, connecting it to the laundry and engine rooms.

"Many find it hard to believe that there used to be a

permanent carnival on the beach here back in the '40s," he says.

Marsden, manager of the Centre Theater for 15 years, remembers when the downtown area was prosperous and the Centre was the largest movie theater in Corpus Christi. "The Centre Theater held the world premiere

of the movie 'Giant' in 1956," he says.

Aside from volunteering for the Lexington, Marsden is also a diocesan deputy for the Knights of Columbus and a member of Corpus Christi Council 1202.

He participates in fundraising activities and serves as a liaison between the state and local offices.

"He is very active, faithful and not afraid to work," says Charles Kaler, Knights of Columbus member. "He came up with the idea for the gold and blue sleeveless jackets we now wear."

Marsden is also a member of the Serra Club, which is an organization of Catholic men dedicated to vocations and religious education, and the Baza 78 Caravan of Alhambra, which is an organization of Catholic men dedicated to the handicapped.

Why does Marsden volunteer so much of his time, effort and money to help others?

"It's pleasant to go home with a good feeling," he says.

*'Almost every day I meet someone who was either stationed on the Lexington or*

WHITED &

# City plans 'big bang' on July Fourth

## Symphony orchestra to perform '1812 Overture' on Lexington flight deck

- The '1812 Overture' will accompany the annual fireworks show.
- The Navy will fire cannons during the performance.
- Mercantile Bank is footing the orchestra's \$13,500 tab.

By RON GEORGE  
Call-Times

Hywel Jones arrived in Corpus Christi a year or so ago to take the reins of the city's symphony orchestra, and among his first impressions was what a fine place the Lexington would be for a Fourth of July concert.

Gonna happen next month - Tchaikovsky, cannons and fireworks, topping off what city officials are calling a "big bang celebration," and we're not talking physics.

"It's just amazing what's going to happen on July Fourth," said Sandi McNorton, the marketing director for the Lexington Museum on the Bay. "I don't know of a city doing more for the Fourth."

Special events coordinated by a mayor's steering committee



David Pellerin/Call-Times

**Flicka Rhan:** Will perform a Rodgers and Hammerstein medley with the Corpus Christi Symphony.

include:

■ A Four for the Fourth run beginning at 7 a.m. in Heritage Park.

■ The sixth annual South Texas Beach Party, sponsored by Special Olympics, beginning at noon in Memorial Coliseum.

■ Coast Guard search-and-res-

cue demonstrations and a performance by the Gator Bait Ski Team in Corpus Christi Marina beginning at 4:15 p.m.

■ A Fourth of July parade titled "What Freedom Means," on Shoreline Boulevard beginning at 5:30 p.m.

■ A patriotic ceremony at 7 p.m. in Sherrill Park, sponsored by the Mayor's Committee for Veterans Affairs.

■ Live music at Cole Park and Memorial Coliseum, also beginning at 7 p.m.

■ Fireworks at 9:20 p.m., accompanied by a live radio and television broadcast of the Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra performing Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" from the flight deck of the Lexington.

"I'm thrilled by it. I really am," said Jones, who came to the Coastal Bend from Palm Beach, Fla. "It really was a dream when I came here. It's really fallen into our laps because of Mercantile."

Mercantile Bank is footing the orchestra's \$13,500 tab, and also plans to underwrite the rest of the

**Please see FOURTH/B2**



Bill Decker (at podium) shares WWII stories at the Lexington on Saturday. Fifty WWII veterans gathered in Corpus Christi this weekend. Michelle Christenson/Caller-Times

## WWII veterans share memories

50 former servicemen gather here for 3-day reunion

By GUY H. LAWRENCE  
Caller-Times

Art Del Rey, a bombardier during World War II, remembers flying over Iwo Jima on a brilliantly moonlit night just before the massive American attack in early 1945.

"There were miles and miles of ships," said Del Rey, of Arcadia, Calif. "You couldn't see the end of it. Why the (Japanese) Zeros didn't attack us, I don't know. It was an awesome sight."

Del Rey was among the 50 amphibious aircraft pilots and crew members gathered in Corpus Christi for a three-day visit, which on Saturday involved telling war stories aboard the Lexington Museum on the Bay.

Allan Schneider of Houston, an audience member, said hearing the veterans talk about their experiences was better than reading it from a book.

"This helps put it in a human perspective," Schneider said.

The veterans, members of VP-23, also visited Naval Station Ingleside on Friday and held a memorial service at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, where many of them were trained to fly planes that were capable of water landings to rescue pilots.

VP-23 pilots flew the PBY-Catalina, or Black Cats as they were called during World War II.

"The PBY probably gave more to winning the war than any other aircraft," said

**Please see VETERANS/C7**

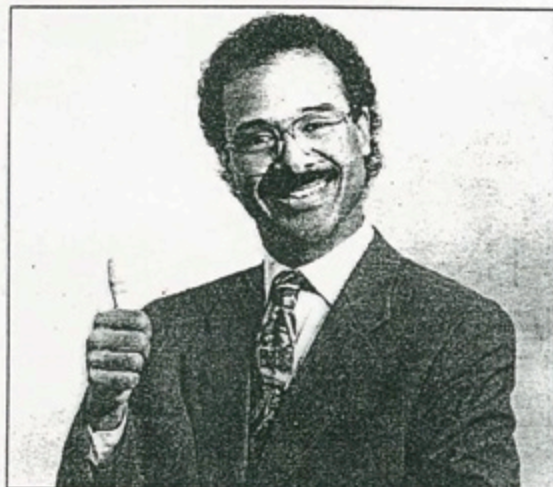


Coleman Mengers, 8, listens as World War II veterans share stories on Saturday. Michelle Christenson/Caller-Times



# ENORMOUS EXPOSURE

# 'Good Morning, America' wakes up for a forecast on the Lexington



Spencer Christian: Enjoys talking about the weather.

Spencer Christian to broadcast Friday weather segment from Corpus Christi

Just hope it doesn't rain. Gnarly weather has meant some annoying snafus for ABC weatherman Spencer Christian when he's ventured outside the "Good Morning, America" studios in New York to do remote segments from around the country. He visits Corpus Christi on Friday for live segments from the Lexington to broadcast for the morning show to 9 a.m., ABC.

There was the time in Traverse City, Mich., where Christian and his three-person crew were supposed to deliver weather forecasts from the annual Cherry Festival.

"That morning we had severe thunderstorms and torrential downpours," Christian recalls. "Just before we went on the air, the signal got knocked out and we missed our scheduled segment."

## Weather

Christian and his crew will be around the Lexington for the broadcast segments, the public will be permitted on board to watch the broadcast on the scene.)

Christian, a former reporter at WWBT-TV in Richmond, Va., said he enjoys cold fronts and tropical disturbances (even though he is a meteorologist), but misses being on the air. "My role on 'GMA' is broad. In addition to

Christian, who's been the weatherman on "GMA" since 1986,

This will be Christian's third trip to Corpus Christi. His last trip here in 1989 was to help ABC

celebrate its 25th anniversary. "GMA" is a big ratings station. The most recent Nielsen averages for the May period show "GMA" posted a 10 rating/44 share in the area. (Each ratings point represents approximately 1,700 households.) NBC's "Today" drew a 3 rating/14 share. "CBS This Morning" earned a 2 rating/10

share. Being a recognition of Christian's strong ratings for "GMA," his visit is also planned as a feature on the Lexington. He is expected to interview one of the ship's tour guides during the weather cut-ins during the hour show. (Because Christian

Please see Weather/B6



## Good Morning, America

Good Morning America weatherman Spencer Christian chats with Rear Adm. Bill Hayden, chief of naval air training, Friday during a

live broadcast aboard the Lexington Museum on the Bay. The ABC show has about 4.5 million viewers nationwide.

JAY JANNER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

B

Tuesday, July 26, 1994/B5

up to a hardline mike, which was plugged into an electrical outlet. All through the show I kept getting electric shocks. They became so severe while I was on the air that they had to unplug me. Charlie and Joan had to voice over the weather maps because I was experiencing shocks. No lasting effects, thankfully. But it was scary."

Oh, these morning shows. Always trying to start the day with a jolt.



The Lex was chosen as a "JAG" location because shots made the ship look like it was out to sea.

File photo

## NBC's on the JAG-ed edge

Scenes in new action-adventure series shot aboard U.S.S. Lexington

- "Jag" creator also produced "Magnum, P.I." and "Quantum Leap."
- Even without Navy cooperation, show manages authentic military flavor.
- Producer Donald Bellisario hopes show will appeal to "Top Gun" fans.

By ELAINE LINER  
CHIEF-TOES TELEVISION/VIDEO CRITIC

**I**t may not have top billing, but the biggest star in the two-hour opening episode of the NBC series "JAG" tonight (8p.m.) is the Lexington Museum on the Bay. Many scenes in the premiere of the new action-adventure show were shot aboard the retired aircraft carrier during a week of on-location filming there in January.

The creator and producer of "JAG" Donald Bellisario, who also produced and created "Magnum, P.I." and "Quantum Leap," said he couldn't have done the show without the Lex. "We had been looking for carriers all over," he said during an



File photo

NBC hopes Canadian actor David James Elliott will be this season's breakout star, with the same appeal of a Tom Selleck or Tom Cruise.

location to shoot because I could shoot from the deck of the Lexington out to sea. The people of Corpus Christi went way out of their way to help us. We had a lot of fun."

Bellisario's task in creating a show about the military's legal eagles - JAG is Navy parlance for the office of the Judge Advocate

said Bellisario. "They gave me no help on the pilot (the opening episode)."

He did receive assistance during the Lex shoot from USN (Ret.) Admiral Jim Scott, museum board member George Lyford Jr. and retired Navy Capt. "Rip" Van Kleeck.

Bellisario also has his own military experience from which to draw. He served in the Marine Corps for four years in the 1960s and is a self-described "military junkie." Many of the TV shows he's produced are action-oriented series in military settings, including "Baa Baa Black Sheep," "Battlestar Galactica," "Magnum" and "Airwolf."

"My heroes are always old-fashioned in terms of morals and character," said Bellisario. "They believe in pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. ... They can always find a way to pull themselves out of trouble. A faith in God and country and fellow man - that runs through every show I've ever made."

Bellisario hopes the look of "JAG" will appeal to fans of movies like "Top Gun" and "Hunt for Red October." He's borrowed aerial combat scenes and sub-



# 'Pearl Harbor' director scouts Lexington again

Michael Bay not saying whether WWII pi said to feature Ben Affleck, will use histo

BY GUY H. LAWRENCE  
Caller-Times

The director of the upcoming World War II film "Pearl Harbor" paid another visit to Corpus Christi on Tuesday to scout out the Lexington Museum on the Bay as a possible site for filming.

But Michael Bay, the director of "Armageddon" and "The Rock," didn't indicate whether the former aircraft carrier would be used in the feature film.

"They have not given us a clue on when they will let us know," said Rocco Montesano, executive director for the Lexington museum.

Bay and a crew of about 20 people spent about three hours Tuesday morning looking over the Lexington.

The director was interested in the flight deck, bridge and forward areas, Montesano said. If used, the Lexington would be portrayed as a Japanese war ship.

Jerry Bruckheimer will produce the film, which will depict events leading up to the Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

In addition to producing

If used, the Lex would be portr as a Japanese w ship.

within two weeks.

"Time is of the because they start Hawaii in a couple McNorton said.

Montesano said the of filming on the ship much the museum w for its use will be ne the Lexington is select

"Pear Harbor" w around two brothers w actors in the U.S. Army and the British Royal and are in love with woman.

An unofficial websi ed to the direc Hollywood heavywei Affleck and Cuba G will appear in the movi Gene Hackman is nego

Jerry Bruckheim actions' office would only say that the actors are considering roles. Locations near and at Pearl Harbor have already been sh



Movie extra Christopher Henry, 23, of Corpus Christi, is a member of a B-25 bomber crew for the production of 'Pearl Harbor,' to

be released Memorial Day 2001. B-25s were flown in for filming of the movie. Filming in Corpus Christi is expected to end today.

## Actors dodge fans as filming heats up

Celeb sightings were tougher at the Lexington Museum on the Bay Thursday as "Pearl Harbor" filming grew intense and actors hustled to get their job done.

Stars Alec Baldwin and Ben Affleck were chauffeured to and from the Lexington and their trailers in heavily tinted vans instead of the golf carts they had been using since Monday.

Crowds of young girls and other stargazers trying to approach Baldwin, Affleck and actor Josh Hartnett were proving to be a little too much, officials said.

"Pearl Harbor" producer Jerry Bruckheimer said the final days of filming involve intricate, dangerous scenes with aircraft and other flight equipment,

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

Go to caller.com for more 'Pearl Harbor' coverage, forums and polls.

- Winner of Who Looks Like a Star?/B2
- More photos/B2

making it imperative that the actors concentrate on their work without distractions.

B-25 bombers were flown into Corpus Christi for the movie's scenes.

Today is reportedly the last day for local filming on the multimillion-dollar project.

The movie premieres Memorial Day 2001.



Movie producer Jerry Bruckheimer (right) said the last days of filming involve dangerous, intricate scenes.

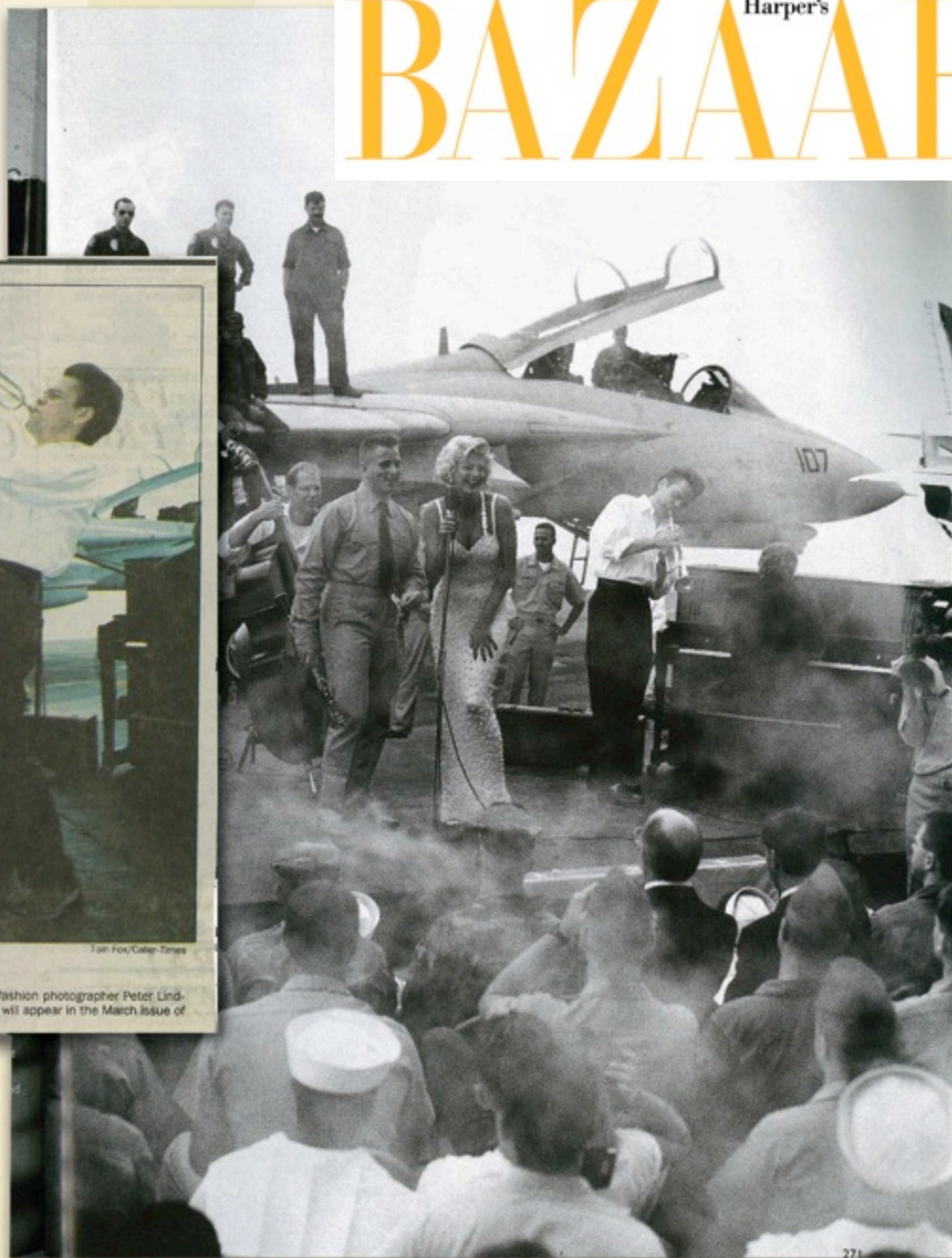
# Harper's BAZAAR



## A matter of style

Model Linda Evangelista shares a laugh with disc jockey Rex Gabrieli (left) and singer/entertainer David Johanssen (also known as Buster Poindexter) while shooting a fashion layout aboard the Lexington Mu-

seum on the Bay Tuesday. Photos by fashion photographer Peter Lindbergh, which have a USO show theme, will appear in the March issue of Harper's Bazaar.



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WIRE: 11/08/2001 9:41 am ET

## Visitors drawn to USS Lexington aircraft carrier museum since Sept. 11 terrorist attacks

*The Associated Press*

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas (AP) A mixture of patriotism and newfound military curiosity following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks has compelled more people to make the trip to a floating museum that stands as a symbol of military might.

The USS Lexington became a museum in 1992 after a storied past that included participation in almost every major operation in the Pacific during World War II.

Workers say the events of Sept. 11 have prompted many people to visit the decommissioned aircraft carrier and learn about this history.

Mike Carrico, 54, a senior volunteer at the museum, said he can sometimes feel the lingering presence of World War II aviators on the Lexington.

"I've taken guys back to their bunks and they just sit there and cry," he said.

The recent events returned many Americans to memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, when the nation also was caught off guard and the enormity of the casualties and damage prompted the United States' entry into the war.

During the war, the Lexington's planes shot down 372 enemy aircraft and destroyed an additional 475 on the ground. Japanese media reported it sunk four times, and its reappearances earned the ship the nickname "The Blue Ghost."

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## Brokaw: Learn from past

Retired anchorman speaks at Lexington

BY ADRIANA GARZA  
Call-Times

Retired NBC Nightly News anchorman Tom Brokaw learned many life lessons at the knee of what he calls the "Greatest Generation" — the men and women who survived World War II and helped build the nation.

Their lessons — unity, humility and sacrifice — are sorely lacking

in today's culture of political polarization, where there is little dedication to maintaining common ground, he said Thursday during a visit to Corpus Christi.

The challenges Americans face today, whether it be the war on terrorism abroad or the war against mother nature at home, present an opportunity to find that common ground and eliminate the culture of blame, Brokaw said.

Brokaw's speech at the Lexington Museum on the Bay, a fundrais-

er for the aircraft carrier, drew about 500 people and raised \$540,000. The venue was appropriate, as those he credits with shaping the country into an economic powerhouse would have served on this World War II ship and others like it.

Rocco Montesano, executive director of the Lexington, said Brokaw's message reflects the ship's history.

Please see **BROKAW 4A**



Tom Brokaw responds to a question about the future of broadcast journalism before his speech.

George Tully/Call-Times

Judith Whipple, historian for the Lexington Museum on the Bay, discusses some of the ghost sightings reported on the retired air-

craft carrier. She is in the ship's engine room, where she said the majority of the sightings have taken place.

Michelle Christensen/Call-Times

## Group seeks past's ghosts

BY JEREMY BROWN  
Call-Times

Cynthia Rowland doesn't want to bust ghosts. She just wants to prove they exist.

Armed with sophisticated cameras and tape recorders, she and her band of paranormal investigators have visited historical sites across Texas, hoping to find evidence of all things ghostly, from orbs to apparitions.

They have stayed overnight at the battleground at Goliad and at Theodore Roosevelt's old San Antonio stomping grounds, the

Menger Hotel.

They have searched Houston subdivisions that are built atop plantation cemeteries, and they have camped out in the old federal courthouse in Corpus Christi.

Now, Rowland and her crew, who call themselves the Spectre Inspectors, want to stow on board the USS Lexington Museum on the Bay for an evening and capture on tape and film

the ghosts that have long been rumored to roam the corridors of the retired aircraft carrier.

"There's a known enti-

ty that's on the Lexington," Rowland said.

"To do a ghost investigation would not be done with any disrespect for people who died in times of war. It's just done out of pure interest in paranormal activity and pure interest in history."

Rowland, a Houston resident who lived in Corpus Christi in the early 1990s, said she read about a program online that, at a price of \$44 a head, allows groups to spend a night on the ship, run fire drills and eat mess food.

To her, the program sounded per-

Please see **GHOSTS/B4**

Call-Times File

The Lexington (or 'Blue Ghost') has been the site of ghost sightings.





# **GIGANTIC** RETURNS

# Tourists spend \$489 million here in '96

Local tourism is expected to generate more than \$650 million by year 2000

By ANNA M. TINSLEY  
Scripps Howard Austin Bureau

Island beaches, the Lexington Museum on the Bay and the Columbus replica ships are among the attractions that draw millions of visitors and millions of dollars to the Coastal Bend each year.

In 1996, tourists spent \$489 million in Nueces County – up from \$349 million in 1990, according to the most recent statistics available from the state.

And the local tourism industry will continue to thrive well into the next century, generating more than \$650 million by the year 2000, according to state estimates.

"With our combination of the bay, museums, ships, aquarium and fantastic hotels, we have enough to compete with any other Gulf Coast city," said Cher Beltran, vice president of the Greater Corpus Christi Business Alliance's convention and visitors department.

Tourism officials this week will celebrate the billions of dollars spent by travelers in Texas each year. They will wear green ribbons – for the color of money – as part of National Tourism Week, May 4-8. Tourists made more than 9 mil-



File photo

The Lexington Museum on the Bay is one of the attractions that bring millions of visitors to the Coastal Bend each year. Tourists made more than 9 million trips to Nueces and San Patricio counties in 1996.

lion trips to Nueces and San Patricio counties in 1996, according to the most recent tourism records.

Statewide, more than 187 million tourists visited Texas sites in 1996 – including Texas residents traveling within the state – compared with 169 million in 1995 and 166 million in 1994, according to Texas

Department of Economic Development tourism records.

"Texas tourism is something to celebrate," said Ron Hinkle, marketing and sales director for the Economic Development department's tourism division.

Tourism, Texas' third-largest

Please see TOURISM/D2



A photographer in a helicopter photographed 500 Harley Owners Group members and their Harley-Davidson motorcycles on the Lexington Museum on the Bay's flight deck Sunday during the H.O.G. Rally.

## Harley Owners Group takes city to heart, has a \$9M im

Visitors liked coastal location, welcoming manner of residents

BY AMANDA NELSON  
*Caller-Times*

As the sun rose Sunday, 475 Harley-Davidson enthusiasts took a ride up the aircraft elevator to the flight deck of the Lexington Museum on the Bay — with their motorcycles. It was an experience

his visit to Corpus Christi.

Sunday's photo on the Lexington flight deck — taken from a helicopter hovering over Corpus Christi Bay — was on the last day of the 2005 Texas State H.O.G. Rally held in Corpus Christi.

"Five hundred of us got put up on the flight deck," said Skip Straus, a Harley-Davidson owner who attended the rally with his wife. "It was certainly the highlight."

Straus and his wife, Cindy, were among 5,200 Harley-Davidson motor-

rally in Corpus Christi last weekend, according to Valerie Ledterman, regional manager for Harley-Davidson.

Wayne Bennett, the publicity manager for the rally, said he estimates a much larger attendance — about 10,000 — because many unregistered Harley riders came to the area to participate in various events throughout the weekend.

Using the 10,000 figure, Bennett estimated that the hotel/motel room revenue was just over \$1 million and the amount spent directly on food and other

items was about \$3 million — a total of \$4.08 million in direct revenue.

The rally, he said, had an overall economic impact of \$9.36 million for Corpus Christi.

Officials from the Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau couldn't be reached to verify the estimated economic impact, but Curt Broomfield, a CVB board member and owner of the South Beach Grill, said he thinks Bennett's estimate is about right.

"Guys who ride thirty-, forty-thousand-dollar Harleys, they don't eat at

McDonald's," he said, "downtown restaurant in business during the here, they spent more good time."

Bennett said some a whole week. He estimated about \$150 a day.

"Most of these people are from a land-locked area and fact that this city is on

Contact Amanda Nelson:  
 nelsona@caller.com

# Lex anniversary event raises \$450,000 for the museum



George Tuley / Caller-Times

**Matt Layton (from left), Debbie Layton, Jesse Saenz, Janet Tornelli and Tedd Mitchell attended the Lexington Museum on the Bay's 10th anniversary gala Nov. 23 at the Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz International Center.**



# Gala marks Lexington's 'Berthday'

Museum has surpassed attendance, revenue expectations, officials say

By Tyrone Meighan

OF THE CALLER-TIMES

The large, blue torpedo bomber loomed on the hangar deck of the Lexington Museum on the Bay - a proud symbol of U.S. military aviation history.

The Grumman Avenger, a relic compared to today's modern aircraft, was the main attraction at Monday's first-year anniversary celebration of the Lexington museum. The Avenger, which was dedicated as an exhibit Monday, is the first World War II era aircraft displayed at the museum.

About 350 people, including U.S. Navy Secretary John Dalton, attended the hour-long "Berthday" celebration aboard the

## Museum's first year

### ■ Attendance

Projected: 330,000  
Actual: 471,750

### ■ Operating Income

Projected: \$2.7 million  
Actual: \$3.65 million

Caller-Times

decommissioned World War II aircraft carrier.

The formal ceremony included an introduction of guests and dignitaries, the posting of colors, speeches, birthday cake and the singing of "Happy Birthday" to

the Lexington.

Dalton, a former San Antonio investment banker, said the museum deserves "straight A's and a recommendation for early promotion."

"I am very proud to be on board the Lexington," said Dalton, who served in the Navy from 1964-69. "This echoes so much of our history."

The U.S.S. Lexington was decommissioned Nov. 26, 1991, after 48 years of Navy service. It opened to visitors on Oct. 15, 1992, as Lexington Museum on the Bay and was formally dedicated as a museum a month later.

The museum received the Avenger

Please see **Museum/B2**



GEORGE TULEY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

four-month-old Anthony Saldana likes to soar to the sky, with a little help from his mom, Lisa. He laughed when she tossed him up and cried when she stopped recently at Easley Park.

## Lexington scores a direct hit with tourists

In first 11 months of operation, ship attracts 461,000 visitors, \$3.5 million in revenue

Greg Orwig

THE CALLER-TIMES

The USS Lexington, which served as a fleet flagship and set more records than any aircraft carrier in U.S. naval history, also is doing well in its new mission of attracting tourists.

As the ship closes in on its first year of operation as a museum, officials say, attendance and revenue have surpassed projections by 35 percent and 47 percent respectively.

"With the Lexington and with the Columbus Fleet and the Texas State Aquarium, we're really putting ourselves on the map," said Sandi McNorton, marketing director for the Lexington. "We're coming alive with history and activities for families. It's just incredibly exciting."

An observance to celebrate the ship's first year as a museum is scheduled for 10 a.m. Nov. 8 aboard the ship, off Corpus Christi Beach.

The Lexington, decommissioned Nov. 26, 1991, after 48 years of service in the

"TCI would take a designated amount of money per subscriber and put it in a special pool," Rhodes said. "I suggested using it to help pay for a long-term water supply for the city. TCI said they liked the idea and suggested using the money for the Food Bank."

Officials with two of the three affiliates - KIII-TV and KRIS-TV -

"Cash isn't the important aspect of this. It's the recognition of our property rights," Kennedy said. "I feel that our intellectual property rights have been denied."

The three affiliates went off the air at midnight Oct. 5, as required by the 1992 Cable Act, after they failed to reach a retransmission

Please see **Television/B3**

Navy, opened to visitors Oct. 15, 1992. It was formally dedicated as the Lexington Museum on the Bay on Nov. 14, 1992, which will be considered the museum's anniversary date, McNorton said.

Numerous plans are in the works to make the Lexington's second year equally as successful as its first, said Jerry Chipman, acting executive director of the Lexington Museum on the Bay.

During the coming months, he said, Lexington officials plan to continue bringing in new exhibits and to open

more parts of the ship to visitors, including the brig, library, chapel, berthing areas and an engine and boiler room.

The museum hosted 461,000 visitors and generated \$3.5 million in revenue during its first 11 months of operation, according to McNorton. Officials had projected attendance of 342,268 and revenue of \$2.4 million over that period, she added.

"I think it speaks so well for the city as a travel destination," McNorton said. "We

Please see **Lexington/B2**

Experience victory at sea!

# Don't Miss The Boat! See the LEX

ON CORPUS CHRISTI BEACH



Contributed art

Posters and billboards featuring World War II aircraft and sailors will be part of a campaign to promote the Lexington Museum on the Bay.

## Ads strive to give life to 'Blue Ghost'

BY NEAL FALGOUT  
Call-Times

Images of World War II aircraft and sailors soon will go up on billboards along Corpus Christi roadways as part of a new advertising campaign for the Lexington Museum on the Bay.

This week, two large billboards will go up along Highway 361 and on North Padre Island Drive for what will be at least a year-long campaign to promote the vintage World War II aircraft carrier docked at Corpus Christi Beach. Eighteen smaller posters will go up on signs across the city, and ads will also be placed on several bus stop benches.

The posters and billboards, which incorporate pictures taken on the Lex during its active duty in World War II, look like wartime recruiting posters. The pictures are meant to remind visitors of the ship's heyday and to draw on

Billboards and posters promoting Lexington Museum on the Bay will draw on patriotic themes



Contributed art

Previous advertisements have featured a drawing of the ship with block letters that read, "Blue Ghost."

"We had portrayed it the last two years as the big ship, the big one," Osborn said. But the new campaign takes a decidedly more patriotic approach.

### Sailing cheering, fist in the air

"This one rose to the top because it made everybody feel good," she said.

Designers began working on the campaign late this past summer by sifting through old pictures of the ship when it was on active duty. One of those images, a smiling sailor cheering with his fist in the air, was taken from the ship's files and appears on a billboard with the words: "Experience victory at sea! On the LEX."

Although plans for the new campaign were under way before the Sept. 11 attacks, museum officials hope visitors will see a theme in the advertisements, said Sandi Mc Norton, the Lex's market-

Officials hope a year long campaign, with ads

## cleaning the decks for 'Pearl Harbor'



The Lexington Museum on the Bay's top deck seemed empty Monday.

Crews hauled the ship's exhibit planes down to a barge that will take them to NAS





**20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

**1992** **USS** **2012**  
**LEXINGTON**  
**MUSEUM ON THE BAY**

# 20 YEAR TOTALS

- ★ Annual budget over \$60 million
- ★ Direct payroll budget over \$20 million
- ★ Direct economic impact over \$180 million
- ★ Air-conditioned event area in Hangar Bay II
- ★ 5 tour routes on 11 decks with hundreds of exhibits
- ★ State-of-the-art Giant Screen Theater (going 3D in May!)  
Named in honor of Museum charter president Joe Jessel.
- ★ Over 259,000 visitors have participated in the overnight program.
- ★ 20 vintage and modern aircraft
- ★ Air-conditioned tour routes
- ★ Virtual battle stations
- ★ 6 million visitors

LEX is totally self-sufficient, never having received any appropriated funds for grants from local, state or federal government agencies. The Museum has relied solely on revenues generated from admissions, ship's store, special events, live aboard, grants and donations. These revenues cover all expenses to operate and maintain the ship as well as funding all capital improvements

