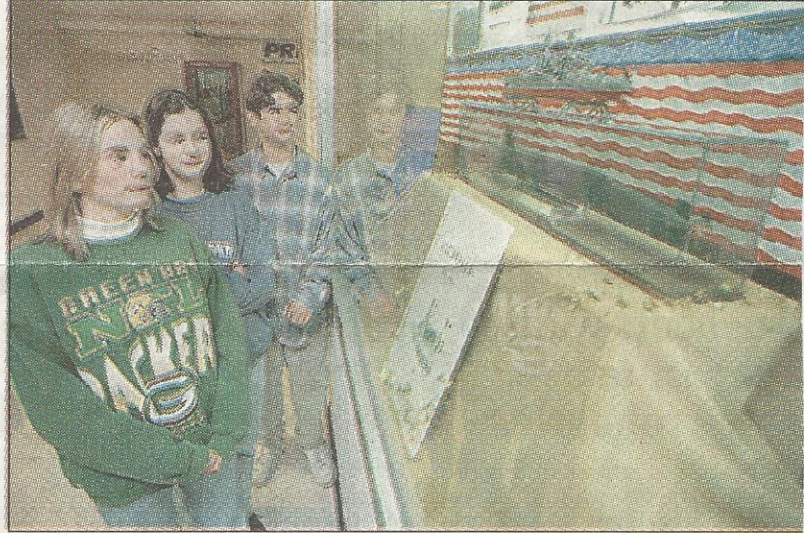


55th anniversary of Pearl Harbor

# Historic flag of USS Nevada restored to glory



■ **Students' Project Nevada:** Several of ship's crew may attend ceremonies.

By Benjamin Grove  
RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL

The ceremonial flag of the battleship USS Nevada is refurbished and ready to travel the state, 55 years after the vessel was nearly sunk during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Now Vaughn Middle School students who raised the money to repair the flag hope to meet several veterans of the attack during a presentation Friday.

■ **What:** Presentation Ceremony for USS Nevada ceremonial flag

■ **When:** 1 p.m. Friday

■ **Where:** Vaughn Middle School gymnasium, 1200 Bresson Ave., Reno

Hosted by: Gifted and Talented students

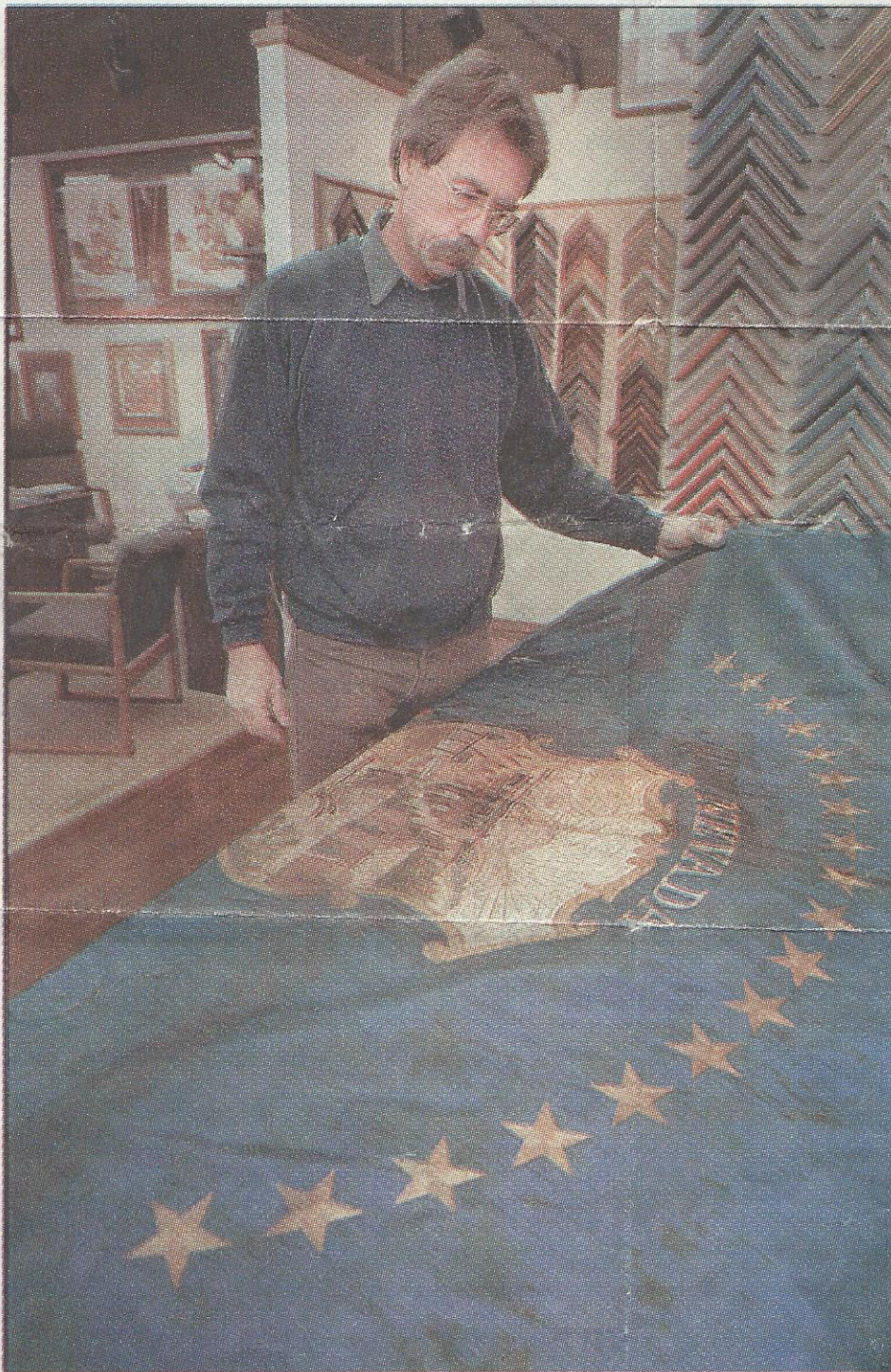
"They found the flag in a trash bin — an ordinary seaman," said Vaughn eighth-grader Casey Moore. "It might have been thrown away and forgotten about forever. But here it is."

"The Nevada did something for us. We wanted to do something for it."

The flag refurbishing is the most recent "Nevada Project" undertaken by Gifted and Talented Students at Vaughn.

For more than a year, students have sold USS Nevada memorabilia, from T-shirts to golf towels, and raised about \$3,500 to refurbish the flag and build a display case for travel around the state.

At last count, 166 members of the crew of about 1,100 in the at-



## PROUD STUDENTS:

Vaughn Middle School students Emilie Benke, 14, above photo left, Olga Shumyatsky, 13, and Evan Stern, 13, examine the USS Nevada display at the school on Wednesday. The students, members of the school's Gifted and Talented Class, will be presenting the flag during the Friday ceremony.

## PIECE OF NEVADA'S HISTORY:

Keith Bartelheim, left, of Fallen Leaf Gallery examines the old Nevada state flag that will be presented Friday. The gallery is making the frame for the flag.

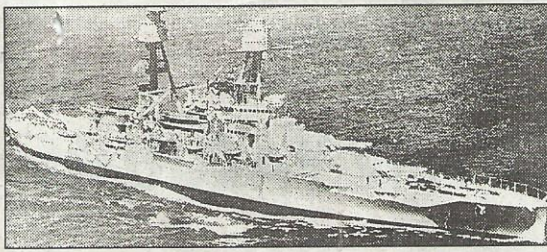
Vaughn Middle School Gifted and Talented students have taken on several USS Nevada-related projects since 1991:

- Displaying of seldom-seen USS Nevada Ceremonial flag on the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor (1991)
- Securing through the Pentagon six World War II Medals never received by Pearl Harbor survivor Robert Grogan (1992)
- Building an \$8,000 USS Nevada Monument on the State Capitol Grounds, Carson City (1992)
- Refurbishing the USS Nevada ceremonial Nevada flag (1995-96)

See **USS NEVADA** on page 5D

Photos by David B. Parker/Reno Gazette-Journal





## USS Nevada

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tack still survive. Several may attend Friday. About 50 crewmen were killed in the attack and 109 wounded.

Among the wounded was Robert Thomas of Orange, Calif. whose wrist was ripped open and leg broken. He said he was moved by the Vaughn students' efforts.

"What we're talking about happened 50 years ago. Their parents weren't even born yet," Thomas said. "What I'd like to tell them is here is a guy who is real. And I want to thank them very much for what they're doing."

The Nevada was the only battleship at Pearl Harbor to get under way during the attack and shot down the first two Japanese planes.

As other battleships burned and sunk around the Nevada, the crew got up steam and headed for the narrow mouth of the harbor entrance in an escape attempt.

But the Nevada began to sink and was ordered to run aground to avoid blocking the harbor entrance.

The Nevada was repaired and fought in many major battles, including in support of the invasions at Normandy, Okinawa and Iwo

Jima. It became the most decorated battleship in Navy history.

As the ship was under repair, Shipwright First Class Robert Raynor found the flag stuffed in a refuse skidbox.

He returned the flag to the ship's captain, who returned it to the state.

For decades, the flag sat in storage at the Nevada State Historical Museum.

Gifted and talented students at Vaughn became determined to restore the flag and build a display case for it after hearing about it several years ago, said Ellyn Fuetsch, their former teacher.

"We'd been doing toothpick bridges, but this is a really dynamic group of students who needed more than that," Fuetsch said.

Students said they had taken a personal interest in the ship's history.

"I can't imagine the fear going through the minds of the men on both sides," said eighth grader Evan Stern, 13, who will be making a presentation Friday. "It's the fear of the unknown, which in this case was death."

Added classmate Emilie Benke, 14, "It's nice to feel like I was part of this history."

Oregon textile conservator Sandy Troon spent eight months restoring the hand-loomed, all-silk flag, now 80 years old.

Some believe the flag still has smoke and oil stains and bullet holes from the attack. Troon believes the tears were not bullet holes and the stains are from water.

## USS NEVADA

# MEMORABILIA

To buy USS Nevada memorabilia to raise money for the flag's display case, contact Ellyn Fuetsch, 359-1275 or send check and requests to her at 1107 Spanish Springs Road, Sparks, 89434.

Make checks to USS Nevada Projects.

■ USS Nevada (Battleship) T-Shirt \$12

■ USS Nevada (Nuclear Submarine) T-Shirt \$12

■ USS Nevada golf/bowling towel \$10

■ USS Nevada decorative license plate \$15

■ USS Nevada cap \$15

■ USS Nevada patch \$5

The state museum will care for and display the flag. Plans are being made to display it around the state.

The flag has outlived its ship.

Outdated by 1948, the Navy used the 32-year old Nevada for atomic bomb testing, which the Nevada survived. It took repeated shelling, bombing, on-ship explosives and finally torpedoes to sink the radioactive ship in 14,000 feet of water 62 miles southwest of Pearl Harbor.

"The flag is an important part of our history, our culture," said Vaughn eighth grader Jessica Johnson.

"It survived all those bombings. It was on our ship."