2021 Joukowsky Lecture
March 20 2021 2:00 PM
William M. Murray, PhD, University of South Florida

MY 40 YEAR SEARCH FOR THE BATTLE OF ACTIUM

In 31 BC, Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra in a naval battle off Cape Actium in Western Greece. A few years later, the victor constructed on the site of his personal camp a grand Victory Monument to commemorate the event. In this lecture, I will summarize the main results of my research, but do so in a personal manner, in the context of my own 40-year journey of discovery in search of the Battle of Actium.

Bill Murray was born in State College, Pennsylvania, and grew up as a “townie,” next to Penn State University, where his father was head of the History Department. In the 1960s, Murray's parents bought a 30-foot sloop and spent summers in the Virgin Islands living aboard with their three kids. Murray learned how to dive, saw first-hand the influence of the sea over those who live along its shores, and faced shipwreck more than once. When he went to Penn State, and then Penn, he became captivated by Greek and Roman culture and decided to move to Greece to study ancient port cities for his Ph.D. dissertation. Ever since learning of the discovery of a complete warship ram just south of Haifa in November 1980, Murray has been obsessed with extracting evidence from the weapon to understand ancient galley warfare. He is now the Mary and Gus Stathis Professor of Greek History and the Director of the Ancient Studies Center at the University of South Florida, and recent publications include The Age of Titans (2012, Oxford University Press). Professor Murray is a past AIA Norton Lecturer, was the 2013/2014 AIA Bass Lecturer, and is a 2020/2021 AIA Joukowsky Lecturer.

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