

WONSAN HARBOR – Reunions always bring out good stories. Some start with a comment. This story started with a comment by EM-1 Ray Howell. Ray and I were walking down the hall after the final banquet when Ray said, “One of our squadron ships hit a mine in Wonsan Harbor – which blew the bow off the ship.” Ray is a Life Member of our Association. He lives with his wife in Traverse City MI. He was aboard FRANK KNOX from 3/1952 – 7/1955. I knew where Wonsan Harbor was from recording stories by LTJG John Sartin and friends. Also, Life member LCDR Russell Judah was on board during that time. As were many others. The Korean War record shows that the 861-day US/UN blockade was the longest in Naval history, starting 02/1951 and lasted until 07/1953 the day the Armistice was signed to formally establish the truce ending the fighting. Five US Navy ships hit mines, all destroyers (USS BRUSH, MANSFIELD, WALKE, E.G. SMALL and BARTON). Ninety-Five ships were damaged by No. Korean artillery fire. Four ships were sunk by mines. A total of 158 US sailors were wounded. US/UN ships successfully kept the strategically important city and port of Wonsan from being used by the No. Korean Navy and others for resupply. US/UN ships inflicted heavy casualties on No. Korean forces diverted from the front line to defend the harbor. Equally important wasted thousands upon thousands of shells trying to damage the ships enforcing the blockade. The port city of Wonsan and harbor facilities were destroyed and remained so for many years after the Armistice. Wonsan was eventually rebuilt and is a strategic port today. (The USS PUEBLO is tied up to a pier in Wonsan Harbor. We need more Korean War stories.) ED