

RADM Dennis Conley remarks at USS Frank Knox (DDR-742) Plaque Dedication at MT. Soledad on 20 Sept 2019

“Good Morning and Thank you for attending and inviting me to participate. Noriko and I are delighted to join you on this beautiful day in San Diego.

- This site is spectacular and so fitting for honoring our Veterans....How “Special” this is to have FRANK KNOX join the legacy represented here.
- At the outset I would like to recognize those who have made this day possible:
 - o Steve Cross
 - o Carol Cross
 - o Harry Chandler
 - o Vaughn Kruger
 - o Margaret Watson
 - o Woody Woodard
 - o And Tom Soltis
- We would not have an Association without the dedication and hard work by these individuals.
- A special thanks to Steve Cross who had the vision for this Plaque and brought it to reality.....BZ Steve.

(Please join me in applause for Steve and the Frank Knox Reunion Officers.)

- Granted the ships of today are more complex and capable, and their crews trained at a much higher degree of technology than we were, which explains in part why it takes years to get them built and ready to deploy.....Nevertheless, we have to stand in awe of what this Country, our Navy, and its Sailors accomplished with USS Frank Knox.
 - o The keel was laid in May 1944 at Bath Iron Works in Maine.
 - o 7 months later in December 1944 the ship was commissioned with a brand new crew and on its way to WestPac.
 - o 6 months later in June 1945 Frank Knox participated in the Battle of Okinawa.
 - o Later on September 2, 1945, Frank Knox was anchored in Tokyo Bay when Japan surrendered aboard USS Missouri.
 - o The ship continued its service in WestPac and supported the Inchon Invasion during the 1950-'51 period. (Two of you present today were aboard Frank Knox at this time.)
 - o After the ship received its FRAM conversion it was back in the Western Pacific in the 1960s and began its service in Vietnam. Frank Knox was award the Ship of the Year during this period (Eight of you here today were aboard)
 - o However, seven of you present today were aboard on 18 July 1965 when the ship grounded on Pratus Reef.

- We cannot begin to appreciate the hardship and heroism that you all displayed during that 37 day period until the ship was freed, and during the subsequent tow back to Yokosuka.

- Jerry Harken and Jim Lasswell will provide their reflections of the Repair/Restoration period in Yokosuka, however I want to mention that the 7 months beginning in April 1966 with the nucleus crew of about 60 Sailors, later joined by the pre-com crew in September, until our Re-Commissioning in November, will always stand out at the top of my memories for teamwork and achievement.
 - When Admiral Bulkeley, President of the Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) came aboard to give us our INSURV inspection and Acceptance Trial, he said that Frank Knox was the smoothest operating ship of its age that he had witnessed.
- In November we set sail for San Diego, and I am sure that the dozen or so of us here today who were aboard for the winter North Pacific transit in that terrible storm will never forget it. This was the first time our crew had been tested, and we passed with flying colors, just as we did in our ensuing Refresher Training and deployment back to WestPac in 1967 and 1968.

I will now turn the podium back but I would like to mention in summary:

- Approximately 3600 Sailors served in Frank Knox during her USN Service
- 27 years active Service in the US Navy
- 21 years in the Greek Navy named Themistokolis (D-210)
- 48 years Total – WOW!

Jerry and Jim, over to you.

Thank you.