

KNOX KNEWS – FALL REUNION SPECIAL

IN THIS ISSUE – WILIMINGTON/CAPE FEAR REPORT; ROYAL REEF RUNNERS REUNION; 2023 DESTINATION/SEATTLE & ALASKA; D DAY PHOTO PART ONE; EALS ANCHOR, SALVAGE MAINSTAY; CAPE FEAR, FRYING PAN SHOALS AND CAPE HATTERAS.

WILMINGTON/CAPE FEAR REPORT – Wilmington, NC was a perfect reunion destination; plenty of history, an eight-block historic district filled with charming restaurants, shops and h-i-s-to-r-y. The city has long been a trading port and Civil War lifeline for southern forces in spite of the fearsome triangle of mariner's hazards and storms – Cape Fear, Frying Pan Shoals and Cape Hatteras along the northern approaches to Cape Fear. Sailor Beware! During our visit Hurricane Fiona passing east of us, Red Flagging the local beaches and delivering 30 minutes of heavy rain, then hurried north to slam into Nova Scotia. Our weather was pleasant throughout.

Our first tour was the battleship USS NORTH CAROLINA BB-55, a state war memorial to 10,000 plus NC veterans from all wars. The ship is the most decorated battleship in WWII. Sharp eyed sailors quickly noticed the two-tone paint scheme and concluded volunteers were part of the way through the painting process often referred to as "dip the ship" – a complete, bottom to top, paint job. In addition to the three massive main 16" turrets, there ship has 10 - 5" mounts, 60 40mm, 36-53 20mm, and 1.1 inch guns seemed to be everywhere. One of our members located the name of a friend's father who served aboard the battleship during WWII. USS N. CAROLINA ranks high in historic ship preservation.



After lunch, a cruise on Cape Fear River put the active port terminal and shipping facilities on display. A delightful afternoon on the water. A short bus ride back to our hotel where groups sampled fresh seafood and other dinner delights often accompanied with Carolina dipping sauce – not to be missed. Not all were familiar with fish like Red Drum, Corvina and Black Sea Bass but those who ordered were not disappointed. Clams and oysters were universal choices – with Carolina sauces to accentuate the quality.



Special guest and speaker VFW senior leader Kelly Goddard arrived with brother Butch, CSCM in tow and spent many hours with our group in the hospitality room. These W Virginia natives were very familiar with Wilmington and all its charms. Kelly and Butch were highly ranked WV high school quarterbacks before joining the Navy and both served aboard the USS GRAPPLE ARS – 7. Sound familiar? GRAPPLE was the

earliest arrival at Pratas Reef midnight of the day FRANK KNOX grounded in 1965. He witnessed 38 days of typhoons and struggle to free our ship.

Reunion second day featured the Wilmington Railroad Museum – a fascinating collection of memories and rolling stock delighting everyone. Our engineering veterans all took turns trying on the engineer's duties on the locomotives. Our lunch break found us wandering the famed boardwalk in search of food and sights like the veteran's memorial on the boardwalk looking directly across the river to USS N. CAROLINA. One restaurant was in the former Maritime Museum (now relocated) complete with dozens of art and artifacts from the museum. Following lunch, we rode through the historic homes section to the Science and History Museum. Here the mystery of the Capes and Shoals was revealed. Ocean water began 30 miles out 8000 years BCE ago. At 3000 years BCE the ocean was three miles out; 100 years ago, the ocean covered the high ground creating barrier islands and shoals, thus the Capes to be Feared as earlier mariners called them. Evening hospitality was enjoyed by all. The room also served a meeting point for several "Royal Reef Runners" as veterans of Pratas Reef are referred to – Kelly Goddard was joined by FKRA members Don Greer, Mike Haloski and Rick Swaney. These men reviewed 48 power point slides and three pages of notes before their appearance at Friday night's banquet to recall their experiences.



Friday morning, the annual Business meeting reviewed our financial position and chose the site of the 2023 FKRA Reunion. Finances remain strong thanks to Life Members, Annual Members and our two auctions – the reunion White Elephant Auction and the Annual Veteran's Auction of valued items and memorabilia. The 2023 Reunion destination is Seattle and our Alaska Cruise, beginning and ending in Seattle. Make your plans to attend – details to follow. Seattle was a very popular choice. Following the business meeting our White Elephant Auction raised over \$1325.00 for the Association. After an afternoon free, members and guests gather for the annual banquet.

The banquets included a happy hour followed by a selection of beef/rice, chicken and shrimp. Following dinner and pledge President Harry Chandler saluted POW/MIAs in our traditional ceremony. Harry then introduced Communications VP Steve Cross who introduced the four "Royal Reef Runners" to recall specific details of their 38 days on and around Pratas Reef in 1965. Never before seen photos from Don Greer, Roger Mullinix and Gary Platou as well as many illustrations from the Salvage Report brought home the storm filled days and nights while crews struggled to release the FRANK KNOX from the death grip of the reef. Dramatic day of refloating photos showed the foam-filled ship floating free after the 38-day ordeal.

Wives, daughters and granddaughters were moved by the detail and personal insights shared by their sailors imply doing their duty. Our guest Kelly Goddard personally witnessed the entire 38-day ordeal from the bridge of USS GRAPPLE as the Captain's talker, or communicator. Goddard concluded "they were doing their duty, but in my mind they were heroes, everyone of them." Frank Knox Reunion Association is grateful to VFW and Commander, Kelly Goddard and his brother for adding to our reunion. Wives, daughters and granddaughters were moved by the detail and experiences related by these men simply doing their duty. WILMINGTON