



POOLE: HOME OF RESCUE FLOTILLA ONE

Fifty years ago, the town of Poole, England, was home to sixty wooden-hulled 83 foot Coast Guard patrol boats. These vessels, previously Atlantic and Gulf Coast Anti-Submarine craft collectively formed Coast Guard Rescue Flotilla One. The flotilla, tasked with Search and Rescue, performed their mission admirably by rescuing 1,487 American, British and Canadian lives off the shores of Normandy during the D-Day invasion. USCGC Dallas arrived off Poole on the morning of 01 June 1994, anchoring about 3,000 yards off shore. Even though the ship was close to shore, a small boat ride to the downtown pier was forty minutes each way. Aware of the inconvenience, the Royal Marines volunteered their services by providing a manned LCU (Landing Craft, Utility), a descendant of those used in the D-Day invasion, to transport Dallas crewmembers to and from the pier on a somewhat regular schedule.

Shortly after anchoring, Vice Admiral Paul Welling, Atlantic Area Commander, and Captain Hull departed to call on the Mayor of Poole, the Commandant of the local Royal Marine base and the National Headquarters for the Royal National Lifeboat Institute. Unfortunately, due to the distance involved between shore and ship, some moderate seas and the limited availability of water taxis, there were few visitors for the ship. The following day Dallas hosted a reception for 150 people on the flight deck. The guests of honor were thirty-six Normandy veterans, twenty-nine of whom were Coast Guard veterans. Astonishingly, some of the non-Coast Guard veterans were actually rescued by some of the Coast Guard veterans present at the reception. The veterans had many interesting stories to share with the young crew of the Dallas.

The highlight of the Poole visit was on 03 June when Mr. Jack Campbell witnessed the fruits of his labors over the past several years. He wanted the Coast Guard to recognize the importance of Poole and to thank the citizens of Poole for what he described as the "incredible hospitality" the citizens paid to the Coast Guardsmen during the war. As the Coast Guard Band played, two Dallas Color Guards, one in vintage WWII uniforms, and an Honor Guard of nearly fifty strong led the parade through the city streets. This was followed by a memorial service at the parish church and afterwards, Mr. Campbell, the Mayor of Poole, and VADM Welling unveiled a plaque on the very quay where the vessels of Rescue Flotilla One had moored just fifty years ago.

