

D-DAY +50 YEARS: WE WILL NOT FORGET

On the 5th of June, 1994, USCGC Dallas departed Portsmouth, UK under brilliant sunshine. Millions watched, both from the shores of Portsmouth and around the world, via satellite, as "Operation Ramsay" began. This operation consisted of 12 vessels from around the world participating in a mid-channel exercise to honor the ships and men who made the same historic crossing fifty years before.

Vessels from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Greece, Canada, Poland, Romania, and the Netherlands lined up in two parallel columns 200 yards apart with only 500 yards between each bow and stern. As the formation took shape, a British Airways Concorde jet and a French Mirage Fighter jet swooped in for a closer look. After everyone was in position, the entire formation, 2 abreast and 6 deep, slowed to 5 knots in preparation for the wreath laying ceremonies that would honor the thousands of Allied souls lost during the invasion of Normandy.

In the distance, three oversize flags, the Royal Coat of Arms, the British National Ensign, and the Church Pennant, could be seen gracefully flying to port, as the Royal Yacht Britannia made her way toward the formation with HMS Active following close astern. On the decks of Britannia, Queen Elizabeth, President Clinton, and many other Heads of State and Military Commanders made last minute preparations for the Pass-and-Review that would take Britannia down the center of the formation. With the rails manned and the Church Pennants hoisted-up, each ship would call "Attention" as Britannia approached. Once Britannia was abeam of each vessel, selected crewmembers would toss a wreath toward Britannia into the channel in remembrance of those who paid the ultimate price for freedom and peace.

On board Dallas, Mr. Charles Thorn, Ensign Deaver, and Senior Chief Segarra were the three crewmembers chosen to toss the wreath on behalf of the crew of Dallas and the men and women of the United States Coast Guard. Mr. Thorn, who joined Dallas during her stop in Bangor, Northern Ireland, served on LST 381 that landed troops on Omaha Beach on D-Day. Now, 50 years later, he was steaming toward France again, but this time participating in the Allied Commemoration instead of the Allied Invasion.

Once Britannia cleared the leading pair of ships, a WWII Lancaster Bomber appeared on the horizon behind the formation. As the formation continued south toward Normandy, the Lancaster flew past the formation and turned North toward the Britannia. Dropping to an altitude of only a mere 200 feet above the tallest mast, the Lancaster passed down the center of the formation. The entire event, from the fly-by of the various aircraft, to the formation steaming and the Pass-and-Review, was extraordinary in its graceful precision. Three cruise liners, including the Queen Elizabeth II, witnessed the entire ceremony. As Britannia sailed over the horizon and the Lancaster disappeared from view, a sense of melancholy overshadowed the crew as they watched the wreaths drift silently past. It appeared that everyone, though most were much too young to remember the original D-Day, were able to comprehend the somberness of the ceremony. During the commemorative events, many of the crew were drawn closer to a generation of soldiers and sailors who sacrificed their futures so that the coming generations could have a future free of oppression and tyranny.

