

The International Flotilla steamed on Tuesday breaking off one by one, heading for the assigned anchorages off the shores of Arramanches, France. Once there they would rendezvous with the United States Aircraft Carrier *USS George Washington* and wait for the next day's ceremonies to commence. As darkness fell, fireworks lit the sky and the crew reflected on the day's events; it was the eve of the invasion, only this time, 50 years later, no blood would be shed.

As dawn approached, *USCGC Dallas* was anchored 7,000 yards of shore, anxiously waiting for the first rays of light to break through the darkness. *Dallas* was not alone, nearly 40 other vessels waited with her, the largest deployment of Allied vessels since the invasion itself 50 years ago. The sunrise illuminated the awesome assemblage of ships anchored from Sword to Utah Beaches to the coastal towns and spectators ashore. At 0520, *Dallas* launched her helicopter, HH-6513, with the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Robert E. Kramek aboard. With no room for error due to limited air space and time, the deck of the *George Washington* stood by to receive the Commandant and other important guests. Once aboard the *George Washington*, the Commandant joined with President Clinton, Queen Elizabeth, and numerous other Heads of State, and military high commanders in a sunrise ceremony commemorating D-Day. As the sun finally rose over the beaches, Navy and Marine Corps helicopters, as well as our own Coast Guard helicopter, participated in a sea service flyby that passed over the *George Washington*.

During this time, waves of amphibious assault craft plowed through the surf en route to "Gold" beach. Meanwhile, the *HMS Edinburgh*, already underway and steaming towards the beachhead, trained her mount to port and fired 21 rounds in commemoration of the forces that landed there, firing just as the first wave of assault craft hit the shores under gloomy skies that were dreadfully reminiscent of 50 years ago. Thousands of spectators and veterans looked seaward as the spectacle unfolded. Later that morning, the guests onboard the *George Washington* were flown to Omaha beach to view the rest of the day's ceremonies.

Soon after HH-6513 launched from *Dallas* to take the Commandant to shore from the *George Washington*, the order was received by *Dallas* to weigh anchor and assume formation for the Parade of Ships. The ships quickly fell in behind one another, 1,000 yards apart, and paraded between the *George Washington* and Omaha beach. Before scores of television cameras and millions of spectators around the world, *Dallas*, with her starboard rails manned, crossed the bow of a French Frigate as they commenced firing 21 rounds in honor of France's first German liberators. It was a victorious moment for the WWII veterans, the United States Coast Guard, and the crew of the *Dallas*. As the Parade of Ships continued, the overhead skies filled with WWII fighters and bombers that reenacted that critical phase of the invasion. Meanwhile, ashore, a myriad of emotional ceremonies took place in the towns, on the beaches, and high atop the cliffs of Normandy. As the last ship rendered honors, the formation disbanded and the vessels headed to their assigned anchorages. *Dallas* anchored next to *George Washington* and several other U.S. naval vessels off Omaha beach. While anchored, quarters was held on the flight deck as Captain Hull talked to the crew, describing in detail, the events that were taking place all around *Dallas* both on land and at sea. He summarized the events *Dallas* and her crew had participated during the many stops since arriving in Europe. Captain Hull explained that these events had ultimately brought the *Dallas* to the beaches of Normandy to commemorate the Allied invasion of France and the ultimate liberation of all Europe. The Captain focused the crew's attention to Mr. Charles Thorn, a Coast Guard veteran aboard *Dallas*, representing all the Coast Guard veterans that participated in WWII, particularly those at Normandy. "This is the reason the world is watching us today" the Captain said, indicating Mr. Thorn, "it is an extreme honor to have him aboard our ship." Captain Hull then presented Mr. Thorn with a line drawing of an LST similar to the one he served on 50 years earlier. As the Captain spoke, once or twice he paused in mid-sentence trying to convey his deep feelings about the day's events. Mr. Thorn was very moved, but no words were uttered in response because the gratitude was apparent in his demeanor and in his silence and the expression on his face.

Shortly after quarters, the helicopter returned to *Dallas* carrying two very important visitors: U.S. Senators Sam Nunn and Claiborne Pell, and Senator Pell's aide Jack Cummings. Neither Senator is a stranger to the Coast Guard, nor is Senator Pell's family unfamiliar to *Dallas*. Senator Pell's great, great, great, great grandfather is none other than the ship's namesake, Alexander J. Dallas, the sixth Secretary of the Treasury. Senator Pell is a retired Captain in the Coast Guard Reserve and it was his oldest daughter that christened *Dallas* in 1967. As for Senator Nunn, he was a prior Coast Guard enlisted member. As soon as Senators Nunn and Pell were safely on deck, they set out to greet and speak to as many of the crew as they could in their short time aboard *Dallas*. From the flight deck to the

bridge, from the engine room to the cabin, the Senators were given a full tour before they met with their states constituents who were stationed aboard. Once the Senators were safely ashore, *Dallas* recovered her helicopter for the final time that day and proceeded to the mouth of the Seine river. This river would carry *Dallas* to her final D-Day destination of Rouen, France where the crew would continue to host more veterans and distinguished guests.

