Tarheels CROSSED ANCHORS

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50 years of Commanders

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Leon H. Corbett, Jr., SN
Reid London, JN
Reid London, N
Joel Williams, AP

Past Commanders in attendance of the 50th Anniversary Banquet at Pine Brook Country Club.

Pictured back row, top to bottom:
- Breda
- Gaskill
- K. Cranford
- M. Cranford
- L. Corbett
- M.L. Corbett
- London
- Breault

Pictured front row, top to bottom:
- Ellis
- Wroten
- Williams
- Jennings
- Travis
- Page not pictured

Fifty Years over the Stern

History in USPS. Each squadron is required to file an annual history report consisting of data about the squadron, names of officers, committee assignments, a list of events, and whatever else the squadron historian wants to put in. Dry stuff. On its 25th anniversary, the Winston-Salem Power Squadron compiled a history containing a short version of the history for each year and a few additional items. Copies of all of that are at the USPS headquarters in Raleigh, and a digital copy of the 25 year history and pertinent extracts of annual histories for the next 25 years are in the hands of the squadron secretary for those who wish to mine that lode of information. This history is a bit different. It has data (there is no history without data), but it attempts to catch a bit of the flavor of the squadron and what it has been over the 50 years. Far history is predominantly represented as a squint back in time through the prism of somewhat more recent history. However, if you like your history without flavoring, you can always get a copy of the annual reports from the secretary!

Commanders. In the 50 year history of the Winston-Salem Sail and Power Squadron, 47 people have served as commander. David Blankenbeckler, Mike Page, Leon Corbett and Reid London have each served two terms. Mike Page and Reid London did it back-to-back, without a break. Otherwise, the tradition has been a fresh face every year. Two couples have served as commanders. Leon Corbett was commander in 1999 and Mary Lou Corbett was commander in 2000. Mike Cranford was commander in 2002 and Kris Cranford was commander in 2005. A unique combination occurred in 1981 when K. B. Jennings, Jr. succeeded his father as commander. Fifteen of those past commanders are currently active members of the squadron. Commander Blankenbeckler went on to become District 27 Commander.

P/C Cousin Nostra

A unique period in the history of the squadron began in 2001 with the election of Ray N. Travis, P (later SN) as commander. He was succeeded by his father's sister's son, Michael L. Cranford, P (later AP). Thus began the Travis dynasty. As mentioned above, Kristine S. Cranford, AP (wife of Michael) served in 2005. The son of another of Ray Travis' father's sisters, Reid London, N, served as Commander in 2007 and 2008. (The picture shows Reid, Ray and Michael.) But kinship is not the only criterion for the dynasty: With but one exception, from 2001 to the present, each commander has been a member of the tight knit group that gathers at Peltier Creek, which is described below under "WSSPS at the Coast." The dynasty has brought an extraordinary period of education, activity, cruising and growth to the squadron. (Not to mention boat naming ceremonies.)

DEWDA. A cherished tradition of the Squadron is the DEWDA Award. It is awarded for feats of seamanship that the winner would rather not discuss. The letters are reputed to stand for "Draft Exceeds Water Depth Available[1]," but the award is not limited to those who have gone aground. (Its closest approach to living up to its name was when Jim Flynt was given the award for a cumulative record number of groundings over the years. Jim had a large sailboat at Beaufort, with a draft of seven feet. It is said that since most of the waters in the Bahamas are six feet deep, there is still a trench everywhere his boat went. He ground so much fiberglass off his keel

[1] *Or maybe the "A" stands for "Award." Whatever.*

that he sprang a leak. The all time winner for DEWDA recognition is the late Albert Gaskill, who received the award for diverse activities, including one occasion when he left a rusty can of black spray paint on the transom of his boat, in the sun, resulting in an explosion that substantially decorated the stern. And of course there is the time he launched his boat into the ICW at Morehead City and the line broke, or maybe it was missing, and he had to swim after the boat, and then there was the time….

The Kids. The Winston Salem Power Squadron (now Sail and Power) is a parent and a grandparent. The Charlotte Squadron was created from Winston-Salem in 1961 and the Greensboro Power Squadron was created in 1974. Charlotte gave rise to Catawba in 1964 and Lake Norman in 1977. The Cape Fear squadron holds the record, as progenitor of six squadrons. Cape Fear, formed in 1951, is also the oldest squadron in the district.

Crossed Anchors. The squadron has had a newsletter since 1960, when the "Tar Heels" was first published. The publication continued under that name until February 2006 when its name was changed to "Crossed Anchors" after an intensive study of numerous proposals for a name not so closely associated with a basketball team from a town farther east. ("Tar Heels" was a nickname given to a North Carolina unit in the Civil War and applied to residents of the state generally until in more recent years it began to be largely appropriated by a branch of the state university.) A number of the recommendations for a new name were not publishable, others were too cute, and finally the squadron settled on a name relating to its burgee.

The Burgee. Each squadron in the United States Power Squadrons has a triangular burgee, a small flag flown from a bow staff on a power boat and from the mast (or a spreader) of a sailboat. The Winston-Salem Power Squadron adopted a burgee described as follows: "consisting of the crossed anchors, representative of the Twin Cities, on the blue field, representing the blue of the waters on which we operate our vessels and finally the red border to complete the Red, White and Blue theme of our country." The design, submitted by Walter Boerner, was adopted in 1961. When a squadron reaches its fiftieth anniversary year it is authorized to add a gold border to its burgee and that border has been added to the WSSPS burgee. At the same time the crossed anchors were slightly modified, to increase clarity. Over the course of time flag makers had blunted and simplified them, making them less distinctive.

Women in the Power Squadron. The official history of USPS states, "Although many women had long held a 'woman's certificate', entitling them to enroll in all USPS courses, it was apparent that boating had become a family-oriented endeavor. Accordingly, the bylaws were changed to make family memberships available. The first female active and family members were accepted in November 1982." In 1983 Lt. Ann W. Watts became the first lady active member of the Winston Salem Power Squadron, and nine ladies were accepted as family members, among them Rebecca Jayne Shinlever, who is still a member. Fifteen years later, in 1998, Dawn A. Gaskill, AP became the first woman to be commander. Mary Lou Corbett, P (later AP), followed in 2000, and Kris Cranford, AP, became the third and most recent woman in command in 2005.

WSSPS at the Coast. WSSPS has had members with homes and activities up and down the North Carolina coast over the years. There have been cooperative charting events, fishing and sailing trips, and rendezvous from Carolina Beach to the outer banks. However, one place on the North Carolina coast has captured the imagination of the squadron, and a core group of its members, more than any other. In the lower part of Morehead City, a creek named "Peltier" winds its way to the Intracoastal Waterway. It crosses under highway 70, where there is a large marina. The creek, turns to the right for a way, and then left again out to the waterway. Along that stretch between the bends stands what some refer to in jest as the Peltier Creek Yacht and Country Club. Actually, it is neither of those—it is the home of the delightful couple, Frank and Polly Styers. (Frank is a Past Commander of WSSPS.)In a time when rampant development threatens every inch of the coast, it is not a place that time has forgotten, but it is a place where time has trod lightly. There is a house of historic age, which has been made into a gracious home, there are numerous boat slips, there is a marine railway for pulling out boats to work on them, there is a gazebo over the water, and perhaps best of all there is the fish house.

The fish house is on the water, and once was a place where fish were bought from local fishermen. But now it is a wonderful clubhouse for boaters—rustic and quaint with a porch on the water side, and chairs and benches and a stool that was one of the late Albert Gaskill's favorite places to be. It is a place of gathering, and fellowship, and food and drink, and tales that grow in the telling. Members keep their boats at Frank's, rendezvous are held there, and it is the launching place to the sea.

WSSPS on the Lakes. Some are seafarers, some are inland boaters, and some are both. Members regularly visit lakes over the state of North Carolina and beyond. There have been members with homes or boats (or both) at High Rock Lake, Belews Creek, Baden Lake, and others, but "home on the lake" for the squadron for many years would have to be the Lake Norman home of Jim and Jenny Frazier where, for years almost too numerous to count, the squadron has gone for a rendezvous in July. (They succeeded the late P/C Perry Harmon and then P/Cs George and Helen Ellis as the Lake Norman base.) There are always boats and swimming and food and drink aplenty. As long as he lived, P/C Conley Smith set up the "monkey fist toss" each year. A monkey fist is a fancy knot tied around a weight and used to assist in heaving a line. The contest was to stand back a distance and attempt to heave the line through a suspended hula hoop. It took good coordination and skill, and the contest was frequently won by a female contestant!

Adventures at Sea. During the first 25 years squadron cruises were (by the historical reports) in the main limited to short trips along the North Carolina Coast. But in subsequent years squadron members sailed the seas. Perhaps the most noted world traveler was Roger Harris, whose large sailboat "Blue Nomad" sailed the seas of the world, generally with a full time captain (for a while it was Bobby Truett). In 1996 Blue Nomad rounded Cape Horn, flying the WSPS burgee. That signed burgee was donated to the squadron and is displayed at meetings.

In more recent years squadron groups have taken trips of adventure, generally under the leadership of P/C Kris Cranford, AP. In July 2002 a group of 15 members sailed aboard the American Eagle, a tall ship sailing out of Rockford, Maine, for a week-long

trip through Maine's coastal waters and islands. In September another group of 35 did a bareboat charter of six boats to explore the British Virgin Islands, and there have been others. But in 1984 there was the most legendary trip of all…...

In June of 1984 a group consisting of Al Rufty, Manning Hunter, Jim Toole, Bob Kerr, Dave Dubisson, Rocky Johnson and Bobby Truett set sail with Capt. Jim Flynt on his 48 foot Hughes sailboat, "Overture," bound for Bermuda, with Rufty as navigator. All items had been checked and were in a high state of readiness. Time wore on and navigator Rufty stated that the navigation chores were too much to do in conjunction with watches and other duties. It was either sleep some or not navigate (by the sextant, using his Power Squadron training). With a rejuvenated navigator they sailed on. But then there seemed to be something wrong with the fuel. Alas, a nail had punctured the tank and the fuel was gone. No fuel—no motor for maneuvering and no electricity for radios, other than that already in the batteries. Along the way a stopped up head exploded, covering the two crew members who were working on it with its contents. As they neared their destination they had no engine and limited battery power. But they sailed on and arrived at Bermuda, with its reef barrier, in the night. The next morning they sailed in, through the reef, in a gale that blew out the headsail. After a pleasant time in Bermuda, and some repairs, the boat returned to the North Carolina coast safely, but missing three crew members who flew home.

At Home in Winston-Salem. In recent times there were only two squadrons in the entirety of USPS that owned their own buildings. One of those was in New Orleans and it was lost to hurricane Katrina. Thus squadrons constantly seek meeting places. The records of WSSPS reflect that it has sampled something approaching a majority of the restaurants in Winston-Salem over the years as meeting places. It had changes of watch at Le Chateau restaurant in 1964 and the Sheraton Motor Inn in 1966 (later it blew up); and it has met at Western Sizzler, Holiday Inn West, the Sawtooth Center, the Elks Club, the Twin City Club, the Piedmont Club, and so on and on. In 1972 the history proclaimed that ladies had been invited to attend the meetings, preceded by dinner at the K & W Cafeteria. The Winston-Salem squadron, perhaps dating to that time, has a gustatory tradition matched by few other squadrons. Regular (and even irregular) meetings are rarely held in the absence of food and drink. (It is reliably reported that many squadrons have business meetings with no food or drink whatever—something that brings quizzical looks to the faces of WSSPS members.) In addition to WSSPS' regular membership meetings special occasions are created around food and drink. For example, after Schlitz Beer opened a plant in Winston-Salem and included an establishment called the "Brown Bottle Room," the Schlitz Blitz began in 1977, giving away to the Stroh Blow when Schlitz sold to Stroh. Alas, both are gone now and beer is just a beverage again (but still a regular guest). The homes of members have served as venues as well, as for example the annual fish fry at Walt Blackmon's home beginning in April of 1995 and continuing for some ten years, giving away to the home of P/C Ray ("Capt. Bligh," then "Lord Nelson") Travis.

Membership. Over the years the squadron membership has fluctuated above and below 100 members. Generally, it has held its size, even though membership in the national organization is declining. In 1974 there were 157 members, but 48 were lost to the creation of the Greensboro Power Squadron. However, 32 members were added the following year. That experience also illustrates the geographical makeup of the squadron. While its base of membership is in

Winston-Salem and its immediate vicinity it has at times reached out, as it did with the Charlotte and Greensboro groups. As perhaps an extreme, its 9th commander, Claude Sherman (1967) commuted 55 miles from Martinsville, VA!

Education. USPS has always considered education as one of the fundamentals of the squadrons, as indicated by the USPS triangle logo. There are three areas: first, the Public Boating Course, devoted to educating the public about boating and boating safety, second a series of courses denoted as "grades" from Seaman through Navigator, and third, a group of elective courses. The elective courses include such subjects as sailing, marine electronics, engine maintenance, cruise planning, weather, and the like. A member who has completed all of the grades and all of the electives is known as a "Senior Navigator."

The post of Squadron Educational Officer is important enough that the list of past educational officers is always included in the program for the annual meeting, right along with the list of past commanders. That list includes some of the strongest members of the squadron through its history. Both Dana Breda, SN and Ray Travis, SN, went on to serve as District Educational Officers.

The squadron has maintained a strong educational program, running the gamut of courses, all the way into the Navigation courses, over the years. For example, it bought its first sextant for use in the navigation courses in May, 1963, and another in 1971. As late as the 2005—2006 education year it won the Prince Henry the Navigator Award for educating the highest number of navigators in District 27.

Now the squadron is moving into additional educational activities for the public through USPS's initiatives in two-hour seminars (such as GPS instruction) and a boater qualification program.

Service. USPS has as one of the sides of its triangle "Civic Service." There are a number of areas of civic service in which WSSPS has participated, but one overlaps the leg of self education. Each squadron is required to have at least one public boating class each year, and in most years WSPS has had several. Passing an examination is a requirement for membership in the USPS and the boating course served to educate the public and also to qualify persons for membership. The examination requirement has been suspended for the period of Dec. 1 2006 through Dec. 1, 2009, but the public boating course continues as a valuable public service and as a recruitment tool for the squadron.

For many years the squadron participated in locating geodetic survey markers and reporting on their condition, a service to the Geodetic Survey. It provided a means of service, and an inland activity for squadrons. Alas, in recent years the Survey terminated the program. GPS location capability has reduced the usefulness of the markers that were carefully placed to aid in locating surveying lines.

Cooperative Charting, an effort to provide up to date information for nautical charts, has long been a USPS activity and an activity of WSSPS. Annual expeditions have been mounted to the North Carolina coast, in regions from Carolina Beach up through Topsail, Morehead City, and even, in 1973, at Calico Jack's on Harker's Island. Earlier expeditions focused on taking depth

soundings in the waterway channels, as well as reporting shoaling, damaged navigational markers, new landmarks, and marine facilities along the waterways. In recent years, increasing interest in technical reporting, made feasible by GPS, chart plotters, and integrated depth sounders has reduced participation levels.

Technology in USPS and WSSPS. From its beginning, USPS has been an organization laden with paperwork. Reports had to be painstakingly typed in triplicate or quadruplicate and mailed off to various recipients, where they were dutifully filed away. (USPS headquarters in Raleigh, NC, is the repository of massive amounts of such materials.) Besides the squadron sextant, the highest tech piece of squadron equipment was an overhead projector. It was a light table with a lens suspended above it to project letter sized slides onto a screen.

The world has changed, even for USPS. Oh, the forms are still there in multiples, but now the computer age has arrived and a single click distributes all copies. In 2003 Winston-Salem was an early adopting squadron with the purchase of a computer and a projector not only to put pictures on the screen but to enter the age of computing. WSSPS was ready before USPS fully embraced the technology in its educational program. Another computer and projector were added in 2006. Now all courses are taught with electronic imaging, and programs presented to the squadron feature digitized data and images.

By 2006, 93%[2] of WSSPS members were online, and electronic communication had come fully to supplant written materials. Paper newsletters gave way to online versions and emails became the constant means of communication. In the main, age was no barrier to embracing the new medium in USPS.

At the same time websites were becoming the basis for institutional identity. As more and more people turned to the internet as a resource, USPS began its own website (haltingly, after all, it is a volunteer organization), with ongoing improvement. Squadrons began their own. WSSPS joined the online world in 2004. The WSSPS website was the volunteer work of squadron member Rob Wittner, a professional in the field of software development, who on his own created the squadron's website. While it was not designed for a flashy front end, it has had enduring utility. It is a small-scale content management system (CMS)[3]. Its genius is that it allows various responsible parties to update different sections of the site, even though they do not have the computer skills to edit a website. Thus the educational officer can access the site and update the courses offered; the commander can update the programs, and so on. With a password, the user need only enter the information in a table and it is automatically formatted for the website. It has proven durable, and its framework is capable of supporting additional enhancements in the future.

Over the Bow. The first fifty years have been a time of change for WSSPS as well as for the society in which it participates. The demographics have changed. What has been important and relevant has changed. That has produced challenges for USPS and the squadrons. As the squadron has evolved over the years, it must continue to evolve to meet those changes, and to prove in years to come that its mission of boating education, boating safety, service, and having fun, are as relevant as ever.

[2] *It has been reported that 84% of statistics are made up. However, this one is pretty close to accurate, based on an actual count by the author.*

[3] *A large scale CMS can cost in the millions. Ours was free!*

50th Anniversary Celebration

The Winston-Salem Sail and Power Squadron celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a dinner and program at the Pine Brook Country Club on October 17, 2009. (The squadron's anniversary date, September 14, was preempted by the District 27 Fall Council and Conference.) Eighty one members and guests attended.

The pre-dinner reception was from 1800 until 1900. During the reception Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines presented a proclamation he had entered naming the squadron's anniversary as Winston-Salem Sail and Power Squadron Day in Winston-Salem. (His schedule prevented his staying for the entire evening.)

When the group had been seated, Commander Williams introduced the 14 past commanders (and spouses) who were in attendance. After the presentation of the commanders, Sea Scouts from Sea Scout Ship 924, The SSS Raven Point, which is sponsored by the squadron, presented the colors, and Flag Lt. Tisha London, S led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the national ensign.

After a delicious buffet dinner P/C Leon Corbett, SN, served as Officer of the Deck and introduced the special guests in attendance for the evening's festivities. He then introduced V/ C John T. Alter, SN, the national Administrative Officer, who brought greetings from the Chief Commander. Next came D/Lt/C Jamie McCurry, District 27 Executive Officer, who brought greetings from District 27.

A special guest for the evening was WXII weatherman Austin Caviness, a frequent speaker at Squadron Programs and a person who has been of great assistance to the Squadron in arranging coverage of safe boating activities. Austin congratulated the squadron on its anniversary and wished it "Fair Winds."

A sampling of the history of the Squadron was presented by three members in an "Over the Stern" segment. First up was P/C (and P/D/Lt/C) Dana Breda, who was substituting for P/C (and P/D/C) David Blankenbeckler, SN, in covering the first 25 years of the squadron history. Commander Blankenbeckler was ill and unable to attend. Commander Breda presented the text prepared by Commander Blankenbeckler and added his own insights into the first 25 years.

The "Third Quarter" of the history was reviewed by Commander Corbett, who related squadron events to world events in the years from 1985—2000. Ending the trilogy was P/C (and P/D/Lt/C) Ray, "Captain Bligh," "Lord Nelson," Travis who presented "The Travis Dynasty," lasting from 2001 to the present date. It included reference to his two first cousins who had also served as squadron commander, and the many technical changes that had occurred in the squadron's more recent history.

The Commander returned to the podium to give an "Over the Bow" perspective, looking forward to the next 50 years, and beyond, for the Winston-Salem Sail and Power Squadron. The formal meeting then adjourned and was followed by time for appropriate refreshments, conversation, music and dancing.

50 years

DEW-DA Hall of Fame

1985 Dick Webster
1986 Dale Cundiff
1987 Jim Frazier
1988 Alexander Cooper
1989 Bobby Truett
1990 Penny Booke
1991 Frank Styers
1992 David Blankenbeckler
1993 Alexander Cooper
1994 Wally Holcomb
1995 Frank Styers
1996 Albert Gaskill
1997 David Blankenbecker & Albert Gaskill
1998 Jim Flynt
1999 Jim Flynt
2000 Albert Gaskill
2001 David Blankenbeckler
2002 Dawn Gaskill
2003 Janice Craig
2004 Don Breault
2005 Cindy Jennings
2006 Jeff Stallings
2007 Fred Eldridge
2008 Joel Williams
2009 ?

CROSSED ANCHORS

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Special 50th Anniversary Edition

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