

Today's Speakers

Congressman Greg Steube is a veteran and a fifth-generation Floridian serving Florida's 17th Congressional District, which spans nine counties in Southwest Florida from the outer suburbs of Sarasota and Fort Myers through the Everglades to the shores of Lake Okeechobee.

Captain Dru DiMattia is a graduate of the Maine Maritime Academy. His 30-year career was served in the Merchant Marine rising from Able Seaman to Master Mariner, unlimited tonnage, any horsepower, Oceans License. Captain DiMattia is currently the President of the American Merchant Marine Veterans Association (AMMV).

Commander Mike Wooster USNR (Ret) is a graduate of the US Naval Academy and served in the surface forces of the US Navy and later as an oceanographer. He is currently the President of the Sun Coast Council of the US Navy League.



Military
Heritage
Museum

Welcome to the Military Heritage Museum! We are pleased that the museum is hosting our event today. The mission of the Military Heritage Museum is to promote an understanding and respect for the rich military heritage of the United States and the sacrifices made by all who serve, living and deceased, emphasizing that freedom isn't free. Take some time to tour the museum and enjoy the interactive displays!

US Navy League



Sun Coast Council



Honor

George Koch



Merchant Mariner

World War II Veteran

February 6, 2020

Hosted by the

Military Heritage Museum

The Russian Ushakov Medal

By Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 520 of August 21, 2020, the Medal of Ushakov was awarded to 17 US citizens for their part in the Arctic convoys that transported supplies and military equipment to the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. The presentation of state awards of the Russian Federation is a recognition of personal courage and valor of American veterans. Tanks, planes, cars, food and raw materials were sent across the North Atlantic from countries of the anti-Hitler coalition to the USSR via the Lend-Lease program. In harsh Arctic weather conditions, the convoys had to fight back against German warships and suffered attacks of enemy air force and submarines. Thousands of sailors lost their lives as a result. The Arctic convoys made an important contribution to achieving the common Victory over Hitler's Germany. In Russia, the assistance provided by the allies is held sacred.



The dedication of participants of the Arctic convoys serves as an outstanding example of heroism for future generations.

George Koch

Imagine yourself looking up into the darkest night sky, sailing silently through the frozen North Sea en route to the Soviet port of Murmansk. Through the hushed blackness of the inscrutable skies come the sounds of German planes. The peaceful sea is alive with speeding torpedoes. Your convoy splits up to make themselves harder to target. Seemingly alone in a vast hostile world, you make your way along the icy deck to the sounds of frantic shipmates and frenzied commands.

And... you are only 16 years old.

This was the reality for George Koch as he carried out his mission to deliver vital supplies to the Soviets during WWII. Though supported by a British Navy escort, his convoy came under regular attack from both the sea and the sky. By this point in the war, the Germans were losing and efforts to prevent resupply among the allies was a top strategic priority for them. Across George's convoy, gunners searched the darkness for enemy planes as the British ships dropped depth charges to destroy hostile submarines. This was the nightly routine.

Program

1100 – 1200

In the Gulf Theater

- Introduction..... CDR Mike Wooster USNR (Ret)
- Colors PresentationCharlotte HS NJROTC
- National Anthem.....US Merchant Marine Academy
Fanfare Trumpets
- Remembrance of Shipmate Peter Gannon.....
- Keynote SpeakerCAPT Dru DiMattia
- Liberty Ship Video.....
- Remarks/Presentation ...Congressman Greg Steube
- Presentation of Ushakov Award to George Koch....
- Personal Experience..... George Koch
- “Heave Ho” (Song of the Merchant Marine).....
- Closing..... CDR Wooster
- ReceptionFlight Deck Patio