

MR. FREDERICK WACHA
THE NAVY NUCLEAR WEAPONS
ASSOCIATION



GRAY DRAGON

10 JANUARY 2022

PRESENTED AT THE 37th ANNUAL
BUSINESS MEETING
DOUBLETREE NORFOLK HOTEL
NORFOLK, VA

15 SEPTEMBER 2022

CWO4 KRIS A. HOBBS, USN (RET.)

PRESIDENT

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***ON BEHALF OF THE NAVY
NUCLEAR WEAPONS ASSOCIATION
AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEET OUR THIRD GRAY DRAGON
FREDERICK WACHA***

It is an honor, privilege and pleasure, as President of the Navy Nuclear Weapons Association, to introduce as of January 11, 2022, the Third Gray Dragon Fredrick Wacha.

Background and history of the Gray Dragon:

The Gray Dragon was established by the Board of Directors at the 2008, Bremerton, WA reunion and adopted in 2009. The Gray Dragon will be the member in good standing who entered the Special Weapons/Nuclear Weapons program on the earliest date. He will retain the title until he joins the staff of the Supreme Commander.

The first Gray Dragon was Edward Doss, CWO-4, USN Retired with a date of December 1948 and served from 2009 to 2012 and was the oldest in the tie. Second Gray Dragon was John N Cummings, GMTC, USN Retired and served from 2012 to 2022.

The past president of the NNWA, LCDR James G. Hambley, USN RET, said: "One of the NNWA'S LOGO'S is "Keepers of the Dragon" ©™. Of course, the Nuclear Weapon is the Dragon. If you think about how a Dragon is mostly shown with FIRE coming out its mouth think about the fire that occurs when a Nuclear Weapon is detonated. Now that is what I call a Dragon."

Fred was not a career sailor but was one of the impending pioneers of the nuclear weapons program as a certified technician.

The following is Fred's own accord of "Memories of My Navy Service" and I have added some detailed information to his memory.

"May 29, 1946 was my 17th birthday and in June I joined the Navy. I was first sent to boot camp in Bainbridge, Maryland. I completed boot camp with no problems. In October 1946, I was assigned to the USS Schmidt which was docked in Baltimore. Here I was assigned to #2 fireroom as a Water Tender striker I was discharged in 1948. (Who knew that this Water Tender rate would be a Weapons Technician rate in the future?)

In April 1949 I re-enlisted and was sent to the Brooklyn Navy Yard in NY. I was there for two weeks, and it seemed to me that all my buddies were being shipped out. I said to myself...what is going on with me? I went down to the yeoman and asked him what was going on with me. To my surprise, he told me I was going to Albuquerque, New Mexico to join NSWU1233. I asked what I would be doing there, and he said that he had no idea. Then I was given a bunch of papers to read and sign.

I took a train to Chicago; then I transferred to a Sante Fe train going to New Mexico. When I got to the base there was an Army Guard at the gate. I went to the officer of NSWU1233 and was shown my bunk and locker. I talked to a few of the members of the unit, but nobody would tell me what was going on. Sometimes the unit would go out at night and not come back until morning, but they would tell me nothing.

After a month or two, (possible for my background security check) I was issued a red badge to get into the area which was guarded by the Army. Some personnel were issued a blue badge. We had Seabees who worked with the cranes, trucks, etc.

We had a Palmer Hut. The Seabees would unload a weapon with a hook attached from a big wooden box. A tarp would be used as a cover. Then a crane would lift the weapon out and it would be put on a trailer. A truck would then pull the trailer into a Palmer Hut. As far as I can remember in my four years, the only weapon I worked with was the Fat Man.



There was not much to do until February of 1951. My Division C one team flew to Norfolk and went aboard the USS Midway. We would go to sea on the Midway and on the USS Coral Sea.

I remember sometime in January/February of 1952 our team was taken at night to Kirkland Field and flown to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. We stayed a few hours, then flew back to Sandia Base. In September 1952 I went with the C or D team aboard the F.D.R on a Mediterranean cruise We came back to base in December 1952.

When I got back to base, I was told that while I was gone orders came in for me to go the Pacific where they tested the Hydrogen bomb.

I was discharged in 1953 and was offered third class and to go aboard the USS Forrestal.”

Notes:

1. While on the carriers, we were allowed to go the front of the chow line.
2. At Sandia base all three special weapons units (471, 802 and 1233) slept in the same barracks as long as the men were single.
3. We ate in the Army mess hall.
4. In mid 1952 our team went aboard the Midway or Coral Sea went down to the Caribbean, spent about a week then to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. We were then relieved by another team and flew back to Sandia base.
5. From 1949 until Feb 1951 while waiting for the carriers to be worked on, I went to typing school. Also went to the motor pool to learn how to drive equipment, just to keep busy.
6. On Caribbean, we received special shoes to walk on the flight deck.
7. My time with NSWU1233 was a very special 4 years.

After his naval service Fred went to work selling heavy equipment parts and worked for Edward Ehrbar Inc., in New York for 33 years and retired after 40 years 1991.

Fred is one of many die heart **DALLAS COWBOY** fans and has a collection of football and baseball cards.

Fred and his wife, Eleanor, have three beautiful daughters, 9 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. They have a blessed life and love to go on cruises. Fred also has one brother who lives in Florida.

“I had so far a good life.”

I would like to present the first Gray Dragon to be present at a reunion his plaque, certificate, and pictures at the 2022 NNWA Reunion dinner September 15, in Norfolk, VA.

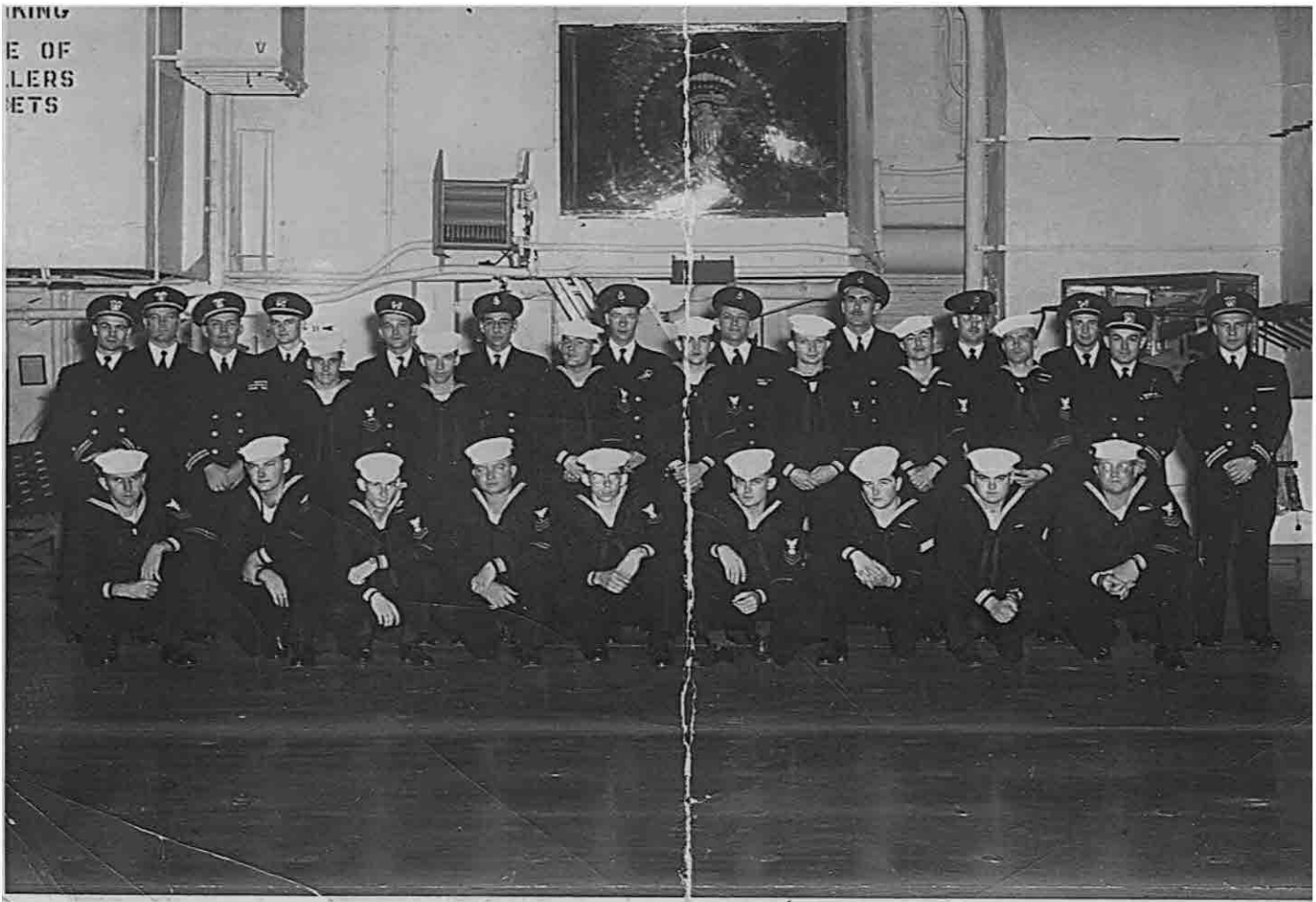
The certificate reads: “Navy Nuclear Weapons Association, Order of the Gray Dragon, Avast Ye Sailors, Dwellers of the Deep, Lovers of the Seas and Keepers of the Dragon: Be Advised that: Navy Veteran NWSN, Fredrick Washa has earned the Honor of being the Third Gray Dragon of the Navy Nuclear Weapons Association and from this day of our Lord the 10th day of January 2022 shall reign as the Gray Dragon until relieved”.

Kris A Hobbs, CWO4 USN (RET)

President



Fred is bottom row 6th from the right USS Midway CVA-41 NSWU 1233 C Team.



Fred is bottom row 3rd from right. USS Coral Sea CVA-43 NSWU 1233 1952.



