

531 Gray Ghost Squadron 2025 Key West Reunion Sept 29th through Oct 3rd, 2025 (Original)

531 Gray Ghost Squadron 2025 Key West Reunion Recap

Hello Grey Ghosts of VMFA-531. The 531 Gray Ghost Squadron 2025 Key West Reunion was truly remarkable. (Sept 29th through Oct 3rd, 2025) An event that will be remembered for years to come. Saying everyone had a great time hardly does it justice.

The week began on Monday afternoon with a “Welcome Aboard” reception outside the Fly Navy II hotel. Attendees reconnected with old friends and welcomed new members to the group, setting a warm and inviting tone for the reunion.

On Tuesday, as more attendees arrived throughout the morning, two groups ventured out on fishing charters off Key West. Captain David of Reel Easy Charters expertly guided Rick, Roy, Rusty, and myself to a prime spot for Mangrove Snapper. Within just over two hours, we reached our group limit of 20 fish. The trip continued with a challenging Barracuda catch, followed by bringing a Nerf Shark and two Lemon Sharks to the boat. Though we were uncertain of what a Key West fishing charter would offer, everyone thoroughly enjoyed the adventure.

Wednesday started with a Trolley Tour of historic Key West. The tour included highlights such as Mallory Square, the Ernest Hemingway Home, the Harry Truman “Little White House,” the Key West Lighthouse, and where to find the best Key Lime Pie. We also learned about the protected status of the many free-range chickens roaming throughout Key West. The group enjoyed lunch at an open-air restaurant on the wharf, keeping pesky pigeons at bay as they scrambled for dropped french fries. The day concluded with a dinner cruise, offering stunning sunset views over Key West.

Thursday morning began with our General Membership meeting, followed by an inspiring presentation from guest speaker Andrew Allen, a Grey Ghost pilot and NASA Space Shuttle Astronaut. Andy shared stories from his career as a Marine F/A-18 pilot and his selection into the NASA Shuttle program, where he completed three shuttle missions before transitioning to the private sector. His humorous and inspirational presentation resonated with all in attendance. The afternoon featured our Marine Corps and Grey Ghost memorabilia auction, supporting the Second Chance Scholarship Auction. This year, the auction raised over \$1,100 to benefit the college scholarship program for our children and grandchildren. The evening wrapped up with a Dinner Banquet held at the Hurricane Hole restaurant.

Friday began early for those who chose to tour historic Fort Jefferson on Dry Tortugas Island, located 70 miles southwest of Key West. After a two-hour catamaran ride, we explored the historic fort and island beaches, which played a crucial role in securing United States interests in the Gulf of Mexico during the Civil War through the Spanish-American War. Despite encountering five-foot swells on the return trip, everyone remained in good spirits. The reunion concluded Friday evening at Duffy's Steak and Lobster House, where everyone exchanged farewells until next year.

Special thanks go to John Durkin and Roy Pearson for their dedication and effort in making this reunion memorable. Mark your calendars for next year's Reunion in Dallas, Texas, scheduled from October 14th to 18th, 2026. The 531 Gray Ghost Squadron will hold its annual reunion in conjunction with the Marine Fighter Foray 2026. For more information throughout the coming year, follow us at <https://531grayghostsquadron.org/> and check out <https://marinefighterforay.com/>

If you are not yet a member, download an application and join us in preserving the legacy of the VMFA-531 Grey Ghost Squadron. Hope to see you next year in Dallas!

Semper Fi, Doug @everyone