

SOCIETY OF SPONSORS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY
President's Annual Report (for Annual Meeting on May 12, 2006)
Summer 2006 (update)

Welcome to all...especially past presidents and new members who have recently christened ships. This has been a busy, wonderful, event-full year from the moment I received the "reins" from Margaret Dalton last May.

Margaret represented the Society one final time by presenting the traditional leather attaché case to the winner of the Ship Handling Award at the US Naval Academy. Soon after that USNS LEWIS and CLARK (T-AKE 1) was launched at National Steel and Shipbuilding Company in San Diego, CA. Mrs. Jane Lewis Sale Henley (a new member) and Ms. Lisa Clark (a new member) were sponsors.

In June, a Keel Laying Ceremony for FREEDOM LCS-1 was held in Marinette, WI. I look forward to meeting her sponsor, Mrs. Birgit Smith, at the ship's christening later this summer.

July found me in Bath, ME for the christening of FARRAGUT DDG 99 on the 23rd. The sponsor is The Honorable Susan Collins, US Senator of Maine. Then on 30 July, a very warm day with a huge audience, USS HALSEY (DDG 97) was commissioned in San Diego. All three sponsors, Mrs. Anne Halsey Smith, Mrs. Alice Spruance Talbot (a new member) and Miss Heide Cooke Halsey are granddaughters of Admiral Halsey.

September and October ceremonies were delayed until December, or later, because of the extensive damage caused by the hurricanes. On October 16th an all-Navy worship service was held at the US Naval Academy chapel. Claudia Natter and I worked very closely with the Chief of Chaplains office and participated in this lovely, ecumenical service. It was held at 4PM and was followed by a delightful reception hosted by VADM and Mrs. Rod Rempt in their quarters, Buchanan House.

A tree planting ceremony, commemorating the life of Susie Skelton, took place on the US Capitol grounds on October 20th. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi was the main speaker and hosted the post-reception. The Skelton family was in attendance so I was able to convey condolences from the Society of Sponsors and express our deep appreciation of and admiration for Susie to Congressman Skelton. It was very moving to see how his face "softened" at the mention of Society of Sponsors. He recanted how special the Society was to Susie and how she always said the day she christened her ship was the best day of her life.

On November 12th USS BAINBRIDGE (DDG 96) was commissioned in Ft. Lauderdale, FL (Port Everglades), a city still recovering from severe hurricane damage. The ship's sponsor, Mrs. Susan Bainbridge Hay (a new member) is the granddaughter of Commodore Bainbridge. It was especially gratifying to watch her bring her ship to life since my husband had commanded the previous BAINBRIDGE, CGN 25.

November continued to be a fun month with our DC Chapter Luncheon on the 15th. Connie

Jeremiah did a wonderful job organizing this affair and the speaker, VADM Dave Brewer, Commander, Military Sealift Command, gave a superb presentation. The porch of the Army-Navy Country Club was the perfect setting for this warm, informative gathering. On November 18th I attended the fall meeting and luncheon of the USNA Foundation in Annapolis, MD. This was an enjoyable day spent learning about the academy's athletic/scholarship undertakings and seeing friends from the past and present.

To begin the new year of 2006 I traveled to Naval Station Ingleside, TX for the commissioning of USS SAN ANTONIO (LPD 17). The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison, US Senator of Texas, (a new member) is the proud sponsor of this ship and the keynote speaker was former President George H.W. Bush.

A keel laying ceremony for LCS 2 was held in Mobile, AL on January 19th. The ship had neither a name nor a sponsor so I did not attend. She has since been designated INDEPENDENCE (LCS 2).

On January 28th the USS FORREST SHERMAN (DDG 98) was commissioned at NAS Pensacola, FL where hurricane damage was still apparent. Mrs. Ann Sherman Fitzpatrick, ship's sponsor, was the daughter of CNO ADM Forrest Sherman. Sadly, Ann passed away on July 2, 2006.

In February 2006, I attended the first submarine ceremony to be held on "my watch". A Return to Service for USS OHIO (SSGN 726) was staged at Naval Base Kitsap in Bangor, WA on the 7th. Mrs. Anna Glenn, wife of former astronaut and former Senator John Glenn was the original sponsor and again, "brought her ship to life".

On a very cold day, February 11th, GRIDLEY (DDG 101) was christened in Bath, ME. Mrs. Cathy Forst, (a new member) the great, great granddaughter of Captain Charles Vernon Gridley, is sponsor. After braving the bitter cold for a wonderful ceremony, all travelers made alternate plans as the weather men predicted a rapidly approaching major snowstorm.

March 10, 2006 I represented the society at the Military Sea Lift Command Change of Command and Retirement ceremony. During his remarks, VADM Dave Brewer introduced me and spoke very highly of the Society of Sponsors.

Naval Services FamilyLine Appreciation Day was held on April 18th. One of our trustees, Diane Blair, graciously represented the Society and presented our \$3000 check to a deeply appreciative organization.

The USNA Foundation Spring Meeting was held on April 29th. I represented the Society and presented our \$6000 check as a contribution for the USNA Prep School Scholarship Program. As always, it was greatly appreciated.

The year passes quickly when you are occupied with so many varied activities. Much time is spent writing letters, fielding questions by telephone and mail and in planning/research. The

main focus of the admin work during this time frame is toward the annual meeting and spring luncheon. Previously the work is centered on the September and February Board Meetings.

I will end this report with a sincere thank you to my fellow officers and trustees, without whose efforts this job would be over-whelming. I sincerely appreciate ALL the hard work, cooperation, assistance and support. Because of your teamwork, it has been a fantastic first year for me.

Submitted by Dianne Reason.