

**SOCIETY OF SPONSORS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY  
PRESIDENT'S REPORT MAY 2009 - MAY 2010**

**KEEL AUTHENTICATION CEREMONY  
AMERICA (LHA 6)  
JULY 17, 2009  
NORTHROP GRUMMAN SHIPBUILDING  
PASCAGOULA, MISSISSIPPI**

AMERICA (LHA 6) is the Navy's newest class of large deck amphibious assault ships. Lynne Pace, wife of General Peter Pace, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is the proud sponsor. It was a cloudy, rainy, and very humid day in Pascagoula but the weather did not dampen the spirits of those in attendance. The organizers were very well prepared with red, white and blue umbrellas. There was a lot of excitement in the shipyard. Lynne's words were heartfelt. She addressed the shipyard workers and told them she was honored to be the sponsor of AMERICA. She said the word America is enormous. It means many things to many people. Freedom, pride and diversity are just some examples. She encouraged the shipyard workers, a very diverse group truly representative of America, to do their very best. She was given a plaque made of heavy stainless steel in the shape of the United States of America.

**NAVAL HISTORICAL FOUNDATION ANNUAL MEETING  
CEREMONY AND LUNCHEON HONORING  
ADMIRAL JAMES L. HOLLOWAY III, U.S. NAVY (RETIRED)  
JUNE 24, 2009**

On June 24, 2009, I attended the Naval Historical Foundation Annual Meeting and Ceremony/Luncheon honoring Admiral James L. Holloway III. It was a very nice tribute to Admiral Holloway. Former Senator of the Commonwealth of Virginia, John Warner, whose wife, Jeanne, is a named sponsor, attended and spoke. Admiral Bruce DeMars, USN (Ret.) is the new Chairman of the Naval Historical Foundation. He introduced me as the Society's President and thanked the Society for its generous contributions/donations over the years.

The Foundation is very proud of the completion of the Cold War Gallery in the Central Hall. The lead historical consultant, Dr. Edward Marolda expressed the importance of providing historical context for the Cold War.

**CHRISTENING OF JASON DUNHAM (DDG 109)  
AUGUST 1, 2009**

On the evening of July 31 a dinner was held at the Harraseeket Inn in Freeport, Maine in honor of Deb Dunham, sponsor of JASON DUNHAM (DDG 109). Deb is the mother of Jason Dunham who was killed in Iraq and posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery. Deb spoke at the dinner. She wanted those of us present to know that she is extremely proud that Jason was a Marine and a leader of

men and the recipient of the Medal of Honor. She also wanted to acquaint us with Jason, her son, who as Deb said, was a regular kid. She said he was a child who was kind but not perfect. He was the son who sometimes partied too much and stayed out too late. He was the brother who sometimes fought with his brothers Kyle and Justin. He was the brother who told his sister she couldn't get married until she was 40. And.....he was an avid Yankees' fan. She just wanted us to know.

Deb received a drawing of her ship with scenes depicting Jason, the Marine, Jason, the son, Jason, the brother and Jason, the Yankee fan. It is a very moving depiction.

On behalf of the Dunham Family, Deb and her husband, Dan presented Major Trent Gibson, Jason's Company Commander in Iraq, and Commander Sciretta, the PCO of JASON DUNHAM (109), Jason's dog tags. Deb and Dan wanted these two individuals to have Jason's dog tags because of their demonstrated leadership capabilities.

Although the days before the christening were very wet, christening day, August 1 was delightful. The Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy was a featured speaker and spoke of Jason's valor. General Michael Hagee, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, was the principal speaker. He awarded Jason the Purple Heart just before Jason passed away.

Deb broke the bottle on the first swing and held it up for the crowd to see. She was smiling from ear to ear and she was so thrilled that she did it!!!!

At the reception following the ceremony, two things occurred. Deb and Michael Phillips presented to each crew member a copy of the book, **Medal of Valor** by Michael Phillips. In addition, several of Jason's Marines presented his dress blue uniform to Deb and she, in turn, presented it to Commander Sciretta for safekeeping on the ship. It was a great Navy-Marine Corps Day!

**USNS MATTHEW PERRY (T-AKE 9)**  
**CHRISTENING CEREMONY**  
**AUGUST 16, 2009**

The Sponsor of USNS MATTHEW PERRY, Hester Evans, is the great, great, great, granddaughter of Commodore Perry, "Father of the Steam Navy". Commodore Perry was also responsible for Japanese ports being opened to U.S. commerce in 1854. At the Sponsor's dinner, Hester said she had the honor of being the sponsor because she is the oldest, living, female relative of the Commodore. She jokingly took issue with the word "oldest." There were many extended family members present. Her sister Betsy and her daughter, Hester Ramplin, were her maids.

The Christening/Launch took place at 5:00 P.M. on August 16. It was slightly windy and cool in San Diego at the NASSCO Shipyard. Vice Admiral Hunt, Commander, U.S. Third Fleet was the principal speaker. Hester broke the bottle on the 4th swing. Each time she heard that "tink" she became more determined and swung harder. When she was offered a little assistance, all in attendance could hear her say, "I can do it." And on the fourth try she did!! It was then amazing to see (with just a little push) that big ship slide into the water!! Balloons and fireworks added to the excitement!

Following the christening, Hester and her maids were presented with lovely, traditional Japanese plates. Hester, in turn, gave Captain Baldwin, USMM - Master, USNS MATTHEW PERRY (T - AKE 9) a portrait of the Commodore, which she said was more to his likeness than the paintings depicted by the Japanese.

**September 8, 2009** - I represented the Society at the viewing of RADM Wayne E. Meyer, "Father of Aegis", in Falls Church, VA. I spoke to Anna Mae and expressed sincere condolences from the Society.

**COMMISSIONING CEREMONY USS WAYNE E. MEYER (DDG 108)  
OCTOBER 10, 2009**

The USS WAYNE E. MEYER was commissioned in historic Penn's Landing in Philadelphia, PA. Anna Mae Meyer, Rear Admiral Wayne E. Meyer's widow is the sponsor. The Rear Admiral, known in the Navy as the "father of Aegis", passed away September 1, 2009 one month before the ship's commissioning. Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Admiral Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations, attended and spoke at the ceremony, paying great tribute to the Rear Admiral. Anna Mae, in her remarks said, "I lived with a legend." Rear Admiral Meyer's son, Robert, walked on board bearing one of his father's naval hats. He said over the loudspeaker, "Wayne E. Meyer spirit arriving." There were thousands of people present at the ceremony. (US Navy Website)

**WORSHIP SERVICE AT THE USNA CHAPEL AND LUNCH AT BUCHANAN HOUSE  
OCTOBER 18, 2009**

The lovely church service was conducted by LTCMDR Weigelt. We had twenty-three sponsors in attendance. Following the service, we were hosted for lunch at Buchanan House by VADM and Mrs. Jeffrey L. Fowler. They welcomed each sponsor and guest with warm smiles. After a brief social period, we were escorted to the dining room where we enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by the food specialists. We were delighted to have our scholarship recipients present: Matthew A. Verducci from Woodbridge, VA., Meghan P. Connor from Alexandria, VA., and Paul H. Reese from Washington, DC. It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak with them. We also congratulated Katie Fowler on being named sponsor of the future USS NORTH DAKOTA.

**WASHINGTON CHAPTER LUNCHEON, BELLE HAVEN COUNTRY CLUB  
OCTOBER 29, 2009**

Our luncheon chairs, Claudia Natter and Barbara Morgan did a wonderful job organizing our fall event at the Belle Haven Country Club in Alexandria, VA. Everything was perfect! Our guest of honor was Mr. Joe Hanna, Director of Ship Commissionings (Retired). Mr. Hanna is well respected in the ship community. He encouraged all sponsors to work on connecting or re-connecting with their ships. He introduced his successor, Bill Huessman. We were very pleased to have both gentlemen as our guests.

**COMMISSIONING OF USS MAKIN ISLAND (LHD 8)  
OCTOBER 24**

The commissioning of USS MAKIN ISLAND (LHD 8) was held in beautiful Coronado, CA. Silke Hagee is the sponsor of this magnificent ship. The ship is named for the Battle of Makin Island which took place

during WWII. Several of the Makin Island Raiders were present. The raiders were Marines, who were transported by submarines to conduct the raid on Japanese forces occupying Makin Island.

During the ceremony, there was a power failure. Silke Hagee used a bullhorn to give the order to "man our ship" at which time the Sailors ran to board ship. As the sailors stood straight and tall she gave the order to "bring her to life and charge her main battery." At that time a company of Marines in full battle gear ran and stood on the aircraft elevator and accommodations ladders, thus signifying the true strength of the Navy-Marine Corps Team.

### **COMMISSIONING OF USS NEW YORK (LPD 21) NOVEMBER 7, 2009**

Upon entering New York Harbor and at the World Trade Center Site, the USS NEW YORK stopped and delivered a 21 gun salute to honor the fallen of September 11. It was very moving to all who witnessed it. The NEW YORK, SOMERSET and ARLINGTON are the three ships built (or being built) to commemorate the heroes of the attacks of September 11.

On the Thursday before the commissioning, Dotty England, the sponsor and spouse of the former Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Gordon England, was presented with a lovely silver tray. The ship's motto, "Never Forget" is engraved on the tray. At the reception on the eve of the commissioning, Dotty presented the ship with what she called a "Diplomatic Gift." It was a twelve piece place setting of china to be used when the CO invited dignitaries both foreign and domestic, aboard ship.

November 7th was a beautiful day in New York City. There were many public officials present at the commissioning ceremony as well as families of the many victims and first responders, etc. of 9/11. It was a day to pay tribute, a day to remember and a day to resolve to never let such an act of terrorism occur on our shores again. All hearts swelled with pride. Dotty England, in her remarks, said, "the spirit of all New Yorkers will forever be on the ship." She emphasized that the ship belonged to them. Dotty stated that she was proud and honored to give the order to "bring the ship to life".

### **CHRISTENING OF MISSOURI (SSN 780) DECEMBER 5, 2009**

The christening of MISSOURI (SSN 780) took place on December 5, 2009 in Groton, CT. Becky Gates is the sponsor of this submarine. It was quite cold and very rainy that morning. Becky Gates is the spouse of Secretary of Defense, Dr. Robert Gates. She joked that this time her husband would have to sit and listen while she gave a speech. There is a child care center named for Becky at the Texas A & M campus. Becky stated that the workers at the center and the crew of The MISSOURI share a common bond.....They give selflessly and they serve to care for others. She described the MISSOURI as a warship but also a peace ship. It is a ship that will bring peace and stability to the world. Becky held up the bottle of champagne and looked behind her and in front, so all could see. She then smashed the bottle effortlessly across the bow. During the ceremony the crew stood in the driving rain without flinching. How very proud we are of these men and women who serve our country!

## **KEEL AUTHENTICATION CEREMONY FOR SOMERSET (LPD 25)**

**DECEMBER 11, 2009**

This ceremony took place at the Avondale Shipyard in Avondale, Louisiana. It was a brisk and windy day. Mary Jo Myers, spouse of the former Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, is the sponsor. The ship's namesake, SOMERSET, is the county in PA where Flight 93 crashed on September 11, 2001. Many Somerset County officials were in attendance as well as some family members of those who perished on that day. Mary Jo thanked the shipbuilders for their selfless service....building ships for the U.S. Navy. She also addressed the bravery of the passengers. She said she looked forward to forging relationships with the families of the passengers and crew. She remarked that it was an honor to be a sponsor and to partake in the first major milestone of the ship. She also said that although it was cold, she was glad the wind was blowing because it made the American Flag wave ever so beautifully.

## **TOUR OF THE HOME OF THE COMMANDANTS**

**DECEMBER 15, 2009**

On December 15, 2009, the Washington Chapter was cordially invited by Annette Conway, the named sponsor of ANCHORAGE to tour the HOME OF THE COMMANDANTS at the Marine Barracks at 8<sup>th</sup> & I. It was a mild winter day. The House is occupied by the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, General James Conway and his wife, Annette. We learned much of the history of the house. It is the oldest continually occupied building in all of Washington, DC. It has been on the site since 1806. Portraits of all of the previous Commandants are displayed throughout. Annette accompanied us on the tour and told us many stories about the occupants and the interesting furnishings that adorn each floor. Annette shared her excitement on being named a sponsor and expressed her delight in meeting so many of you.

## **COMMISSIONING OF USS INDEPENDENCE (LCS 2)**

**JANUARY 16, 2010**

On January 16, 2010, I represented the Society at the commissioning of the USS INDEPENDENCE (LCS 2) in Mobile AL. Doreen Scott, wife of the former MCPON, Terry Scott is the sponsor. At the reception the evening prior, Doreen spoke of the pride she felt for those who serve and how important it was that they all continue to "watch each other's back" to stay safe.

It was a very rainy day in Mobile, AL. and during the commissioning ceremony most of us got very wet. However, yet, again, the spirits of the crew, families and guests were very high despite the driving rain. Everyone was so very proud and there were many shouts of joy as we witnessed the crew adhere to Doreen's order to "Man Our Ship and Bring Her to Life." The Littoral Combat Ship was brought to life and it was another great Navy Day!

## **CHRISTENING OF USNS CHARLES DREW (T-AKE 10)**

**FEBRUARY 27, 2010**

On February 27, 2010, on a damp and very rainy day for San Diego, Bebe Drew Price, the eldest daughter of Dr. Charles Drew, smashed the bottle of champagne on the first swing and bestowed the

name of the ship in honor of her father. The ship launched into the water with great fanfare.....lots of balloons and music. It was an exciting Navy day and a great tribute to the doctor, surgeon and researcher. Dr. Drew was interested in blood preservation/blood transfusions. He and his team were responsible for the first blood bank in 1939. He set up the first blood bank for the American Red Cross in 1941. He taught and mentored the majority of African American surgeons trained in the U.S. between 1941 and 1950. The USNS Charles Drew is the first U.S. Navy ship named in honor of the noted surgeon and hematologist. The Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service, VADM Regina Benjamin presented BeBe with the Surgeon General's Medallion. At the sponsor's dinner, BeBe presented, to the ship, a bust of her father.

### **COMMISSIONING OF USS DEWEY (DDG 105)**

**MARCH 6, 2010**

On March 6, 2010, in Seal Beach, CA, I represented the Society at the commissioning ceremony of USS DEWEY (DDG 105). The ship's namesake, Admiral George Dewey, led his squadron of warships into Manila Bay to destroy the Spanish fleet during the Spanish-American War. It was a rainy morning in Southern California. However, minutes before the ceremony, the clouds dissipated and the rain stopped. The sponsor of the USS DEWEY is Deborah Mullen. The featured speaker was Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and, of course, Deborah's husband. In his remarks he emphasized the leadership capabilities of the sailors and the strength of the families. In his introduction of Deborah, he praised her commitment to military families and said she would be a good sponsor and would continue her relationship with the ship and her crew. After giving the order to "Man Our Ship" and witnessing the crew run aboard her, you could see Deborah wipe her tears of pride and joy. She was overheard saying, "Now the ship is truly alive." Deborah presented a long glass and the ship's bell from the original USS DEWEY (DD-349) which was commissioned in 1934.

### **TINGEY HOUSE**

**MARCH 11, 2010**

On March 11, 2010, the Washington Chapter was cordially invited by Ellen Roughead, the named sponsor of MINNESOTA, and wife of the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gary Roughead, to tour Tingey House, the residence of the CNO at the Washington Navy Yard. Ellen was most gracious in her welcome, coming out to our cars and urging those of us who had arrived early to join her inside. Ellen also invited the director of the Naval Historical Heritage Society, Jay Deloach, and his team, to brief us on the history of the house. We learned much about Tingey House from Ellen and the team. Two of our sponsors present learned they are descendants of some of Tingey's famous inhabitants!

### **COMMISSIONING OF USS NEW MEXICO (SSN 779)**

**MARCH 27, 2010**

On March 27, 2010, I attended the commissioning ceremony of the USS NEW MEXICO (SSN 779) in Norfolk, VA. Cindy Giambastiani is the sponsor. There was a crowd of about 3,000. It was a cool but sunny day. NEW MEXICO is named in recognition of the people of the "Land of Enchantment." NEW MEXICO (SSN-779) is the second Navy ship to carry the name. The first, the battleship USS NEW MEXICO

(BB-40), earned six battle stars for her service in WW II. One of the highlights was CWO George Smith, USN (Ret.) passing the long glass to the Officer of the Watch. CWO Smith served on the USS NEW MEXICO Battleship in 1940. Cindy Giambastiani, wife of the former Vice Chairman, ADM Ed Giambastiani, was thrilled despite the cool temperatures. She expressed her feelings of honor and pride in being able to participate in “this amazing day”. She felt honored to represent submarine spouses. In her remarks, Cindy wished “success and safe voyages to all who sail in her.”

**CHRISTENING OF WILLIAM P. LAWRENCE (DDG 110)  
APRIL 17, 2010**

On Saturday, April 17, 2010, Barbara Pilling, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, represented the Society of Sponsors at the christening of the WILLIAM P. LAWRENCE (DDG 110) at the Pascagoula, Mississippi shipyard. The WILLIAM P. LAWRENCE is the 60<sup>th</sup> ship of Aegis Destroyers and honors U.S. Navy Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence (1930-2005), a fighter pilot, a Vietnam War Prisoner of War, a U.S. Third Fleet Commander, a Chief of Naval Personnel, and a Superintendent of the USNA. The ship was christened by the Admiral’s widow, Diane Wilcox Lawrence and his two daughters, Laurie Macpherson Lawrence, M.D. and Captain Wendy Lawrence, USN (ret). It was a beautiful day in Pascagoula as the three sponsors said in unison, “In the name of the United States of America, may God bless this ship and all who sail in her. We christen thee, WILLIAM P. LAWRENCE, sail with the honor of a man whose name you bear.” Many members of the Lawrence family were present as were numerous friends who traveled long distances to honor the Admiral and his family. The bright sun was only outshined by the warm southern hospitality of the entire christening committee. It was indeed a great Navy day!

**UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY PRIZES AND AWARDS CEREMONY  
MAY 27, 2010**

On Thursday, May 27, 2010, Rosalie Calhoun, our 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, and I, had the pleasure of representing the Society at the Color Parade at Worden Field and at the Prizes and Awards Ceremony in Alumni Hall. At the ceremony, I was honored to present a leather briefcase to Midshipman First Class Eric Thomas Stromme. Eric achieved the highest proficiency in the art of practical ship handling in this year’s graduating class. As is typical during Commissioning Week at the USNA, there was much excitement everywhere! It was quite a hot but very thrilling day.

In June there are three christening events. In July, there is one. The fall will be busy with both christenings and commissionings. Each ceremony follows Naval tradition, yet each is unique in some way and always emotional. I know I will have much to tell you in May, 2011.

Submitted by Rose M. Magnus