

SOCIETY OF SPONSORS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY
President's Report May 2011 – May 2012

MICHAEL MURPHY (DDG-112)

Past President Rose Magnus represented the Society one final time:

On May 7, 2011, *MICHAEL MURPHY* (DDG 112) was christened. The 34th Arleigh Burke Class Destroyer was built at Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine. *MICHAEL MURPHY* (DDG 112) is the 62nd Ship of the Class. The ship is named in honor of LT Michael P. Murphy who was a USN SEAL. LT Michael Murphy was killed in June, 2005 while leading his NAVY SEAL team in the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan. His heroic attempt to protect and save his troops was a true act of bravery. As a result of his actions, he was awarded (posthumously) the Medal of Honor. LT Murphy's parents Maureen and Dan were presented with their son's Medal of Honor by President George W. Bush at a White House Ceremony on October 23, 2007. Maureen Murphy is the proud Sponsor of this great warship. Maureen broke the bottle of champagne with a mighty swing. It was a heartfelt and joyful occasion for family and friends and all who were present. She christened *MICHAEL MURPHY* (DDG 112) on what would have been LT Murphy's 35th birthday. During her sincere and eloquent remarks she wished her son a "Happy Birthday." She also said, "I am so proud and it is truly an honor for people to come out and remember Mike and to celebrate this ship. It means a lot and it means that they still remember the sacrifice he made for his country." (quote taken from Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Dominique M. Lasco) May 7, 2011 was a heartfelt and joyful occasion for family, friends and all those present. It was a great day for our Country and for the United States Navy. (Submitted by Rose Magnus)

ANCHORAGE (LPD-23)

As my first official act, I represented the Society on May 15, 2011, a blustery day in New Orleans, LA, as nearly 1,200 guests attended the christening of *ANCHORAGE* (LPD-23) at Ingalls Shipbuilding Avondale Operations. The ship's Sponsor, Annette Conway, is the wife of Gen. James T. Conway, USMC (Ret.), the 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps. Annette, a former educator and volunteer serving military families, was accompanied by three lovely young women who were her Matrons of honor; they were her daughter and her two daughters-in-law. Among the speakers were George Vakalis, Municipal Manager of Anchorage, Alaska and MajGen Timothy C. Hanifen, USMC, Director, Expeditionary Warfare, OPNAV. The Honorable Robert O. Work, Under Secretary of the Navy, was the principal speaker. He said "Amphibious ships like the new and improved *Anchorage* - the seventh of the superb *San Antonio* class - are among the most useful ships in our fleet." Annette spoke warmly about the relationship between a Sponsor and her ship lasting forever. All of the speakers during the christening ceremony were interesting and informative; however, I particularly enjoyed one of the remarks made by General Hanifen. He had a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye as he made a real cute comment about the three Matrons of Honor. He said:

“Ladies, I assure you that no Sailor or Marine would ever consider you matronly!” Annette did a smashing job when she broke the bottle across the ship's bow with her first swing! She triumphantly held the broken bottle over her head as the crowd cheered.

MINNESOTA (SSN-783)

On May 20, 2011, I attended the keel laying of *MINNESOTA* (SSN-783) in Newport News, VA. The ship's Sponsor, Ellen Roughead is the wife of Chief of Naval Operations ADM Gary Roughead. The principal speaker was ADM John C. Harvey Jr., Commander, US Fleet Forces Command, US Navy. He said "...by inviting Ellen Roughead to be *MINNESOTA*'s sponsor, I am very proud to say our Navy could not have gotten it more right... Ellen Roughead is at the very heart of our Navy and she indeed represents for all of us so much of what it has been that has made our Navy great, and that is the commitment, the strength, and the spirit of our spouses and our families without which we simply would not have a Navy." Ellen chalked her initials onto a metal plate which was then welded by a master shipbuilder. The metal plate will be permanently affixed to *MINNESOTA*'s hull. Ellen is a former educator and a tireless supporter of military families and continuing education initiatives for Navy spouses. She spoke warmly of Minnesota, her grandmother, her Viking heritage, and her Maid of Honor, her lovely daughter Elizabeth.

United States Naval Academy Prizes and Awards Ceremony

On May 26, 2011, First Vice President Barbara Pilling accompanied me to the United States Naval Academy to present the Society's annual award for proficiency in the art of practical shiphandling. Traditionally, we have presented a briefcase; this year, we presented a check for \$200.00. The recipient was Midshipman First Class Travis Michael Turner who will join the Navy as a Surface Warfare Officer.

USS WILLIAM P. LAWRENCE (DDG-110)

On June 4, 2011, I attended the commissioning of USS *WILLIAM P. LAWRENCE* (DDG-110); it was the 69th anniversary of the Battle of Midway. The night before, I had attended the pre-commissioning reception at the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, FL. It was an impressive venue and a fitting location for a wonderful, moving celebration of the life of a naval aviation hero who was a POW for over six years. Fifty POWs were listed in the program and it seemed that most, if not all of them, attended; I am in awe of their sacrifice. As we entered through the convention center for the breakfast reception before the commissioning ceremony, we were greeted by numerous "southern belles" in pretty pastel dresses. A large crowd was gathered at the Alabama State Docks on the Mobile River. The mighty warship, decked in red, white, and blue, looked splendid! The speeches were impressive, informative, and emotional. The POWs were recognized as a group during the commissioning ceremony. ADM James Winnefeld Jr., Commander, US Northern Command, delivered the principal address. He said "Indeed, we should recognize those men who are with us today--

because, consistent with our ship's motto: 'They never gave in.' So for those in the audience who served with Admiral Lawrence in prison in Vietnam, I thank you again, for what you did in showing what it means to be an American--when the chips are down, and you must personally pay for that privilege." Ross Perot attended as he was a close friend of Admiral Lawrence. The three Sponsors are SOS Life Members Diane Wilcox Lawrence, widow of the ship's namesake and Sponsor of *WASP* (LHD-1), and the Admiral's two daughters, CAPT Wendy Lawrence, USN (Ret.), an astronaut who completed four space missions, and Dr. Laurie Macpherson Lawrence, a medical doctor. The Sponsors did a very efficient and enthusiastic job of directing the crew to man their ship and bringing her to life! It was so exciting when the crew ran aboard. It was a great Navy day!

USNS *SPEARHEAD* (JHSV 1)

First Vice President Barbara Pilling represented the Society in my stead: USNS *SPEARHEAD* (JHSV 1), the first of 10 US Navy Joint High Speed Vessels (JHSV) designed for rapid intra-theater transport of troops and military equipment, was christened on Saturday September 17, 2011 during a ceremony at Austal's USA shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. The Military Sealift Command (MSC) will own and operate *SPEARHEAD* which will be crewed by 22 civil service Mariners who will operate, navigate and maintain the ship. Retired Army Chief Warrant Officer, Kenneth Wahlman, is the ship's sponsor. His daughter Catherine, a staff sergeant in the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps at Virginia Tech University, broke the traditional bottle of champagne across the bow to formally christen the ship. Chief Wahlman's wife, Chief Warrant Officer Five, Linda Wahlman, in a very moving video, spoke to the audience live from afar, while on deployment with the 645th Regional Support Group in Kandahar. The chief named his wife as the Matron of Honor. Chief Wahlman shared with me that he hoped both his wife and his daughter would be invited into the Society. The Wahlmans are truly a unique and very special family, all three serving their country in uniformed service. (Submitted by Barbara Pilling)

USS *SPRUANCE* (DDG 111)

On October 1, 2011, USS *SPRUANCE* (DDG 111) became a destroyer in the Navy's Pacific fleet after being placed in commission at Naval Air Station Key West. The new destroyer honors legendary ADM Raymond Spruance, whose calm and decisive leadership at the Battle of Midway contributed to a pivotal American victory during World War II. It is the second ship named in his honor. The ceremony took place at sunset on Key West's waterfront and it included a flyover by a Naval Air Station Key West fighter squadron. It was the first time that Key West hosted a commissioning of a naval vessel. CDR Tate Westbrook is the ship's first commanding officer; he spoke of the advanced weapons systems on Spruance and credited his Sailors with an outstanding effort preparing to operate them. He said "*Spruance's* crew has trained for years to sharpen their skills to employ those capabilities. On board *Spruance*, through many long hours, they have sharpened their swords." Vice Chief of Naval Operations ADM Mark E. Ferguson III delivered the ceremony's principal address. He said "We welcome the

USS *Spruance* and her crew to the fleet. Wherever she sails, this ship will honor Admiral Spruance's legacy as the 'quiet warrior' who displayed uncompromising integrity and a powerful intellect, while giving the nation victories at sea in time of war. The ship's sponsor, SOS Life Member Ellen Spruance Holscher, is a granddaughter of the ship's namesake and a proud Navy Junior. Her daughters, Margaret and Dorothy were her Matron and Maid of Honor. Ellen proudly gave the order to "man our ship and bring her to life!" it was so exciting to see the officers and enlisted personnel run aboard. It was a great Navy day!

USS CALIFORNIA (SSN 781)

On October 29, 2011, USS *CALIFORNIA* (SSN 781) was commissioned at Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Virginia. She was built under an agreement between General Dynamics Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding. Odd numbered boats are being assembled at Newport News Shipbuilding. USS *CALIFORNIA* (SSN-781) is the eighth Virginia-class submarine and the seventh United States Navy ship named for the state of California. Because the weather forecast called for gale-force winds, the commissioning ceremony was held indoors in a large hangar. RADM David Johnson, program executive officer for submarines said "As the size of our force shrinks in the coming years, it is imperative we continue to get these tremendous assets into the hands of the fleet ahead of schedule, under budget, and ready to execute those unique missions that only a Virginia class submarine can." A World War II submarine veteran, Joe Cox, passed the long glass to set the first watch. The Sponsor is SOS Life Member Donna Joy Willard, wife of ADM Robert F. Willard, Commander, US Pacific Command, a former Chief of Naval Operations. Donna brought the ship to life to a rousing cheer! The crowd applauded as the crew ran up and assembled at the front of the hanger, safe, warm, and dry. It was a great Navy day!

USNS MEDGAR EVERS (T-AKE 13)

USNS *MEDGAR EVERS* (T-AKE 13), named after slain civil rights leader, Medgar Evers, was christened at General Dynamics NASSCO in San Diego, CA on November 12, 2011. It was a very rainy, gray day. The Sponsor, Myrlie Evers, a civil rights activist in her own right, is the widow of the ship's namesake. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus was the principal speaker; he spoke extensively about Evers, calling him a man who "fought in a principled and nonviolent way." Secretary Mabus said "His life was a mighty blow against the chains of racism that bound us all for too, too long." Myrlie explained that over 20 years ago, when Ray Mabus was governor of Mississippi, he promised her he would do something to ensure that Medgar Evers would be remembered for the man he was. The promise was fulfilled when Myrlie smashed the bottle of champagne and christened USNS *MEDGAR EVERS*. She spoke about people who helped her husband advance civil rights and then she said "This is truly a wonderful day, one that will go down in the history books and one that will remain in our hearts forever."

MISSISSIPPI (SSN 782)

On December 3, 2011, I attended the christening of *MISSISSIPPI* (SSN 782) at Electric Boat in Groton, CT. Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Allison Stiller, is the Sponsor. Allison is an SOS Life Member. The ship is the ninth member of the Virginia class and she was built under an agreement between General Dynamics Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News Shipbuilding. Even numbered boats are being assembled at Electric Boat. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus was the principal speaker. He said "When you look at this ship, you know American exceptionalism will not only survive, it will prevail." Many of the speakers at the christening praised the shipyards for delivering submarines ahead of schedule and under budget. During her remarks, Allison mentioned the day marked the 38th christening that she has attended and she emphasized how special the day was for her. She said "All of the christenings have been special, but this will be the most special one that I will be a part of. The ship may be made of steel and fiber and the finest technology, but the crew is what is most important." Allison smashed the bottle of champagne over the hull, breaking it on the first try! She triumphantly held the broken bottle over her head as the crowd cheered.

CORONADO (LCS 4)

CORONADO (LCS 4) was christened at Austal USA Shipyard in Mobile, AL on January 14, 2012. We were actually gathered at the Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center in Mobile, AL directly across the Mobile River from the shipyard. She is the fourth littoral combat ship and the name honors the city of Coronado, California. Coronado has deep ties to the US Navy and is the home to Naval Air Station North Island (NASNI) and the Naval Amphibious Base (NAB). The speakers were interesting and informative. Sean Stackley, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development & Acquisition, delivered the principal address. He said "Thank you for opening your city to these fine men and women who proudly call themselves the *CORONADO*... They're bright, well educated, determined. When given the choice between being a witness to history and making history, they've chosen the high road, which is to say, they've taken the hard road. For when they sail from your warm embrace, inspired by your gratitude for their patriotism and graced by the blessing endowed by their Sponsor, the USS *CORONADO* will make ready to answer all bells, to go in harm's way, to serve our nation in time of war." *CORONADO*'s Sponsor is Susan Ring Keith, a native of Coronado with a long family history associated with service to the Navy and to Coronado. Susan was a member of the Coronado City Council and Susan served as Maid of Honor when her mother, Eleanor Ring, christened a previous USS *CORONADO* (LPD/AGF-11) in 1966. Susan brought a bottle of champagne from the Hotel del Coronado to christen her ship. It was lots of fun to be part of the crowd attending the christening. However, it was unusual to have the Sponsor and some of the other platform participants depart across the Mobile River to Austal USA Shipyard for Susan to christen her ship. A few smart people had brought binoculars so they could see across the river. Most of us at the convention center watched Susan swing the bottle on a TV screen. The distance didn't

dull the excitement, especially since I was standing with Susan Keith's grandchildren.
We were thrilled when she broke the bottle!

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosalie J. Calhoun". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Rosalie J. Calhoun
President