

Society of Sponsors of the United States Navy
President's Report 2013 - 2014
Barbara Pilling

On May 4, 2013, the *USS ANCHORAGE (LPD 23)* was commissioned at a ceremony in Anchorage, Alaska, her namesake. LPD is an abbreviation for Landing Platform Dock. Anchorage is the seventh amphibious transport dock ship in the San Antonio class and is capable of embarking a landing force of up to 800 Marines. The ship's sponsor is Annette Conway, wife of retired Marine Corps General James T. Conway, 34th Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps. Guests at the snow-covered ceremony listened to congratulatory remarks by many dignitaries culminating with, "Man our ship and bring her to life!" by Annette Conway as the crew ran up the brow and engaged all ship systems. Mrs. Conway's enthusiastic remarks began with asking those in attendance to honor the handsome fierce Marines and sailors who were part of the crew for their willingness to endure extreme hardships to ensure our freedoms. Then she thanked former Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Donald C. Winter for the gift of being a sponsor. She remarked that she did not know that the gift would include the friendship of a great group of women in the Society of Sponsors; that she would meet and so enjoy the men and women who poured their hearts and souls into building the USS Anchorage; that she would be warmly accepted by the crew and families of USS Anchorage; and finally to discover the open-arms welcome extended to the crew by the wonderful people of Anchorage, Alaska.

On September 7, 2013, the *USS MINNESOTA (SSN 783)* was commissioned during a ceremony at Naval Station Norfolk in Norfolk, Virginia. The USS Minnesota (SSN 783) is the 10th of a projected 30 Virginia-class submarines. The ship's sponsor is Ellen Roughead, wife of retired Admiral Gary Roughead, former Chief of Naval Operations. It was a beautiful sunny September day and the enthusiasm of the native Minnesotans, the boat builders from General Dynamics, Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries, and the Navy crew was very evident. The state of Minnesota had not had a ship named for it in 92 years, so the support from the state residents present was overwhelming. Many dignitaries were there to honor the event, including state senators and congressmen, the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations. Ellen Roughead, began her remarks by saying, "What a great Navy day and what a great day for Minnesota." She quoted from Our Naval Heroes: In Words of Easy Syllables, by Josephine Pollard. "So it seems to me that a boy or man who joins the Navy has need of strong nerves, a brave heart, a clear head, a firm will and a soul at peace with God." "Today is really only about the men who will go to sea, who will work, and who will live on board Minnesota" said Roughhead. "You have trained, you have been tested, and you have met every challenge with exceptional ease and grace. You are ready to go." She wished the crew Fair Winds and Following Seas. Then, before the moment the crowd was waiting for - Go Navy! Go Minnesota! Finally with great enthusiasm – "Man Our Ship and Bring Her to Life!" as the crew ran aboard.

ON NOVEMBER 2, 2013, the *USS NORTH DAKOTA (SSN 784)* was christened at a ceremony in Groton, Connecticut at the General Dynamics Electric Boat shipyard. The North Dakota is the first of the Block III submarines. The ship's sponsor is Katie Fowler, wife of retired Vice Admiral Jeff Fowler. The ceremony was held on a beautiful sunny fall day and attended by a host of dignitaries from North Dakota, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Many Navy uniformed and civilian officials joined ship yard workers to celebrate the event. Ms. Allison Stiller, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, a Society of Sponsors member and Trustee, gave remarks celebrating the birthday of the State of North Dakota. "Today we honor the State of North Dakota on her 124th birthday by christening the eleventh submarine of the Virginia class." VADM Michael Connor, Commander, Submarine Forces, pointed

out that the state of North Dakota and the submarine North Dakota have a lot in common. “Neither have a lot of people, but those people have a huge impact.” He compared the huge energy renaissance in North Dakota as the fastest growing energy producing state in the union, to the crew of a nuclear submarine where each member of the crew’s contribution is far greater than the size of the crew and ship would suggest. VADM Connor also congratulated the workers in Newport News, Quonset Point, and Groton, by heralding their long tradition of producing safe ships. Katie Fowler was honored as a Navy wife who understood being part of a family submarine readiness group, while her husband served on multiple submarine deployments. When it was time for the christening, Katie Fowler said, “In the name of the United States, I christen thee North Dakota. May God bless her and all that sail in her.” She then gave the bottle one quick swing smashing it against the hull.

On November 9, 2013, the ***USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78)***, the lead ship of the new Gerald R. Ford class, was christened in a ceremony at Huntington Ingalls Newport News Shipbuilding facilities in Newport News, Virginia. It is the first of its class of new nuclear powered aircraft carriers. The ship’s sponsor is Susan Ford Bales, daughter of the late President Gerald R. Ford. It was a beautiful sunny fall day and the ceremony was attended by a host of dignitaries from Gerald Ford’s administration, state officials, uniformed and civilian Navy officials and by over 20,000 onlookers. At the ceremony, the President of Newport News Shipbuilding, Matt Mulherin, spoke of the magic and the art behind the science of ship building. He said that the Gerald Ford would always carry the spirit of the sponsor, the strength of the crew, and the heart of the ship builders. Since Gerald Ford was the only president to be an Eagle Scout, Boy Scout troops from the Colonial Virginia Council served as honor guards to parade the colors. In her remarks, Mrs. Bales spoke of her father’s key virtue of integrity and how it was entwined in the ship’s motto: *Integrity at the Helm*. Mrs. Bales also thanked the ship yard workers for sharing their experiences and letting her become involved in the life of the ship. She said she was “proud to be your fellow shipbuilder.” She read a letter written by her father after he was told that an aircraft carrier would be named in his honor. “Thus, it is a great source of pride and humility to know that an aircraft carrier bearing my name will be forever connected with the valor and patriotic service of men and women of the United States Navy.” Mrs. Bales hit the bow crisply with strike of a bottle of sparkling wine and the crowd applauded as she christened the Navy’s newest aircraft carrier.

On December 18, 2013, the ***USS MILWAUKEE (LCS 5)*** was christened at the Marinette Marine shipyard in Marinette, Wisconsin. LCS is an abbreviation for Littoral Combat Ship. The Milwaukee is the third of the Freedom class littoral combat ships and the sixth U.S. Navy vessel christened in tribute to the Wisconsin city. The ship’s sponsor is Sylvia Panetta, wife of the former Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta. Despite severe cold conditions, the ship’s sponsor, Sylvia Panetta, preserved and struck the bow with a bottle of champagne, officially naming the ship. In her remarks, Mrs. Panetta stated, “It is a true privilege to serve as the sponsor for this ship as it begins its journey of service and commitment to our powerful fleet. I am proud to support the ship’s crew members over the course of her service to ensure it leads with strength and protects our freedom. My congratulations to the city of Milwaukee as this ship assumes its name.” After Mrs. Panetta christened the ship, it had an exciting sideways launch into the Menominee River. The Navy, along with the Lockheed Martin-led industry team, coordinated the christening. Comments at the ceremony included that the USS Milwaukee is one of the ships that are procured under the block buy contract awarded in 2010 and represent the true beginning of “serial production” for the class. With serial production, the Navy is able to realize benefits such as improved cost structure per vessel and reduced construction time.

On January 11, 2014, the *USNS FALL RIVER (JHSV- 4)* was christened at the Austal USA shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. JHSV is an abbreviation for Joint High Speed Vessel. The Fall River is the fourth in the Spearhead-class which is intended to provide a platform to support users in the Department of the Navy and the Department of the Army of the United States Military Sealift Command. The ship's sponsor is Mrs. Diane Bemus Patrick, the First Lady of Massachusetts and wife of the Governor, Deval Patrick. The christening ceremony was held underneath the 338-foot catamaran vessel as guests were flanked on both sides by the iconic twin hulls. Many of the speakers correlated the hard work and industrial fortitude of the people of Fall River, Massachusetts, with the strengths of the ship Fall River. The Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy, was the principal speaker and he recognized the Society of Sponsors. He said that we would be welcoming a wonderful new member in Mrs. Patrick. He also spoke of the amazing partnership between the ship yard workers and the Navy. In her remarks, Mrs. Patrick, said that she carried the responsibility to love and honor the ship and those who serve on it. "I take it very seriously," she said. "I am proud to be a citizen and a sponsor of this awesome ship." Mrs. Patrick also spoke of how symbolic the christening ceremony was for her personally as it coincided with the christening of her first grandchild.

On February 1, 2014, the *USNS JOHN GLENN (MLP-2)* was christened at the General Dynamics NASSCO, shipyard in San Diego, California. MLP is an abbreviation for Mobile Landing Platform. The ship is the second of the Navy's (MLP) Montford Point-class ships. The ship features an open, reconfigurable mission deck the length of a football field and a half that can support a wide variety of operations. The sponsor of the ship is Lyn Glenn, daughter of John Glenn, former United States Marine Corps pilot, astronaut and United States senator. The christening ceremony was attended by numerous Navy and civilian officials. Among those present were the Honorable Sean Stackley, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and Admiral Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations. Secretary Stackley spoke of the distinguished and honorable career of John Glenn and how he was chosen to be one of 7 astronauts to pioneer and lead the United States to be first in space. Admiral Greenert pointed out the unique innovations of the ship and likened it to a giant Swiss Army knife capable of multitasking. The highlight of the day, however, was the remarks by John Glenn, himself, who accepted the honor in memory of those with whom he had served. Lyn Glenn expressed thanks to all those who made the ship a possibility: members of the military, ship yard workers, the ship's Captain, the Glenn family, and her parents John and Annie Glenn for the wondrous life they had brought to the family. At the reception the day before the christening, she gave ship's captain a gift for the ship - the original American flag that John Glenn carried into space on Freedom 7.

On March 1, 2014, the *USS SOMERSET (LPD 25)* was commissioned at Penn's Landing in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. LPD is a Navy designation for Amphibious Transport Dock. Somerset is named for the heroes of Flight 93 whose plane crashed in Shanksville, Somerset County, Pennsylvania on September. 11, 2001. Steel from the wreckage of Flight 93 was gathered, melted and put into the bow of the Somerset. The sponsor of the ship is Mary Jo Myers, wife of retired Air Force General Richard B. Myers, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The ceremony was attended by numerous military, industrial and political players, along with the families of the victims of Flight 93 and over 5000 onlookers. The event's keynote speaker was General James Amos, commandant of the Marine Corps. He pointed out that we will never know how many lives those heroes saved. "They took a stand and refused to back down." The representative from Pennsylvania's 9th district, Bill Shuster, pointed out that the 40 heroes of Flight 93 were the part of the first counter terrorism attack and that he was personally grateful because he was in the US Capitol that day. Mary Jo Myers said, "Today is much more than a celebration of the rivets and steel we see behind us. Today transcends that structure and embraces this magnificent ship and the spirit it will carry with it." She asked the family members

of Flight 93 to stand and be recognized. The crowd enthusiastically applauded them. After that, Mrs. Myers gave the order “Officers and crew of the USS Somerset, man this ship and bring her to life!” Once its crew manned the ship, the Somerset's commanding officer, Capt. Thomas L. Dearborn, said, “Somerset, let's roll!” paying homage to Flight 93 passenger Todd Beamer's famous rallying cry.

On March 22, 2014 the *USS JACKSON (LCS 6)* was christened at the Austal USA shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. LCS is an abbreviation for Littoral Combat Ship. The ship is named after the capitol of Mississippi and is the first ship to bear the city's name. The sponsor of the ship is Dr. Katherine Holmes Cochran who was born in Jackson and is the daughter of Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi. Katherine served as the maid of honor for her mother, Rose Clayton Cochran who sponsored the *USS Barry (DDG 52)* in 1991. Katherine's maid of honor is her niece Elizabeth Katherine Cochran. At age seven, “Lizzie” must be the youngest maid of honor in the Society's history. Dr. Cochran is an associate professor in English at the University of Southern Mississippi. In her remarks Dr. Cochran talked about how special the City of Jackson was and quoted a well know American writer from Jackson, Eudora Welty. “One place understood helps us understand all places better.” She also presented the ship with a gift, a “King Fisher” bird figurine from the Wolf Studio in Jackson, Mississippi. Secretary Ray Mabus was the keynote speaker. He congratulated the sponsor and noted that she was an educator, author and teacher of teachers. He also spoke of the special relationship that the ship would have with the sponsor. “She will maintain a special relationship with this ship and her Sailors, a special relationship that will be shared by the city of Jackson and her people, and by all the people of Mississippi.” Secretary Mabus commented on the wonderful partnerships with Navy and industry and remarked on the fiscal block buy programs for Littoral Combat Ships at Austal USA and at Marinette Marine Corporation.

On March 29, 2014, the *R/V NEIL ARMSTRONG (AGOR 27)* was christened at the Dakota Creek shipyard in Anacortes, Washington. AGOR is a classification for an Auxiliary Oceanographic Research Ship. The ship is named for the legendary astronaut and first man to walk on the moon, the late Neil Armstrong. His wife, Carol Armstrong, is the ship's sponsor. His granddaughter, Kali Armstrong, is the maid of honor, and beautifully sang the national anthem at the ceremony. The ship has been designated by the Office of Naval Research to be operated by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. RADM Matthew Klunder, the Chief of Naval Research commented that it was a great day for the American spirit of discovery and exploration and that the ship will make a real difference. Dr. Susan Avery, president of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, commented that courage and explorations will always be linked to the name of Neil Armstrong. The newest addition to the fleet, R/V Neil Armstrong will replace R/V Knorr (AGOR 15), which will be retired at the end of the year after nearly half a century of service. Carol Armstrong commented that “Now the R/V Neil Armstrong will provide a continuum of exploration for the next 50 years.” It was a great day of celebration for the city of Anacortes, for the shipyard, and for the Navy. Many dignitaries shared in making congratulatory remarks. Among them were: the head Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Honorable Charles F. Bolden; the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Vice Admiral Michael S. Devany; and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Allison Stiller.

On April 5, 2014, the *USS CORONADO (LCS 4)* was commissioned at the North Island Naval Air Station, Coronado, California. The ship sponsor is Susan Ring Keith. Her family has a long history of distinguished service to the Navy while Susan has an outstanding record of public service to the City of Coronado. Previously, Susan's mother christened the *USS CORONADO (LPD/AGF-11)* and Susan served as her maid of honor. At the pre commissioning reception, Susan presented a unique painting of

the City of Coronado to the ship and expressed how it symbolized the home port for the ship where she would always be welcomed home. The commissioning was actively embraced by the community and many retired Navy residents were involved. Among them were Admiral Bud Edney and Vice Admiral Ed Martin, who served as Co-chairmen, and Vice Admiral John Nyquist who served as the Chief of Staff. The Society of Sponsors, San Diego Chapter, became Honorary Plank Owners with a \$500 donation to the commissioning committee. The Coronado commissioning was celebrated with remarks from many local and US Navy officials. The mayor of Coronado, the Honorable Casey Tanaka, presented Keys to the City of Coronado, to the two commanding officers, one for the Blue crew and one for the Gold crew. RADM Brian Antonio, Program Executive Officer for Littoral Combat Ships, spoke of the Coronado as the Crown of the Fleet. Vice Admiral Mark Ferguson, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, spoke of the challenges faced by Coronado and said that “success and failure lie with you. He concluded, “Sail safe and Godspeed USS Coronado.” Susan Keith’s remarks were the highlight of the commissioning. She said, “I want the crew to know that they will carry the hearts and thanks of all the residents of Coronado. We are so proud of what you do for us and so proud that you carry our name. Now, I want you to man this ship and bring her to life.” Then a great sight as the crew marched aboard.

On April 12, 2014, the *USS ZUMWALT (DDG 1000)* was christened at the Bath Iron Works shipyard in Bath, Maine. The Zumwalt-class destroyer (DDG-1000) represents next-generation multi-mission destroyer technology for the US Navy and at 610 feet long and 15,000 tons, it's the largest destroyer built for the Navy. The ship is named for Admiral Elmo “Bud” Zumwalt, former Chief of Naval Operations from 1970-1974. His two daughters are the sponsors: Ann Zumwalt and Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers. Admiral Zumwalt’s four granddaughters were the matrons and maids of honor. The event was well attended by representatives of the Navy, the congressional delegation and state officials whose congratulatory remarks focused on the good work at Bath Iron Works, the Navy’s contributions, but mostly the character and accomplishments of Admiral Zumwalt himself. Many spoke of Admiral Zumwalt’s famous “z grams” noting special declarations from some of them. His very famous Z-gram # 66: (Equal Opportunity) dated 17 December 1970 was noted, as was Z-gram #116 (Equal rights and opportunities for women), dated 7 August 1972. Admiral Zumwalt’s leadership was praised by the Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, who lauded his focus on people first and making life better for sailors which ultimately had a profound effect on the Navy. Admiral Zumwalt’s three living children spoke poignantly sharing remembrances of their parents. Mouzetta praised her mother’s special fortitude as a Navy wife, having moved 40 times in 33 years and read from the special 50th anniversary letter her father wrote to her mother. Ann Zumwalt said that if her father were there he would see the legacies of his work in the Navy today allowing for great advances for women and minorities. Admiral Zumwalt’s son James Zumwalt praised his father’s character and could see many his characteristics in the prospective Commanding Officer, Captain James Kirk. After the three spoke, the two Zumwalt sisters and their brother boarded the ship and the two sponsors simultaneously gave triumphant strikes to the two christening bottles.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Pilling
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