

Society of Sponsors of the United States Navy
President's Report 2014 – 2015
Barbara Pilling

On August 9, 2014, the *R/V SALLY RIDE (AGOR 28)* was christened at a ceremony at the Dakota Creek Industries, Inc., shipyard in Anacortes, Washington. The (AGOR 28) is an auxiliary general oceanographic research vessel named for Dr. Sally Ride, physicist, teacher, author and astronaut, who died in July 2012. The ship's sponsor is Dr. Tam O'Shaughnessy, co-founder, Chair of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer of the Sally Ride Science Foundation. Matrons of Honor were Sally's sister, the Rev. Dr. Bear Ride and Ms. Kathleen Ritzman, Assistant Director, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego. R/V SALLY RIDE (AGOR 28) will be home ported there.

There were many significant leaders in oceanographic research who spoke of the spirit of Sally Ride the person embodied in SALLY RIDE the ship. Dr. Margaret Leinen, Director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, spoke of Sally Ride as a path maker, mentor and heroine for girls in science. She said that the ship would be a magnificent asset to the Pacific Ocean Theater of operation. Its mission of exploration and operation will help us answer critical research questions. Dr. O'Shaughnessy discussed the partnership between the Office of Naval Research and the Scripps Laboratory in the pursuit of knowledge and scientific oceanographic research. She presented a painting to R/V SALLY RIDE (AGOR 28) showing both the Spaceship Challenger and the HS Challenger in 1872-1876. Modern oceanography began with the Challenger Expedition between 1872 and 1876 which was the first expedition organized specifically to gather data on a wide range of ocean features. RADM Matthew Klunder, Chief of Naval Research, spoke of the innovative design of the ship with its ultra-quiet data collection capability and research capacity. He said he has high expectations that it will help solve environmental issues in pursuit of ocean harvesting energy. Allison Stiller, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, congratulated Dakota Creek Industries on another world class research vessel and said that the ship will mold its own future and reach its own stars. The Honorable Katherine Sullivan, Undersecretary of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA), a former astronaut who served with Sally Ride, shared personal and humorous stories about the time they spent in training to be astronauts. She praised Sally Ride for her penchant for action and rock solid composure under stress. Dr. Sullivan concluded that the R/V SALLY RIDE (AGOR 28), like tall ships of the past which needed "a star to steer her by", would have the spirit of Sally Ride to drive research, exploration and learning.

On September 6, 2014 the *USS JOHN WARNER (SSN 785)* was christened at a ceremony at Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Virginia. The ship is named for Senator John Warner - Navy and Marine veteran, Secretary of the Navy and five-term United States Senator. The ship sponsor is his wife Jeanne Warner. The submarine was built under a teaming agreement between Newport News Shipbuilding – Huntington Ingalls Industries and General Dynamics Electric Boat, and was built ahead of schedule and under budget. JOHN WARNER is the 12th boat in the Virginia class, but the first to be named for a person.

The ceremony was attended by many prominent Virginia and national political figures who praised the outstanding career and qualities of Senator John Warner. They praised him as a true statesman and a Virginia gentleman who emanated the virtues of civility and respect for others. President and CEO of Huntington Ingalls Industries, Mike Petters, said we are a better nation because of the service of John Warner. He was a tireless defender of national security and the personification of a statesman and that the submarine bearing his name will also be both. Admiral John Richardson, Director of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, spoke of the guiding star of John Warner who

knows service to something bigger than himself. Senator Mark Warner said that both the spirits of Jeanne and John Warner will be with the boat. Secretary Ray Mabus spoke of the partnerships among Congress, industry and the Navy needed to build ships. He announced, to standing applause, that JOHN WARNER (SSN 78) would be home ported in Norfolk, Virginia.

Senator John Warner reflected on his public service and said he was extremely grateful for his family and the many wonderful staff people who supported him. He reminisced about the 8:00 pm meetings with Admiral Rickover and how well Congress in his days there worked together. Senator Warner introduced his wife and praised her many fine qualities. In her honor he read the poem, Sea Fever by John Masefield. "I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky, And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by..." Jeanne Warner emotionally said that the ship, like her namesake, will do what is best for America. The christening ceremony took place at 6:30 pm. After Jeanne Warner christened JOHN WARNER (SSN 78), a spectacular fireworks display followed and concluded the evening.

On October 11, 2014 the *USS AMERICA (LHA 6)* was commissioned at a formal ceremony at the Port of San Francisco Piers 30-32 during San Francisco's Fleet Week. The ship sponsor is Lynne Pace, wife of retired Marine General Peter Pace, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The ship is the fourth ship to be named AMERICA and is the Navy's newest and most technologically advanced amphibious assault ship. LHA stands for Landing Helicopter Assault, and is the United States Navy's hull classification symbol for the general purpose helicopter-carrying amphibious assault ships of the Tarawa and the future America classes.

At a reception held in the Hangar Bay the night before the commissioning aboard AMERICA, Mrs. Pace was thanked for her contribution to designing the ship's crest, particular for the 50 dark blue stars as a tribute to the sacrifice of military families across the nation, and the top gold star in honor of those who sacrificed all in defense of America's freedom. Mrs. Pace noted that 1% of the people in America serve while another 1% stand behind them. She presented three gifts to the ship. Two large ship crest displays for the officer and enlisted quarters and a large framed American flag which had been carried across America to all 50 states by Larry Ross.

Many of the industrial partners also presented gifts to the ship and celebrated the wonderful partnerships and accomplishment in building USS AMERICA. The commissioning ceremony was a joyous event and took place under a beautiful sunny sky. Assistant Secretary of the Navy, The Honorable Sean Stackley gave inspiring remarks reminding us that we are all AMERICA. He said that the history of America is the history of freedom itself which is preserved and defended by sailors and marines who are heroes who come from all corners of the USA. He challenged the crew to proudly call yourself AMERICA and "Where you sail, America sails." The Secretary of the Navy, The Honorable Ray Mabus, acknowledged Mrs. Pace's deep contributions to our military families. He noted that that where USS AMERICA sailed might be the only face of America that the people of that region would ever see. He placed USS AMERICA in commission as Lynne Pace, acknowledged the families and said to the crew, "Take my heart and my love with you as you sail." Finally, "Man our ship and bring her to life" as the crew ran aboard to thunderous applause.

On October 18, 2014 the *USS DETROIT (LCS7)* was christened at the Marinette Marine Corporation shipyard in Marinette, Wisconsin. The ship sponsor is Barbara Levin, wife of Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services. Senator and Mrs. Levin's three daughters were matrons of honor: Kate Levin Markel, Laura Levin, and Erica Levin.

The ship is the sixth ship to be named for Detroit, Michigan, home town to both Barbara and Carl Levin. The USS DETROIT is a Freedom class littoral combat ship and construction is led by Lockheed Martin with 900 suppliers in 40 states. Celebratory activities were held both in Marinette,

Wisconsin and nearby Menominee, Michigan. At a reception the night before the christening, VADM Hilarides, Commander, Naval Sea Systems Command, honored Mrs. Levin and recognized the Society of Sponsors. He commented that it was founded in 1908 by then President, Teddy Roosevelt, a very strong president and that our Society was a very strong organization. Barbara Levin expressed her overwhelming thanks for being chosen a sponsor and for the many gifts and recognitions she received. One of the gifts she received was a small replica of the **Spirit of Detroit**, which is a city monument with a large bronze statue created by Marshall Fredericks and located at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center on Woodward Avenue in Detroit, Michigan. The following day a much larger version of the statue was presented to the USS DETROIT.

At the christening ceremony, VADM Hilarides again recognized the Society of Sponsors and said that Mrs. Levin was imbuing her spirit into USS DETROIT and as a sponsor she was “joining the Society of Sponsors today.” He spoke of the City of Detroit which had a long history of supporting the military. During World War II, they stopped building cars but turned instead to building arsenals of freedom. RADM Brian Antonio, Program Executive Officer, Littoral Combat Ships, spoke of the sheer complexity of ship building. He said that the challenges also presented opportunities. Senator Tammy Baldwin said that it was especially fitting that a daughter of Detroit, with the same gusto and spirit, would be the ship sponsor.

Senator Carl Levin, in a very touching testimonial to his wife, praised his ship mate of 53 years. The Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus praised the Levin family and commented on the character of Senator Levin whose moral compass was always true. Mrs. Levin spoke of her experience of meeting many workers who were involved in the process of construction and its transition as it went from a construction site to a Navy vessel. She said that her hopes and prayers would always be with the crew for their safe return. Mrs. Levin, accompanied by her three daughters went to the christening site next to the ship. After she successfully christened, USS DETROIT to much applause, an amazing sideways launch of the ship took place. It was an incredible sight to see the ship tipped almost 45 degrees, then right itself on the Menominee River.

On October 25, 2014 the **USS NORTH DAKOTA (SSN 784)** was commissioned under a beautiful sunny fall sky at the Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, Connecticut. Katie Fowler, wife of retired VADM Jeff Fowler, is the sponsor. Katie is also a Trustee of the Society of Sponsors and is chairman of the Scholarship Committee.

NORTH DAKOTA is the first of the Block III variant of the Virginia class submarines. It is very stealthy and can strike targets at sea or on land using a mix of torpedoes and missiles and is designed to carry teams of special-forces troops such as Navy Seals. NORTH DAKOTA is the second Navy vessel named for the state of North Dakota, the first one being in 1910. The motto of the submarine is: *Strength from the Soil, Reapers of the Deep*. Strength from the Soil is taken from the North Dakota Coat of Arms and Reapers of the Deep represents the submarine warriors and the state’s farm heritage of reapers cutting grain in the fields of North Dakota. There was a very large contingent of North Dakotans at the commissioning including many members of VADM Fowler’s family who are natives of the state.

Many notable political, Navy and industry leaders were present for the commissioning ceremony. They all praised Katie Fowler for her unwavering spirit and her grace and strength. The Governor of Connecticut, Dannel Malloy, thanked the industrial team and the Navy for delivering a submarine under budget and ahead of schedule. The Governor of North Dakota, Jack Dalrymple, noted that it was the 125th birthday of the State of North Dakota and that the Chief of the Boat, Master Chief Preabt, was born in Minot, North Dakota. Admiral Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations, reminded us that the weekend was the anniversary of the Battle of Leyte Gulf which took place seventy years prior in October 1944. He noted the incredible contributions of the submarines in

that battle and remarked on the outstanding attributes of USS NORTH DAKOTA (Flexibility, Versatility, and “Lethability”) from which we can expect 33 years of service until 2047. He praised Mrs. Fowler and said that as the sponsor she would be an integral part of the life of the ship. Finally Mrs. Fowler gave the order to “Man Our Ship and Bring Her to Life,” and the crew of NORTH DAKOTA proudly ran aboard to thunderous applause.

On November 8, 2014 the *USS MONTGOMERY (LCS 8)* was christened at the Austal USA Shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. The ship sponsor is Mary Blackshear Sessions, wife of Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama. Her maid of honor is her oldest grandchild, Jane Ritchie Reinhart, age 7, daughter of Commander and Mrs. Paul Reinhart of Keyport, Washington. Commander Reinhart was scheduled to take command of the USS ALABAMA (SSBN 7310) in December, 2014. The USS MONTGOMERY is named for the city of Montgomery, Alabama which was named for Richard Montgomery, a decorated brigadier general in the Continental Army. Mrs. Sessions was born in Montgomery, Alabama and noted in her remarks that she was descended on her mother’s side from the Montgomery family.

USS Montgomery is an Independence-class littoral combat ship, a 419-foot-long aluminum hulled trimaran that can travel in excess of 40 knots. The ships are designed to be fast, agile, and have a focused-mission platform designed for operation in near-shore environments yet capable of open-ocean operation.

The many distinguished speakers spoke of the merits of the program and the ship. Mr. Craig Perciavalle, President of Austal USA spoke of the impact the program had in Alabama and pointed out the unusual features of the ship with extreme “lethability.” Mr. Carlo Zaffanella, a Vice President with General Dynamics, recounted the legacy of ship building in Mobile especially during World War II when women were called in to be welders in extreme heat conditions with no air conditioning. Allison Stiller, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Ship Programs, reminded us that ship building was a team sport and listed the many types of individuals that contribute to completing a ship, from painters and fitters to acquisitions’ teams in government and industry. Senator Sessions commented that the Navy was asked to build a small ship at a lower cost and they did it with ships like the USS MONTGOMERY. He said that his wife Mary was a person who never called attention to herself and had a spirit of compassion and service to others.

The principal speaker was ADM Michelle Howard, Vice Chief of Naval Operations. She began her remarks by reading a poem by Langston Hughes, *Daybreak in Alabama*, which was written in 1940 before World War II. In the poem Hughes articulates a vision for a future in which racial lines do not separate people from each other. ADM Howard likened Langston Hughes words to the landscape of the new Navy where people of all colors work together toward justice, equality and hope. She said the ship’s crew would be ambassadors as they sailed to distant shores and represented a population of black, white, red and yellow hands from 15 states and 3 foreign countries.

Mary Sessions thanked the many who came for the ceremony including the 25 members of her family. She said that the good education and good training that the ship’s crew received will serve them well as they go forth. She then shattered a bottle of champagne over its bow and imbuing the vessel "with her spirit" and christened the ship officially USS MONTGOMERY.

On January 10, 2015 the *USNS TRENTON (JHSV 5)* was christened at the Austal USA Shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. The ship’s sponsor is Ms. Virginia A. Kamsky, founder of Kamsky Associates, Inc. an advisory firm focusing on investments into China and deployment of assets overseas. She is also serves as a member of the U.S. Secretary of the Navy Advisory Panel. Her Honor Attendant was her son, Michael Kamsky who is in 11th grade at the Dalton School in New York.

The ship is named for the city of Trenton, the capital of New Jersey and a city of great historical significance during the Revolutionary War. TRENTON is the fourth ship named for Trenton, New Jersey. At the reception the night before the christening, Ms. Kamsky presented TRENTON with renditions of two important paintings. First, the iconic 1851 painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware* by Emmanuel Leutze, which commemorates General George Washington's crossing of the Delaware River on the night of December 25, 1776. (An original hangs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.) Second, was *Washington Rallying the Americans at the Battle of Princeton*, the 1848 painting by William T. Ranney. (The original hangs at the Princeton University Art Museum.) In addition she presented the Captain of TRENTON, Susan Orsini, and the crew with several books of historical significance commemorating the Battle of Princeton, a turning point in the Revolutionary War.

The USNS TRENTON is a “Joint High Speed Vessel” which is a shallow draft, all aluminum commercial-based Catamaran capable of high speeds and the ability to transport personnel, equipment, and supplies over operational distances. The virtues of the ship were hailed by the many dignitaries who spoke at the christening, mainly its affordability and flexibility. Mr. Carlo Zaffabella, Vice President General Dynamics Mission Systems spoke of the high tech capability of the ship and projected what it would be like 30 years hence when the ship was expected to still be operational. RADM Thomas Shannon, Commander, Military Sealift Command, lauded the JHSV class of ships for sustaining demanding sets of sea trials and how they are currently meeting every challenge on three continents. VADM Philip Cullom, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Fleet Readiness and Logistics, spoke of the ship as a living object with a unique personality. Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, praised the sponsor for her enthusiasm, generosity of spirit, and amazing intelligence. He spoke of TRENTON (JHSV 5) as a new kind of ship meeting the challenges of the new Navy. He reflected on rebuilding the Navy with ships which are acquisition excellent with costs going down and coming in ahead of schedule. Ms. Kamsky thanked the Secretary and many others for the honor of being the sponsor. She ended her remarks by citing the ship’s motto: *Responsive – Resourceful - Ready*. She then moved to the christening stage and enthusiastically smashed the bottle to christen USS TRENTON (JHSV 5).

On February 7, 2015 the **USNS LEWIS B. PULLER (MLP 3 AFSB)** was christened at the NASSCO General Dynamics shipyard in San Diego, California. The ship is named for Lieutenant General Lewis “Chesty” Burwell Puller, the most decorated Marine and the only one to be awarded five Navy Crosses. The ship’s sponsor is his daughter, Martha Puller Downs, who was born into the Marine Corps and remained closely connected having married Michael Downs who retired as Commanding General of Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune. Mrs. Downs Matron of Honor was her good friend and fellow Marine Corps spouse, Janice C. Brinkley, who is married to Lieutenant Colonel Sam Brinkley (USMC ret.) At the reception the night before the christening, Mrs. Downs presented the ship with several gifts. Among them were a brass bust of Lewis B. Puller, a miniature framed US Postal PULLER stamp, a framed display of Lieutenant General Puller’s many distinguished metals given by the Marine Corps Foundation.

USNS LEWIS B. PULLER (MLP 3 AFSB) is the third Mobile Landing Platform (MLP) ship, the first two being MONTFORD POINT and JOHN GLENN. These ships are large auxiliary support vessels designed and operated to facilitate amphibious landing forces. PULLER is the first purpose-built Afloat Forward Staging Base (AFSB) ship designed to support special missions, counter-piracy as well as humanitarian and disaster relief missions.

There were many distinguished military, government and industrial leaders present at the christening. Kevin M. Graney, Vice President and General Manager of General Dynamics NASSCO described the ship as a force multiplier - a capability that, when added to and employed by a combat

force, significantly increases the combat potential of that force and thus enhances the probability of a successful mission. Allison Stiller, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for the Ship Programs, spoke of the name of the ship as an inspiration and legend that they will carry with them. She praised the completion of the ship in “ship building light years.” VADM Joseph P. Aucoin, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations Warfare Systems, lauded the many capabilities of the ship and referred to it as a “Swiss army knife.” He also told a famous Puller combat story when the enemy was eluding General Puller and his troops. Finally, when the enemy was very evident, General Puller said, “We are surrounded by the enemy, and that simplifies our problem.” The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Joseph F. Dunford Jr, was the principal speaker. He told the audience that this was an American ship that we could all be proud of. He said that Lewis B. Puller holds a special place for his physical and moral courage. His praised Puller’s passion, compassion, bravery and loyalty to esprit de corps – his love of his military legion. He said that ship, like Puller will be unique, and like him, will always find a way to complete the mission.

Martha Puller Downs the ship sponsor, expressed appreciation for the honor bestowed on her family and said that her father would have wanted to say thank you to the ship yard workers. She spoke of her father’s love for the Marines and their love for him. She read a poignant letter written by General Puller to his five year old son while on deployment. Mrs. Downs said that the ship will carry her father’s leadership, tenacity, and gentleness. She concluded with, “May the spirit of Chesty Puller always sail with you,” before she christened the ship.

On March 21, 2015 the *USS JOHN P. MURTHA (LPD 26)* was christened at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi. The ship is named for Representative John P. Murtha who represented Pennsylvania's 12th congressional district in the United States House of Representatives from 1974 until his death in 2010. Mr. Murtha served in Marine Corps, both active duty and reserves from 1952-1990, and received many decorations for his valor in Vietnam. He was a staunch supporter of military causes. As a key leader of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, he worked closely with the military to fund projects and advocate for the troops.

The ship’s sponsor is his daughter, Donna S. Murtha. Ms. Murtha is a retired educator who continues to serve her community as a tutor and volunteer. Her mother and widow of John Murtha, Mrs. Joyce Murtha, served as her matron of honor. Mrs. Joyce Murtha christened the USS BONHOMME RICHARD (LHD 6) in Pascagoula in 1997. She is a life member of the Society of Sponsors. At the reception the night before the christening, Ms. Murtha presented the ship with a shadow box filled with several items of family historical significance. There were pictures of John Murtha with his three brothers, with his parents, as a young Marine, and John Murtha receiving the John Kennedy Profile in Courage award. Ms. Murtha also presented a coin collection that she and her father shared. Coins he had given her on milestones in her life and a coin she had given him when she graduated from college. Ms. Murtha thanked the many people who made the christening possible and spoke of the great grandmother of John P. Murtha, Mary Watson Bell, who told John Murtha and his brother, “We are put on this earth to make a difference.” She talked about the ship representing more than her Dad, but the ideals and principles of the Murtha family. “Dad and her uncles put others first, and the ship embodies that.”

The JOHN P. MURTHA (LPD 26) is the tenth ship in the San Antonio Class. It is an amphibious transport dock whose mission is to transport US Marine Corps landing forces, while providing command and control, communications and medical services. The ship will also transport amphibious assault vehicles, landing craft air cushion vehicles and helicopters.

The many distinguished government, industrial and military representatives praised John P. Murtha the man and JOHN P. MURHTA, the ship. Major General Robert S. Walsh, USMC, Director of Expeditionary Warfare, said it was an impressive ship and an impressive man. John P. Murtha was a

Marine through and through and all Marines will be proud to serve on the ship. Allison Stiller, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy Ship Programs, congratulated Huntington Ingalls Industries for another top notch ship. She said that the name John P. Murtha, with his legacy of service, would be an inspiration. She said that the ship was truly blessed to have Donna Murtha as its sponsor. The principal speaker, The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic Leader, told many first hand stories having worked with Representative Murtha for years. She said he was a great soldier and a great public servant. He had vision, commitment, good judgement and always had a plan. He made it a point to visit the wounded in military hospitals and communicated with them by soliciting their input on what they saw as necessary requirements in body armor and other protective necessities for warfare. She concluded that the “P” in John P. Murtha should stand for Patriot, as John P. Murtha was a gold standard patriot of the first order. Donna Murtha was the final speaker who thanked everyone for making the day successful. She said her father had lived up to the family ideal, “We are put on this earth to make a difference.” Then Donna Murtha, with one successful swing of the bottle, christened JOHN P. MURTHA.

On May 2, 2015 the **USS JOHN FINN (DDG 113)** was christened at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi. The ship is named for Navy Lt. John Finn, who received the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions on December 7, 1941. On that day, Finn, who was stationed at the Naval Air Station Oahu, Hawaii as a Navy chief aviation ordnanceman, assembled a .50 caliber machine gun to a movable tripod used for gunnery training. For two hours he fired on Japanese planes despite being seriously wounded. Nine months later, aboard the USS Enterprise (CV 6) he was awarded the Medal of Honor from Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and became the first Medal of Honor recipient for service in World War II. He went on to live an exemplary life and died at the age of 100 in 2010.

The sponsor of the USS JOHN FINN (DDG 113) is Laura Stavridis, wife of Admiral James G. Stavridis (USN ret.) former commander U.S. European Command and NATO’S 16th supreme allied commander. Mrs. Stavridis is the author of “Navy Spouse’s Guide” a book about her experiences and advice on being a Navy spouse. The Stavridis’s two daughters served as matrons of honor: Ensign Julia Elizabeth Wallace and Christina Stavridis Wong.

USS JOHN FINN (DDG 113) is the 29th Arleigh Burke-class Aegis guided missile destroyer built at Ingalls. These destroyers are highly capable, multi-mission ships that can conduct a variety of operations and can simultaneously fight air, surface and subsurface threats.

At the Christening ceremony, Brian Cuccias, President, Ingalls Shipbuilding, acknowledged and thanked the many veterans who were present especially the veteran survivors of Pearl Harbor and the veterans who served with John Finn aboard the USS Hancock (CV/CVA-19) during World War II. He also acknowledged the thirty plus members of the Finn family who came from great distances to honor “Uncle John.” Mike Petters, President and CEO of Huntington Ingalls Industries spoke of John Finn the man who downplayed suggestions that he was a hero. Finn said, “There’s all kinds of heroes, but they never get a chance to be in a hero’s position.” Petters related Finn’s comment to the opportunity for heroism in ship building. “Ships built by heroes for heroes.” Representing the Secretary of the Navy’s Office was Principal Civilian Deputy, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, James Thomsen. He commented that, as we have learned from history, things can change in a split second and John Finn’s split second decision to stand and fight was a great act of heroism. Representing the CNO was Vice Admiral Joseph Aucoin, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Warfare Systems. VADM Aucoin commented how John Finn took the fight to the enemy and like that the USS JOHN FINN (DDG 113) will “stack the deck” in favor of America’s warfighters with the latest warfare weapons systems. The principal speaker was the MCPON, Michael Stevens, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy. He said that John Finn embodied

the best in leadership traits: Quiet, humble and a servant leader. His actions spoke louder than words, he thought of others first and he served the people he led.

Laura Stavridis thanked the Secretary of the Navy for bestowing upon her the honor to be sponsor. She also thanked those in attendance especially the members of the Finn family, the shipbuilders, and the Navy Team. She said that she and her husband were happy to be back in Pascagoula where they had previously lived over 30 years ago when Admiral Stavridis was the commissioning operations officer for the USS VALLEY FORGE. She said that, “John Finn was brave, resourceful, determined, and above all a patriot of the United States of America: his spirit and courage will always sail in the warship we will christen in his honor shortly... I know that the qualities John Finn demonstrated on that terrible day in Hawaii will be the touchstone by which the crew of USS JOHN FINN sails this ship into harm’s way. In war and peace, may the JOHN FINN always live up to her illustrious namesake.” Laura Stavridis then moved to the christening stage and, to much applause, cracked the bottle with one strike.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Pilling
May 7, 2015