

Winter 2025 SOS Z-Blast

Happy Holidays to all!

Allison has sent you this e-blast at my request as she has the database of all of your email addresses. I apologize for the delay in this communication. A lot has been going on and hence this message is as long as it is late. I am happy to report that a number of exciting things are happening with SOS, so I will get right to it....Ann Zumwalt, President SOS.

Luncheon-

Welcome to New Chair Nicole Foster MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION (T-ATS 10).

Michele Lyons -USS PHILLIPPINE SEA (CG -58) Maid of Honor, will continue as Co-Chair.

Annual Meeting

Our Society of Sponsors Annual Luncheon is confirmed for:

Thursday, May 7, 2026

Westwood Country Club

800 Maple Ave E, Vienna, VA 22180

The Annual Meeting is: 10:00-11:30 AM

Luncheon:12:30-2:00 PM

Speaker: I have invited Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Daryl Caudle, to be our speaker. I'm hopeful it will come to pass. Invitations will be mailed in the Spring.

Naval Academy Visit:

Many thanks to Terry Stackley for organizing our October 26 visit to the U.S. Naval Academy. Regrettably, the Chapel service and the Superintendent's brunch at the Farragut House were cancelled at the last minute because of the government shutdown.

In Remembrance

Travie Jane Ross, Co-Sponsor of the USS HERSHEL "WOODY" WILLIAMS (ESB-4) named after her father. Co-Sponsor Ms. Tracie Jean Ross, her sister, notified SOS of her death. Their father was the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient recognized for heroism at the Battle of Iwo Jima during World War II. He was present at both the christening and commissioning.

Dianne Fowler Reason, USS OSCAR AUSTIN (DDG 79), was a devoted President of the Society of Sponsors (2005–2007) and a mentor to many. The lifelong love of Admiral J. Paul Reason----she met him in elementary school, and they shared 60 years of marriage. An Army brat with deep West Point roots, she brought grace and strength to all she did. Admiral Reason became the first African American four-star admiral in the U.S. Navy, served as President Carter's Naval Aide, and later commanded the U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

Hope Puanani Zablan Kihune -USS ROBIN (MHC-54) (since decommissioned)

Hope's husband, VADM. Robert "Bob" Kihune (Ret.) USNA ('59) was the first Vice Admiral of Hawaiian descent. He served as commander, Naval Surface Force Pacific from 1988-1990. His handwritten note to the Society shares, "She was very honored to be part of this very prestigious group of women."

Honorable John William Middendorf II, age 101 ----62nd Secretary of the Navy 1973-1977 under President Ford. Daughters Dr. Amy Givler and Frances Middendorf, Co-Sponsors of the future USS J. WILLIAM MIDDENDORF (DDG-138) along with their 101-year-old father were able to attend a framed keel plate ceremony . It will be welded in place in the future. He led major naval modernization championing the Trident missile, Aegis, and the F/A-18 Hornet programs; served as U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands, and Representative to the EU. He was a Renaissance man who was also a prolific painter and classical music composer.

Honorable Paul Ignatius—age 104, 59th Secretary of the Navy 1967-1969-USS PAUL IGNATIUS (DDG 117) Known for his historically informed approach to leadership, believing that “understanding history and civilization helps one to appraise things that are happening now—and happening at an accelerated rate,” he guided the Navy through a period of rapid technological and operational change. His tenure emphasized modernization, strategic adaptation, and the importance of informed decision-making rooted in historical perspective. His wife, Nancy Ignatius, christened the ship. After her passing Dr. Elisa Ignatius became sponsor representative continuing the tradition at commissioning.

Ship events since our Annual Meeting

Christenings

USS JEREMIAH DENTON (DDG 129) Madeleine Denton Doak/Mary Denton Lewis

USS LOUIS H. WILSON, JR. (DDG 126) Janet Wilson Taylor/Honorable Susan Rabern

USS UTAH (SSN 801) Mary Kaye Huntsman/Sharon Lee

Commissioning

USS PIERRE (LCS 38) Larissa Thune Hargans

New Lifetime Members

Madeleine Denton Doak, USS JEREMIAH DENTON (DDG 129), **Mary Denton Lewis** USS JEREMIAH DENTON (DDG 129) **Janet Wilson Taylor**, USS LOUIS H. WILSON, JR. (DDG 126), **The Honorable Meredith Berger** USS FORT LAUDERDALE (LPD-28), **The Honorable Susan Rabern**, USS LOUIS H. WILSON, JR. (DDG 126), **Mary Kaye Huntsman**, USS UTAH (SSN 801).

SOS History Update: Paula Niera is working on the next volume of “Ships of the US Navy and their Sponsors. (Volume VI). This publication will cover ship events from 1991 to the end of 2025. A final draft will be completed by Q1 in 2026. Once a publisher is identified, it is planned to be available for purchase sometime in 2026.

Society Mailings, Website and Social Media.

I hope you all reviewed the summer mailing that was sent. I mentioned in that letter that I hope to work on enhancing the connection between the Sponsors and their ships. To that end, I will highlight a program I am working on with SECNAV office to increase public awareness of the Navy Sponsors and to increase bidirectional communication between the COs and Sponsors. In addition, you should have received a mailing in the past month requesting donations. We rely upon these donations to support all of our activities and scholarship as dues alone will not cover it. Allsion Stiller is chairing a task force I requested to review the website and online presence of SOS. We are considering moving to a new platform which would allow us to communicate more effectively, manage our membership database and provide real time updates and news to our website. We hope to have a proposal by the May 2026 annual meeting.

Martha Hill and Beth Asher have been updating our website which I ask all of you to visit:
<https://societyofsponsorsofusn.org>.

Beth Asher has also done a fantastic job in creating and maintaining a Facebook page and Instagram account. The QR links below will bring you to each of these which are both packed with wonderful photos:



SECNAV Corridor Project:

I have been working with Dr. Angel Callahan, Navy Secretariat Historian on a program to highlight the role of Ship Sponsors in the life of a US Navy ship. Dr. Callahan had proposed a display along the Secretary of the Navy's Corridor in the Pentagon to represent and demystify the Sponsor-Ship relationship beyond a ship's Christening and Commissioning. Personal artifacts such as letters, personal objects, photos of Sponsor engagement not related to the formal events (holiday parties, cruise photos, change of command, ship visits and get togethers etc.) **Please consider contributing to this project.** Physical objects in particular provide a rich picture for these types of displays. (infant gifts, crew gifts, children's books etc.).

The following is from Dr. Callahan:

*"Greetings from the Secretary of the Navy's Historian. Over the last few months of working with your organization, I have taken a keen interest in **informing naval leadership of your much-valued influence on the morale of Navy ships.** I would love to include documents, photos, and/or artifacts in our SECNAV history displays to tell this story. We have a couple formal ceremonial objects available from Naval History and Heritage Command, but what I would love to include are a few more personal mementos, photographs, cards, or gifts to or from ships. These, and the stories behind them, would help breathe life into your work.*

If you live in the DC area, I would be honored to pick up artifacts you are willing to loan. I would also be honored to host you and loved ones on a VIP history tour of the building, if you wish to deliver objects yourself or if you simply want to come view the exhibit spaces before committing.

Please feel welcome to reach out with any questions or ideas. We regularly borrow art and artifacts from local museums and I am more than happy to respect your wishes on how long objects are on display, where they will be displayed, and how best to get them home to you safely. I am currently working on a 3-year plan for rotating artifacts, so we have a lot of time to discuss.

With much gratitude,

Angelina Callahan

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