**PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

**The Society of Sponsors of the U.S. Navy**

**Annual Meeting May 2017**

**PORTLAND *(LPD 27) May 21, 2016***

On this third Saturday of May hundreds of people joined with the ship’s sponsor, Bonnie Amos, to celebrate the christening of PORTLAND (LPD 27) at the Huntington-Ingalls Shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi. It was an especially auspicious day for this naval tradition as May 21st, 2016 was also Armed Forces Day, a day set aside to honor and thank military members for their service in support of our country. As the wife of a former Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James F. Amos, Mrs. Amos has herself served the men and women of the United States Marine Corps long, proudly and well.

PORTLAND is the eleventh ship in the *San Antonio*-class amphibious transport dock series and is named for both Portland, Oregon and Portland, Maine. She is the third Navy ship to carry the name - the first being USS PORTLAND (CA 33) launched in 1933 and seeing action in many World War II battles, while the second is USS PORTLAND (LSD 37) commissioned in 1970 and completing many deployments as an Atlantic fleet “Gator Freighter”. Former USS PORTLAND (CA 33) was proudly represented by crewmember BM1 Ted Waller, who quite wonderfully, was also celebrating his 93rd birthday. Mr. Waller was present on PORTLAND’s deck when ADM George Murray accepted the surrender of the Japanese base at Truk Lagoon on Sept. 2, 1945. Mr. Rocky Cash, Mr. Ron Scintilla and Commander Scott Noe, USN (Ret), crewmembers of former USS PORTLAND (LSD 37) were also among those present and recognized on this newest PORTLAND’s naming day.

When it came time for Mrs. Amos to christen her ship, Mr. Waller stood with her as she prepared to break the bottle. With a mighty and determined swing, Bonnie crushed the bottle over the ‘bow’, showering PORTLAND with sparkling bubbles and foam. It should be noted that this was the third swing, the first two swings being necessary to clear away the decorative, commemorative plating which had been placed on the ‘bow’ after the sponsor’s practice swing the day before. Shipyard president, Brian Cuccias, later apologized, saying the ‘error had been the pitcher’s; not the batter’s’. PORTLAND’s motto is ‘First Responders Brave and Determined’ and it’s clear that her sponsor’s determination flowed over the ship that day.

Among the speakers were Principal Speaker, Major General Christopher S. Owens, USMC -Director, Expeditionary Warfare, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations; The Honorable Steven Palazzo - United States Representative, Mississippi’s 4th District; Vice Admiral Dixon R. Smith, USN - Commander, Navy Installations Command; and Ms. Allison Stiller, Principal Civilian Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition.

Other special guests were The Honorable Donald C. Winter - 74th Secretary of the Navy; General James F. Amos, USMC (Ret.) - 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps; Private First Class Logan McDonald, USMC; The Honorable Gordon Gollott - Mayor of the City of Gautier, Mississippi and The Honorable David Tadlock - Councilmember, City of Pascagoula, Mississippi.

Throughout the festivities of the christening weekend, Bonnie was ably supported by her Matrons; good friend Mrs. Linda Valerga, daughter Mrs. Jaymie Nielsen and daughter-in-law Mrs. Molly Amos. Everyone present to hear her remarks delivered at the Sponsor’s Dinner the night before and then, in full, at the Saturday christening understood that Bonnie will enthusiastically and steadfastly stand with and behind all those who sail on her ship. USS PORTLAND (LPD 27) could have no better sponsor and champion.

***USS MICHAEL MONSOOR (DDG 1001) – June 18, 2016***

On a bright, sunny morning on the banks of the Kennebec River in Bath, Maine, former Navy SEAL teammates , shipyard workers from Bath Iron Works, Congressional Senators and Representatives, Department of the Navy officials - both past and present, uniformed Navy military leaders, and grateful citizens all gathered to watch Sally Monsoor, ship’s sponsor, break a bottle of champagne over the ship’s bow and speak the words that would name the ship for her son, Petty Officer 2nd Class, Michael Monsoor. On September 29, 2006, in Ar Ramadi, Iraq, Master at Arms Second Class, Sea Air and Land, Michael A. Monsoor gave his life to save his SEAL teammates and eight Iraqi Army (IA) soldiers, shielding them from a grenade’s blast by deliberately covering it with his own body. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest honor our country can give, on April 8, 2008.

With grace, strength and humor, Mrs. Monsoor shared memories and stories of her son during her remarks, bringing Mike to life as a boy and then as a man who was very loyal, silent and determined, but who was also a character who loved fun and surprising people. There was wonder in her voice as she said “Mike…You couldn’t stop him!” Through her words, Michael Monsoor was brought from an abstract hero (he had earlier also been awarded both the Silver and Bronze Stars) viewed with awe from a certain distance, to a man all could easily recognize as a son, a brother or a friend.

Sally Monsoor is the wife of former Marine George Monsoor, who joined her for the weekend’s activities along with sons James and Joseph. Mrs. Monsoor was also well supported by her Matrons of Honor; daughter Sara Monsoor and daughters-in-law Naomi Dawn Monsoor and Martha Alexander Monsoor. The extended Monsoor family and many friends gathered in Bath, far away from their homes, to honor Michael and share in the christening of USS MICHAEL MONSOOR.

There were many speakers on this special morning and all had words that touched those present. U.S. Senator Susan Collins (Maine) told of Michael’s camouflage field cap, which was kept by his SEAL teammates in a place of honor for nine years and which now will be held by the officers and crew of the ship which bears his name. She described how he had inscribed these words inside his cap, ‘You Never Quit’ and how these words had inspired students at Bath Middle School, who have made those words a guiding force in their young lives. Their teacher, Julia Kearns reported that you can hear it in the hallways as they encourage one another to ‘never quit’.

Vice Admiral Joseph Maquire, USN (Ret), who served as a Navy SEAL for thirty-six years, gave the stirring Principal Speech, beginning by explaining that United States Navy destroyers only carry the names of the most distinguished members of the Naval Service. He continued, saying that those who knew Michael Monsoor were not surprised by what he did, but that nothing in SEAL training would have led Michael to do what he did. His parents - his father, a former Marine and his mother, a social worker- were, instead, his examples of love, selfless service and sacrifice. He added in closing, “What Mike did was truly an act of bravery above and beyond the call of duty, but it was every bit as much an act of love. Like all who wear the cloth of the nation, Navy men and women answer to a higher moral calling on the path that, at times of war, requires us to take and to give life. It’s this dedication to ideals greater than self that gives us strength.”

Other speakers on this day were: The Honorable Angus King, U.S. Senator (Maine); The Honorable Chellie Pingree, U.S. Representative (Maine), 1st District; The Honorable Bruce Poliquin, U.S. Representative, (Maine) 2nd District; The Honorable Janine Davidson, Under Secretary of the Navy; and Vice Admiral Sean Pybus, USN Deputy Commander, Special Operations Command.

Mrs. Monsoor is active in the American Gold Star Mothers organization and a number of them along with parents from the Gold Star Families were present and are listed here: Ms. Penny Bento – Mother of Anthony Kamalu Bento, USA; Mr. and Mrs. Gary Brattain – Parents of Private First Class Joel Brattain, USA; Ms. Cynthia Kruger – Mother of Sergeant Michael C. Hardagree, USA and President of American Gold Star Mothers; Ms. Debbie Lee – Mother of Petty Officer Second Class Marc A. Lee, USN; Ms. Maureen Murphy – Mother of Medal of Honor Recipient, Lieutenant Michael Murphy USN and Sponsor of USS MICHAEL MURPHY (DDG 12); and Colonel and Mrs. Charles Soltes – Parents of Major Charles R. Soltes, Jr. USAR.

Other special guests in attendance were: The Honorable Donald C. Winter, 74th Secretary of the Navy; The Honorable Jennifer L. DeChant – State Representative, Maine’s 51st District; The Honorable Mary Mayhew – State Commissioner Health and Human Services; RADM Garry J. Bonelli, USN (Ret.); RADM Samuel J. Cox, USN (Ret.); RADM John F. “Dugan” Shipway, USN (Ret.); Ms. Anne Zumwalt, Sponsor of USS ZUMWALT (DDG 1000) and Ms. Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers, Sponsor of USS ZUMWALT (DDG 1000).

On that bright Saturday morning in June, a mighty warship received her name and prepared to enter the river waters, marking a giant step on her path to join the Fleet. The ship, her crew and their motto - **‘YOU NEVER QUIT’**.

***USNS YUMA (T-EPF 8)***

USNA YUMA is an Expeditionary Fast Transport vessel assigned to the Military Sealift Command. EPFs support a variety of missions including overseas contingency operations, conducting humanitarian assistance, supporting special operations forces, and supporting emerging joint sea-basing concepts. She is capable of transporting 600 short tons 1,200 nautical miles at an average speed of 35 knots. With a flight deck capable of supporting day and night launch and recovery operations and with the ability to seat 312 embarked forces or berth 104, she is a complete package.

YUMA was christened by her sponsor, The Honorable Janet Napolitano, on August 20, 2016 at the AUSTAL USA shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. Ms. Napolitano is currently the 20th president of The University of California. She is a distinguished public servant having previously served as the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Governor of the state of Arizona, the Attorney General of that state, and as the U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona. With her long and strong connections to Arizona, and therefore also to Yuma, she is a natural choice to sponsor USNS YUMA (T-EPF 8).

The weekend of August 20th was a wet one for the Mobile area, indeed travel from the West Coast was affected and Ms. Napolitano was unable to join the dinner held on Friday night in her honor. The next morning the weather cleared and the sun shone brightly at the shipyard. Secretary Napolitano had made it in late the night before and was so comfortable in her role at the pre-christening breakfast and platform briefing, that no one there could have been aware of the problems just a short time before. There were many jokes and comments on the fact that Yuma is considered the most arid city in the nation, while Mobile is recognized as the rainiest. Since a sponsor’s spirit is said to extend to her ship, YUMA is fortunate to have this gift of adaptability, professionalism, capability and good humor. With the mix of missions that the EPF-class is expected to take on, all of these qualities will be needed.

The christening ceremony itself was held underneath the hull of the vessel, with the audience seated in rows from the bow of the ship to her stern. It made a stunning picture with the bare aluminum of the catamaran’s hull seeming to be the shimmering ceiling of a large hall. When it came time to perform the christening, Janet Napolitano climbed the stairs to the platform next to one of YUMA’s outriggers and took her position. With no hesitation, she raised the ribbon bedecked bottle and with one mighty swing broke the bottle over the bow, bathing herself and all nearby in a blanket of foamy spray. YUMA took on her rightful name - USNS YUMA - at that moment and took a giant step on her way to join the fleet.

Those giving remarks at the ceremony were; RADM Thomas K. Shannon, USN, Commander Military Sealift Command; Ms. Gloria Valdez, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Ship Programs; and The Honorable Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor of Yuma, Arizona. The Principal Address was given by RADM Craig Faller, USN, Chief of Legislative Affairs.

***USS MONTGOMERY (LCS 8)***

The United States Navy commissioned USS MONTGOMERY (LCS 8) on Saturday, September 10, 2017 at the Alabama State Docks, Pier Two in Mobile, Alabama. Mrs. Mary Sessions, spouse of The Honorable Jeff Sessions, United States Senator, Alabama. Mary Blackshear Sessions was born in Montgomery, Alabama and has maintained her Alabama roots for over forty-one years. Her Maid of Honor is her granddaughter, Jane Ritchie Reinhardt. Mrs. Sessions christened USS ALABAMA on November 8, 2014 at the AUSTAL Shipyard in Mobile.

The night before the commissioning those gathered to celebrate were treated to a fantastic show of fireworks over the water’s edge and the mood was set for the following day. The weather was perfect for the ceremony and the family, friends and well-wishers enjoyed a perfect view of the fine warship in front of them. Littoral Combat Ship 8 was clearly ready to join the fleet.

The Honorable Sandy Stimpson, Mayor of Mobile, Alabama, gave the official Welcome. Other platform speakers included; The Honorable Todd Strange, Mayor of Montgomery, Alabama; Mr. Craig Perciavalle, President, AUSTAL USA; RADM John Neagley, USN, Program Executive Officer, Ships; Ms. Gloria Valdez, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Ships; The Honorable Jeff Sessions, U.S. Senator, Alabama; and ADM William Moran, USN, Vice Chief of Naval Operations. The Principal Address was given by The Honorable Bradley Byrne, United States Representative, Congressional First District, Alabama.

After Admiral Moran placed the ship in commission, Commander Daniel Straub, USN, took command and the first watch was set. Mary Blackshear Sessions then gave the order to ‘man the ship and bring her to life’ and MONTGOMERY’s ship’s complement ran aboard smartly. Soon the rails were manned by sailors, steamy ‘smoke’ rose from the ship into the sky and anything that could be set to move operationally was set in motion. It was quite clear that USS MONTGOMERY (LCS 8) was ready for action as she took her place in the fleet.

***USS WICHITA (LCS 13)***

On September 17, 2016 in Marinette, Wisconsin, just across the river from Menominee, Michigan, a large crowd of onlookers gathered to watch the christening of WICHITA (LCS 13). Her sponsor, novelist and writer, Kate Lehrer had been there for each of the milestones along the way as the shipbuilders of Marinette Marine gradually turned plans and bare metal into the magnificent littoral combat ship standing before her. Kate Staples Lehrer grew up in Texas and has written an award-winning novel, Out of Eden, drawing on her knowledge of the West. Her husband, Jim Lehrer, is a well-known journalist and the former anchor of “The MacNeil-LehrerReport” on PBS. More important to this occasion though, is the fact that he was born and raised in Wichita, Kansas and still retains his affection for that city. Wichita is about as far from the ocean as you can get in the continental United States and ships built in this shipyard have to travel down the St. Lawrence Seaway to reach open water, but for those assembled on this day, the oceans of the world and the ships and sailors of the U.S. Navy were as near to mind as the looming ship in front of them.

When a Littoral Combat Ship is launched at Marinette, the ship is perched on ways next to the Menominee River. Small explosive charges placed in the ways are set off as the ship is christened, causing the ship to tip over and launch broadside into the water. In order to christen the ship with sparkling wine, the sponsor has to climb up to a high platform in front of the ship, so Mrs. Lehrer was looking far down on those watching and directly at the bow of the ship, which seemed to be bearing down on her. Hoisting the red, white and blue ribbon-bedecked bottle, Kate lined up the bottle with the bottle-break strike plate and with one strong, determined swing, christened her ship in a flurry of foam and bubbles. Standing before her sponsor now was United States Ship WICHITA, but only briefly, as the band played, the crowd cheered, and LCS 13 rolled far to her right and slid quickly into the river. Bouncing back and forth, and displacing huge sprays of water, she quickly righted herself and settled into her more natural home waters. When this warship, named for a city far away, is ready to join the U.S. Navy’s fleet, she will have the unwavering support of her sponsor, Kate Staples Lehrer, her sponsor’s entire family and the steadfast citizens of Wichita, Kansas.

Supporting their mother as Matrons of Honor were Jamie Lehrer, Lucy Lehrer, and Amanda Lehrer Nash. Granddaughters Kate Olivia Lehrer O’Brien and Olivia Nash performed, just as ably, the duties of Maids of Honor for their grandmother.

Among those who presented remarks at the ceremony were; Vice Admiral Joseph Mulloy, USN, Deputy Chief of Operations for Integration of Capabilities and Resources; The Honorable Jeff Longwell, Mayor of Wichita, Kansas; and The Honorable Sean Stackley, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition. The sponsor’s husband, Mr. Jim Lehrer added special, personal remarks of his own. The Principal Address was given by The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, U.S. Senator, Wisconsin.

***USS ZUMWALT (DDG 1000)***

USS ZUMWALT was commissioned at Baltimore, Maryland on October 15, 2016, by the United States Navy. She is the lead ship in the ZUMWALT-Class of destroyers, is a marvel of advanced technology and is recognized for the stealth design that makes her more ‘invisible’ than any other surface ship. She carries the name of Admiral Elmo (Bud) Russell Zumwalt, Jr., the 19th Chief of Naval Operations, and her two sponsors are her namesake’s daughters, Ann Zumwalt and Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers. USS ZUMWALT was built by Bath Iron Works in their shipyard at Bath, Maine and was christened there by her sponsors on April 11, 2014.

The commissioning itself took place late in the afternoon on a beautiful sunny day. Before the ceremony, the Navy’s top aviators, the Blue Angels, flew their jets in close formation and performed amazing maneuvers in the air above the ship. The crowd that assembled to watch the commissioning was very large, with friends, family and appreciative naval and governmental colleagues of ADM Zumwalt well represented. As the setting sun drew towards the horizon, a luminous full moon became visible above the water’s surface behind ZUMWALT’s prow, while nearby, another destroyer - USS JASON DUNHAM (DDG 109), named for Marine Corporal and Medal of Honor recipient, Jason Dunham- seemed to stand guard over this newest arrival to the Navy’s fleet. It was a stunning and entirely appropriate setting for the commissioning of this very unusual and special ship.

The platform speakers included; Congressman Charles (Dutch) Ruppersberger, III, representing Maryland’s 2nd Congressional District; Maryland Lieutenant Governor, Boyd Ruthersford; Vice Admiral Thomas Rowden, USN, Commander, Naval Surface Forces; and Admiral John M. Richardson, USN, Chief of Naval Operations. The Principal Speaker was The Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy. The speeches were all genuine and to the point, evoking a sense of the man, ‘Bud’ Zumwalt, detailing the legacy he left for the U.S. Navy, and stressing the value this ship, USS ZUMWALT, brings to the defense of our nation. When Ann Zumwalt and Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers jointly gave the command to ‘man our ship and bring her to life’, the sailors and officers sprinted onto their magnificent ship, bringing this truly inspiring, ‘Navy day’ to a close.

***USS DETROIT (LCS 7)***

USS DETROIT was commissioned by the United States Navy on October 22, 2016 in her namesake city of Detroit, Michigan. Her sponsor is Barbara Levin, the wife of The Honorable Carl Levin, former U.S. Senator, state of Michigan. Mrs. Levin’s Matrons of Honor are her daughters Kate Levin Markel, Erica Levin, and Laura Levin. Barbara Levin is a native of Detroit and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics from the University of Michigan, a Master’s degree in Mathematics from Columbia University and a law degree from Wayne State University in Detroit. For her gift to USS DETROIT and her crew, Barbara Levin compiled and presented a bit of the city’s and area’s history, going back to the early 1700’s when it was a French fur trading outpost.

USS DETROIT sailed on the Detroit River to her namesake city and docked on the Riverwalk near the GM Rennaissance Center, where many of the commissioning week events were held. Up to 4,000 people were expected to view the ceremony and the ship was open for tours before and after the event. The lines were long, but the Detroiters waiting to see ‘their’ ship did not seem to mind.

The pre-commissioning breakfast and platform briefing were held on a riverboat, the DETROIT PRINCESS, which was docked only a short distance from the warship, USS DETROIT. One would never be mistaken for the other. It was a beautiful fall day and everyone present thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to welcome this newest ship to the U.S. Navy.

The platform speakers that day included; The Honorable Mike Duggan, Mayor the city of Detroit; RADM John Neagley, USN, Program Executive Officer, Littoral Combat Ships; The Honorable Gary Peters, U.S. Senator, Michigan; The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, U.S. Senator, Michigan; and Ms. Gloria Valdez, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Ships. The Principal Speaker was Admiral Philip Davidson, USN, Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

After USS DETROIT was placed in commission, Commander Michael Desmond had assumed command, and the first watch was set, Mrs. Barbara Levin stepped to the microphone and commanded the crew to ‘man the ship and bring her to life’. DETROIT’s sailors and officers ran up the gangway onto the ship to the Navy Band’s joyous rendition of ‘Anchors Aweigh’. It was a prefect ‘Navy Day’!

***USS COLORADO (SSN 788)***

It was a frigid Saturday in December at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut, but the crowd assembled to watch COLORADO’s christening didn’t seem to mind the weather and spirits were high. Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, was there to watch as his daughter, Annie, prepared to break the bottle of sparkling wine on the strike-plate welded to the submarine’s hull. The wine itself contributed more than a touch of the sub’s namesake to the festivities since it came from the Balistreri Vineyards in Denver and had been chilled in a bucket of water from the Colorado River. The ceremony took place inside the main assembly hall, so almost the entire vessel was visible. The audience’s white plastic seats, stretching from one end of the boat to the other, created a sea of white that served to emphasize the enormity of this Virginia-class submarine. Realizing that a December christening in Connecticut might be rather chilly, neck mufflers had been thoughtfully provided by the commissioning committee and had the image of Colorado’s state flag and ‘SSN-788’ woven into the fabric. The scene was set, now all that was left to be done was for Ms. Mabus to say the words, “I christen thee USS Colorado” and perform the time-honored act of christening the boat with the bottle of sparkling wine. With two strong whacks, Annie did just that and COLORADO became United States Ship COLORADO (SSN 788). Another mighty warship took a giant step on the path to join the U.S. Navy’s fleet.

This USS COLORADO is the fourth ship to carry that name, coming after a frigate that served during the Civil War, an armored cruiser launched in 1903 and the lead ship of the Colorado Class of battleships, launched in 1921. USS COLORADO (BB-45) saw heavy and hard service in WWII, participating in many of the fiercest fights and receiving seven battle stars. Seven veterans who served on that ship during the war were present and gave the crew pens made out of teak from the battleship’s deck. The moment was poignant, as the older crew seemed to pass some of their spirit and valor to the newest COLORADO and her crew.

The platform speakers were drawn from the states of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Colorado and included the following: from Connecticut - U.S. Representative Joe Courtney, U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, and Governor Dannel P. Malloy; from Rhode Island – U.S. Representative David Cicilline, U.S. Representative Jim Langevin, U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, and U.S. Senator Jack Reed; from Colorado – U.S. Representative Mike Coffman, U.S. Representative Ed Perlmutter, and U.S. Senator Michael Bennett. The principal address was given by Secretary Mabus. All in all, December 3, 2016 was wonderful day, filled with emotion, pride and patriotism for all those witnessing USS COLORADO’s christening.

***USS TULSA (LCS 16)***

The christening ceremony for TULSA (LCS 16) was held on Saturday, February 11, 2017 at AUSTAL USA shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. Her sponsor is Kathryn (Kathy) Taylor, former Mayor of Tulsa who presently serves the current Mayor as Chief of Economic Development. Ms. Taylor has given a lifetime of service to the people of Tulsa and continues to be a tireless advocate for them. Her late father, Chief Signalman James Taylor, served aboard USS BOLLINGER and deployed to the Asian-Pacific Theater during the Battle of Iwo Jima, while her late father-in-law William Lobeck, Sr., also served the country in WWII as an instructor at the U.S. Naval Base in Norfolk. Ms. Taylor remarked several times during the weekend that these men and their wartime experiences helped to shape her efforts to support our military and veteran families. She also remarked that being the sponsor of TULSA allows her, in her own way, to recognize the service of these two men. Ms. Taylor’s daughter, Elizabeth Frame Ellison, ably supported her mother as Maid of Honor during the weekend’s events.

Platform remarks were given by Mr. Craig Perciavalle, President Austal USA; Mr. Carlo Zaffanella, Vice president and General Manager, Maritime and Strategic Systems, General Dynamics Mission Systems; RADM John P. Neagley, USN, Program Executive Officer Littoral Combat Ships; Ms. Gloria Valdez, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Ship Programs; and The Honorable G.T. Bynam Mayor of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Principal Speaker was Admiral William Moran, USN, Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

During the christening of an LCS-class ship at Austal, the audience sits underneath the trimaran’s hull with the christening platform positioned high above the audience and next to the main hull. Ms. Taylor climbed the stairs and took up her position and with an air of determination carefully sighted the red, white and blue bottle on the strike plate. One mighty swing of the bottle led to a burst of foam, as the Navy band played *Anchors Aweigh* and confetti strips in patriotic colors came streaming down from above. USS TULSA proudly took on her official name as she became a U.S. warship that day.

***USS PAUL IGNATIUS (DDG 117)***

Paul Robert Ignatius has lived a life of service to his country, beginning with his naval service aboard USS MANILA BAY (CVE 61) during World War II, continuing through his work in support of procurement and logistics for the Department of Defense, and following that by his appointments to Assistant Secretary of the Army, Assistant Secretary of Defense and finally to Secretary of the Navy. PAUL IGNATIUS (DDG 117) will continue her namesake’s service to country well into the future and those assembled at Ingalls Shipbuildiing in Pascagoula, Mississippi on April 8, 2017 were there to celebrate the christening of this, the U.S. Navy’s newest *Arleigh Burke-class Aegis* guided missile destroyer. The sponsor of this fine warship is Nancy Ignatius, the spouse - and partner in this life of service - of Secretary Ignatius. Nancy Ignatius has been an advocate for environmental causes and, as a subject matter expert, worked with the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. Mrs. Ignatius is an experienced sponsor, having christened USS SEAHORSE (SSN 669) in 1968. The Ignatius’ were joined by as many of their four children and numerous grandchildren as were able to make it through the weekend’s weather/travel delays. Dr. Elisa Ignatius was there and admirably supported her grandmother as Maid of Honor.

Despite the weather leading up to it, the morning of the christening dawned bright and beautiful and the sun seemed to spotlight DDG 117 as she waited, festooned with signal pennants and red, white and blue bunting. The platform speakers included The Honorable Philip A. Gunn, Speaker of the House of Representatives, State of Mississippi and Ms. Gloria Valdez, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Ships. The Principal Speaker was Admiral John M. Richardson, USN Chief of Naval Operations, who described the qualities exemplified by Secretary Ignatius’ service as navigation points that we would all do well to follow. Secretary Ignatius himself took this opportunity to add his personal remarks to the crew, noting that it’s not very often that a ship’s namesake gets to speak at the christening and added that he and Nancy will be celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary in December, 2017. It was a pleasure for all present to witness the love, affection and good humor demonstrated by this extraordinary couple.

Then it was time for the main event and Mrs. Ignatius did not disappoint. It had been mentioned earlier that she is a competitor on the tennis court and she used that athletic experience to swing the bottle hard against her ship, showering all around her with the bubbly proof that PAUL IGNATIUS (DDG 117) had gained the right to be called USS PAUL IGNATIUS. There is no doubt at all that this warship will sail the world with the spirits of both her namesake and her sponsor guiding her in service to the Navy and the country.

***USS INDIANA (SSN 789)***

April 29th dawned warm and muggy and those assembled at the Newport News Shipyard were warned to ‘hydrate’ well as the sun and the temperature were sure to climb. The prospective USS INDIANA (SSN 789) loomed above and to the side of the crowd and platform guests, while a high staircase wound up to her red, white and blue, draped bow where the bottle-break would take place. According to the shipyard’s lead executive, their three previous christenings had all required more than one attempt to shatter the thick glass encasing the sparkling wine and he was hoping that INDIANA’s sponsor would break the string. Diane Donald, wife of Admiral Kirk Donald, USN (Ret.) – former Director, Naval Nuclear Propulsion – was cool as the proverbial cucumber as she lined up the bottle with the special plate welded to the submarine’s bow. With one perfect swing, Mrs. Donald smashed the bottle and foamy bubbly erupted all over those standing beside her. INDIANA was now well and truly christened and the submarine had become **U**nited **S**tates **S**hip INDIANA. Among those gathered with Diane was the Vice President of the United States, Mike Pence, a former Governor of Indiana as well as a six-term Congressman from that state. Vice President Pence was only one of many watching who hail from the Hoosier State and it was clear from their enthusiasm that the state’s lack of ocean frontage will not be a factor in the amount of support INDIANA will have from her namesake state going forward.

Vice President Pence delivered the principal address with remarks leading up to that portion of the program given by The Honorable Sean Stackley, Acting Secretary of the Navy; The Honorable Joe Donnelly, U.S. Senator, Indiana; Vice Admiral Joseph Tofalo, Commander, Submarine Forces; and The Honorable Bobby Scott, U.S. House of Representatives, Third District, Virginia.

Special guests in the audience were crewmembers (including some plank-owners!) of the battleship USS INDIANA (BB-58). This INDIANA was also built at Newport News, served in World War II and earned nine battle stars. April 29, 2017 was really a special day for these veterans as they passed the INDIANA torch to her new generation of sailors.