



**USS Colorado (SSN 788)
Commissioning Committee
Newsletter # 14
Special Christening Edition
December 2016**



USS Colorado Christened

On December 3rd, USS Colorado was Christened by Ship's Sponsor, Annie Mabus, in ceremonies at General Dynamics Electric Boat Shipyard in Groton, Connecticut.



The Christening is the ceremony where the ship is officially given its name by the sponsor and is blessed before it enters the water. In the past the submarine immediately slid into the water after a bottle of wine was broken over its hull. Modern submarines however are too large for this so the "float off" is now a separate event and will happen for Colorado in a few weeks.

References to ceremony surrounding ship launchings can be found as far back as the 3rd Millennium BC, The Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans all called upon their gods to protect seamen. In the US Navy the first recorded Christening was that of USS Ironsides on October 21, 1797.

It is part of that tradition that the ship's sponsor is technically considered a permanent member of the ship's crew and is expected to impart her personality to the ship as well as be an advocate for its continued service and well-being.

Colorado winery Balistreri Vineyards produced a special batch of sparkling wine for the Christening. To honor the Battleship USS Colorado (BB 45), which was christened in 1923 with a bottle of "muddy Colorado River water", the sparkling wine rested in a bucket filled with ice made from Colorado River water.

Seven veterans of WWII service on Battleship Colorado were present and, as part of the ceremony, presented to the crew pens made of teak decking salvaged from the battleship when it was decommissioned in 1947. The decking, as one veteran put it, was "washed in the blood of our brothers." Battleship Colorado saw heavy action during the war earning seven Battle Stars during which 93 men lost their lives.



The state of Colorado was well represented at the Ceremony. Over 100 persons traveled from the Centennial State to witness and celebrate the event. The Colorado contingent consisted of members of the Commissioning Committee and several sponsors, State Senators Larry Crowder, Mary Hodge and Bob Gardner, submarine veterans, crew member families and other submarine supporters. Members of Congress from Colorado present were Representatives Mike Coffman, Ed Perlmutter and Doug Lamborn. The three Congressmen were part of the official party, each providing remarks during the program.

The principal speaker was Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, proud father of the sponsor, gave tribute to the Veterans and the Crew. Annie's remarks acknowledged the great honor and looked forward to her continuing relationship with the subsequent Captains and Crew throughout Colorado's life.

After a blessing by Father Anthony Dinoto, the ceremony concluded with the breaking of the bottle of sparkling wine with the traditional words "In the name of the United

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States, I Christen thee Colorado. May God bless her and all who sail in her.”



Veterans of the Battleship USS Colorado (BB 45) who attended the events were Frank Byars, Bill Dougherty, Ken Jones, David Jones, Charles Johnson, Wayne Kizer, Charlie Ripper, Bill Tomczyk, and Randall Toop. Also participating were widows of crew members Mariana Cochran, Charlotte Dean, Geraldine Jacks and Erma Krishnek. Some of this group traveled from as far as Texas, Oklahoma and Idaho. We were honored by their presence which made the events of the weekend truly special.



Other Events Surrounding Christening

On the weekend of the Colorado’s Christening, several events were held bringing together the crew of PCU Colorado, the veterans of Battleship USS Colorado (BB 45), the Coloradans who traveled to Connecticut for the event and the ship’s sponsor Annie Mabus. On Friday afternoon, the Committee held a reception for the Colorado contingent to meet the Crew and the ship’s sponsor, Annie Mabus. We were happy that the veterans of the Battleship USS Colorado (BB 45) and their families could join us. Nearly 250 got together in the Marriott. It was great to see the groups intermingle, especially as the WWII vets shared their sea stories with the crew. Former State Senator Bernie Herpin presented Annie with a sample of the USS Colorado license plate which he sponsored in the legislature. State Senators Larry Crowder, Mary Hodge and Senator elect Bob Gardner helped Committee Chair ‘JJ’ Mackin present a copy of the ship’s crest which was signed by all state legislators and the Governor during the last session to the Commanding Officer, CDR Ken Franklin. The crest will be mounted on one of the tables in the Crew’s Mess.

On Friday evening Electric Boat hosted a special Sponsor’s Dinner for Annie. The dinner included executives from Electric Boat, Congressmen, the CO, XO, COB and about six crew members from the boat and their spouses. At this dinner CDR Ken Franklin honored Annie by making her an honorary Submariner and presenting her with Dolphins.

On Saturday after the Christening, Electric Boat held a reception at the Marriott. The Colorado Thirty Group presented a special plaque of the Ship’s Crest to the Commanding Officer. The Thirty Group commissioned Native American artist and Vietnam veteran Doug Hyde, a noted bronze artist, to create this plaque which will be mounted in the boat’s wardroom for the life of the submarine. It will serve as a permanent reminder of the support from the citizens of Colorado for the mission of the crew and vessel. The Colorado Thirty Group, founded in 1978, is a state-wide military support organization providing educational events to its participants. The group also provides Colorado military installation commanders with connections to communities in the state and acts in support of military missions. The sculpture was commissioned with the support of its members.



On Saturday evening the Commissioning Committee organized a social hour and buffet dinner for the Colorado contingent, the Battleship veterans group and the CO, XO and



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Why a USS Colorado

A question often asked is why was this submarine named Colorado. The decision to name the ships lies with the Secretary of the Navy. He talked about the name in his remarks at the Christening Ceremony on December 3rd. So, in his own words;

“... It is also one of my great privileges to name all our ships. And one of the things I think is important is to make that connection between the American people. And I think it’s particularly important, as has been mentioned, to connect the Navy to states like Colorado, which may be a little ways from the sea. Colorado has given us Sailors and Marines and Soldiers and Airmen and Coast Guardsmen for years. The citizens of Colorado have given their sons and daughters in the defense of this country. And that name should be out around the world telling the story of Colorado.

The last Colorado, as you’ve heard, was commissioned in 1923, but went on to earn seven Battle Stars in the Pacific – Tarawa, Marshall Islands, Marianas, the Philippines, Okinawa. And after the war, she was assigned to Magic Carpet duty and brought more than 6,000 veterans home to their families. And now, almost 70 years since the last Colorado was decommissioned, it’s time. It’s time to have another Colorado, to have a submarine which will carry the legacy and the patriotism of the state of Colorado for decades to come. She and her crew will carry the American spirit, will carry the name Colorado worldwide. A lot of times Sailors aboard these ships are the only Americans people from outside this country will ever meet, and they’re great at that job as well.”

Secretary Mabus also paid tribute to the crew who will sail COLORADO and to the Ship’s Sponsor, his daughter, Annie. For a complete transcript of his remarks see Secretary of the Navy Remarks on our web site

West Point Alumni Donate to USS Colorado

The West Point Society of Denver has demonstrated their support for USS Colorado by conducting a fund-raising drive among their membership. During halftime of the local Army-Navy Game watch party their Chapter President Bob Wolcott presented the check for \$700 to Committee Chair JJ Mackin. Many thanks to our Army friends.



Looking Forward

Now that Christening is complete, the Committee is focusing on our main event, Commissioning. Although no date has been sent, the best estimate is that Commissioning will occur in the September time frame. We hope to have an even larger contingent from the state to attend this momentous event. We will provide information through all our communications channels as information becomes available. In the meantime we plan to have at least two more crew visits prior to the boat going on sea trials, which is expected in June. We are still short of our fund-raising goal, so if you have not already done so, check our our web site to see how you can contribute to making the Commissioning an event that will make all Coloradans proud.



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