



## USS Illinois Commissioning

On October 29th, committee members, Florence and JJ Mackin, visited Groton, CT to attend the commissioning of USS Illinois (SSN 786). Len Waas, Illinois Commissioning Chairman, extended the invitation in the interest of having our committee learn from their experiences.

The Chairman's Reception was held on the Friday evening before commissioning at the Mystic Hilton Hotel. It was a celebration of the completion of the shipyard period and the hard work put in by the crew in preparing the ship for sea. As committee chairman, Len acknowledged the contributions of the many sponsors who made the event possible. During the program, several companies presented gifts to the crew.

We were also graced by a visit from Illinois's favorite son, an actor playing Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln shared his wisdom on the importance of the democratic process. His words were especially noteworthy during the 2016 election season.

The Commissioning Ceremony itself was held on Saturday morning at 11am. It was a lovely fall day in Groton with temperatures warm enough not to require jackets or coats. The ceremony began with congratulatory remarks by high level Navy, Shipyard and political officials. Unfortunately, the Governor of Illinois was not in attendance as the Chicago Cubs were playing in the World Series.

Michelle Obama, the Ship's Sponsor, gave a gracious speech expressing her pride in the achievements of the crew and the support of their families in getting the ship ready for commissioning. She pledged her support for the crew over the lifetime of the ship.

The essence of the Commissioning Ceremony is when the Commanding Officer reports to the Chief of Naval Operations that the ship is ready for commissioning and the Commissioning Pennant is raised. The Ship's Sponsor then declares, "Man our ship and bring her to life" and the crew runs on board as the ship's whistle sounds. It is a thrilling moment for all in attendance.

After the Commissioning Ceremony, a reception was held in a large tent at the head of the pier for all 4,000-people attending, featuring special foods from the state of Illinois, including deep dish pizza, ice cream, pulled pork sandwiches and craft beer.

The ship was open for tours after the ceremony. The tours were very thorough with representatives from each division giving an overview of their spaces on board. The submarine is a technological marvel. The professionalism, enthusiasm and pride of the sailors was evident as they described their roles and responsibilities.



The event was well covered by the media. It even made the Denver Post. A video of the ceremony can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/v8fsBedDkcs>. See the Navy press release and their photos of the event.

All in all, it was a highly rewarding experience. We had discussions with several members of the USS Illinois Committee, who were very helpful in passing on their experiences in planning and executing the Commissioning week events. We will have the opportunity to put these lessons learned into effect at the commissioning of USS Colorado next summer!



## USS Colorado (SSN 788) Commissioning Committee

[usscoloradocommittee.org](http://usscoloradocommittee.org)

### SSN 788 Ship's Bell Presented to CU Veterans Center

On Veteran's Day a second copy of the ship's bell which will become part of USS Colorado (SSN 788) was unveiled at the annual Veteran's Day Program at CU Boulder. CU Boulder's University Memorial Center (UMC) is a tribute to all Colorado veterans, men and women, who have served or are currently serving our country and is Colorado's Official Veterans Memorial. It contains several artifacts from battleship USS Colorado (BB 45) including the ship's bell and stern pilot wheel. Last year on Veteran's Day, the Ship's bell that saw service on both the first and second USS Colorado's was unveiled in the UMC, having been found in a Navy History and Heritage Command warehouse in the Washington, DC area. In order to accommodate the second bell, over the past year the UMC was renovated and this Veteran's Day marked the official opening of the newly renovated Veteran's Memorial Lounge.



The Battleship Colorado Association commissioned noted Colorado sculptor George Lundeen to make a specially inscribed bell to donate to the submarine. It is the second copy of this bell that was donated to the UMC. The original bell will be presented to the boat at Commissioning ceremonies late next summer.

The program featured welcoming remarks by Christina Gonzales, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and the featured speaker was Colonel Issac Pelitier, United States Army and CU Boulder Alumnus of the Class of 1992. Colonel Pelitier currently serves as Commander of the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

### Preparation for Christening Underway

Preparations for PCU Colorado's Christening are well underway. General Dynamics Electric Boat shipyard is expecting about 3,000 persons to attend this momentous event. Colorado will be well represented.

Colorado's own Balistreri Vineyards has produced the sparkling wine that will be broken over the boat by the ship's sponsor, Annie Mabus, as the boat is officially given its name. To honor the Battleship Colorado, which was chris-

tened in 1923 with a bottle of "muddy Colorado River water", the sparkling wine will rest in a bucket filled with ice made with water from our own Colorado River. About ten veterans who served on the Battleship Colorado during World War II will be in attendance along with about 75 family members.

Over 100 Coloradans are planning on making the trip to Groton for the event. Senator Bennett and Representative Perlmutter will be part of the official party. Four members of the state legislature will also be in attendance. In addition, the Colorado contingent will include members of the Commissioning Committee, Submarine Veterans and other supporters of USS Colorado (SSN 788). Several family members of crew members from Colorado will also attend.

As part of the activities of the day, the Colorado Thirty Group, a non-profit group which fosters understanding and cooperation between the civilian community, the government and the military, will present a sculpture of the ship's crest which will be mounted on the boat when it is completed.

The Commissioning Committee will hold a reception for the Colorado contingent and the Crew on Friday before the Christening.

USS Colorado (SSN 788) is the 15th Virginia Class nuclear attack submarine and will be commissioned and enter service late next summer. It is the fourth ship to bear the name

We will provide updates to our activities and information about the Commissioning through email, Facebook and our web site. We hope to have an even larger group attend from Colorado for the Commissioning.



USS Colorado (SSN 788) Commissioning Committee

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