

Mike Petters
New Hampshire Christening Ceremony
June 21, 2008
Remarks

Thank you John.

Mrs. McGuinness, Representative Courtney, Representative Shea-Porter, Admiral Donald, Vice Admiral Sullivan, Vice Admiral Donnelly, Ms. Stiller, Rear Admiral Hilarides, Rear Admiral Haney, Rear Admiral Grooms, distinguished platform guests, ladies and gentlemen – it's my honor to be here representing the men and women of Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding who helped build the submarine – New Hampshire.

Mrs. McGuinness, on behalf of the Northrop Grumman Corporation, I extend to you our thanks for graciously serving as the sponsor for this ship – and for your husband's ultimate act of patriotism on the tragic day of Sept. 11, 2001.

(PAUSE)

You should know that the people of Virginia have a strong affinity for the state of New Hampshire where you live, as well as her namesake submarine.

Maybe it's because New Hampshire and Virginia are each one of America's original 13 colonies – built upon a tradition of fighting for freedom and democracy in the face of adversity.

It's a tradition that still remains -- and one that is readily apparent in the daunting elegance of this submarine.

There's also the connection between Virginia and New Hampshire that was formed nearly 400 years ago by none other than the English explorer, Captain John Smith.

It was Smith, the man who founded the Jamestown settlement in Virginia and befriended Pocahontas, who coined the name "North Virginia" for the territory that today includes what is known as New Hampshire.

This was in 1614 when Smith sailed along the New England coast, writing in his journals and marveling about the calmness of the waters and recording, “The sea there is the strangest pond I ever saw.”

He was obviously sailing on a day much like today!

Now -- King James later nixed the North Virginia moniker and it later took on its present day name.

And if this shared history isn't enough to demonstrate the bond between these two states, the submarine New Hampshire will surely do it.

(PAUSE)

This year has been a busy one for Virginia-class events – with a ship delivery, keel authentication, commissioning ceremony, and now a christening – and it's only June!

Before the end of the year, this team of highly talented shipbuilders will have christened another submarine and delivered the one you see before you.

Importantly, this serial production has enabled us to steadily increase the momentum in reducing our costs and improving efficiencies.

In the case of New Hampshire, we delivered the bow section with the sail attached for the first time.

And even though the overall work scope on the module was greater, the team performed the work for fewer man-hours than on the previous module for Hawaii.

To be specific, there were 50,000 hours of added work that was completed in 16 percent less time than on Hawaii.

The Virginia-class program has become the model for how to do shipbuilding right.

When we formed this team more than a decade ago, we thought it was a creative way to build value for the government and the respective companies.

Granted – we've had some tough times in the program.

Yet today, I can say with confidence that we were right on both counts -- the teaming has gone better than we ever anticipated.

And the credit for this success belongs to the shipbuilders – and it speaks to the skill, commitment and dedication of the engineers, designers, and craftsmen at both companies.

We share this success with our Navy customer – who has demonstrated flexibility and an unwavering commitment to the program.

Good shipbuilding results from people who are the best at what they do – who learn from each other – and who are not satisfied with second best.

These are the characteristics of the people – Navy, shipbuilders and our supplier community -- who make up the Virginia-class submarine program.

I am proud to be a part of this team.

On behalf of Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding and the shipbuilders of Newport News – we look forward to continued excellence – and to a long and very productive relationship with our teammates at General Dynamics Electric Boat -- and with the world's greatest Navy.

Thank you.