

Mike Petters

North Carolina Commissioning Remarks

May 3, 2008

Thank you, and good morning everyone!

I am honored to be here -- and privileged to share the platform with so many distinguished guests on such a beautiful Carolina day!

I'm here representing the men and women of Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding at Newport News who helped build the submarine North Carolina.

The shipyard in Virginia has a long relationship with our sister state to the south.

Today, nearly one-thousand talented Newport News shipbuilders call North Carolina home.

We also have a strong North Carolina supplier base -- with 65 submarine suppliers located in the Tar Heel State -- five in the 7th Congressional District.

In the 1940s, Newport News Shipbuilding operated North Carolina Shipbuilding -- right here in Wilmington -- building more than 240 Liberty ships that served in World War II.

And our connection with ships named North Carolina dates back even further.

The submarine being commissioned today, as you may already know, is the fifth ship to carry the North Carolina name.

The first was a 74-gun “ship of the line” that served from 1824 to 1866.

The third, BB 52, had her keel laid in Norfolk in 1920, but was cancelled before launching.

We’re all familiar with the fourth ship -- BB 55 --, the battleship on display here in Wilmington.

The second USS North Carolina I’ve saved for last -- a Newport News-built Tennessee-class armored cruiser that was the first ship to launch an airplane by catapult while under way – an important milestone for our Navy and for our country.

As it so happens, this ship was commissioned on May 7, 1908 – 100 years ago almost to the day we commission another with the same name.

It’s not known what was said on that day a century ago, yet I would guess that the work of the shipbuilders was praised, and that the

ship's commander and crew were assured that their ship -- was -- above all -- highly-capable and safe.

This complement of 859 officers and sailors didn't know what their future held -- but I believe they knew that their ship was the best ever built.

So it is today with SSN 777.

And to parallel that event 100 years ago, I congratulate the men and women of Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding, General Dynamics Electric Boat, and the United States Navy -- on the commissioning of this highly capable and safe ship.

Captain Davis, as you and your men take your rightful place in the world's greatest fleet, please know that your ship -- USS North Carolina -- carries with it quite a legacy.

A legacy of more than 122 years of shipbuilding at Newport News --

--Of nearly 200 years of ships bearing the same name --

--And of more than 400 years of American history in the wonderful state of North Carolina.

Thank you.