

## The Christening Tradition

Few modern rites have a 4,000-year old tradition. Yet the ritual of ship christenings reaches that far back in recorded history. The practice of using wine or champagne as the time-tested toasts to new ships can be traced almost as far back as history.

Ship christenings in the days of the Vikings were marked by the spilling of blood, human sacrifices and incantations by high priests to appease the gods. The Greeks and Romans later used water as a token of purification in blessings of a ship and her crew, officers, passengers and cargo.

For more than a century, the tradition throughout the world has been that women christen ships. A great deal of attention is focused on the bottle of champagne used in the christening. The bottle is enclosed in a slotted aluminum casing and then covered with a cotton sleeve. These coverings prevent fragments of the glass from flying out and possibly injuring spectators or the sponsor. After this casing is applied, decorative ribbons are woven around it and it is ready for breaking!

Champagne has not always been used to christen ships. In the 1930's during Prohibition, many ships were christened with carbonated non-alcoholic beverages.

## JAMES's Christening

CGC JAMES was christened on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014, at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, MS. The christening ceremony was officiated by the president of Ingalls Shipbuilding, Brian Cuccias. The Vice Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, Vice Admiral Peter Neffenger, was the keynote speaker for the ceremony. Also in attendance was the ship's crew, including the prospective Commanding Officer, Captain Andrew Tionson.

CGC JAMES is named for Captain Joshua James of the United States Life-Saving Service. James is credited with saving over 600 lives from the age of 15 until the time of his death at 75 years of age. He is considered one of the most celebrated lifesavers in the world. The ship's sponsor, Charlene Benoit, is the great-great-niece of the ship's namesake.

Pictures from the christening ceremony are included below:

(Put pictures on the bottom of the page. Special notes for some photos are as follows:

008 – Charlene Benoit, the ship's sponsor.

016 – Coins, pictures and documents that will be placed in JAMES's mast during a mast-stepping ceremony.

019 – From left to right: CGC JAMES Command Senior Chief MKCS Michael Petras, ship's sponsor Charlene Benoit, Command Officer CAPT Andrew Tionson, Engineer Officer LCDR Daniel Keane.

071 and 072 – Members of CGC JAMES's pre-commissioning crew.

105 – VAMD Peter Neffenger delivers the keynote address during the ceremony.

130 – Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Cuccias, Commanding Officer Captain Andrew Tiongson, Vice Commandant VADM Peter Neffenger, and ship's sponsor Charlene Benoit on the christening platform.

153 – Commanding Officer CAPT Andrew Tiongson, Command Senior Chief MKCS Michael Petras and the Benoit family on the christening platform.

175 – CGC JAMES's first Commanding Officer, CAPT Andrew Tiongson.