

Christening of the National Security Cutter HAMILTON
Remarks of the Ship's Sponsor, Mrs. Linda Kapral Papp
Ingalls Shipbuilding, Pascagoula, Mississippi
October 26, 2013

Good morning – and thank you for that kind introduction.

You know, as I stand here this morning, and I look back at this absolutely beautiful new cutter behind me, I can't even begin to tell you how proud and humbled I am to be here as HAMILTON's sponsor.

I will, however, also confess to being just a little nervous. But it's probably not for the reason you think. It's not because I'm up here on this podium standing behind this microphone. I actually enjoy that!

It's because I'm thinking about breaking that Champaign bottle!

But it's also because I know what it means to be a sponsor, and I'm aware of the responsibility that comes with that title. But I can promise you – I *embrace* that responsibility, *precisely because* I know what it means.

I want to start by thanking Ingalls Shipbuilding, and, in particular, all of the outstanding men and women who have worked so hard here in the yard to build such a terrific cutter. The transformation that's taken place since I was here just over a year ago is truly remarkable.

Of course one of the reasons I'm thankful for the care you've taken in building her is because of the role this cutter will soon play in carrying out the missions of the Coast Guard. I have absolutely no doubt that HAMILTON will be the most capable and technologically advanced cutter in the Coast Guard's long history.

The reason I'm really thankful for all the care you've taken is because of the precious cargo that will be aboard while HAMILTON is out at sea conducting those important missions.

You see, as I stand here this morning, as striking as she looks with that fresh coat of paint, and that big bright red racing strip down the side, what really catches my eye, and what has always held my attention, is the crew that is working to bring this cutter to life. My true passion is for those who will sail in HAMILTON – and the families that support them.

As wonderful as this ship is – and for all of the great things it will accomplish – it is those who stand the watches... and walk the decks.... and man the rails to wave goodbye to their loved ones that I think about the most. They are the ones who will be the heart and soul of HAMILTON.

As I look at the faces of the crew and their families who are here today, I can't help but think back to when ENS Papp and I reported to our first ship as a new family.

I'll confess, even as the daughter of a Coast Guard officer, I was not quite prepared for what life would be like with a sailor as a husband.

Well, standing here 37 years later, I can't begin to tell you how wonderful the journey has been, how thankful I am for all of the experiences we've had and, most importantly, how much I cherish our Coast Guard family. I spent 14 of those 37 years watching six different cutters pull away from the pier – ten of those years as the Commanding Officer's wife. The crew of every cutter became an extension of my own growing family.

It's a family that has grown with every new tour, every city, and every cutter. We have laughed together, cried together, and worked hard together to make those families strong, healthy, and happy.

That is now true of HAMILTON. This may be the sixth cutter to bear that great name – but the family we start growing here today is new, and I could not be more proud to be a part of it.

And it's not just the crew who is here now, or those who will soon join you, or even those who will sail away from the pier less than a year from now. It's every member of every crew that ever sails in HAMILTON – and *their* family. As the Coast Guard's Ombudsman-at-Large, I know that the strength and resilience of our family members on the home front provides critical support to all of our Coast Guard men and women.

So to those who are here now, and to those who follow, you will always have a special place in my life, and in my heart. Sometimes in person, but always in spirit, I will be there with you, and *for* you. We are all family now – and there is nothing more important.