

**Remarks of Mayor Paul Fraim
Battleship Wisconsin Ceremony
April 16, 2010**

Thank you, Admiral and good morning.

The date was April 16, 1944.

A brisk wind was blowing off the Delaware River as a crowd gathered to watch the commissioning of the USS Wisconsin at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.

World War II, the largest armed conflict in the history of mankind, was raging and the USS Wisconsin was poised for a date with destiny.

Eight months to the day, December 16, 1944, the Wisconsin earned its first Battle Star during an engagement with Japanese forces in the Leyte Gulf.

As a member of Admiral “Bull” Halsey’s Third Fleet, Wisconsin fired its powerful 16 inch guns against enemy forces in such places as the Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, Honshu, Okinawa and Iwo Jima.

When the Japanese surrendered on September 5, 1945 ... Wisconsin was anchored in Tokyo Bay ... her crew watching proudly as the documents of surrender were signed on the deck of Wisconsin’s sister ship, the USS Missouri.

The nation called on Wisconsin once again in 1951 when war erupted in Korea.

From November of that year until March, 1952 – the Wisconsin provided naval gunfire support for American and South Korean forces.

And, following her third re-commissioning, the nation watched as the Wisconsin unleashed its new Tomahawk missiles to launch the first Gulf War.

April 16, 2010 – 66 years since the commissioning at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard – Norfolk is celebrating ownership of the Wisconsin by moving “full steam ahead” to open interior sections of the warship to the public.

The tours will allow the Wisconsin to tell its own story – a story of dedication, sacrifice, bravery and patriotism.

Today's ceremony represents the culmination of a journey that began 13 years ago when Admiral Paul Reason, then Commander-in-Chief Atlantic Fleet, shared a dream with me – a dream to bring the USS Wisconsin to the downtown Norfolk waterfront.

It was Admiral Paul Reason who inspired that fateful journey that we embarked upon 13 years ago.

Although Admiral Reason could not join us today, the City of Norfolk will always owe him a great debt of gratitude.

MAYOR FRAIM LEADS APPLAUSE

For the past 10 years, the battleship Wisconsin ... her valiant service to this country recorded on the pages of history ... has rested gently in this quiet cove.

The Wisconsin has become an enduring example of the values of public service and sacrifice.

Its graceful beauty and majestic presence is a symbol in battleship grey of Norfolk's unwavering commitment to the gallant men and women who wear the uniform of the United States of America.

It is safe to say that the Wisconsin is berthed on the downtown Norfolk waterfront because of the tireless determination of one man: Statesman. Patriot. Warrior: Senator John Warner.

Unfortunately, Senator Warner could not be with us today. However, he was kind enough to record some of his memories of the Wisconsin, beginning with the first time that he saw the Iowa Class battleship:

JOHN WARNER TAPE ROLLS

To our dear friends – the veterans of the USS Wisconsin – let me reiterate:

This is ... and always will be ... your ship:

Our responsibility is to preserve and protect your ship – to ensure that your legacy of duty, honor and country endures and inspires future generations of Americans.

It's a responsibility that we willingly accept.

One of the Navy's most cherished traditions is the commissioning of a new ship. The most dramatic moment comes when the captain calls on the crew to bring the ship to life.

The Wisconsin was first brought to life on April 16, 1944.

Today, 66 years later, the Wisconsin begins a new life.

It's time to write a new chapter in the history of the last and largest battleship.

Please join me as we bring this ship to life.

CELEBRATION BEGINS