



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728)
FLEET POST OFFICE
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98799

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From: Commanding Officer, USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Enc1: (1) USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (GOLD) Command History
(2) USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (GOLD) Dependents/Relatives Information
Booklet
(3) USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (GOLD) Change of Command Booklet 21 May 84
(4) USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (GOLD) Welcome Aboard Booklet

1. Enclosures (1), (2), (3), and (4) is submitted as the first command history for USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (GOLD) in accordance with reference (a).


ROBERT W. BOYCE

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USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (GOLD) COMMAND HISTORY

On 18 June 1983, USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) was commissioned, and Captain George R. Sterner, USN, assumed command of the Gold crew. While the Blue crew embarked on shakedown trials, the Gold crew moved with their families to Bangor, Washington, FLORIDA's new homeport. While at Bangor, the Gold crew underwent a vigorous training period in anticipation of a highly compressed schedule during which the crew would undergo all of the major inspections and testing which would normally be conducted over the period of an entire year.

On 26 August 1983, the Gold crew flew from Bangor to meet the ship at Port Canaveral, FL. Two days later, Captain Sterner assumed command of FLORIDA and the Gold crew began its shakedown period. The first exchange of command was a festive occasion. Ceremonies and celebrations were sponsored by well wishers and supporters from the State of Florida, FLORIDA's namesake.

The long hours of training during the off-crew period were in evidence as the ship and crew performed superbly, including the flawless launch of a Trident C-4 missile, an outstanding Nuclear Weapons Acceptance Inspection (NWAI), and an above average Operational Reactor Safeguards Examination (ORSE). Interspersed with all the operational testing and demonstrations, were visits from many dignitaries. Most notable was a congressional indoctrination cruise about which the Force Commander remarked, "...impressed them indelibly with the professionalism of our people..." Among the many dignitaries to tour FLORIDA during this period were the Honorable Charles E. Bennett, Chairman, House Seapower Subcommittee, Governor Bob Graham, State of Florida, and Admiral Kinnaird McKee, USN, Director, Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program.

At the completion of shakedown trials, FLORIDA returned to Groton, CT where she would undergo her post shakedown availability period. On 31 October 1983, Captain William L. Powell, USN, assumed command of FLORIDA once again. The Gold crew returned to Bangor for another off-crew training period to finish out the year.

On January 1984, the Gold crew once again flew to Port Canaveral, Florida to complete shakedown trials and to make the voyage to Bangor, Washington, USS FLORIDA's home port.

Once again the gold crew responded to the challenge. Upon completion of a successful MK-48 torpedo certification, USS FLORIDA participated in several significant Trident security program exercises conducted in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. These demanding operations required the finest judgement in seamanship and shiphandling and hones the crew to peak operational readiness.

Highlights of the voyage home included transit through the Panama Canal on February 18th and an excursion south of the equator on February 20th. A thrilling Shellback ceremony was conducted for the 125 polywogs and was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Enclosure (1)

After crossing the equator USS FLORIDA began its long awaited journey home, all the while keeping busy participating in numerous exercises.

On March 25, 1984 USS FLORIDA quietly slipped into Bangor, Wa where she received a warm welcome from the families and dependents of the crew. Particularly noticable was the lack demonstrators which had met the previous two Tridents submarines.

Immediately upon arrival in Bangor, the weapons department began the FLORIDA's initial strategic loadout. This important evaluation was accomplished in record time without incident and culminated with a Navy Technical Proficiency Inspection (NTPI) in which USS FLORIDA was rated outstanding in every area examined with zero disficiencies noted. FLORIDA Gold was subsequently selected as "nuclear unit of the year" by Nuclear Training Weapons Group, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Shortly thereafter, the Gold Crew was relieved by Captain William L. Powell and his Blue crew. The gold and blue crews worked together during the ship's initial refit on Bangor, Wa to prepare FLORIDA for her first strategic deterrent patrol.

On 21 May 1984 Captain George R. Sterner, USN, relinquished command of the USS FLORIDA gold crew to Captain Robert W. Boyce, USN whose previous tour was Commanding Officer, USS SEA DEVIL (SSN 664).



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728)
FLEET POST OFFICE
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98799

HIS:DCM:tas
5757
Ser: B100-84
6 April 1984

From: Commanding Officer, USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (BLUE)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH), Washington Navy Yard,
Washington, D.C. 20374

Subj: Command History

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) Command History USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (BLUE)

1. In accordance with reference (a) enclosure (1) is submitted as the first command history for USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. L. Powell", written over the printed name.

W. L. POWELL

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Though the history of USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) formally begins with her commissioning on June 18, 1983, she did not spring into existence overnight, and to begin her story there would be to ignore many events and to slight the efforts of a great many people. This introductory portion of the history for the USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) is therefore presented.

The keel of SSBN 728 was laid July 4, 1976, nearly seven years before the ship was commissioned and four years before she had a crew. On July 8, 1980, then Commander William L. POWELL, USN, established the Precommissioning Unit SSBN 728. The ship remained nameless until January 19, 1981 when then Secretary of the Navy HILDALGO signed SECNAVNOTE 5030 assigning the name FLORIDA, making SSBN 728 the sixth U.S. Navy vessel to bear the name.

Initially relegated to office spaces on the Submarine Base New London due to construction delays and backlogs at Electric Boat, the nucleus of the crew moved to the shipyard July 22, 1980, and passed the remainder of 1980 developing administrative procedures and conducting engineering department training in anticipation of the reactor vessel fill and operational testing. Further construction delays at Electric Boat caused several postponements of these events, as well as the date of launching, which had been originally scheduled for March of 1981. These postponements, along with a joint Congressional, Navy and Electric Boat reevaluation of shipyard capabilities and national security priorities in the spring of 1981, resulted in a revised Shipyard Master Construction Schedule. To support the FY81 delivery of the USS OHIO (SSBN 726) and several 688 class submarines, FLORIDA's launching was rescheduled for November 1981.

The first shipboard watch was stationed February 14, 1981 in order to commence operational transfer of engineering systems to ship's force. Successful fill and cold operational testing of the reactor plant followed soon thereafter, but the revision of the Master Construction Schedule forced the delay of hot operational and steam generator testing until September.

During the spring and summer additional crew personnel arrived at a steadily increasing rate. By October 1, the nucleus of every division was aboard and the ship's administrative framework took shape as the date of launching approached.

Political realities and shipyard scheduling conflicts continued to haunt FLORIDA (SSBN 728). National interest in the long delayed commissioning of USS OHIO (SSBN 726) and the fact that the two ceremonies were to be conducted in the same berth actually forced the shipyard to place FLORIDA (SSBN 728) in the water on October 23, 1981 and shuttle her around the yard until she was finally returned to the launch berth on November 12, 1981. On November 14, 1981, Marcia Myers CARLUCCI, wife of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, christened the ship in a ceremony attended by the Honorable Charles E. BENNETT, Chairman, House Seapower Subcommittee, and Admiral Thomas B. HAYWARD, USN, Chief of Naval Operations.

Ceremony interrupted construction only briefly. During November and December 1981 the engineering department completed hot operational testing, and set plant conditions for reactor core load, which was accomplished

January 25, 1982. During the remainder of the winter and spring the engineering department completed final fill of the primary plant, most core load cold operational testing, engine room steaming, control rod testing and hot operational testing. The Ship's emergency battery was tested in February 1982. The first active inert missile (AIM) was loaded in May 1982 and the first operational sequence testing of the strategic weapons system began. Cryptography equipment was loaded in June 1982. The first operational control transfer of non-nuclear systems also began in June.

The steady progress was marred in early July by several anti-nuclear demonstrators who paddled a canoe alongside, painted USS AUSCHWITZ on the hull, poured animal blood topside, and pounded on the topside portion of tube 13 with a hammer. Though the demonstrators were apprehended and removed, the incident attracted national attention and forced a review of Electric Boat security procedures.

In spite of the adverse publicity, construction and operational control transfer proceeded at a brisk pace. Large numbers of new crewmembers continued to arrive and by the end of the year, the crew had nearly doubled in size from the year before. In anticipation of sea trials the following winter, watch sections formed and commenced drills and walk through evolutions to familiarize the crew with underway submarine operations. Stress on watchstation qualification became more apparent.

During the fall of 1982, the engineering department underwent several inspections culminating in satisfactory completion of the Pre-Criticality Reactor Safeguards Examination conducted by the Division of Naval Reactors. Certified for initial criticality and power range testing, the engineering department took the reactor critical for the first time on November 13, 1982, and continued reactor and propulsion plant testing.

The ship's Command and Control System (CCS) testing began during the fall of 1982 with the first firing of torpedo tube water slugs. Continued testing ended with the Navy Pre-Sea Trials Test Program (NPTTP) in late December. Initial normal fuel oil loading for the emergency diesel generator was accomplished in October and electrical distribution switchboards were turned over to ship's force in December 1982.

The beginning of 1983 found the FLORIDA (SSBN 728) near the end of seven years of construction and testing, and nearly ready for initial sea trials. The last operational control transfer was completed by January 23, 1983. In mid January, the ship got her first thorough cleaning in preparation for habitability certification which took place on January 18th. On January 23, 1983, PCU FLORIDA (SSBN 728) went In Service to the fleet.

While the ship was receiving her finishing touches, the crew was polishing the skills needed to take her to sea. Their knowledge was formally assessed in crew certification inspections in January and February. Training continued right up to the beginning of sea trials. After a short period of dock trials and fast cruise, the ship got underway on her maiden voyage, "Alpha" trials, on February 22, 1983. Onboard in direct charge of these propulsion trials was Admiral Kinnaird McKEE, USN Director Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. Under command of Captain William L. POWELL, the ship and crew began to build their reputation.

After a short turnaround at Electric Boat. FLORIDA (SSBN 728) returned to sea on "Bravo" trials, which included a transit south to the Bahamas for sound trials at the sonar arrays in Exuma Sound off Eleuthera.

On return to port after "Bravo" trials. FLORIDA (SSBN 728) underwent a month long drydock period for final underwater hull preservation and was underway again April 20th for "Charlie" trials. All the sea trials consisted of evolutions demonstrating the ship's characteristics and capabilities, and drills were conducted to hone the crew's skills in casualty control, ship handling, and propulsion plant, weapons handling and navigation operations evolutions.

After the acceptance inspection by the Board of Inspection and Survey on May 10, 1983. FLORIDA (SSBN 728) was delivered to the Navy on May 18, 1983, 44 days ahead of schedule. The final version of the crew split was approved, and that same day the Gold Crew under the command of Captain George R. STERNER, USN, took the ship across the Thames River to the Naval Underwater Systems Center in New London for a fast cruise and training period.

On May 28, 1983 the Blue Crew under the command of Captain William L. POWELL, USN, went to sea for two weeks of independent ship's exercises, returning to the Naval Underwater Systems Center on June 9th to complete final preparations for commissioning, which was to follow nine days later. This interval was marked by a frenzy of last minute preparations: uniform inspections, rehearsals for the ceremony, field days, final arrangements for receptions and parties, guest lists, tickets and programs, seating and security. On June 13, the ship embarked a large number of wives and families of crewmembers for a dependent cruise as a side trip enroute to Electric Boat for commissioning.

If the ship's history of construction and sea trials can be likened to childhood and adolescence, commissioning marked the day FLORIDA (SSBN 728) came of age and began her adult life as a full fledged ship of the line. On June 18, 1983, the crew paraded in full dress white uniforms on deck during the formal ceremonies which included speeches by Senator Paula HAWKINS of Florida; Florida's Governor Bob GRAHAM; state officials from the state of Florida; Mr Fritz TOVAR, General Manager of Electric Boat; Admiral Kinnard R. MCKEE, Director Naval Nuclear Propulsion; Rear Admiral Harold L. YOUNG, Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Groton, CT; and of course the ship's commanding officers: Captain William L. POWELL, USN, and Captain George R. STERNER, USN. 2500 invited guests witnessed the culmination of years of sustained effort. As is becoming the usual, the ceremony was marred slightly by hundreds of antinuclear protestors outside the gates of Electric Boat and in boats on the river.

At the moment of commissioning Captain William L. POWELL assumed command of the USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (Blue), retaining command of the ship itself. From this point on the narrative concerns the USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) (Blue) crew only.

Tours of the ship for the invited guests and Electric Boat workers and their families occupied the rest of that day and the following one. A reception at the Submarine Base Officer's Club and a Ship's Party that night celebrated the USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) grand debut.

Much work lay ahead, however. On June 19, the ship left Electric Boat for Naval Underwater Systems Center for a torpedo load and got underway on her shakedown cruise on June 21. Amid much fanfare, the ship moored briefly in Maysport, Florida to embark Governor Bob GRAHAM who rode her to her next destination at Port Canaveral, Florida. Following an unprecedented press tour of the ship on June 26, USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) debarked Governor GRAHAM and embarked several members of the Florida Congressional Delegation for a day long underway period, returning to Port Canaveral.

After a week in port the ship departed again on July 5, commencing her transit to AUTECH at Andros Island for Weapons System Accuracy Trials on July 10 thru 13. Off Andros on the completion of WSAT, USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) embarked Admiral Kinnard R. McKEE, USN and the United States Comptroller General and members of his staff for an indoctrination visit enroute to Exuma Sound. On July 14, the ship commenced acoustic trials which continued until July 29, pausing only briefly on July 19 for a personnel transfer and a sun call for the crew.

On July 30, the Nuclear Propulsion Examining Board arrived for the ship's first Operational Reactor Safeguards Examination (ORSE), which was completed satisfactorily the following day, and the ship transited back to Port Canaveral.

On August 1, the ship commenced her Demonstration and Shakedown Operations (DASO) period. After initial inport preparations, she began a series of short underway periods on August 12th for a DASO workup. After an August 18th inport launch rehearsal, the ship repeated the rehearsal at sea with Vice Admiral B. M. KAUDERER, USN, Commander, Submarine Force U.S. Atlantic Fleet observing. On August 21, she embarked General J. W. VESSEY, USA, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and several of his staff members, Vice Admiral B. M. KAUDERER, USN, and Vice Admiral N. R. THUNMAN, USN, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Submarine Warfare for the DASO launch itself. The launch was flawless, as a Trident I (C4) missile arched its way downrange in an impressive demonstration of the nation's newest strategic deterrent weapons system. Three days later the crew underwent a Nuclear Weapons Acceptance Inspection (NWAI), achieving an overall grade of excellent.

This would have marked the end of this period of shakedown operations for the Blue crew had it not been for a tropical storm which prompted an unscheduled but uneventful sortie for storm evasion on August 25, 1983. The ship returned to port the following day.

On August 27, the Gold crew arrived from Bangor, Washington to commence turnover and two days later, in a formal ceremony attended by Governor GRAHAM and his Military Affairs Committee and other Florida dignitaries, Captain George R. STERNER, USN, assumed command of the ship and the Gold crew began its own shakedown period.

The Blue crew reassembled in Bangor in September for its first off crew training period, which consisted of six relatively relaxed weeks of training, administrative preparations and recreation.

On October 28, 1983, the crew flew from Bangor, Washington, to New London, Connecticut to meet the ship at Naval Undersea Systems Center and received turnover from the Gold crew. On October 31, Captain William L. POWELL, USN, assumed command again, and that afternoon the ship transited to Electric Boat to enter drydock and begin her Post Shakedown Availability period. This was a demanding, complex, physically uncomfortable time for the crew, made worse by their having to live on the boat. Shipyard activity aboard proceeded with an intensity not seen since before the ship went In Service. The successful completion of the USS FLORIDA (SSBN 728) PSA period was entirely due to the tireless efforts and unfailing good humor of her crew. This period was marred by a series of small fires which caused only minor damage but unnerved the crew. Concentrated effort by agents of the Naval Investigative Service (NIS) resulted in the identification and apprehension of an unstable crewmember who was setting the fires to get attention. His departure brought a great relief and permitted the crew to get on with the task at hand.

On December 20, 1983, the ship got underway for a brief post-PSA sea trials period to test the new modifications. Inattention on the part of the navigation party allowed the ship to graze an underwater obstruction damaging two underwater appendages and forcing a brief return to Electric Boat for repair after an otherwise successful sea trials. After the repair the ship left Electric Boat for the last time on December 23rd and moored at NUSC for a protective torpedo load. On December 26th, the ship was underway again enroute to Port Canaveral, arriving again in her namesake state on 30 December 1983. It is expected that Mark 48 torpedo certification will be completed in early January, followed by yet another exchange of command in mid January, but these events are material for next year's command history.