

Ship Carl Brashear honors 1st Black master diver

By Eric Addison
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SAN DIEGO (NNPA) —

The morning sun shone hot on the guests assembled on the high, crowded platform and DaWayne Brashear was "walking on clouds." About 20 yards away, a huge ship bearing the letters TAKE and the number 7 stood like a skyscraper laid on its side, on a ramp that sloped gently down toward San Diego Bay.

Around him, at the General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard, members of his family mingled with reporters, with current and retired military, elected and corporate officials, and with Hollywood luminaries, including Robert De Niro, among others. The festive occasion for the diverse group was the christening and launch of the USNS Carl Brashear, named for DaWayne Brashear's father, the U.S. Navy's first Black master diver. Carl M. Brashear's story was told in the 2000 movie "Men of Honor."

"We thought that having a movie made about his life might be the pinnacle, but I think this has pretty much exceeded that," said DaWayne Brashear. He and his brother Phillip have worked to keep their father's values alive through the Carl Brashear Foundation, which they established. "All my dad wanted was to do his duty, honor the Navy and be the best diver that he could possibly be. And I don't think in his wildest dreams he thought he would have this honor bestowed on him. But here we are."

Carl B. Mack, executive director of the National So-

ciety of Black Engineers, expressed the sentiment of many of the guests.

"I am absolutely blown away by the magnitude of this event," said Mack.

Few who know Carl Brashear's story — either from firsthand experience or from Cuba Gooding Jr.'s and Robert De Niro's big-screen portrayals — would disagree about how unlikely this true plotline seems. Born on a sharecropper farm in Tonieville, Ky., in 1931, Brashear dropped out of school after the seventh grade to work in his family's tobacco, corn and wheat fields. At age 17, in 1948, he joined the Navy and was assigned to the officer's mess (dining hall), the same year that President Truman ordered the desegregation of U.S. armed forces.

After seeing some Navy divers at work in 1950, Brashear started writing letters requesting admission to the Navy salvage diving school. His letters went unanswered, but he kept at it until he was admitted in 1954.

As the only Black student at the school, Brashear was harassed and had his life threatened by his classmates and some commanding officers. But, again, his determination brought him through. He graduated the next year and began working as a salvage diver, recovering sunken aircraft, ships and ammunition.

He got his general equivalency diploma in 1960, went into the Navy's deep-sea diving school and, after many attempts, passed the school's science tests and graduated in



Carl Brashear became the Navy's first Black master diver.

1964.

In 1966, he lost a leg in a diving mission in which he saved another diver from injury. But after incredibly arduous physical therapy, bucking the Navy's rules, he convinced the doctors to clear him for diving duty. In

1970, Brashear became a master diver. He retired from the Navy in 1979 and passed away in 2006.

"I christen you the USNS Carl Brashear."

With those words and one strong swing, Lauren E. Brashear, DaWayne's daugh-

ter and Carl's eldest granddaughter, broke a bottle of champagne on the hull of the ship. Then she, her mother, Linda R. Watkins-Brashear; her aunt Sandra E. Brashear; and DaWayne's partner, Joy S. Harris, gave a symbolic push, and the Navy's newest auxiliary dry cargo vessel slid down the ramp and into the bay, with horns blaring and red, white and blue balloons and streamers flying. The 689-foot, 42,000-ton, diesel-powered ship — part of the Military Sealift Command fleet — will be manned primarily by civil service and civilian mariners and will carry everything needed to supply Navy warships.

Having a Navy ship with her family's name is "a blessing and an honor," said Lauren Brashear, 23. "But at the same time, I know that without Granddaddy going through all the things he went through, I would not be standing here. So I am thankful to him, and I just hope I can honor him as he should be honored."

Before the christening and

launch, Navy officers, including Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead, Navy Master Chief Petty Officer Joe R. Campa and Command Master Chief Kenneth Green of the Military Sealift Command, spoke about the historical significance of the day.

"...What a great day for you, your family and our Navy," said Adm. Roughead, addressing Lauren Brashear, who is the "sponsor" of the ship named in honor of her grandfather.

"Christening a ship imbues it with the character of its namesake and its sponsor. It is an affirmation of our beliefs and our values."

Three Black men who were directly influenced by Carl Brashear's work attended the ceremonies in his honor: Retired Master Navy Divers James Fenwick, Mike Washington and Lamont King were all mentored by Brashear.

Eric Addison is editorial consultant for the National Society of Black Engineers.

Your Horoscope Says... Sept. 24-Oct. 1

AIRES

It's a great week for catching up on chores and leftover tasks from last week. You'll also have the opportunity to spend some time thinking about the direction you want your life to flow toward.

Soul Affirmation: I face each day with a smile and the day smiles back at me.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 6, 8

TAURUS

Communication vibes are highlighted, and you are in your element. Many ideas will be presented, and everyone will be very receptive and agreeable to what you say. Romantic interests are easily pursued this week. Smile on!

Soul Affirmation: The slowness of my pace gives me time to refresh my energy.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 49, 51

GEMINI

Love and romance vibes are all around you this week! They will soothe your spirit and uncoil your tensions resulting from having too much work to do. Delegate some of the minor tasks so that you can do your best at the big stuff. Have a loving, lovely week.

Soul Affirmation: New intuitions create new plans and a new cast of characters.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 5, 16

CANCER

Financial matters are highlighted during working hours. Everything to do with your money, or money under

your care, goes smoothly. Another party invitation arrives... say YES!

Soul Affirmation: I admit what I really want out of life this week.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 22, 36

LEO

If you are finding it hard to concentrate on a project at work, begin imagining it successfully completed. Work steady and stay calm this week. This week is a good time for personal inventory.

Soul Affirmation: I will take time to enjoy the simple things in life.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 33, 44

VIRGO

Mental fog lifts and you are sharp as a tack once again. You'll be making decisions about partnerships and joint finances. A very happy week is in store.

Soul Affirmation: My smile is a radiant light to those I encounter.

Lucky Numbers: 19, 23, 41

LIBRA

Exercise prudence this week in your handling of personal funds. Let your mind wander into the future and you'll receive the happy answer that you are looking for. Time shared with a partner tonight will be very enjoyable.

Soul Affirmation: Helping others is the true measure of my worth.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 15, 20

SCORPIO

Work with a partner or colleagues goes exceptionally well this week. You receive praise for a job well done! Feel free to change your mind regarding a personal issue. News from a distance arrives.

Soul Affirmation: I go inside myself to find peace and joy this week.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 16, 24

SAGITTARIUS

You are a superstar at work. Efficiency seems to be your middle name. As you go your charming way, don't forget to delegate tasks with a smile.

Soul Affirmation: I give my mind a holiday again this week.

Lucky Numbers: 43, 47, 51

CAPRICORN

A relationship may be heating up. Make sure you know what you want, then go ahead. Minor challenges on the home front are easily dealt with.

Soul Affirmation: The widest outlook comes from the look within.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 10, 34

AQUARIUS

You make important progress at work this week by seizing the initiative and letting your leadership abilities shine. What you do makes things better for everyone around you, so rock steady. Meetings and conversations go especially well.

Soul Affirmation: The word is in me. I bring it forth.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 31, 42

PISCES

Pay attention to the details in your big bright beautiful picture this week. You'll handle everything that comes up if you keep your focus sharp. A grand social event is in store for the week.

Soul Affirmation: I am willing to make changes in my life.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 17, 19

Mental

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paper makes a plea for better access to mental health treatment for young Black males, noting that they currently often confront a "confusing maze" when trying to get help.

The paper notes that when Black youths do find treatment, depression is often overlooked because their symptoms often differ from White youths'. For cultural and social reasons, Black youths often express suicidal feelings through somatic complaints rather than sadness or depression.

Moreover, the paper calls for more "bicultural" training for young Black males. Such training would better prepare them to follow proper behavior in school and the workplace, while also working with young Black males to get them ready to deal with the discrimination they are likely to face. Also cited is the need for a significant increase in the number of Black therapists available to work with African-American youths.

Dr. Treadwell said it is essential that new policies be implemented to address the social and environmental factors that create poor mental health outcomes for young Black males.

"We must increase the capacity of America's mental health system to help resolve the problems faced by young Black males," she said. "There must be more research in this area, and more people of color must be trained and hired to help this at-risk group."