



Forecastle Report

Newsletter of the Midwest Model Shipwrights

March 2009

● Scuttlebutt ●

Commodore **Sid Wotman** opened the meeting at 7 bells with an outstanding turnout of 28 members present. Special guests Sam Palermo and Harry Bloom were introduced (see articles that follow) with a hearty welcome from all hands.

Purser **Ken Goetz** reminded all members that the 2009 dues were now payable so, if you don't want your membership (and receipt of the Forecastle Report) to lapse, now would be a good time to send Ken a check for \$20. Mark it payable to "Midwest Model Shipwrights" and mail it to **Ken Goetz, 3302 Sarah St, Franklin Park, IL 60131**. Thanks mates.

We've been informed that "Ship Chandler" is having a sale during the month of March with up to a 30% discount on some items and 10% on fittings. Check it out.

There being no other business or news to discuss, the meeting moved on to "Ships-on-Deck" presentations followed by Ray Oswalt's presentation on tool sharpening.

● Tool Sharpening ●

By Ray Oswalt

Ray was out in full force this evening with all his prized carving tools and tool sharpening devices to share with us. While we could all envy the chisels, gouges, strops and diamond sharpening blocks we saw, using Ray's tips for selecting good tools and keeping them in tip-top condition would put such things within the reach of all modelers.



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March Meeting Notice

"Models of Japan"

From the *Rope Conference, 2008* - By Gus Agustin

We'll call this "Gus' Travels" as Gus Agustin shows us what remarkable work is being done by fellow modelers in Japan. Get set to be entertained with a series of over 100 images of some of the finest ship models you'll ever see.



Fourth in our new series, *Historic American Warships*, features two famous examples of the *John C. Butler* class of Destroyer Escorts, which are the subject of a feature article starting this month, and a Ships-On-Deck presentation. Read more about them on page 5.

Our next meeting will be at 7:15 p.m. Wednesday,
March 18, 2009

At the Community Presbyterian Church
407 Main Street in Mount Prospect



We all hung on Ray's every word and had the added advantage of an excellent handout, thus eliminating the problem of short memories (a common complaint among a group like ours). Ray says carving tools come in only four basic shapes—flat, V-shaped, U-shaped and square-sided. Flat chisels can be sharpened three different ways ... square ended sharpened on one surface, square

See *Sharpening, Page 5*

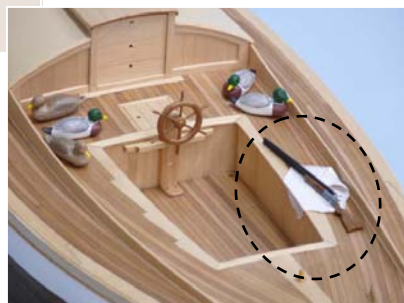
● Ships on Deck ●

❖ Off Site ❖

Steve Wheeler has sent us some photos of his completed *Hunting Launch* and the *Punt* it tows. The punt was built over a solid form with the sides and keelson pre-bent so they would keep their shape after the boat was removed (from the form). Wet-



ting the parts and hand-forming them to shape



worked fine. There was no need for steam and also, no spring back when they dried. Looks like an award candidate to us, mate. PS - the shotgun is a model of a Remington double-barrel from 1889. Beautiful decoys, too!

❖ On Site ❖



It would be safe to say that special guest, **Sam Palermo**, brought something to our meeting that no club has ever seen. It was the muzzle from a US Navy 5-in gun that once resided aboard the USS *Dennis* (DE-405), and helped defend Taffy III from a superior Japanese force during the Battle Off Samar.

It may seem strange, but this artifact once belonged to someone who never was a member of the *Dennis'* crew. In October, 1944, Gunner's Mate Mark Capalia was serving aboard the jeep carrier USS *St. Lo* when it was struck by a Kamikaze and sank. Mark would spend the next 8 hours in the water before being saved by the *Dennis*.



Thirty years later, as Los Angeles Deputy Port Warden, Capalia would be on routine harbor patrol when he spotted a familiar-looking vessel. Closer inspection would reveal that it was the *Dennis*, which was at Terminal Island, and set for dismantling. National Metal and Steel Corporation, the owners of the vessel, learned of Mark's relationship to the *Dennis* and decided to present him with the souvenir.



Sam Palermo and his shipmates were aware of the artifact, and upon Mark Capalia's death a year ago, were able to obtain the muzzle. Sam stated that it will eventually be donated to a museum where it will be a permanent reminder of the sacrifices made by all Americans during World War II. The *Dennis* was responsible for rescuing 434 survivors of the *St. Lo* (CVE-63) and, for this action, shared in the Presidential Unit Citation as well as eventually receiving four battle stars for WWII.

Thanks Sam for sharing this with us!

Bob Sykes brought in his completed "Mamoli" model of the *Royal Louis* (1:90) and made a very impressive presentation. Lots of fine attention to detail and a great rigging job really sets his work apart. In addition, Bob was able to add some great realism to the flags supplied with the kit and decorated the metal fittings beautifully. His hull planking looks spot on, too. This is a really large and impressive looking kit measuring 43-in. long and 33-in. high. Thanks mate, for bringing her in this night.



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Ships-on-Deck, continued from page 2

Gus Agustin has been working on his 1:192 model of the *St. George* (1792) for some time and described to us his technique of shaping



a solid hull and then cutting it up to create the frame sections. Mind boggling! Current work is on the forecastle and head with attention to bending boxwood strips for the head rails. Just finished was the galley

funnel on the forecastle deck. Small parts all give big joy.

Art Carlson is still hard at work on his model of *LST-515* being made from metal to a scale of 1:48. Due to its large size, we were treated to a view of the superstructure only. No wonder! The model is being made to operate as an R/C, so it will float. Plans were obtained from the "Ship Chandler" and are very complete. Beautiful scratch building there, Mate.



superstructure only. No wonder! The model is being made to operate as an R/C, so it will float. Plans were obtained from the "Ship Chandler" and are very complete. Beautiful scratch building there, Mate.

Walt Philips is building the *Emma C Berry* lobster smack kit (Model Shipways, 1:32) but only using the plans! The



materials being used have all been scratch built to enhance both the experience and the result. From our view, it looks like you will achieve the desired effect, mate!

Tony Sergios has built the "Midwest Products" *Chesapeake Bay Skipjack* (7/16" = 1'). Hull is sheet on bulkheads (duplicating the original) but the deck has been planked as a departure from the kit. Really nice job of kit bashing, mate.



Bob Filipowski proudly stated that he has finished the copper plating on his half-hull model of the *Staghound* (1:96). And proud he should be, as the results are a bench mark on how to accomplish this task. Well done, mate!

Ken Goetz has finished the bow on his *USS Constitution* and has installed the gun barrels (tompions were decorated using computer made star patterns). This just keeps getting better and better, mate. How will you ever



part with it? All the neat solutions you have found to solve the many difficult decorative details are a real

lesson for us all. Thanks for keeping us up to date.

Doc Williams gave us a great idea on how to organize our tools. He built a case out of lacewood, walnut & maple using as a pattern a jewelry box with fold out drawers. All his rigging materials fit in here and are easily accessible. Ship shape!



Bob Ivan finished off his "Supermarine" *Spitfire* and, borrowing on the nautical tie in, earns a place at our table. The original prototype was, in fact, designed as a float plane and successfully competed in air races in the 30's. This success led to it's eventual use as a major fighter plane during WWII.



THE BATTLE OFF SAMAR

By Bob Filipowski

On October 25, 1944, one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of the United States Navy occurred. An American task group, code named Taffy III, and composed of 6 jeep carriers (CVE's), 3 destroyers, and 4 destroyer escorts, was attacked by a Japanese force of 4 battleships, 7 cruisers, and 11 destroyers. One of the battleships was the pride of the Imperial Navy, the mighty 18" gun *Yamato*. History would later call this engagement "The Battle Off Samar."



The Battleship *Tennessee*, a veteran of Surigao Strait, pulls away after refueling the *Dennis*.

In 1944, the Japanese were well aware of the fact that they were losing the war. If the Philippines fell, the home islands would be cut off from indispensable raw material supplies in Southeast Asia. A major last gamble was devised, called the "SHO Plan", in which they would play their last trump card, the powerful surface units of the Imperial Navy.

The force that attacked Taffy III that day was one of two pincers that was to meet at Leyte Gulf, where the American invasion was taking place. Things went badly from the start for the Japanese as the Southern Force was all but annihilated in a night action in Surigao Strait, by battleships, cruisers, destroyers and PT boats, under the command of Jesse B. Oldendorf, who masterfully executed the classic "Crossing-the-T" maneuver.



The Central Force, which would eventually engage Taffy III, was mauled by US submarines and aircraft in San Bernardino Strait, and actually turned for home. Admiral Halsey, thinking that this group no longer posed a threat, pulled his powerful carriers and battleships off station, and raced north, after learning that four Japanese carriers (a decoy force) were headed his way.

This left the northern flank unprotected, and opened the door for Admiral Kurita's battle group, which had reversed course again during the night.

Sam Palermo's ship, the USS *Dennis* DE-405. Both 5" guns would be disabled during the battle. The forward mount by shellfire, and the other would suffer a broken breach operating spring.



On that fateful October morning, Machinist Mate 3rd Class Sam Palermo had no other plans other than to get a good breakfast before he relieved the watch at 08:00. As he waited in the chow line, he noticed a large body of ships approaching from the north.

Everyone thought it was Admiral Halsey's Task Force 34, which was composed of fast battleships, cruisers and destroyers.

This impressive sight gave Sam and his mates a great sense of security. The feeling of well-being was short lived as the horizon suddenly lit up with gun flashes, followed by screaming shells, and multi-colored splashes among the vessels of Taffy III. (These colors helped the fire control men aboard Japanese



The USS *Heermann* (foreground) and USS *Dennis* early in the battle making smoke. Note the bow wave on the *Heermann*.

ships mark their ship's fall of shot during daylight, multi-ship engagements.) A moment later, general quarters sounded.

The *Dennis* had two boiler rooms and two engine rooms. Palermo, along with three other crewmen was assigned to one of the engine rooms during "GQ." His battle station took him down into the deepest area of the ship. Sam joked that he would have been the last one out in an emergency ... if he could get out.

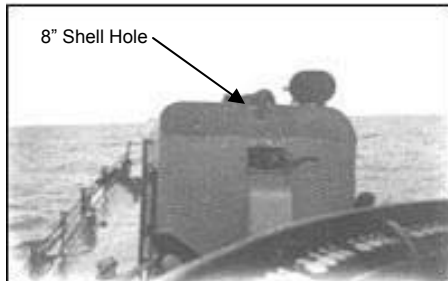
Against battleships and heavy cruisers, the likelihood of a super heated steam line being damaged was quite good, and would have meant almost certain death.



Palermo's primary responsibility was to monitor various redundant pressure systems. If one was damaged, it was shut down, and the backup system was brought on line. This apparently gave him time to think. When asked if he was aware of what was going on above, his response was: "No, but I did a lot of praying!"

During the battle the men below decks had to rely on their senses, and could only guess as to what was happening. Unfortunately, their worst

fears were being realized as the *Dennis* shook and rocked with each 8" shell impact. This little DE would be hit 5 times, resulting in five dead, numerous wounded, and substantial flooding. Fortunately for the Americans, the Japanese made a critical mistake by using armor piercing shells. The majority of the hits scored on Taffy III vessels actually passed completely through their hulls.



The *Dennis*' forward mount lost four men when a direct hit, punctured the turret, went through the deck, and came out the side of the ship. A second 8" projectile would enter the chief's quarters, where a member of a damage control party would suffer shrapnel wounds, and become the fifth fatality.

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Sharpening, continued from page 1

ended sharpened on two surfaces, and angled ended sharpened on one cutting surface (skew).

Sharpening involves a three step process: grinding/whetting, honing, and stropping. Off-the-shelf tools, even though new, will need to be sharpened first before use. The cutting angles of the edges must be brought closer to 30 degrees but not less than 25 degrees on a whetting stone (a once-in-lifetime operation).

Next, honing on progressively finer grit stones achieves flat and true cutting surfaces. Lastly, the tool is stropped on a leather belt using the hard, outside face of the leather.

'V'-tools must be treated as a combination of two single sided flat chisels united at the center by a small gouge. The resultant sharp 'V' on V-tools needs to be honed off to match the inside radius. Other quick tips: ♦Pull on the chisel when stropping—never push. ♦Try to use and devise fixtures or guides to keep your (sharpening) technique uniform and accurate so that the cutting angles you've developed remain the same from touch-up to touch-up. ♦The smaller the chisel the more difficult it is to sharpen so use magnification, if necessary, with plenty of light. ♦Only the sharpest edges are capable of making paper thin wood chips, so let that be your goal in sharpening.

Ray suggests the "Exacto Woodcarving Gouge Assortment No. X134" as a startup tool specimen, as it contains three of the four basic shape chisels and the hardness of the metal passes the "file test".

As a close, Ray leaves us with this thought: "Best of luck and let the chips (thin ones) fly". Thanks, Ray. ❖



The **Nautical Research and Model Ship Society of Chicago** had, as its February program, a round-table entitled "Plans - The Good, The Bad and The Ugly" (sort of a take-off on the Clint Eastwood cult film). The result of the discussion was an appreciation of what makes a set of plans good rather than bad or ugly. Works in progress and problem issues were also covered.

The **North Shore Deadeyes** closed out the year 2008 with its annual Pot Luck Holiday Dinner. Despite some heavy weather, the event was described as an array of gustatory pleasure for those who braved the elements.

Mark your calendars: **November 7th** is the date for our annual **Tri-Club Symposium**. We're going back to the *Lutheran Church of the Ascension*, 460 Sunset Ridge Road, Northfield, IL. No info on speakers is available at this time.

• *John C. Butler-class DEs* •

Fourth in our series on *Historic American Warships* feature two famous Destroyer Escorts of the *John C. Butler* class. Destroyer escorts were smaller than destroyers, designed to protect convoys against submarines or aircraft. Her major weapons were two 5-inch guns that could lightly damage but not sink armored ships, and three torpedo tubes.



The *USS Samuel B. Roberts* (DE-413) was part of the Battle off Samar. The destroyer escort, along with a handful of destroyers and escort carriers of Taffy 3, was inadvertently left alone to fend off Japanese cruisers and battleships in the most pivotal action in the 1944 Battle of Leyte Gulf. Steaming through a gauntlet of incoming shellfire, the *Roberts* scored one torpedo hit and numerous gunfire hits as she slugged it out with enemy cruisers before finally being sunk (with a loss of 89 of her crew). For this action she received the nickname "the destroyer escort that fought like a battleship".



Photo # NH 90603 USS Samuel B. Roberts, circa June 1944

The *USS Dennis* (DE-405) found herself screening the escort carriers supplying air cover for the invasion of Leyte on the 25th of October, 1944. On that day, she

DE Class: *John C. Butler*

Builder: Brown Shipbuilding,
Houston, TX
Completed: 83
Cancelled: 4
Lost: 3
Retired: 80

General characteristics

Length: 306 feet
Beam: 37 ft., 0 in.
Draft: 9 ft., 4 in.
Displacement: 1,350 tons
Speed: 24 knots
Crew: 15 officers, 183 enlisted
Armament: Main Battery 2 5-in/38, 3 21-in Torpedo Tubes, AA Battery 4 (2x2) 40-mm, 10 20-mm.
Propulsion: 2 boilers, 2 (WGT) Westinghouse Geared (steam) Turbines.

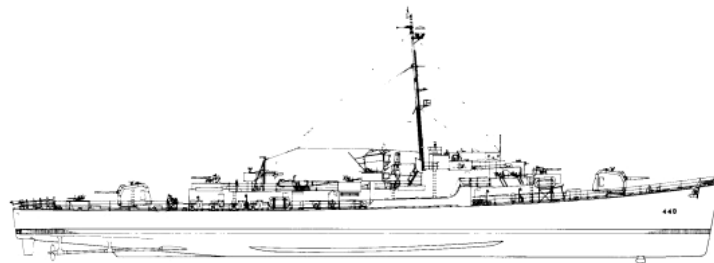
joined her carriers and destroyers in making history as they fought a gallant action with the Japanese attacking force. *Dennis* rescued 434 survivors of the bombed *St. Lo* (CVE-63). For this action she shared in the Presidential Unit Citation awarded to TU 77.4.3, "Taffy 3". In addition to this honor, she received four battle stars for WWII service.

After WWII, US Navy destroyer escorts were referred to as ocean escorts, and in 1975 were reclassified as Frigates (FF).

Compiled from information provided on the web site: www.wikipedia.org.



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