

## Skipper's Corner

### **The "Maine" Event**

by Joe Miller  
Skipper, WSMS

The WSMS met at the National Naval Medical Center and held another remarkable show and tell - but more about that next time, as I have just come back from the wonderful 2004 NRG meeting in Portland Maine, and want to talk about that.

If you have not been to one of these meetings, you have deprived yourself of a real ship-modeling experience. There really is something for everyone. For example, for the kit builder

who has asked himself why his or her favorite hull has not appeared as a kit, this meeting afforded us an opportunity to learn about how ship model kits are designed. Contrary to what one may intuitively think, that is the emphasis would be on the physical design and production of the kit. Actually, the primary goal has to be an understanding of what the kit purchaser wants and is like. For example, thirty years ago, the kit builder did everything and the bulk of kits were simply a collection of wood, metal and other basic materials. More recently, with the advent of a need for "instant gratification", much more "finish" is needed - that is, the current builder expects a lot more work done towards completing the model, for example preformed, usually cast resin or etched brass parts. The subject of the model is also crucial - the plastic airplane business is a classic example - there must be several hundred versions of the P-51, and very few of an early French warplane. Simply, people buy what they recognize. Several other technical sessions dealt with local Portland Maine nautical points of interest especially ship-building there during the second world war - an area of interest to the Steel Navy types. For sticks and strings enthusiasts, Clay Feldman gave an excellent if somewhat detailed analysis of the accuracy of Charles Davis' model of the brig *Lexington*, on which he based one of the earlier books about ship modeling, and one which has inspired ship modelers for decades. Unfortunately, Mr. Davis, according to Dr. Feldman, apparently had the lines of a Cruizer-class brig (a common type of small British naval vessel related to the famous HMS *Beagle* of Darwinian fame) and used that.

**Next Meeting**  
**Saturday, October 9, 2002**  
**At 10 A.M.**

**At**  
**Meteor Productions,**  
**Suites H & I**  
**7401 Fullerton Road**  
**Springfield Virginia**

#### **Directions to Meteor Productions**

- 1: From the Capitol Beltway, merge onto I-95 S via exit number 57A toward RICHMOND.
- 2: Merge onto BACKLICK RD/ VA-617 S via exit number 167 toward FULLERTON RD.
- 3: BACKLICK RD/ VA-617 S becomes ALBAN RD/ VA-790 S.
- 4: Turn RIGHT onto BOUDINOT DR.
- 5: Turn LEFT onto FULLERTON RD

Regrettably, the British brig had only the vaguest resemblance to the earlier *Lexington*. Dr. Feldman then described his efforts to find the lines of the actual ship - an approximation based on contemporary drawings and the attempts of several others. This whole effort has become a long-term effort for Dr. Feldman.

For those more interested in seeing than sitting and listening, before the core meetings began there were several trips to local nautical sites of interest in the Portland area, including the Maine Maritime Museum in beautiful Bath, Maine, the "city of ships". That evening everyone had an opportunity to study examples of *Homarus americanus* - the Maine lobster. I studied it very closely indeed. Although I was not able to go along, as I had business up there, many members were able to take a special boat ride on a schooner, the *Bagheera*, around Casco Bay. Again I was not able to go, but all who did reported a great time - and lots commented on a much deeper understanding of the difficulties in operating a wind-drive vessel. The various tool and other ship model support vendors were present in significant numbers, and the folks at Pier Books had an especially successful visit - I ended up buying a book and plan set for both a French

armed ship's boat and an armed transport. The plans and the book are phenomenal - very well done, and very beautifully presented. For far too long, the emphasis in the sticks and strings late 18th-early19th century community has been on English naval subjects, neglecting a gold mine of material at the Musee de la Marine in Paris, Toulon and others. Following Jean Budriot's lead (his famous 4 volume series The 74 Gun Ship of the Line), many other French writers have begun to publish technical discussions of French shipbuilding, and model making. These are being translated into English, and are masterpieces. Seeing is believing, and I will bring these items to the next meeting. There was a wonderful book I was not able to buy - I have a budget these days, and want too much - titled the Art of Model Shipbuilding, which at first glance looked like another ode to pretty ship models, but actually turned out to be a really great treatise on tricks of the trade in model building. I am saving my pennies for that one (\$85, again from Pier Books).

Perhaps one of the most interesting parts of the meeting was the technical sessions on Sunday, the last day of the meeting. The experts gath-



**NRG 2004 Conference Registration Desk. NRG Office Manager Valerie Slocum (center) with her sister Pam, ably supported by Guild director and conference organizer Mickey Martelle (in the funny hat!)**

ered at several small tables, and for 3 hours there was an informal give and take session in which some really great ideas were shared. For years I have wondered about methods of aligning fut-tocks for sistered frames, and lo and behold! someone had the answer.

I am very aware that the above sounds like an advertisement for the Nautical research Guild, and it of course to a degree is - but the fact is that I am willing to spend the few seconds my masters yield to me at this meeting because it really speaks to the things I most like to think about - ship modeling. Next year's meeting will be in Newport News, promises to be even better, and will be in November 2005- think about attending! In the meantime, the Bridge, meeting on the deck of a ship in Casco Bay, was inspired to get things going for the 75th Anniversary meeting. More about that at the next WSMS meeting.

Also, I appear to have awakened a bit of a discussion about Joel Labow's excellent presentation at the August meeting. It was not my intention to imply that all decking is sprung, or that all decking at the time was sprung - however, it often was. I apologize if I have misled anyone, and will be happy to continue the discussion at the next meeting as well.

## Scale Ship Model Competition Returns!

For almost 25 years, the Mariners' Museum in Newport News has hosted the Scale Ship Model Competition. Held every five years, the competition became what amounted to the world series of modeling – a competition that drew top-notch models from around the world. Models were judged in March or April (I'm told that at the last competition, the judging required two full weeks, 8 hours per day!). The award winning models (three per category) remained on display at the Museum through the summer, drawing large crowds of admiring visitors. The competition culminated in the Nautical Research Guild conference, hosted by the Hampton Roads Ship Model Society, where the competition awards

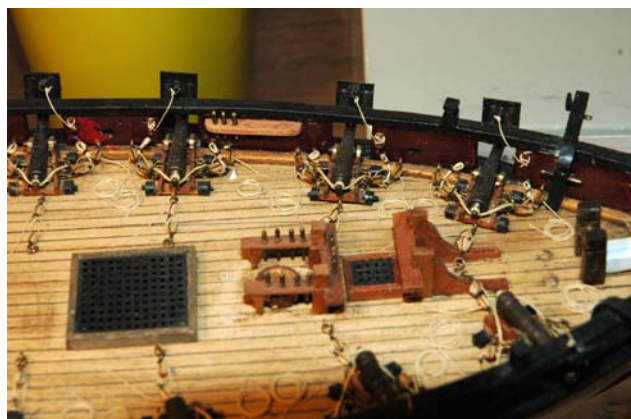
were presented.

The next competition was scheduled for 2005. Then, last year, the Mariners' Museum announced that it did not plan to host the competition. Modelers from around the world expressed their disappointment. However, behind the scenes, things were happening.

As a result of efforts by Kim Nielsen, director of the US Navy Museum and Dana Wegner, the Navy's Curator of Ship Models, the competition is back on – and is moving to Washington! The competition will be sponsored by the Navy Historical Association, and the Navy Museum will play host to the exhibition. The next competition will be held a year late, in 2006. Subsequent competitions will be held in 2010 and every five years thereafter. The format will be very similar to past competitions. The NHA plans on promoting this competition in a *big* way, with hopes of bringing competitors from all over the world.

And yes, that means that the NRG conference will be coming to the Baltimore-Washington area as well. The WSMS and the Naval Academy Ship Model Society are the logical hosts for the conference – provided that the membership is willing. As you all know, we put on a successful conference in 2001, under the most trying circumstances imaginable. The next conference can be bigger, and better, than the last one.

The Bridge will poll the membership at an upcoming meeting to determine the membership's level of interest in hosting the conference.



## Steel Navy Special Interest Group

The Steel Navy special interest group meets the last Saturday of the month in one of the members' homes. This group focuses on post-civil war powered vessels. Plastic, wood, cardboard, metal and computer models are all discussed. Members are encouraged to bring their latest kits, models, tools or reference materials.

The next meeting will be held on Saturday, October 30 at 10 AM. The meeting will be held at Bruce Buchner's new townhouse. Bruce has promised to provide directions, which will be emailed out prior to the meeting. If you would like directions and did *not* receive this newsletter via email, please contact Vince McCullough (703) 345-8644 (daytime) or by email at [vincent.mccullough@ngc.com](mailto:vincent.mccullough@ngc.com).



**September 2004 Steel Navy Special Interest Group Meeting. Attendees (clockwise from left) Bill Burdick, Jeff Fenton, Bruce Buchner, Pat Tomeldon, Lon Heidler (standing), Harry Ohanian, Don Preul. Vince McCullough (photographer) not shown.**

### Upcoming WSMS Meeting Schedule

Regular monthly meetings alternate between Virginia and Maryland locations. Virginia meetings are held on the second Saturday of the month, and Maryland meetings on the second Tuesday. The current meeting plan is:

October 9 (Saturday), 10 AM – Regular Meeting, Meteor Productions, Springfield, VA.

October 30 (Saturday), 10 AM - Steel Navy Meeting. Location: Bruce Buchner's home, Lorton, VA.

November 9 (Tuesday) 8 PM – Regular Meeting, Bethesda Naval Hospital