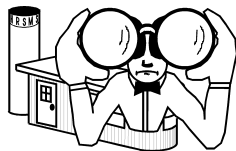


From The Bridge



Mystery Photo



The month of June traditionally marks the beginning of summer, but the Hampton Roads area is in for quite an event as the area will host OpSail 2012 from June 1 to June 12. The theme of OpSail 2012 will be the celebration of the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 and the writing of the Star Spangled Banner. The event will coincide with Norfolk Harborfest and will be held mostly along the Norfolk waterfront, with most activities held at Waterside and Town Point Park. The Tidewater area is very fortunate to have been selected as one of only five historic ports to host OpSail 2012.

The waters surrounding Hampton Roads will host approximately 50 ships that will participate in OpSail 2012, which include tall ships, naval and other types of vessels. Many countries will be represented. On Friday morning, June 8, the tall ships will set sail from Lynnhaven Roads for the Parade of Sail. The approximately 22 tall ships will sail into Norfolk where they will dock and be available for tours. Ships on display include the USCG Eagle, Godspeed, Bounty, Pride of Baltimore II, Sultana and Virginia. This is an excellent opportunity for the ship modeler to visit and take reference photos of these replicas of ships from the past.

I attended OpSail 2000 and really enjoyed the Parade of Sail and the ship tours. The 2000 event attracted over 2 million visitors and generated in excess of 21 million dollars in revenue for the local economy. I hope you get a chance to attend OpSail 2012. It is not often that you get to see so many tall ships gathered in one place and that you have the opportunity to tour them.

I want to thank Ron Lewis for his presentation on the Titanic at last month's meeting. Ron made us feel that we were all on board the Titanic as he relived the last few hours of this doomed ship.

Please bring your current ship model project to the meeting to share your progress with the members. I look forward to seeing everyone Saturday.

Ryland

Mystery Photo #310: You've all heard the saying that implores you to follow your gut, go you're first instinct, or trust your intuition—right? And the implication is you'll usually be right—right? Well sometimes that first impression really needs a second opinion. It doesn't happen often and usually means that your first impression was not very good. That impression could have been made in haste; it could have been the result of not paying close attention; it could have been clouded by other stimuli. That's what happened to me with this Mystery Photo. My first glance, and it was a really quick glance, told me that this image featured a United States Navy "Wind"-class icebreaker. I saw a smallish vessel with a single mast and a hull form that was very rounded; it screamed icebreaker. I was wrong. But I'll tell you anyway to always follow your gut, right or wrong—there's usually a basis of fact lurking behind your opinion—as we'll see while we go down the "B" row again and dissect this month's clear, crisp offering.

Ok! What could be better than finding a vessel posed quietly next to a pier with a background that hints of a tropical paradise. That hint? Well. It must be that palm tree. Alright, I agree you can find palm trees in places that are not island oases. Places like Miami, Long Beach, where I-95 crosses the South Carolina-Georgia state line, and out at the end of Glendale Road, here in Newport News, Virginia. But I ask you, do any of those places have a mountain in the background?

We're looking for a port with a pier at the end of a long narrow street, with palm trees near the water's edge and mountains in the background. Also, and this will help, we need to understand that we are looking for a commissioned United States vessel, as evidenced by the national ensign flying from the staff at the stern. And a vessel still in wartime grey paint, but one that seems to be devoid of wartime armament and urgency.

(Continued on page 2)

I don't know who named them swells. There's nothing swell about them. They should have named them awfuls.

--Hugo Vihlen

MEETING NOTICE

Date: Saturday June 9, 2012

Place: Mariners' Museum

Time: 1000 Hours

(Continued from page 1)



Mystery Photo

So or setting consists of a vessel docked at a tropical location soon after the end of—and I'll just say it—World War Two. What are our options? We have places to consider like St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Havana, Cuba; Honolulu, Hawaii; Bougainville, the Solomon Islands; or how about Tahiti? They all come to mind. Perhaps you can name even more. These locations cover a very broad swath of ocean, so we need more clues.

And the best place to find them is in the photograph. The vessel is rather smallish, probably not more than 200 feet in length. The hull features fine ends, pronounced tumble-home, a raised forecastle and a raised stern. A two deck high superstructure sits atop the upper deck and its bridge face appears to be about midship. The pilot house is actually 1/2 deck higher in this arrangement. One lone sailor stands atop the bridge, his abbreviated uniform of shorts and no shirt can attest to the relative air temperature but maybe not the humidity. Forward of that we see a well deck with a large scupper. Several sailors mill about the starboard rail there, and above them you can see the business end of a heavy boom cocked



up at about 30-degrees from the horizontal. Directly below the boom a sailor appears to be holding a boom crotch. The single, thin mast supports two rather light weight yards and a large, distinctive radar—its waveguide is protected by the standoff tube on the starboard side. On the signal deck located atop the radio shack you can see the starboard flag bin with its sloped outer face. On the aft face of the structure you can see the notional stack flanked by two large ventilators; notional but adequate to discharge the exhaust from her two main diesels—you could almost mistake it for the Charlie noble. Just aft of that we find an empty gun tub with a canvas bulwark. The open after deck is covered by an awning, always a sign of a vessel in a hotter climate. Finally at the stern the square opening in the bulwark is where the bed rail of the starboard depth charge rack protruded. Aside from the already commented on paint scheme, we see a few carley floats and stacked ship's boats that can attest to an augmented, but I'm sure nonexistent at this time, wartime crew.

In the background we see the marking "15" or "I5" on the warehouse which sits on the pier or quay. My bet is on the numerical choice because most piers in harbors are num-

bered (if a letter is used it usually follows the designation). On the front of the closest building which appears to be across the street from the pier we see a signboard with two words. Only the second word is legible and it reads "Company." As you go up the street, several of the buildings offer distinctive features, one of which is instrumental in proving the location of the scene. And finally there is a clue that I will let our single respondent offer; and it's a dusey, as you will see.

After a hard look through several references—chiefly Robert Scheina's book U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II, I determined that this vessel was one of a large group of purpose-built buoy tenders. In fact, the design was the culmination of a long evolutionary chain of tenders developed for the U. S. Lighthouse Service (USLHS).

In 1939 the USLHS merged with the U. S. Coast Guard which had evolved earlier from the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service and the U. S. Lifesaving Service. Part of the "New" Coast Guard mission was protecting Coastal and inland waters as well as maintaining navigational aids for all vessels using these waters. One of the ways this was done was by using light houses and channel markers called buoys. It is for the aid to navigation mission that this tender was born.

According to Scheina, there were three remarkably similar classes of tenders built between 1941 and 1944 totaling 39 vessels. The leading group is known as the *Cactus*-class and all ships carried names of native trees, shrubs, or flowers. But what is important about the class is the timing of its design. "Preliminary design of the 180-foot coastwise tender was initiated by the USLHS prior to its amalgamation into the Coast Guard. For the first time it added search-and-rescue features to the features designed for tending buoys or servicing lighthouses." The "New" Coast Guard also "added ice breaking features to the design." The icebreaking mission more than anything else drove the hull form we see in the Mystery Photo. As a result "the design featured a single screw, slack bilges, and a cutaway forefoot."

But with 39 vessels in the combined classes how can we narrow the field and identify the Mystery vessel? It was back to Scheina's book. One of the things Scheina offers is a brief history of where each vessel was stationed during the war. It stands to reason that if the vessel was stationed near an island paradise during the war and we assume that the image was made just after the war ended then we could narrow the list to a manageable few vessels. It was a good tactic.

(Continued on page 3)

Nautical Term

Jacobs Ladder (1) Any ladder aloft except rattled shrouds. The term was a sailor's nickname, and referral to the ladder by which the Biblical Jacob climbed to heaven. (2) Also called a "Pilot's Ladder," a ladder that can be hung over the side of a ship for access to boats. Also too, a light ladder for ship side of for boat booms.

Submitted by, Tim Wood

(Continued from page 2)



Mystery Photo

Using the most likely ports as a basis for the search, I was able to narrow the list. Almost immediately I was able to eliminate the 13 units of the *Cactus*-class because of two things: 1) none served in an area that featured a likely port, and 2) they all featured a prominent stack and their bridge wings lacked the vertical legs that braced their outboard ends. The 6 units of the *Mesquite*-class were the next to be eliminated because their wartime stations didn't fit the bill.

This left the 20 units of the *Iris*-class as contenders. I quickly narrowed that list to two; *Basswood* which was stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and *Sagebrush* which was stationed at San Juan, Puerto Rico. Now I agree this is a bit unscientific as there were many other units which were stationed in various tropical regions and could have been caught in port, but it made sense. After that it was off to the Internet to look for images of these two vessels. That search will lead you to a site called USCG.mil.

Bob Moritz offers the only response for this Mystery Photo. "John, I believe the mystery photo is the Light-house Tender WAGL-388 *Basswood*." He adds a few statistics to his reply: "Displacement of 935 tons, 180 X 37 X 12 feet, 1 shaft Diesel-electric drive, B.H.P. 1,200 = 14 Knots. Armament is 1-3 in., 2 or 4-40 mm. AA guns. Built between 1941-1944 by Zenith Dredge and Marine Iron & Sbdg." Sadly, the Web challenged Moritz said "[he] cannot date the photo or location." But he offers that "It also looks as if the 3 in. gun is missing." Finally he drops one bomb of a clue, one that everyone should have seen: "If you look just aft of the life raft on the stern, you will see the name of the ship. They are raised lettering with the name *Basswood*."

Give that man a cigar!

This was about the time where I was reminded of the old joke about asking a PHD to pour beer out of a boot with instructions written on the heel. Ok, the vessel's name is visible and you could go from there, or you could research the two likely candidates and see what turns up. Besides we still have to try and identify the location and date the image.

The Internet is our friend. It may be capricious, but it is our friend. If you thought that this was a Coast Guard vessel, you could have found the vessel. If you thought that this was a tender of some sort, you could have found the vessel. If you had a named ship to search, such as *Basswood*, you could have found the vessel. In fact, if you searched under Google images for "USCGC *Basswood*," you would have found the Mystery Photo at USCG.mil. While the image is undated it does locate our tropical paradise. The very brief caption accompanying the image reads: "USCGC *Basswood* at Honolulu (no date)". Let's assume that Honolulu is our tropical paradise and let's see if we can prove it.

Funny thing about a harbor and a 60 year old image of it; it changes and time can obliterate your reference points. For instance, piers can be torn down, consolidated with others, filled in to become shipping container termi-

nals, or public space. In this case we got lucky. According to a current map of Honolulu harbor there are at least 53 piers or quays for vessels to tie up to. There are a few more if you include a few trailing letters. And if you look at the map you see a little stub pier named "15" whose present user identifies as being 250' long. And if you look at any Honolulu street map you will learn that the street opposite the pier is called Mauna Kea Street.

Now it's hard to say but Mauna Kea Street either skirts the western edge of the downtown district or its part of what is called Chinatown. It's not clear from my maps if this is a boundary street between the districts or one that runs through the heart of Chinatown. It doesn't really matter as long as I have the oriental switch in your mind turned on.

Searching on Google for "buildings on Mauna Kea Street" proved to be very fruitful. That building with the placard ending with the word "Company", yields that the building is really—or currently—the M. Kawahara Building, built in 1911. That's certainly useful. The shape and physical characteristics of the building match what you see in the Mystery Photo. One has to assume that the 1940's occupant of the building covered this with "____ Company." We need a bit more to cement the deal.



Remember the tease about a building that was instrumental in proving the location? Well, if you scan rooftops as you go up the street in the Mystery Photo keeping your eye on the level of the lowest palm frond, you will see what appears to be a pagoda shaped roof. That's distinctive. Using a Google search, or even better if you search using Google Maps, you will see that two blocks up the street there still exists a building on the corner with this distinctive pagoda shaped roof.

That building is the home of the Wo Fat Chop Sui Restaurant. Apparently it was called the Wo Fat building in several historical images I uncovered. A web site dealing with Honolulu's Chinatown history reveals that the building was erected in 1938. Wo Fat literally means peace and prosperity in Chinese. But to a certain somebody from Kentucky the mere mention of "Wo Fat" can

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)



Mystery Photo

produce the sort of side splitting laughter that brings tears to your eyes. I can't tell you why, but if she reads this, I guarantee another episode of side splitting laughter. The events that produced that memory were that funny. Across the block from the Wo Fat building and on the same side of the street you can still see the brick pediment of the Siu building, another survivor to the present day.

And this is neat! Google Maps offers the opportunity to put your self on the corner of Mauna Kea Street at the M. Kawahara building where you can look up the street. Guess what you see in the distance. That's right, mountains!

OK, let's turn our attention back to the pier for a minute. As alluded to earlier pier 15 still exists. The wooden warehouse we see in the Mystery Photo is long gone, replaced by a station of the Honolulu fire department. At the pier they tend to their fireboat, the *Moku Ahi*.



Now aside from the ship's name that so gracefully adorns the fantail of our Mystery tender, can we prove that *Basswood* was at this location at a time when she still carried her wartime grey? The web site USCG.mil offers quite an extensive history of *Basswood*. It lists her stations from commissioning to a time period that adequately frames what we need to satisfy the Mystery Photo.

"USCG *Basswood*, an ocean going buoy tender, was built in Duluth, Minnesota and commissioned on 12 January 1944. From March to April 1944, *Basswood* performed general ATON (*Aids to Navigation*) and icebreaking on the Great Lakes. The cutter was then transferred to Astoria, Oregon where it was used for general ATON duty until the end of the war. After the war's end *Basswood* continued to be stationed at Astoria and used for ATON duties. She was subsequently transferred to San Francisco

where it was homeported from 2 February-21 August 1946. That assignment was short-lived, as the cutter was re-assigned to Honolulu where she served from 22 August 1946- until 1968."

So the earliest we can date this image is August 22, 1946, and that seems to fit the general appearance of the tender.

What can we say about the design? After all, at first glance these vessels look a bit odd. The final tender design coming from the drawing boards of the USLHS was *Juniper*. *Juniper* was evolutionary in that she had the same general hull shape and appearance as her forebears and you can easily see the lineage. You can also see this same lineage in *Basswood* in everything except maybe the hull form. The missions added to her role by the new amalgamated service forced some unique compromise to her final shape and appearance. And I think you can see that her architects were good at what they did. The longevity of these vessel attest to that. Most were over fifty years

and some reached sixty years of service before they were retired. *Basswood* lasted from 1943 until she was decommissioned on September 4, 1998. She was sold in 2000 but not scrapped until 2011.

By today's standards the design is somewhat anachronistic. But that is more a function of making things easier for today's sailor and making them easier and cheaper to build than making things better. One such

item is the single screw; today we see a tendency to over-power everything. While seemingly fine to the 1940's mariner, the "single screw propulsion, meant they were not the most maneuverable platforms and required a skilled ship handler to bring them alongside a buoy." A skill that comes with bragging rights, I would say. Some features that also point to their longevity are their all welded construction, their multi-role design, excellent range and economy, and stout construction. Their class history sums it up in these words: "A notched forefoot, ice-belt at the waterline, and reinforced bow gave the vessel icebreaking capabilities. Extending the superstructure to the ship's sides increased interior volume above the main deck. The 30,000-gallon fuel capacity gave the new design a range of 12,000 miles at a 12-knot cruising speed; at 8.3 knots the cruising range increased to 17,000 miles. Finer lines at the bow and stern increased the new tender's sea keeping ability in rough weather; an increase in draft also promoted seaworthiness. Finally, "The lift capacity and towing features of the tenders helped them carry out salvage work."

Basswood; it's not just for hulls anymore!

John Cheevers

THE ANSWER

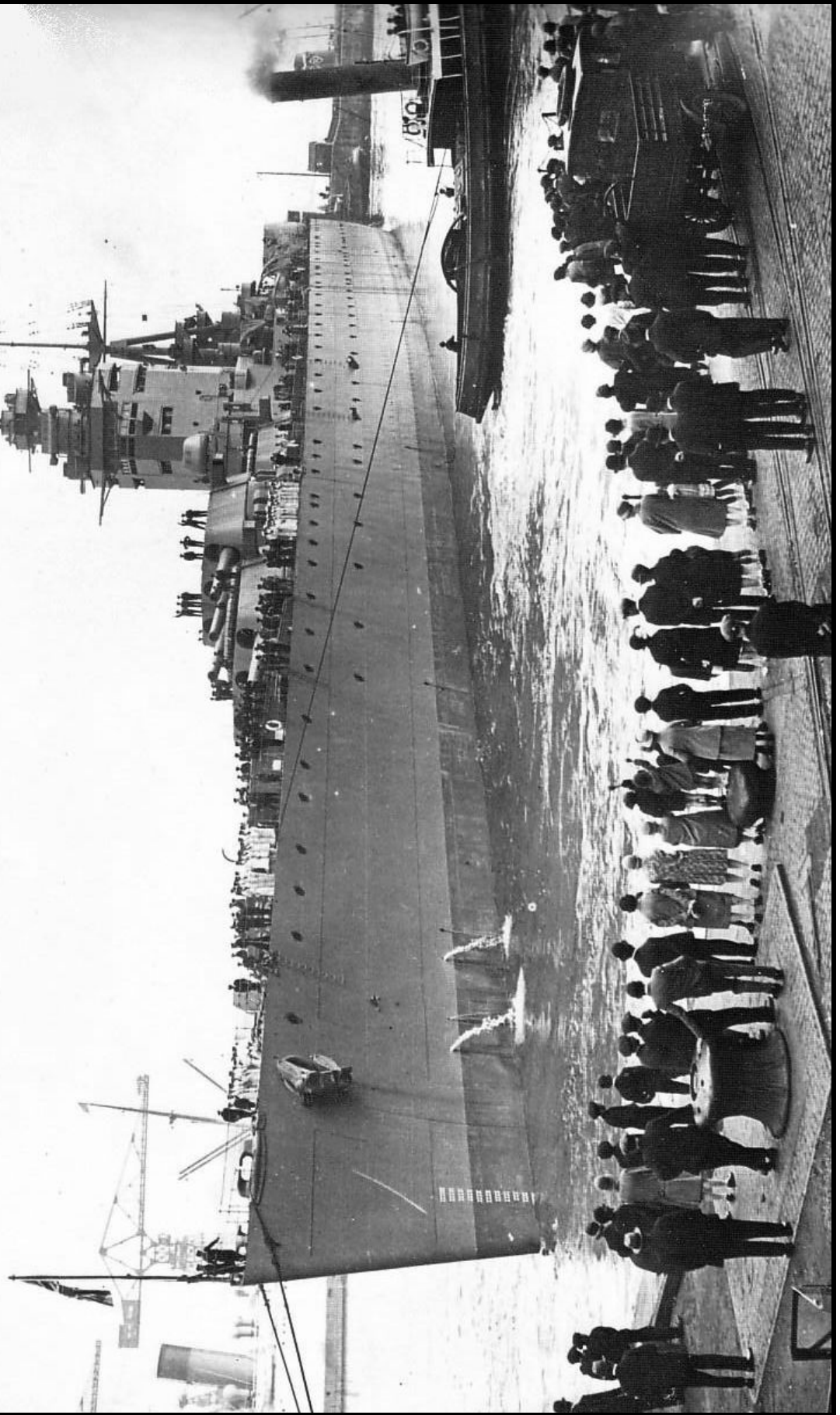
Mystery Photo 311

USCGC *Basswood* at Honolulu (no date)

Thanks to Tim Wood for submitting the May photo.

Mystery Photo

Contact John Cheevers by mail, e-mail or telephone if you know what it is.
jfcheevers@verizon.net



NOTABLE EVENTS

JUNE

- 9 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: Mystic Seaport & 2012 Northeast Ship
Model Conference, Ryland Craze

JULY

- 14 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: Building Plastic Models - Charles Landrum

AUGUST

- 11 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Presentation: Always Good Ships, Bill Fox

SEPTEMBER

- 8 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting, Picnic, NN Park
19 Talk Like a Pirate Day

OCTOBER

- 13 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
13 NRG Symposium, New York City

NOVEMBER

- 10 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

DECEMBER

- 8 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

JANUARY

- 12 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Nomination of officers,

FEBRUARY

- 9 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum
Election of officers

MARCH

- 9 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

APRIL

- 13 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

MAY

- 11 **HRSMS** Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

**WATCH, QUARTER
AND
STATION BILL**



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Mate: Tim Wood (757) 481-6018
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Bill Clarke (757) 868-6809
Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580
Webmaster: Greg Harrington (757) 930-4615
Chaplain: Alan Frazer (757) 867-7666

MINUTES



Hampton Roads Ship Model Society
Monthly Meeting
Mariners' Museum
May 12, 2012

The meeting was called to order by the Skipper, Ryland Craze at 1011 hours. There were no guests present. The minutes were approved with no corrections or additions. The Purser was absent so Stewart Winn gave the Purser's report.

Old Business: The Skipper talked about the joint meeting with the Washington Ship Model Society. The plans are tentative at the present time. The Skipper said that John Cheevers had been in contact with the Washington group.

New Business: Tom Saunders talked about an e-mail he received from the NRG Secretary, Bob Filipowski. The NRG is offering a discounted membership fee through June 30th of this year. If five members of our group join or renew their NRG membership using the form Bob sent, the HRSMS will receive a copy of the Ship Modeler's Notes. Tom also gave notice of an NRG Seminar scheduled to be held on October 13th, 2012. The seminar will be held in the New York area. John Wyld said there was a possibility that the Tidewater Chapter of the International Plastic Modelers' Society (IPMS) will host their national conference in 2014. The selection for conference venue will be made in August. John said our participation would be welcomed if the Tidewater Chapter were selected. Ron Lewis said the exhibit "Abandon Ship" would open at the Mariners' Museum on the Memorial Day weekend.

Show & Tell: Henry Clapp showed his model of a scratch-built flattie using Chappell's measurements. Henry gave some background on this type of craft. Ryland Craze showed the progress on his plank-on-frame, 18th Century Longboat. Ryland also showed a Chuck Pissaro designed kit for a 1:48 scale English Pinnace.

The meeting was adjourned to the presentation "RMS Titanic: Fortune and Fate", by Ron Lewis.

Midshipman Hitch

