

From The Bridge



Mystery Photo



I may be wrong, but it seems to me that there ought to be a good use for all these face masks in ship modeling after the COVID has left town. The first idea that springs forth would be to use them as sails. Not the N-95 kind with the hard plastic surround and micron filter insert, but the neat cloth ones with the elastic cord. They seem to have the right cut, they are pre billowed, and they have most of their running rigging already attached. And if they have any writing on them so much the better! Just think, your model could adorn a local restaurant some day and the sails would give the customers hours of fun and laughs reading the pithy sayings. Of course you could always wear them in the shop to keep dust and other creepy things out of your lungs.



The sky is the limit. Imagine, years from now you can bore your grandchildren with a retelling of how you beat the COVID monster by wearing the mask.

2nd Banana, John

Nautical Term

Kedge - Earlier, to warp a ship or to move her by the use of an anchor; now only of the latter meaning. An earlier spelling was kadge. The word comes from Middle English, caggen, to catch or to fasten.

Tim Wood

MEETING NOTICE

The September meeting will take place online.
1000 Hours
September 12, 2020



Mystery Photo #410: Could science fiction ever get a foot in the door of the mystery Photo? Logic would suggest it's possible since this is a mystery solving endeavor. Let's see: mystery, science, water, intrigue, romance.....Romance? It's all here. It's right here this month. The only thing missing is a reference to Godzilla...until just now! Who remembers the great science fiction movies from the 1950's and 1960's? Have you all seen The Creature from the Black Lagoon? Did you ever wonder if Captain Kirk's encounter with the Green Lady produced anything? And then there was The Fly. Good science fiction always has a sexual undertone that you know is there but you never talk about in polite society--monster gets the girl. Good guy shows up in the nick of time to prevent the kinky stuff. Monster dies.

COVID's got him, you'll say. Staying locked up in isolation has opened a Pandora's Box of deviant thought. Well, not really. My warp drive has always been this way. But that's not the point. This month the idea for the introduction comes from melding our two replies. The first reply called the vessel a "monster". Of course he used the word as an adjective instead of a noun, but this is my essay. Our second reply refers to the beast in romantic terms: "Leave it to the French for romance. If you send a heavy cruiser home with a submarine after a party, this is your result of that union nine months down the road." This month we offer proof positive that there are some species that should never mate.

It's obvious that we have a submarine on offer this month. It's also obvious that we have one of the odder hybrid versions. Not nearly as odd as the British one with the stream engine, but odd. The classic, simplistic view of submarines is a vessel that sinks below the surface in order close on an opponent undetected to fire torpedoes at them. In reality that's just one of the missions they are tasked with. The impetus of the design in this month's Mystery Photo comes from the Washington Naval treaty of 1922. Treaties that are designed to stop a certain actions usually produce opportunities in other areas. The treaty "placed strict limits on naval construction by the major naval powers in regards to displacements and artillery calibers of battleships and cruisers. However, no accords were filed in motion for light ships such as frigates or destroyers or submarines." Oh what wordsmiths we are!

I'm sure you eagle-eyed observers spotted the large caliber guns protruding from the bubble fairing at the forward end of the sail complex. But did you also know that the fairing aft of the coning tower contained and airplane hangar? With her

(Continued on page 2)

What's Happening at the Museum

The museum remains closed to visitors. Please check out presentations and blogs at www.marinersmuseum.org.

Ron Lewis

(Continued from page 1)

clean appearance, crisp paint, and orderly sailors it would seem that this “official” photograph might just be recording her coming out party. Let’s see...



Dave Baker and Tim Wood supplied our data this month. They agree that “this month’s mystery ship is the French Navy’s submarine *Surcouf*...” A conclusion to which Dave adds, “which was lost in southern Caribbean waters early in WW II, a possible victim of collision with the USN gunboat ERIE (PG 50) — or at least the French like to think so.” Dave found his information here: “Here’s some data and history for the SURCOUF, taken from Jean Labayle Couhat’s 1971 book *French Warships of World War II*.” And Tim found his here: “I was able to come up with my solution through the use of a book I acquired at one



Waterproofing device for cannon tubes

of our auctions, the book’s title is “Submarines of World War Two by Ermino Bagnasco. Published by Naval Institute Press.” Ah, the value of the auction—at the next one, you all need to bring the big bucks!

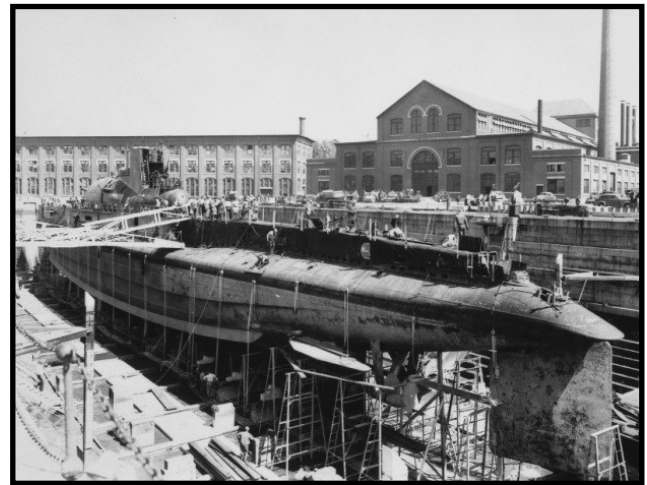
As you can see in the Mystery Photo, *Surcouf* is a big boat, what Dave calls “the monster French sub, which had two 8-in. guns in that gunhouse at the forward end of the sail...” He completes his thought through this segue...“but those weren’t the largest guns ever fitted to a submarine; British WW I subs M-1 through M-3 were each fitted with a single 12-in. gun and were intended to act as submarine monitors for bombarding German positions along the English Channel coast.” *Surcouf* was the largest submarine when built, even larger than the US submarine *Argonaut*, and she kept that honor until the Japanese navy built their *I-400* class boats.

Surcouf displaced around 4,300 tons submerged. “The submarine’s dimensions were 361.9 ft overall, 29.5-ft. beam,

and 29.76-ft draft surfaced. Powered by two Sulzer diesels providing 7,600 brake horsepower on the surface and two electric motors providing 3,400 shaft horsepower submerged, the SURCOUF could make 18 knots surfaced and 8.5 knots submerged. Her endurance at 10 knots on the surface was 10,000 nautical miles at economical speed, while at 13.8 knots, her range was 6,800 n.m.; submerged range was 70 n.m. at 4.5 knots. The crew was composed of 8 officers and 110 enlisted.”

“Armament on the submarine included a twin 203-mm trainable mounting at the forward end of the sail, two single 37-mm anti-aircraft guns, and four machine-guns, while there were six 550-mm and four 400-mm torpedo tubes. In a watertight compartment at the after end of the sail could be carried a single Besson MB.411 monoplane twin-float scouting and gunnery spotting aircraft.”

Speaking of wordsmiths, *Surcouf*’s designation is a bit of a mystery as well. She is variously referred to as a Cruiser Submarine, a Corsair Submarine, and even an Underwater Heavy Cruiser. Were all of these designations intended to get around treaty limitations? Was it political? Was it intended to boost morale and national pride? You could even argue that she was a Reconnaissance Submarine because of the observation floatplane she carried. And she could even be considered a Commerce Raider since she was fitted with a boarding launch and had space and equipment to manage prisoners or passengers.



Surcouf in dry dock, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, September 1941

And speaking of treaty loopholes, the submarine was a deal breaker. “Soon after *Surcouf* was launched, the London Naval Treaty (1936) finally placed restrictions on submarine designs. Among other things, each signatory (France included) was permitted to possess no more than three large submarines, each not exceeding 2,800 long tons (2,800 t) standard displacement, with guns not exceeding 6.1 in (150 mm) in caliber. *Surcouf*, which would have exceeded these limits, was specially exempt from the rules at the insistence of Navy Minister Georges Leygues, but other ‘big-gun’ submarines of this boat’s class could no longer be built.”

Dave says that the submarine was “Built by the French Navy’s Cherbourg Dockyard, the SURCOUF was laid down during December 1927, launched on 18 October 1929, and commissioned during May of 1934.” And true to MP rules, he

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

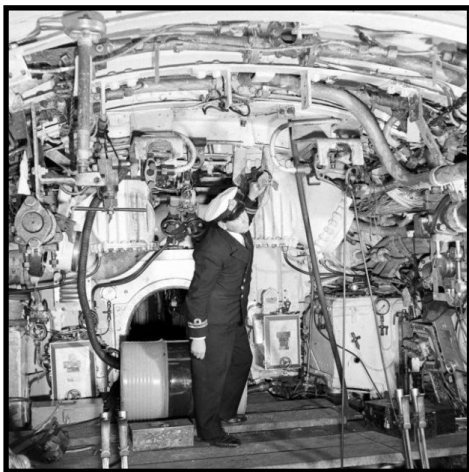


guesses that “the photo dates to 1934 and was taken with her original commissioning crew on the casings topside.” I would agree.

Not much is written about the submarine’s early years. So I assume *Surcouf* tooled around from 1934 to 1939 trying to figure out how to effectively use her guns and observation plane. Tim provides clues that aren’t encouraging on the big guns’ performance:

Because of the low height of the rangefinder above the water surface, the practical range of fire was 12,000 m (13,000 yd) with the rangefinder (16,000 m (17,000 yd) with sighting aided by periscope), well below the normal maximum of 26,000 m (28,000 yd).

The duration between the surface order and the first firing round was 3 minutes and 35 seconds. This duration could have been longer in case the boat was going to fire broadside, which meant surfacing and training the turret in the desired direction.



Inside the control room of the Surcouf

Firing had to occur at a precise moment of pitch and roll when the ship was level.

Training the turret to either side was limited to when the ship rolled 8° or more.

Surcouf was not equipped to fire at night, due to inability to observe the fall of shot in the dark

It’s not really clear if the product of the union was really successful. Maybe it would have been successful ten years earlier when the idea was conceived, but advancing technology made the idea an oddity and she languished.

Published histories seem to all pick up on her career in 1940. Dave quotes Labayle Couhat: “In June 1940 she escaped from Brest where she was refitting, to get to a British port. She was captured by the British in June 1940 but was later turned over to the FNFL (Free French). After a difficult refit, far from a French Naval Base, she carried out patrols in the North Atlantic. She also participated in the seizure of St. Pierre and Miquelon islands [French possessions even today, off the southwest coast of Newfoundland] with General de Gaulles’s forces. The *Surcouf*

(Continued on page 4)

AMERICAN NAVAL HISTORY

1838

January 15: Battle on the Jupiter River. Lieutenant Levin M. Powell discovers a trail near Jupiter Inlet and follows it to attack a Seminole encampment in a cypress swamp 5 miles from the coast. After an initial advance, his 75 men are driven back to their boats in some disorder. Four are killed and 12 wounded.

March 22: A combined expedition of regulars and Tennessee volunteers under Colonel James Bankhead and a detachment of soldiers and sailors under Lieutenant Powell drive the Seminoles from an island encampment in the Everglades. This is 1 of the 1st times US forces have penetrated the great swamp.

July 1: James K. Paulding becomes the 11th secretary of the navy.

July 6 - August 19: Wilkes Expedition. An expedition consisting of the sloops *Vencenes*, *Peacock*, brig *Porpoise*, converted pilot boats *Sea Gull* and *Flying Fish* and storeship *Relief*, sails from Norfolk, Virginia, with orders to survey various parts of the Pacific and to explore the south polar regions. Called the US Exploring Expedition, it is the first large operation of its kind conducted by the navy. In voyages lasting 4 years, the expedition sails approximately 85,000 miles, charts 280 islands, collects thousands of scientific specimens and discovers the Antarctic continent.

August 19: Twenty-four men under Second Lieutenant John Faunce, US Revenue Marine (now the Coast Guard) from the revenue cutter *Campbell* surprise a band of Seminoles near Cape Florida, killing 3 and putting a dozen to flight. A few days earlier the Indians had massacred the crews of 3 New England fishing sloops and also the crew of a merchant brig that grounded in a gale.

1838 Ends with no further actions.

Bob Moritz

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

Hugo Vihlen

THE ANSWER

The Answer to Mystery Photo 410
French Submarine *Surcouf*

Undated photo

(Continued from page 3)



collided with the U.S. Merchant Ship THOMSON LYKES in the Gulf of Mexico [sic] on February 18, 1942 and subsequently sank.” The submarine, per Labayle Couhat, was enroute to transit the Panama Canal for service in the Pacific at the time of her loss.

About that difficult refit. Seems it began “on 28 July, 1940 when *Surcouf* went to the United States Naval Shipyard at Portsmouth, New Hampshire for a three-month refit.



US Merchant ship *Thompson Lykes*



Douglas B-18 Bomber

After leaving the shipyard, *Surcouf* went to New London, Connecticut, perhaps to receive additional training for her crew. *Surcouf* left New London on 27 November to return to Halifax.” The United States was officially still neutral in this conflict but not neutral in politics.

“In January 1942, the Free French leadership decided to send *Surcouf* to the Pacific theatre, after she had been re-supplied at the Royal Naval Dockyard in Bermuda. *Surcouf* was bound for Sydney, Australia, via Tahiti. She departed Halifax on 2 February for Bermuda, which she left on 12 February, bound for the Panama Canal.” She never made it. “*Surcouf* vanished on the night of 18/19 February 1942, about 80 mi (70 nmi; 130 km) north of Cristóbal, [Panama].”

Many theories exist as to her loss. Dave has already mentioned the sub’s being rammed and sunk by the U.S. Navy gunboat *Erie*, and he and Tim have supplied information that she was rammed and sunk by a the US Merchant ship *Thompson Lykes*. That ship reports: “Steaming alone from Guantanamo Bay, on what was a very dark night; the freighter reported hitting and running down a partially submerged object which scraped along her side and keel.” Other stories suggest that she was attacked by a patrol bomber. “The records of the 6th Heavy

Bomber Group operating out of Panama show them sinking a large submarine the morning of 19 February.”

I wonder if they both could be correct. Perhaps the merchant ship damaged the submarine which had to surface. And, as she limped on toward Panama, the patrol bomber spotted her and applied the coup de grace sending *Surcouf* to the bottom. “As no one has officially dived or verified the wreck of *Surcouf*, its location is unknown. If one assumes the *Thompson Lykes* incident was indeed the event of *Surcouf*’s sinking, then the wreck would lie 3,000 m (9,800 ft) deep at 10°40’N 79°32’ WCoordinates: 10°40’N 79°32’W.”

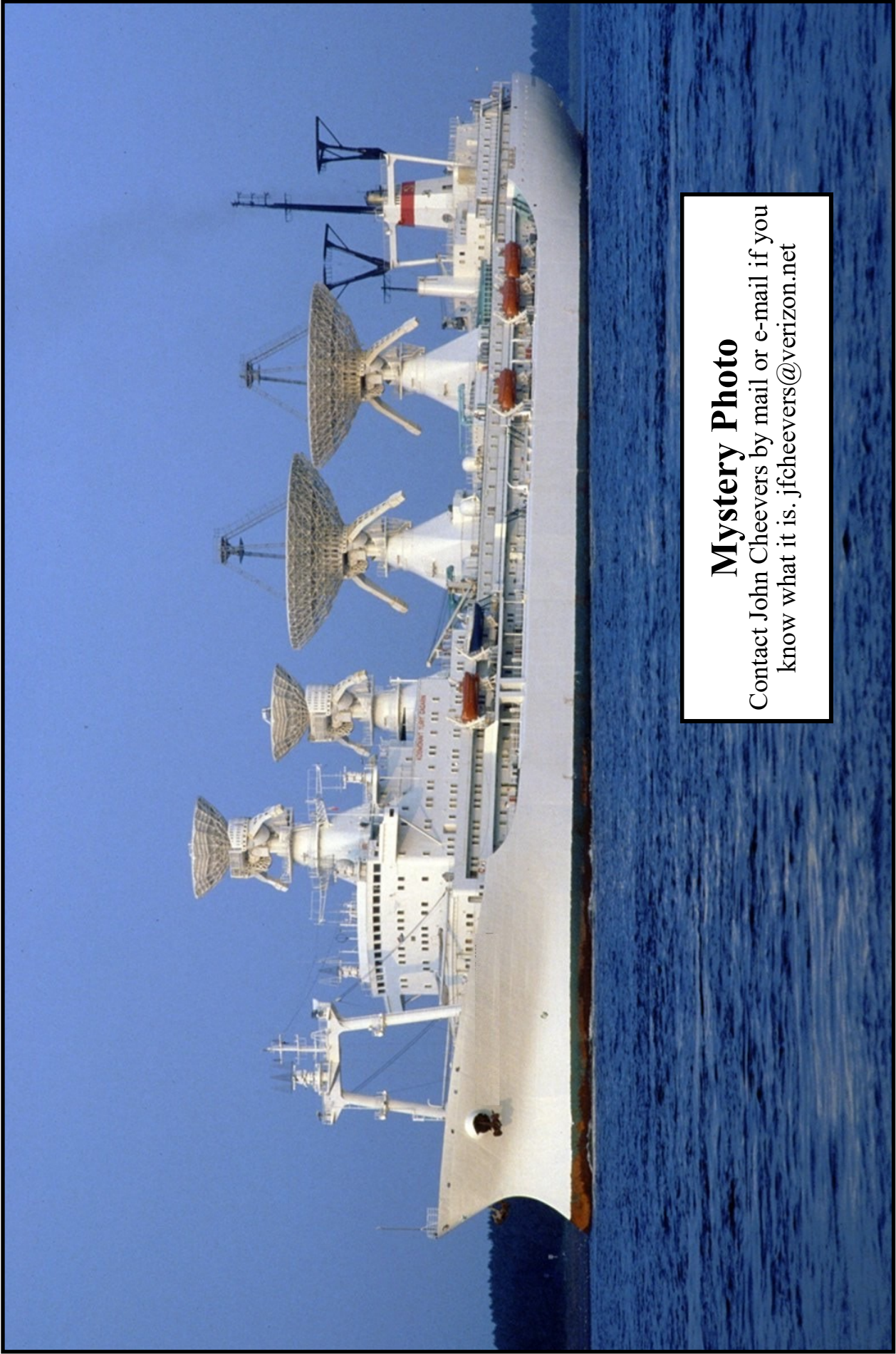


Not a monster. Not a freak of nature. But it died in the end anyway. The Mystery continues.

John Cheevers



Monument dedicated to the dead of the submarine cruiser *Surcouf*, inaugurated in Cherbourg on September 23, 1951.



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

NOTABLE EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting, Zoom Video Presentation "Small Boats", by Tom Ruggiero
- 19 Talk Like a Pirate Day

OCTOBER

- 10 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum Presentation, TBA

NOVEMBER

- 14 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum Presentation, TBA

DECEMBER

- 9 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum Presentation: TBA

JANUARY

- 9 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum Nomination of officers

FEBRUARY

- 13 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum Election of officers

MARCH

- 13 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: ,

APRIL

- 10 HRSMS Monthly Meeting:

MAY

- 8 HRSMS Monthly Meeting:

JUNE

- 12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting:

JULY

- 10 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum Presentation: TBA

AUGUST

- 14 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Presentation, TBA

**WATCH, QUARTER
AND
STATION BILL**



Skipper: Greg Harrington (757) 218-5368
Mate: John Cheevers
Purser: Ryland Craze (804) 739-8804
Clerk: Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580
Historian: Tim Wood (757) 481-6018
Editors: John Cheevers (757) 591-8955
Bill Clarke (757) 868-6809
Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580
Webmaster: Greg Harrington (757) 218-5368
Photographer: Marty Gromovsky

MINUTES



Hampton Roads Ship Model Society
Monthly Meeting
Zoom Video Meeting
August 8, 2020

Skipper Greg Harrington called the meeting to order at 1005 hours. Hank Ghittino said that the name of his model was the *Beagle* not the *Eagle* as reported in the minutes. No other corrections to the minutes was noted. Ryland Craze gave the Purser's report, detailing expenditures and account balance. Greg Harrington gave the Webmaster's report.

Old Business: Ryland Craze said that he received a refund for our shelter reservation at Newport News Park. The picnic scheduled for September had been canceled.

New Business: The members reflected on the passing of member, George Livingston. John Cheevers made a motion to make a donation to the West Side Rowing Club in George's name. The motion was carried and the Purser will make the disbursement.

Show & Tell: Gene Berger showed the progress on his Butler Class Destroyer Escort. Ryland Craze showed spars that were turned in a drill. Discussion ensued on methods of tapering spars and masts. Hank Ghittino showed the progress on his *Beagle* talking about gun port covers, chain plates and covers. Mike Amicone showed several of his completed models. Bill Brown showed the progress on his plank-on-frame *Cheerful* and talked but videos from the "Sampson Boat Company". Dennis Hobbs showed his completed whaleboat. Ulrich Guenther showed his plank-on-bulkhead *Berlin* from Corel. John Proudley showed the progress on his *Royal Carolina*, a plank-on-frame kit from Panart.

The meeting was adjourned a presentation, "Painting Figures", shown by Ryland Craze.

