



# San Diego Ship Modelers' Guild

1306 N. Harbor Drive

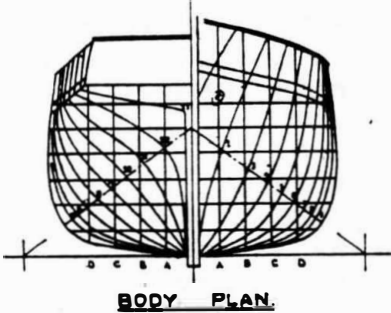
San Diego, CA 92101

April 1995

Newsletter

Volume 19; Number 4

The poet Longfellow, who, however it may be the fashion to decry him in these days, was a true down-easter in his feeling for ships and the sea, was a frequent visitor to McKay's shipyard, and in his poem 'The Building of the Ship', which is generally supposed to be based upon the launching of McKay's ill-fated masterpiece, the *Great Republic*, he has an interesting reference to the Builder's model.



*First with nicest skill and art,  
Perfect and finished in every part,  
A little model the Master wrought,  
Which should be to the larger plan  
What the child is to the man,  
Its counterpart in miniature;  
That with a hand more swift and sure  
The greater labour might be brought  
To answer to his inward thought.*

\*\*\*see page 9  
for more about  
this poem....

1995							1995						
APRIL							APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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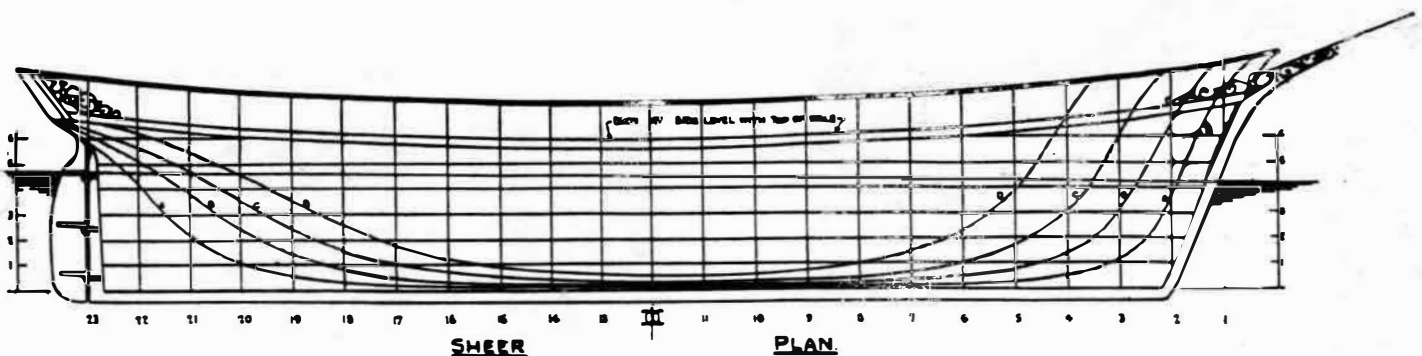
NEXT MEETING:

7PM aboard the  
"Berkeley"

SHARE YOUR MODEL OR  
CURRENT PROJECT WITH  
US DURING "SHOW AND  
TELL."

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE: (Saluting Harold Underhill and plank-on-frame modelers)

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NAVAL RESERVE DAY AT THE POND:

This coming Saturday, April 8th, Naval Reservist KELLY MURPHY will bring his camera crew down to the pond to video tape R/C boats. He plans to not only cover scale electric/steam on Saturday morning, but also the Argonauts sail boats that afternoon, plus the power boats running the next day, Sunday.

He intends to submit this material to Washington (DC) for inclusion in the "NAVY NEWS", a weekly 30 minute series, once it passes his CO's review and approval. The main idea is a plug for recruiting and to show how R/C boats can teach/train future ship handlers etc.

We'd like to have a good showing this Saturday morning. BOB O'BRIEN has promised to bring his 9 ft. carrier, USS ESSEX (CV-9), DAVE MANLEY will sail his USS SAN DIEGO (CLAA-53) and FRED FRAAS will run his WWII Liberty JEREMIAH O'BRIEN. There will be a nice variety of tugs, yachts etc. run by local regulars both guild members and past/prospective members. Ought to be lots of fun, so if you haven't been to the pond lately, come on down and watch the action.

There is an ironic note about this event. We have done this in the past, but had to do so on a week day, because the media crews did not work on weekends. In this case, the naval reservists work only on weekends (once monthly), so this fits our schedule to a "T".

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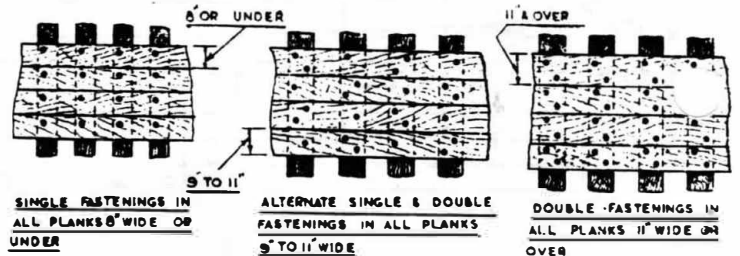
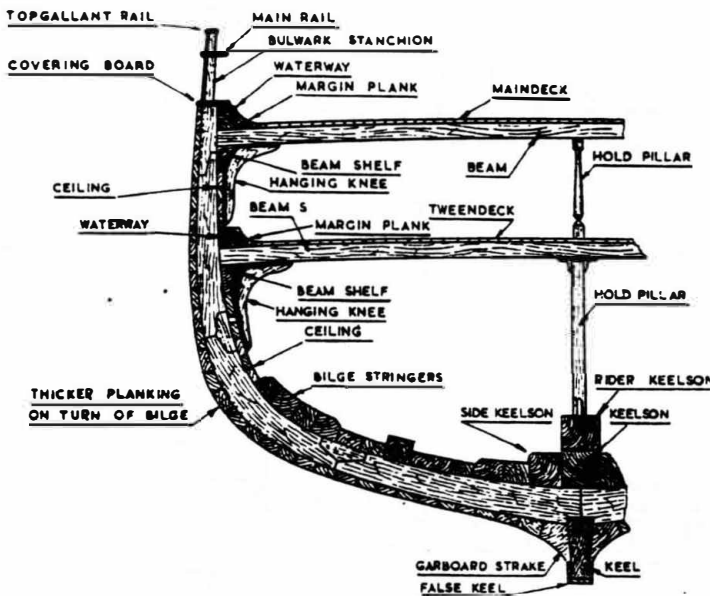
DUES ARE DUE; HAVE YOU PAID??

Purser ED WHITE reports we have about two dozen members who have not paid their '95 dues. Check your address label; if it shows '94 and is circled in "red", you are in this group. You can give him a check (for \$15) at the next meeting, or mail it to his address:

ED WHITE  
/redacted/

Please do it soon, or you may miss the next newsletter.

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NOTES FROM MARCH 16th. MEETING

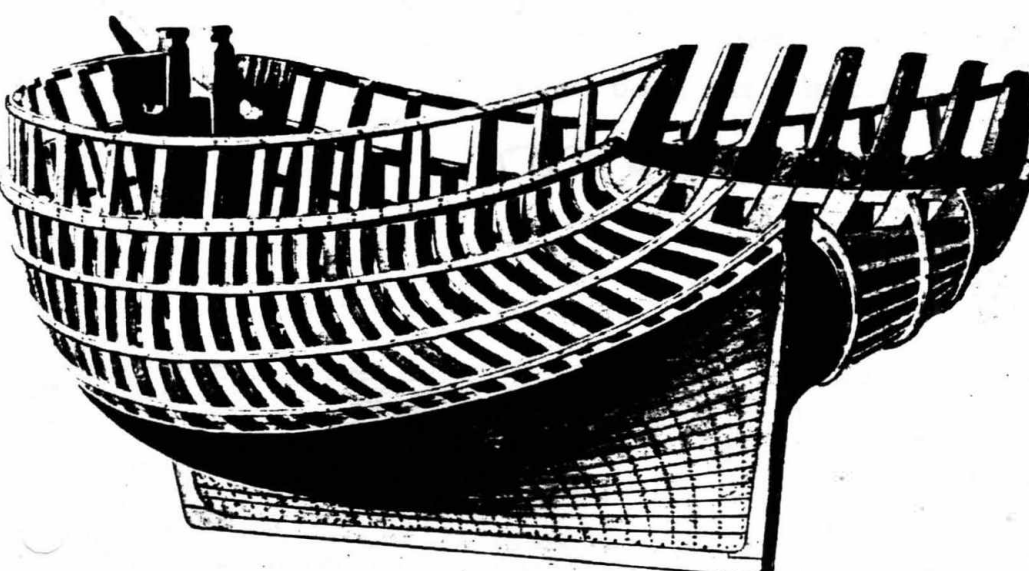
Twenty-two members attended the last meeting on the ferryboat berkeley.

Dave Manley began the "Show and Tell" session with his foam and PVC pipe marker buoys which should be great for use in the model pond. Dave never ceases coming up with new items from his shop and discussed how the buoys are made, their polycarbonate tops and bottom hooks or anchors to keep them "on station".

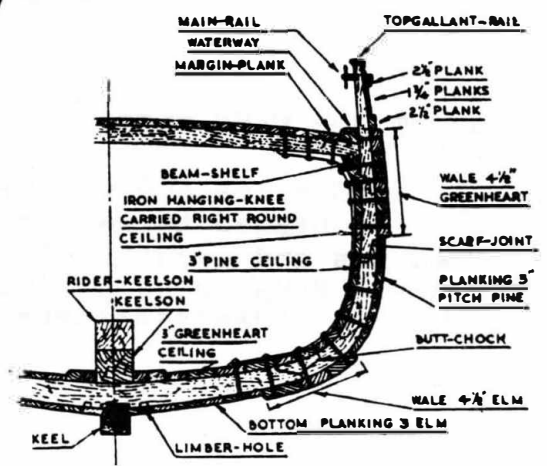
Veteran Fred Fraas brought us some very interesting information from a recent issue of NAVAL HISTORY MAGAZINE. It has been discovered, through the advances in laser lighting, that the interiors of famous and/or historic models are oftentimes just as detailed (but hidden all these years) as are the exteriors or parts readily visible to the eye.

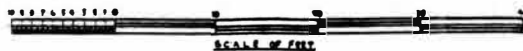
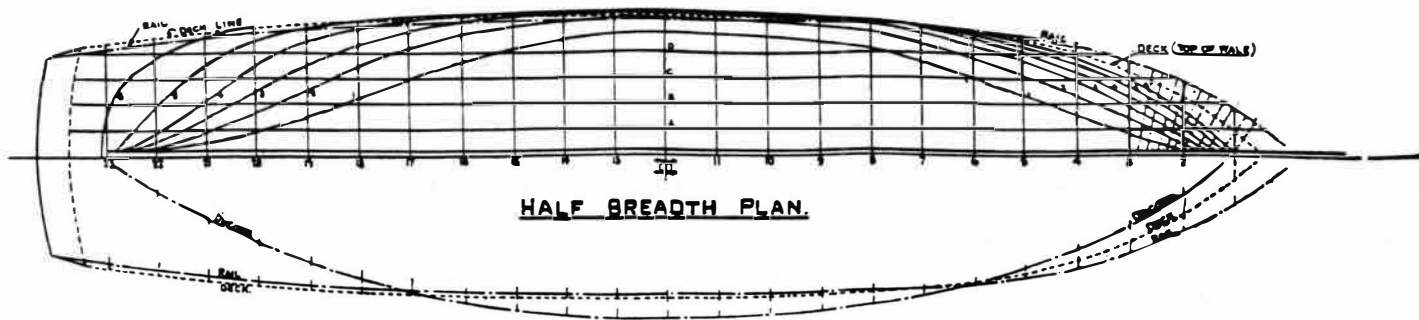
"It's medical technology applied to the study of ship models" says Fred. Kinda like exploring the interior of an ancient Egyptian pyramid, methinks.

Fred also showed us his on-going model of "411", last of the single-stack destroyers. In previous tests it was readily apparent that on tight turns, "411" listed dangerously while underway at a good clip. Superstructure weights were obviously too much, so Fred is replacing some of the components with lightweight vacuum-formed parts.



HAROLD A. UNDERMILL.





LINES DRAWING FOR MODEL OF BRIGANTINE "LEON".  
Showing location of cant-frames.

NOTES FROM MARCH 16th MEETING (cont.) :

Bob Crawford has tackled another large project--that of making a 1/2"/foot, half model of our MEDEA, 1904 steam yacht which is a proud part of the San Diego maritime Museum. A cutaway section will display construction of the Scotch boiler and the overall will be mounted on a mirror for full-hull simulation.

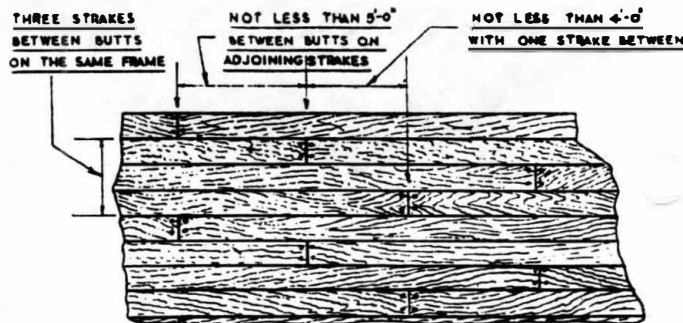
Phil Mattson was heartily congratulated for the fine job he did on reproducing the original gilded bow decoration on the SAN DIEGO model in our museum aboard BERKELEY. We believe the original model was built by Henry Bouchet for the U.S. Navy @ 1/4 scale. Bouchet eventually became Blue Jacket Model Fittings. ED WHITE, auctioneer elite, conducted a bidding sale at the meeting to help defray expenses in connection with the gold-leaf and gilding work accomplished on the bow decoration. Odds and ends of wood scraps, plans and model kits were purchased by members, not to mention some good magazines.



ABOUT OUR NAME TAGS:

Old salts and you new salts too are encouraged to wear an ID badge to meetings and events. If you need one, contact HENRY WENC at /redacted/

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## HELPFUL HINTS IN CONSTRUCTING PLANK ON FRAME SHIP MODELS #1

Beginning in the July/August 1994 Seaways' Ships in Scale magazine is an outstanding 6 part series by Master Ship Modeller N. Roger Cole of Canada of some of the research and techniques he used in scratch building the Santa Maria. Some of those techniques will be included in this and future issues of our newsletter to impart information and also to give our members ideas that may be useful in your projects.

Mr. Cole indicated that he rarely relies on simple glued joints in his work. Where possible every joint is glued and doweled but in some cases where exceptional strength is required, he makes rivets or pins from white brass dressmaker's pins which he says are becoming increasingly difficult to find. These pins come in 2 different diameters, 0.021" and 0.025".

He makes his dowels from the outer shell of bamboo and fabricates them in the following sizes: 0.0135", 0.016", 0.021", 0.026" and 0.032". These sizes correspond to drill bits #80, #78, #75, #71 and #67 respectively.

He indicated that to make the dowels he splits the bamboo stock as close to the size needed and sharpens one end of the material and pulls it through successively smaller holes in a drill gauge plate with pliers until the desired diameter is obtained. He indicates that the material is hard and difficult to draw. He then stores those dowels in different marked containers until ready for use. If stored for a considerable amount of time he runs the material through the drill gauge again before installing.

The glue he uses is Weldbond, a PVA (Polyvinylacetate Resin). He indicated that Weldbond dries clear, becomes tacky quickly and dries within an hour on most porous surfaces, with full strength being reached in 24 hours. Moderate clamping pressures are all that is required and often, hand held pressure is sufficient. Cleanup is easy, normally only requiring a wipe with a damp, water moistened cloth. He stated that once cured, Weldbond sands easily, strength increases with age and joints remain flexible (an important feature since humidity changes are always working on a model). The product also contains a bactericide making it impervious to molds and fungi. To many this is unimportant but Mr. Cole indicates that there have been reports from some conservators that where some adhesives are used which are subject to molds and fungi, this can be decidedly detrimental to the long life of a model.

Weldbond comes in a concentrated form and when used for hard, dense woods, he uses equal parts of glue and water for assembly work. He uses a thinner mixture (3 to 4 parts of water) for doweling. In this thinned state it's really a sealer and not a glue. However used this way it has been his experience that it will wick into a dowel hole and not scrape off as the

WELCOME ABOARD:

DAVE SNOOK joined our guild at the last meeting. DAVE'S interested in R/C scale modeling and his address is: /redacted/; glad to have you aboard, Dave!

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HELPFUL HINTS IN CONSTRUCTION.....(cont) by Tony De Feo

dowel is inserted. Installed this way, dowels must be driven fit. Weldbond is also available in a stronger grade known as "Weldbond Professional Wood Glue", an aliphatic glue. While this glue has a higher shear strength, it lacks the elasticity of the PVA, which he considers to be a serious drawback in a model that is subjected to various climatic changes.

He indicates that Weldbond is available at most Ace Hardware, True Value and Home Depot Stores in the U.S. He also indicated that the features and abilities of Weldbond, may not be true of other PVA glues made by other manufacturers.

Next month's newsletter will contain more information from Mr. Cole's experience and future articles will discuss dyeing of rigging, weathering sail materials and finishing of woods.

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3/18/95

Dear Fred:

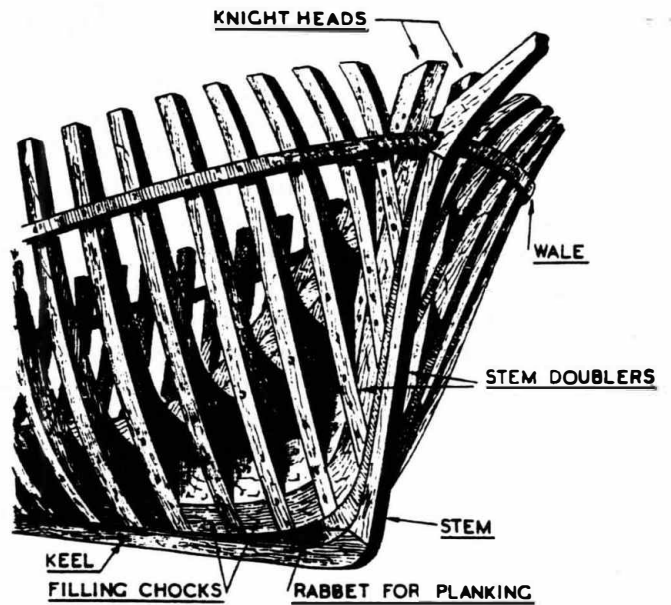
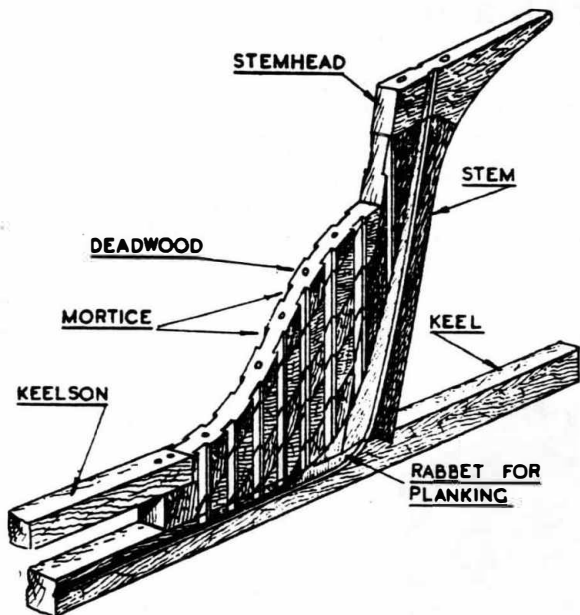
Here is the first of some articles I will prepare for inclusion in our monthly newsletter. The Roger Cole articles and pictures in the Ships' in Scale magazine are brilliantly written and should furnish our members, be they master shipbuilders or just novices such as myself, some information that will be useful.

I'll prepare another article and will be ready to give it to you at our next meeting.

Tony De Feo  
/redacted/

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks so much, Tony, for this article. As a fellow subscriber to "Ships' in Scale" (from the first edition) I am familiar with these articles and Roger Cole's excellent reputation. We will certainly look forward to your future articles....once again, a BIG THANKS!

Fred



## Ship Model Shop

I would like to take a few moments to express my appreciation for all of the hours put into the Model Shop by our volunteers—7819 hours to be exact. Fifteen individuals contributed to those hours from as few as five hours to as many as 1764. Most of Joe Bompensiero's 1764 were put into the USS LANGLEY (CV-1) and the 1934 America's Cup Defender RAINBOW. The RAINBOW is our newest addition to the America's Cup Exhibit. We now look forward to finishing the LANGLEY sometime this summer.

Many of Jack Klein's 1510 hours have gone into a boat-building diorama being constructed for the museum, a model of HMS KINGFISHER, and answering visitors' questions. Bob Cunningham's dogged determination and 1428 hours are producing what will be one of our finest models, the Alaska Packers Association's STAR OF INDIA. I regret to say we will be losing Bob to Arkansas soon, but he leaves us a reminder of his skill

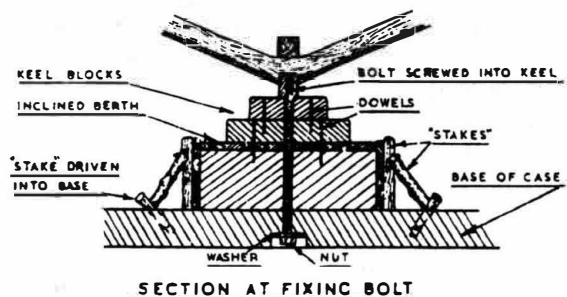
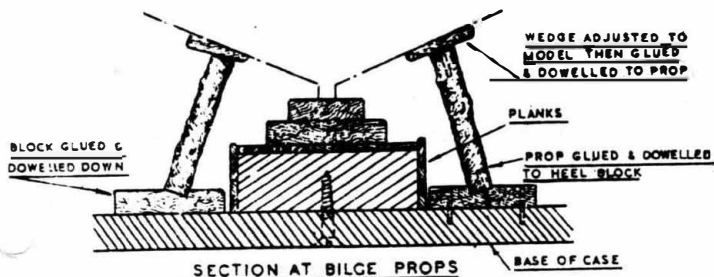
and devotion.

Chuck Hill and his CUTTY SARK are visitors' delights with his warmth and her beauty. Chuck has 469.5 hours in this past year alone. Suzanne Levonian, Tom Taylor, and Jack Slowiczek each put in 150 hours—give or take a few—and contributed much of themselves in the process. Ed White and John Fluck averaged 75 hours apiece by manning the shop one Saturday every month this year.

Finally, thanks to San Diego Ship Model Guild Members Phil Matson, K. C. Edwards, Jim Hawkins, Fred Fraas, Tony DeFeo and Doug McFarland for their efforts. Without these people, many of the projects and visitor interfaces would not be possible. Thank you, everyone.

—Robert Crawford,  
Curator of Ship Models

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** from the Winter '95 issue of MAINS'L HAUL  
Special thanks to Editor Craig Arnold and  
Bob Crawford



## Volunteer of the Quarter

Our Volunteer of the Quarter for the winter of 1995 is Bob Cunningham. Bob is a very highly respected ship modeler who is constructing a model of the *STAR OF INDIA* as she appeared during her Alaska Packers period. When completed, this model will be placed in its appropriate slot with our other two models of the vessel, those depicting her in the Shaw Savill Line (by Bill Brown), and as she looks today (by Lionel Meeker). Thus visitors will see how the ship's appearance has changed over 130 years, depending on what function she was performing during a given period.

Bob is a native of Chicago. His first major exposure to ships came during service in the U.S. Navy in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Ship modeling was a hobby he picked up while stationed in Japan. As with so many modelers, he found that the challenge of building accurate models is addictive, and thus has pursued it over the years, trying to perfect his craft.

In June 1993, Bob started work on the present model. Many trips to the Jerry MacMullen Library became required "homework" as through the study of photographs, many details of the ship in the APA period were revealed. A 1907 document detailing *STAR OF INDIA*'s paint scheme, obtained by the Library from San Francisco, showed the colors required. Of course, Bob also spent much time studying the actual ship—and while doing this, discovered that during her restoration the main and fore yards had been swapped.

The model will be finished this year. If Bob is unable to complete it before his planned move to Arkansas, fellow modeler Joe Bompensiero will take over.

Bob says that one of his greatest satisfactions has

been learning advanced techniques of modeling from Bompensiero and Bob Crawford, our Curator of Ship Models. The rigging is the hardest part of the job, but Bob says he has enjoyed learning how to do historical research, and how to overcome the many obstacles inherent in making an accurate, highly detailed model. Bob and his wife Leanne are sponsoring the cost of the model, and we are sure it will be a fine one. Thanks, Bob, for your excellent contribution to our museum.



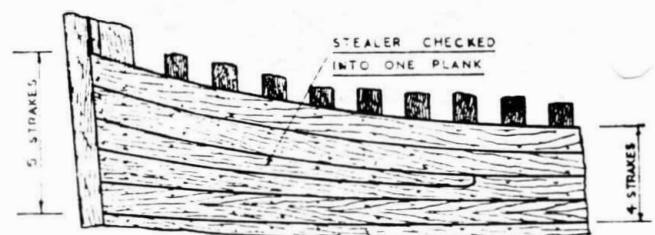
Volunteer of the Quarter Bob Cunningham works on the Alaska Packers period model of *STAR OF INDIA*. PHOTO BY BOB CRAWFORD

## The Loss of USS *Indianapolis*: An Oral History

By Dr. Melvin Modisher with Robert G. Wright

*Ed. Note:* The sinking of USS *INDIANAPOLIS* (CA-35) and its horrifying aftermath near the end of World War II has been documented in at least two books, numerous articles, and even a TV movie over the years. However, Maritime Museum Oral Historian Robert G. Wright recently provided a fresh perspective on this tragedy via a lengthy interview with one of the cruiser's survivors, Dr. Melvin Modisher, who at the time was a medical officer in the ship. As this year marks the 50th anniversary of the sinking, we present Mr. Wright's interview with Dr. Modisher.

Congratulations to our guild founder, Bob Wright for this excellent oral history article also published as the lead-in story for the Winter '95 issue of *MAINS'L HAUL*. We'll try to pass around a copy at the next meeting.



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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is an excerpt from "SHIP MODELS" by C. Fox Smith ; Conway Maritime Press 1972

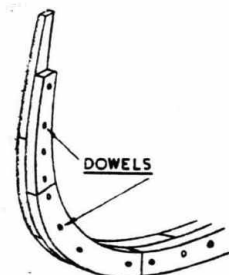
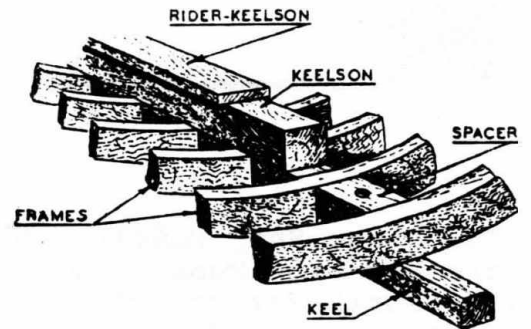
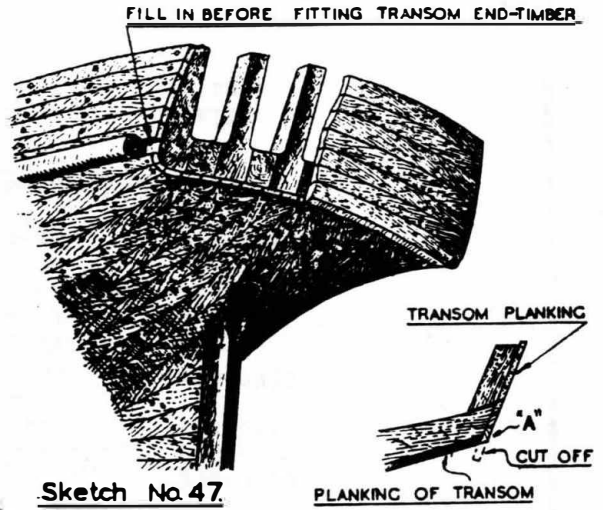
Donald McKay was a firm believer in the usefulness of a model rather than of a draft in designing a ship, and he introduced a notable improvement in the type of model he used. In his early days he was very friendly with a well-known citizen of Newburyport, Orlando B. Merrill, who in 1794 introduced a new type of builder's model which brought about a marked improvement in American shipbuilding. Up to that time the models used in American yards had been of the rib and plank type used in Britain. Merrill's waterline model was composed of a number of lifts joined together, which could be taken apart so that the sheer, body and half-breadth plans could be easily transferred to paper and thence to the mould-loft.

The poet Longfellow, who, however it may be the fashion to decry him in these days, was a true down-easter in his feeling for ships and the sea, was a frequent visitor to McKay's shipyard, and in his poem 'The Building of the Ship', which is generally supposed to be based upon the launching of McKay's ill-fated masterpiece, the *Great Republic*, he has an interesting reference to the Builder's model.

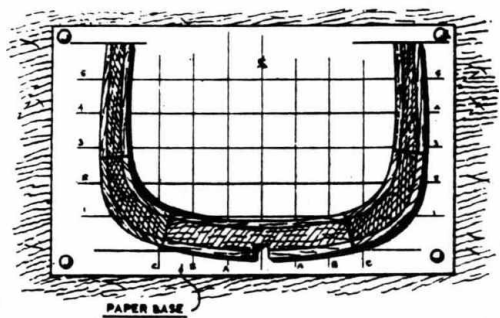
*First with nicest skill and art,  
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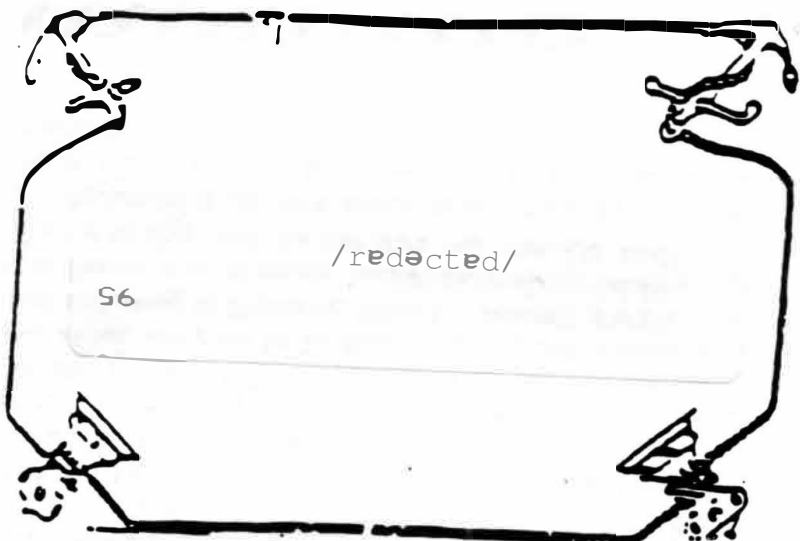
McKay had no doubt learned much from his early friendship with Merrill, and his models, like his ships, were regarded as masterpieces of their kind. It is very probable that he made models of practically all of

his ships, and that most of them were preserved until after his death, for it is known that they were taken down from the mould-loft and from McKay's office at East Boston when he retired to his farm at Hamilton, Mass. There, perhaps through lack of space elsewhere, they were stored in a barn; and it was not until some years after McKay's death that it was learned they had been chopped up for firewood. Only three of the McKay models are known to exist. That of the *Stag Hound* had escaped the destruction at Hamilton, and is now in the possession of the Boston Marine Society; that of the *Great Republic*, perhaps the very one Longfellow wrote about, was given by McKay to his daughter Albenia, who was married and living in Germany. What has become of it since the cataclysm of Europe it is, of course, impossible to say. The third and last, the *Glory of the Seas*, itself the last of McKay's clippers to survive, passed into the hands of the firm which rigged the ship, and thus escaped the general demolition. It is now in the possession of one of McKay's descendants.



Sketch No. 90  
1/26





San Diego Ship Modelers Guild  
c/o Maritime Museum Assoc. of SDiego  
1306 North Harbor Drive  
San Diego, California 92101

San Diego Ship Modelers Guild

Officers for 1995

Guild Master	Jim Hawkins /redacted/
First Mate	Doug McFarland
Purser	Ed White /redacted/
Logkeeper	(open)
Newsletter Editors	Fred Fraas /redacted/
Steering Committee	Gordon Jones /redacted/
	--Open to any and all interested in the welfare of the club.
Regatta Commodore	Dave Manley /redacted/

Schedule of Activities:

Meetings -- Third Thursday of the month. 7:00PM Social, 7:30PM Meeting, held on board the ferryboat "Berkeley."

R/C Operations -- Saturday mornings at the Model Yacht Pond. (Mission Bay)

Annual Regatta -- Third weekend in June.

Membership:

Dues are \$15 annually (\$7.50 after July 1st)

We strongly encourage all to join the San Diego Maritime Museum as an expression of appreciation for the facilities they provide for our benefit.

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