

● Scuttlebutt ●

COMMODORE, Bob Filipowski, opened the February 2019 meeting at 7:15 with a loyal crew of 24 on board. Door prizes included a whale boat kit, some small parts storage cases, a set of DVD disks featuring the World War II documentary *Victory at Sea*, and a really nice book on flags donated by Tony Serigos.

● Sam Palermo ●

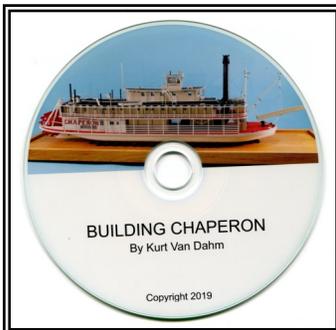
We recently learned that another member of The Greatest Generation, Sam Palermo, has left us. It was exactly 10 years ago that Sam came to our meeting, and shared some of his experiences during WWII. Palermo served onboard the USS *Dennis*, a *Butler*-class destroyer escort, which participated in one of the most remarkable battles in US Navy history. An article appeared in the March, 2009, *Forecastle Report*, which briefly described Sam's experiences, and this engagement. Sam always appreciated that piece, and passed out copies of it to former shipmates. In his honor we are including it in this issue.



● Building *Chaperon* DVD ●

After many requests for one or more back issue copies of the *Chaperon* series that was published in *Ships in Scale*, Kurt Van Dahm decided to make the files into a book. With SIS out of business it will be quite a while before the last issues of the magazine are digitized.

Kurt intends to put a notice on *Model Ship World* that he has this CD for sale. Cost and mailing details still need to be worked out. If building the *Chaperon* is on your bucket list, you may want to consider investing in one of these disks.



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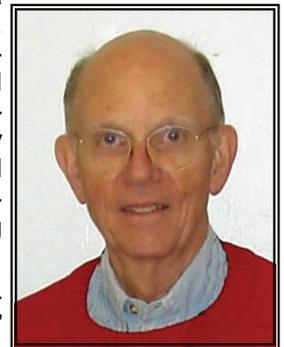
March Meeting Notice Rope and Its Variations

This presentation, by Doc Williams, will cover rope as a subject, the types, how it is made, how it is set up for rigging a ship, and how it relates to our models. No doubt this subject has never been presented from this perspective, and should be very informative.

Our next meeting will be at 7:15 p.m.
Wednesday, March 20, 2019
The Dasom Community Church
501 S. Emerson Street
Mount Prospect, IL

● John Mitchell Steps Down ●

Nobody has served longer as a club officer than John Mitchell. Fifteen years to be exact. As Editor, John put the Midwest Model Shipwrights on the map. Our *Forecastle Report* has become highly regarded throughout the United States and abroad due to his tireless efforts and imaginative writing style.



With this issue he now starts enjoying a well-deserved "retirement." John stated that he will continue to attend meetings, and build model ships. We certainly hope so. His innovative approach to the hobby has always been a welcome addition to our get-togethers.

There is an old song that was popular in the early 1900's called *After You've Gone*. A few words have been changed, but the opening lyrics are quite appropriate:

After you've gone and left us crying
After you've gone, there's no denying
We'll feel blue, we'll feel sad
We'll miss the dearest pal we've ever had.

John, well done!
Thank you for your service and dedication.

● Sacks ●

Bob Filipowski began his presentation by giving us a little historical background on how sacks were handled and stored aboard sailing vessels.

When shipping wheat, longshoremen lined the entire ship's hold with wood and burlap to guard against condensation that caused spoilage. They also went bare-foot to avoid ripping holes in the sacks. Heavy matting was placed on the deck, so spilled grain could not fall through cracks and clog bilge pumps.



Bob's preferred product for making sacks is *Milliput*. Unlike Sculpey Clay, which needs to be



baked in an oven to be cured, *Milliput* is self curing, and can be rock hard in 3 to 4 hours. This product can be drilled, sanded and carved, and it adheres to almost any surface.

It is a two-part epoxy mix. Equal quantities of each part are thoroughly mixed together.



Bob mixes small quantities, which will make about 3 or 4 sacks at a time. He uses pieces of scrap wood as guides for consistent thickness and size.



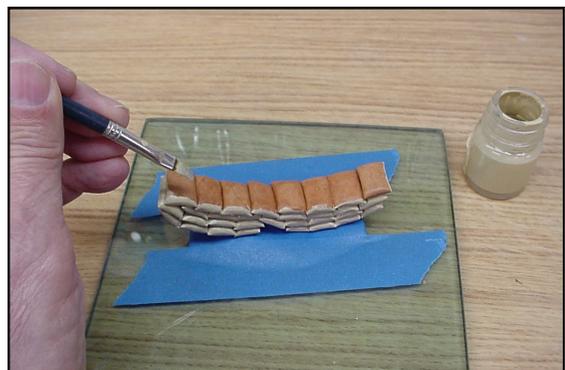
The material, at first, can be quite sticky. Keeping your fingers moist helps alleviate the problem. Once you have achieved the basic shape, the edges are rounded, and the corners are carefully elongated using your fingers.



The cargo hold was lined with wax paper to prevent the sacks from staining or sticking to the ceiling planks and bulkhead, which had been covered with a mirror to add a sense of depth.



Once the assembly is completely cured it should be quite ridged, and can be painted. *Milliput* comes in white, silver-grey, yellow-grey, black, and terracotta. These particular pieces were made with terracotta.



Burlap sacks normally have a light tan or beige color. A base coat of tan was applied to the assembly.

Once the base coat is dry, a brown antiquing agent is applied with a stiff-bristled brush. The tip of the brush is dabbed along the surface of the sacks, which produces a "stipple" appearance that simulates burlap material.



"Sacks", continued on Page 7

● **Ships on Deck** ●

Doc Williams has carved this impressive “Sea Monster” for the future case decoration on his HMS *Royal William* model.

Added to the neat pedestals he has already produced, this is going to be a very impressive display when it's all complete. Really fine work there, mate.



Ken Goetz has finished his 1:48 Russian model of the *Abrau-Dyurso* side-wheel steamer ca. 1890. This kit was available at Model Shipways for \$99. Ken also found this



ship was used in the local wine industry for transporting goods along the coast. Great job, mate. She's a beauty.

Ken Goetz's second offering was another imported Russian kit. The quality of this 1:72 model is quite high. It represents an 1801 gunboat known as a “Jolle,” and was commonly used in Baltic coastal waters. This particular design is attributed to the Swedish naval architect, Frederik Chapman.



Dick Samojsla's 1/2 scale model of a *British Gun Boat* is in the planking phase, but unfortunately we missed getting a photo of it for this issue. We'll look forward to seeing it again in March.

Bob Filipowski's half-hull model of the cutter *Diligence* now has finished wales, channel and hawse pad. Much of this work was done in ebony wood, which requires a completely different approach than conventional wood. First notable exception is that ebony dust can create a health hazard. Extreme caution must be used to avoid breathing in any of these particles, i.e. use of a mask when creating dust. Otherwise, the ebony can be bent and shaped like regular wood using moisture to help soften it.



Another of Bob's great techniques is the use of these custom clamps to hold the wale tight to the hull while gluing. Note the offset tabs he has glued to the tips of the clothespins in order to grip the bottom of the wale

and help hold it up in position without slipping down. Neat solution to the problem, mate!



Dan Pacholski is just starting to plank the 1:72 model of Mamoli's *Hunter*. Dan promises to bring the model next month to give us a look (along with his dues!).

Allen Siegel is making slow progress towards his goal of displaying in Manitowoc, but he thinks it may be possible. Work is being done on a two-piece wale, due to the difficult hull lines.



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."



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

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

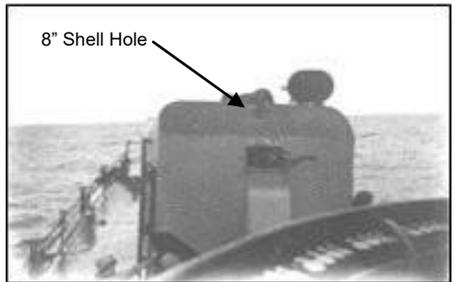
into the deepest area of the ship. Sam joked that he would have been the last one out in an emergency ... if he could get out. Against battleships and heavy cruisers, the likelihood of a super heated steam line being damaged was quite good, and would have meant almost certain death.



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.

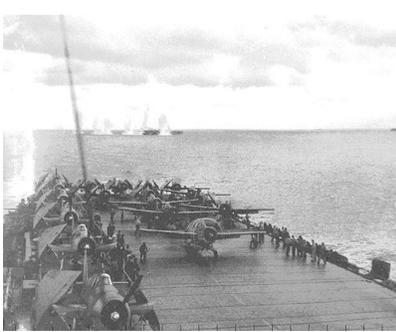


The *Dennis*' forward mount lost four men when a direct hit, punctured the turret, went through the deck, and came out the side of the ship. A second 8" projectile would enter the chief's quarters, where a member of a damage control party would suffer shrapnel wounds, and become the fifth fatality.

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"The Battle Off Samar", continued from Page 4

It may have been divine providence, but as Taffy III turned south to avoid the onrushing Japanese, this actually brought the CVE's into the wind. It was a bizarre scene as ships belched smoke, multi-colored shell splashes enveloped the carriers, and deck crews frantically tried to arm aircraft with whatever was handy. Many planes attacked the enemy with depth charges, rockets, and finally nothing as they made "dry" runs over the enemy, hoping to distract them.



USS *White Plains* is bracketed by enemy fire (background) as the *Kitkun Bay* frantically scrambles aircraft.

The 3 *Fletcher* class DD's along with the DE *Samuel B. Roberts* were the first to attack with torpedoes. The *Hoel*, *Johnston* and *Roberts* would eventually be sunk, but not before exacting some measure on at least three heavy cruisers. The *Heermann*, in spite of sustaining substantial damage, would actually engage the mighty *Yamato*, forcing her to turn away from this tin can's spread of 10 "fish."



As things became more critical, the *Dennis* along with the other two remaining DE's were ordered to engage. Although these vessels carried three torpedo tubes, they were never intended to attack capital ships. Due to the smoke and confusion, a coordinated attack could not be mounted. As the *Dennis* turned towards a column of four heavy cruisers, she realized that she was alone. Nonetheless, the *Dennis* closed to less than 8000 yards, and fired. Sam stated with justifiable pride that his ship nailed one cruiser before returning to screen the



carriers. Palermo didn't find out until years later at a reunion, but the gunnery officer in charge of torpedoes was Lt. John M. Smyth. If that name sounds familiar, it should. He would eventually start the large Chicago furniture store chain.

As mentioned earlier, Sam had no way of knowing what was happening, but he felt the violent maneuvers of the *Dennis*, the impact of shells, the rattle of shrapnel on the hull from near misses, and the recoil of the ship's guns as she charged. When the ship started firing her two 5" 38 cal. guns, Palermo knew they were well within range of the Japanese heavies, but as the 40mm's opened up, and then the 20's, he really



became concerned!

In spite of the gritty courage being shown by the U.S. tin cans and Navy fliers, the Japanese continued to press home their attack, and eventually began to find the range. The USS *Gambier*



The *Gambier Bay* (right) making smoke along with other Taffy III vessels early in the battle.

Bay was hit repeatedly, and staggered out of formation. The Japanese cruisers and destroyers sensing a kill, closed in on the baby flattop, and for over an hour pounded her mercilessly. She would be the only US carrier sunk by enemy naval gunfire in World War II.

There are many theories as to why Admiral Kurita decided to abort the attack, but nobody knows for sure. As the remnants of his fleet began withdrawing, it's been recorded that one resolute gob aboard a jeep carrier exclaimed: "Damn it! They're getting away!" However, Taffy III's ordeal was not over, and the *Dennis* would perform yet another heroic task.

This battered task group would have the distinction of suffering the first Kamikaze attack of the war. A Zero loaded with a 500-pound bomb penetrated the hail of AA fire and slammed into the *St. Lo*, setting off internal explosions from munitions and aviation fuel. One determined pilot, willing to die, had done more damage than the 18" guns of the mighty *Yamato*.

The *Dennis* immediately began picking up survivors. She would account for 434 men out of the 932 rescued! One of Sam's anecdotes relates to a sailor from aboard this carrier, which he met many years later at a Taffy III reunion.

With almost 700 men crammed aboard this small DE, finding a place to sleep that night was very difficult. This particular seaman, who was completely exhausted from his ordeal, found some sacks on top of the torpedo tubes, which he quickly claimed as his "bunk." It wasn't until the next morning that he realized that he had spent the night on top of five stuffed body bags!

As part of Sam's presentation, he brought in a number of mementos, which the membership found very interesting. They included some awesome photos, two pieces of shrapnel from an 8" shell, and a Navy survival fishing kit, complete with heavy line and lure!

Sam, we want to thank you for a great presentation. Your story helps keep alive the sacrifices made by all Americans during World War II. You make us all very proud!



"The Battle Off Samar", continued on Page 6

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The Photo Gallery

Sam Palermo, as part of his presentation, brought two photo albums just loaded with great snapshots, which portrayed life aboard a Destroyer Escort during World War II. These gems are just a sample.



The USS *Dennis* in circa 1944 Pacific Theater camouflage.



USS *Solace* off Iwo Jima. She would be filled to capacity within 24 hours of arriving on station.



The forward 40mm gun mount and crew.



Spoils of war. A Japanese gun emplacement.



Loading torpedoes aboard a *Fletcher* class destroyer.



Heading for some R&R on Eniwetok.



King Neptune's Court crossing the Equator.



Hey guys! Are you sure this is my lookout station?



So, I said to her



Nothing but beer, beaches, and baseball!



Refueling at sea from a *Cimarron* class tanker.



USS *Sangamon* The large object sticking up from the flight deck is the stern elevator after a Kamikaze hit. Somehow, she survived!



Dennis approaches an *Independence* class CVL. These carriers were originally going to be light cruisers, but were changed before completion.

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Once the antiquing agent is dry, earth tone chalks were applied in crevasses and along the rounded edges. Be careful not to smudge the chalk when handling the assembly.



A coating of Testors Dullcote Lacquer is applied, which gives the assembly a rich color, and seals in the chalk.



The bottom of the assembly was then cleaned and suffed up. Five minute epoxy was used to glue the sacks in place. Note the mirror behind the sacks.

Some members questioned why Bob planked over the cargo hold, thus hiding all that great detail. Bob stated that the hatch covers would be removed on the finished model, and he wanted onlookers to be intrigued by the tantalizing glimpse of what a cargo hold might have looked like in the age of sail. It looks like he nailed it!



HISTORIC SHIP PROFILES

● USS Chicago (CA-29) ●

The second in our series on US Navy ships named Chicago is the USS *Chicago* (CL/CA-29), a *Northampton*-class cruiser that served in the Pacific Theater in the early years of WWII. She was originally classified as a light cruiser, CL-29, because of her thin armor. Effective 1 July 1931, *Chicago* was re-designated a heavy cruiser, CA-29, because of her 8-inch guns in accordance with the provisions of the London Naval Treaty of 1930.

After surviving a midget submarine attack at Sydney Harbor, and participating in the battles of the Coral Sea and Savo Island in 1942, she was sunk by Japanese aerial



Torpedoed cruiser USS *Chicago* low in the water on 30 January 1943

torpedoes in the Battle of Rennell Island in the Solomon's, on 30 January 1943.



History



United States

Name: *Chicago*
Namesake: City of Chicago, Illinois
Ordered: 18 December 1924
Builder: Mare Island Naval Shipyard
Vallejo, CA
Laid down: 10 September 1928
Launched: 10 April 1930
Commissioned: 9 March 1931
Honors/awards: 3x battle stars
Fate: Sunk by air attack, Battle of Rennell Isl., 30 January 1943

General Characteristics

Class & Type: *Northampton*-class cruiser
Displacement: 9,300 long tons
Length: 600 ft 3 in
Beam: 66 ft 1 in
Draft: 16 ft 1 in
Installed power: 8x White-Forster boilers 107,000 shp
4x Parsons reduction steam turbines, Curtis cruising gears.
Speed: 32.7 kn
Compliment: 90 Officers, 601 enlisted
Armament: 9x 8 in guns, 8x 5 in anti-aircraft guns, 16x 1.1 in anti-aircraft guns, 28x 20 mm Oerlikon cannons, 6x 21 in torpedo tubes.
Aircraft: 4x SOC Seagull scout-observation floatplanes.
2x Amidship catapults.

Reference: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Chicago_\(CA-29\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Chicago_(CA-29))



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