

*Editor, Sam Snyder Presents...*



# SCUTTLEBUTT

*The Volunteer Newsletter of the*

★ WILLIS B. BOYER ★

**Vol. 1 No. 6 September 2008**

## FROM THE WHEELHOUSE

In the early 1800s, as the United States started to grow, its expansion was ultimately dependent upon how much steel could be poured into the bloodstream of its developing industrial revolution. In turn, a massive, low-cost transportation system was needed to provide for the movement of iron-ore from the mines of the upper Great Lakes to the steel mills of the lower lakes where the industrial strength of America was heavily seeded. When the most direct route of cargo carriage proved to be

across an 800 mile span of freshwater, it was evident that strength of our country would flow from the lake-born commerce of vessels know as bulk-freight carriers or Great Lakes Bulk Freighters.

Upon her launching in 1911, the S.S. Willis B. Boyer (Boyer), then called the Col James M. Schoonmaker was proclaimed to be "The World's Largest Bulk Freighter." Built at the Great Lakes Engineering Works of Ecorse, Michigan the Schoonmaker was unsurpassed in both size

and elegance. Maintaining her crown as "Queen of the Lakes" from July 1, 1911 to April 14, 1914, the Schoonmaker established multiple cargo records for iron ore, coal, and rye cargoes. Retiring in 1980, and opened as a museum in 1987, the S.S. Willis B. Boyer has served her community as a floating testament to our regions rich maritime heritage for over 20 years.

Yet, from her opening until 2005 the Boyer, though the largest museum ship on the Great

Lakes and welcoming thousands of visitors annually, weathered a storm of deficient funding and deterioration. In 2007, finding a champion in the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, the Boyer Crew initiated a "Don't Give Up the Ship" campaign which started at the vessels deck-plates but reached the hearts of the Toledo community, and many gracious benefactors.

(Cont. on p.2)



## FROM THE WHEELHOUSE CONT.

In the spring of 2008, the Boyer's Executive Director, Paul C. LaMarre III, was approached by one of his senior volunteers, Sam Snyder. Sam, a longtime friend of North Star's Nick Smith, said that had he had spoken to his comrade regarding some heavy maintenance projects planned for the museum ship's 2008 operating season. Nick would step aboard the Boyer for the first time in early June and again in July with North Star Bluescope Steel President, William R. Jacob.

Met by Mr. LaMarre, the North Star Bluescope executives were given a tour of a ship that is arguably the most historic to have ever sailed the inland seas. While walking her decks Mr. LaMarre pointed out that while the Boyer's inherent antiquity remains, the program faces numerous long-

term and immediate maintenance challenges some of which included: major mid-ship gangway repairs, a new forward halyard, and the removal of deteriorated ship's equipment on the vessels boat deck. In turn, in what can only be described as a blessing by the Boyer Crew, Mr. Jacob said that North Star Bluescope Steel would be "glad to help in any way possible."

With that, on July 18th, contractors sponsored by North Star Bluescope, which included workers from Swanton Welding and Machining Co. Inc., and Henry Gurtzweiler Inc., arrived at the Boyer prepared to do just that. Working an entire day cutting, fabricating, and welding on North Star Bluescope's behalf, diligent craftsmen met the Boyer's every

request and left a safer vessel one step closer to restoration.

In an age where historic preservation has become extremely difficult due to overwhelming advances in technology it is extremely rewarding to work with other organizations who embrace our past for the good of our future. North Star Bluescope's sponsorship of the S.S. Willis B. Boyer Museum Ship is truly priceless and all who walk her decks on a daily basis are eternally grateful.

## CHIEF'S LOCKER

"Steady as she goes" best describes the progress on our several volunteer projects this summer. Top priorities were (and are) painting the engine room, creating a tool room/workshop, and stripping and repainting the boat deck.

Paul and I sincerely thank all the robust volunteers for their efforts in restoring and maintaining the vessel. At the same time we cannot overlook those who contribute over and above the call of duty, hence the following: Sam Snyder is on the boat nearly every week day for a few hours. He has coffee, dons his painting coveralls, grabs a brush and paint can and descends into the mysterious depths of the engine room to be seen no more until he comes up

and goes home. The result is a beautiful white, aluminum and black engine room.

The emerging tool room (most forward cabin, starboard side, after deck house) is pretty much the meticulous handiwork of Stan Kerbel. Stan comes regularly one day a week, brings apple turnovers, good conversation, and then to work.

Mike "the Mighty Mann Machine" (if you ever heard him with a chipping hammer you would understand) comes two mornings a week banging away with gusto and whatever else he can put into it.

Luke faithfully comes up from Findlay twice a week after teach-

ing school and helps wherever needed.

And we can't overlook Bob Bowersox who is always at his gangway watch post, the cash register, taking money and telling entertaining sea stories to our many visitors.

Last Saturday we had our monthly Pancake Day which turned out to be a super successful day, especially on the boat deck. Chipping hammers, Wimpy the needle gun, and electric wire brushes were all going at warp speed removing layers of cruddy rust and paint in preparation for brilliant red deck paint.

(Con't. on p.3)

## CHIEF'S LOCKER (CON'T.)

I want to welcome a new crew member who joined us early this season: Gary Rock. Gary works with computers at the area 911 just across the river from us. Also, new members as of Saturday Wayne Walamaki and Angie Ragnoni, both from Lorain, Ohio area; that's a long way to travel. Wayne served on the *Boyer* in 1975 in various positions in the deck department.

I also want to mention the passing of Steve Remnick. Steve and I volunteered together for about three years. He did many good things for the boat and for stray animals. Those good things will not be forgotten.

Steve left behind an extremely lovable dog, a black Lab mix, quite overweight, about 8 years old. "Baby" requires very little attention as she is accustomed to living in a small apartment. She is super friendly and gentle to everyone and will make anyone happy who opens his heart and home to her.

She is at the Lucas County dog pound until October 14th. For information, call me at the boat or at home: (419) 833-4632.

I'll see you at the next and last pancake breakfast for the season, Oct. 25th.



American Gothic (1/2)

## JULY VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Like many of us, Mike Mann came aboard purely by accident. The former Director, Kim Danes, took a computer to be repaired to Mike's son's shop in Genoa. Kim mentioned that the BOYER needed volunteers and Mike decided to give it a try. For the first pancake breakfast, Al asked Mike to provide the pancake mix and syrup, which he did and continues to do.

It turns out that Mike is uniquely qualified for the job of volunteer. When he was in college he worked summers painting bridges on the Ohio Turnpike. Mike likes to chip paint and paint and, like Al, climb up to high places. Most recently he has make making the chips fly

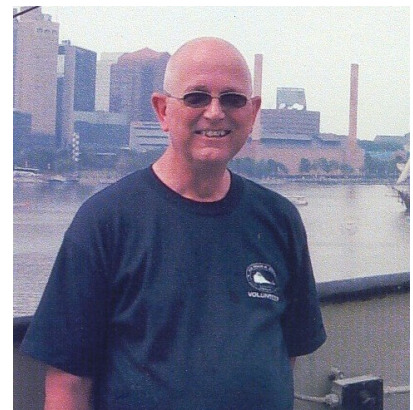
up on the boat deck. Mike is a big man, he swings a big hammer, and he makes a lot of racket.

Some of us suspected that Mike has thespian tendencies. He has appeared in several plays as a member of an amateur theatre group in Genoa. If Mike is holding forth with Shakespearean soliloquies we can't hear him over the hammering.

For a big man, Mike can move really fast. This was demonstrated last season when Mike and Luke were painting the rails on the spar deck. Mike has soaked a rag in Xylene and stuffed it in his back pocket. Suddenly there was a figure moving rapidly along the

deck heading for relief from the galley sink.

Mike has been an important addition to the volunteer crew. He brings pancakes and syrup, a strong right arm, and a great sense of humor.



## AUGUST VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

No one can fail to be impressed by the new signage on and about the BOYER: new signs over the door, on the door, in front of the ship, the one at the entrance to the drive, the billboard, and now the new name boards. This is all the work of RAY JOHNSON, who has been a volunteer for just over a year.

The way that Ray came to us was a kind of accident. Ray is a member of an amateur radio group that was putting on a display on the BOYER last year. While aboard the ship Ray met Paul of course and Ray mentioned that he made signs and that he could improve the sign-

age that we then had. Ray suggested some designs, he and Paul negotiated, and the result is the beautiful works of art that are now a proud part of the BOYER.

Many of us thought that making signs was what Ray did for a living, but we were mistaken. Ray, who lives in Dearborn, is a safety and environmental engineer who works in Adrian. He spends so much time on the BOYER that most of us figured that he lived in the Toledo area.

Ray got into the sign-making business by a circuitous route. Ray and his son had a midget

auto racer: his son drove and Ray was the pit-crew boss. He began his sign-making career by making decals for the racer. Once started Ray just continued his education, branching out into other areas such as silk-screening. As you probably know, Ray is responsible for the Volunteers' T-shirts and for those for sale aboard the BOYER. Ray's next project is going to be making signs to identify the knots on the board hanging over the display case. Like all Ray's work, it will be beautiful and a fine addition to the museum ship.

