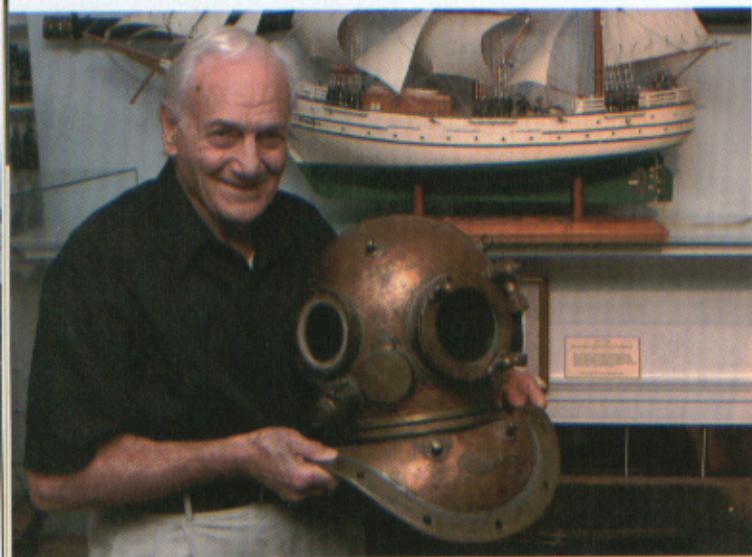




Jim Manziolillo shows off his replica of the English war ship, the HMS Victory.

A Mariner's Paradise

Sail on into Houston's Maritime Museum and be swept away by the world that has been brought together by its enthusiastic curator, Jim Manziolillo. This World War II merchant marine veteran, naval architect, maritime engineer, ship builder, inventor and world traveler has amassed a collection of nautical instruments and all types of models of ships from modern oil tankers to vessels built in the 15th century.



Underwater diving helmets such as this one were invented in 1819.

ship in the water and at the dock with background view of a city. "It is really beautiful," Manziolillo said.

ExxonMobil has donated a model of a geophysical ship, complete with a helicopter pad on its deck. With great detail, the model shows the kind of modern vessel that uses depth sounders and other technology to explore the ocean's bottom for energy sources and drilling sites. One of Manziolillo's volunteers has a doctorate in oceanography and provides valuable information for supporting such an exhibit.

The tankers and exploration vessel displays allow visitors a greater understanding of the investment being made by the major oil companies to keep meeting U.S. energy needs. The Maritime Museum helps bring to life the daily headlines in the business pages.

The only thing that slows Manziolillo is the need for much more space, preferably at a new location. He is hopeful of a breakthrough soon and a new home for this priceless collection. ■



A model of the Dutch ocean-going tug, the Smit Nederland. The Dutch are famous for their tugs.

Manziolillo collected the various items throughout his life, primarily during his 24-year career designing and building 240 ships in his two Mexican shipyards. Other items have been donated and continue to be donated to the museum by individuals and businesses happy to have the items displayed properly in front of an interested audience.

When he sold the shipbuilding business in 1981, Manziolillo retired to Houston because "it is a great city with a great seaport." But if the frenzy of activity he underwent to open the museum resembles a retirement, then his shipbuilding days must have been extraordinary.

There is no aspect of maritime history and artifact that is not lovingly revered by this enthusiastic person. His mind overflows with ideas for new exhibits including displays about the Port of Houston, the ship pilots, agents for cargo ships and oil tankers. He proudly shows off each new acquisition like a proud papa with a newborn son.

For example, Shell Oil Company recently sent the museum a seven-and-a-half foot model of a ship called Fong, which is currently on display. Manziolillo points out how this ship is in essence a "floating factory" that takes natural gas and liquefies it by putting it under pressure at a rate of 600-to-1. Once converted into this form, large quantities of gas can then be safely transported by tankers that carry domes on deck for this purpose.

Manziolillo was called recently by another large company, British Gas Systems, which has now sent him a large, seven-foot long diorama of one of their ships called the SS Methane Progress. The model shows the



Manziolillo shows off his replica of the Spanish war ship, the San Felipe.

Plan a Visit Soon

The Houston Maritime Museum is located at 2204 Dorrington, which is one block south of West Holcombe and just east of Greenbriar near the Texas Medical Center. The museum is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. A donation of \$2-\$4 is suggested. Visitors are asked to phone 713-666-1910 for appointments on Sunday or Monday to tour the museum. The museum is open with no reservations required the rest of the week. You can also visit the museum's Web site at www.houstonmaritimemuseum.org.