



## Letter From the Board

Dear MSRA Members,

What a year! No new shipwrecks, but the busiest year yet in terms of the amount of work that took place.

MSRA covered almost 65 miles of bottomlands in search of the *Andaste*. The ship was not found, but we certainly got a good start on cornering the sly shipwreck. We have high hopes for a discovery next June.

And the same goes for Flight 2501. With over 70 square miles covered during the last few years of searching, the team feels positive this will be the year.

The *Hennepin* will soon be on the National Register. No other non-government agencies have ever nominated a shipwreck to the register. This is a credit to MSRA.

We began an excellent affiliation with historian William Lafferty. His efforts netted him the coveted Barkhausen Award for his paper on the *Hennepin*, and he is looking forward to partnering with us on a publication about the Rise of the Self-Unloaders. And he is churning up all kinds of good research on the *Andaste*, our next target.

Our own Valerie (and my wife) had a good run this year with several articles being published, an award, and an appearance on the History Channel.

Our documentary "She Died a Hard Death," was chosen for showing at the prestigious Waterfront Film festival in Saugatuck this past June.

We received a major grant to develop an exhibit from the Michigan Humanities Council. This will keep MSRA busy for the next year.

Lastly, we have finally filed papers for becoming a 501C3 corporation. As divers, accounting is not our strong suit, so we avoided this distasteful task for a long time. But now its done. Your donations will now be tax deductible as a result.

Thank you all for your continued support for the educational work we are doing. We hope you will all be around for the continued adventure.

Happy Holidays

**Jack van Heest**  
Director, MSRA

## Happy Holidays from the MSRA Crew



*The Hennepin is all decked out for the holidays!*

## Important Year End Announcements!

- MSRA Files for 501C3 Status! (Finally)
- MSRA receives major grant from MHC
- *Hennepin* approved by State of Michigan for National Register Listing
- May 3, '08 reserved for MSRA annual film festival
- Van Heest receives Michigan State History Award

**Check out the Jan./Feb. 2008 issue of Michigan History Magazine for an article about the discovery of the Hennepin.**

# MSRA awarded Michigan Humanities Council Grant

To understand a bit about MHC, here is some information from their web site.

## Mission Statement

The Michigan Humanities Council connects people and communities by fostering and creating quality cultural programs. In carrying out its mission, the Council encourages and supports, through advocacy, fundraising and community engagement, a variety of activities which bring humanities scholars and the public together to examine culture. Moving forward the Council will:

- award grants for public humanities and cultural programs;
- conduct public humanities and cultural projects of statewide importance;
- initiate collaborations and partnerships to broaden and strengthen the organizational and institutional base for the humanities in Michigan; and
- provide the humanities with leadership and a public voice in Michigan.

## Vision Statement

The Michigan Humanities Council will be known as a unifying force throughout Michigan, whose programs help people connect with one another and the places where they live, by fostering a greater understanding and engagement in the cultures, histories, and values which tell us who we were, are, and hope to be.



MSRA was notified in mid November that we have been awarded a \$15,000 grant to develop educational programming relative to the recent discovery of the *Hennepin* and its listing on the National Register of Historic placement. For those interested in what the grant will accomplish, here is the summary from the grant proposal:

The coincidental timing of the discovery of the shipwreck *Hennepin* by MSRA and the development of an exhibit called "Working Waterfronts" at the HMCC focusing on the maritime history of southwestern Michigan could not be better. In today's world, which is focused more on the present, it is often difficult to focus children and even adults on topics historical in nature. Educators agree that if a link can be generated between the past and the present, public interest will be stronger. In this case, the modern-

day discovery of the *Hennepin* will serve as the "hook" to establish an interest in the topic of Great Lakes maritime history, commerce and transportation, which in large part is linked to the development of the self-unloaders.

The "Rise of the Self-Unloaders" exhibit will be designed to interpret the origin and development of the self-unloader within the Great Lakes maritime landscape – past, present and future – and reflect on the inherent value of shipwrecks as a source of information on Michigan's maritime culture. It is important to note that during the formative period of the self-unloader's development – the shipping of bulk goods on the Great Lakes (grain, lumber, iron ore and coal) rivaled the waterborne trade of the eastern and western seaboard states combined! The impact of Great Lakes maritime trade (and its innovations) on the industrialization of our nation, although largely unrecognized in economic textbooks of today, cannot be overstated.

St. Joseph/Benton Harbor is a fitting place to offer such an exhibit. The Twin Cities owe their beginnings to the river and lake and the setting it provided for the founding of Fort Miami in 1679 - the oldest Euro settlement in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The "Rise of the Self-Unloaders" will be presented in its own 20' x 18' foot space, adjacent to the primary "Working Waterfronts" exhibition gallery. This adjoining room is equipped with seating, a built in viewing screen, wall-space for the mounting of interpretive panels, exhibition cases for artifacts, and is handicapper accessible. It will serve as an exhibition area for not only the general visitor, but also for special focused presentations to guided tours and school groups. A series of graphic panels and text will present the development and modern role of self-unloading technology, the associated story of the *Hennepin* and its discovery, the presence and resources of the Southwest Michigan Bottomland Preserve, and the significance of shipwreck sites as a source of information for the study and interpretation of Great Lakes maritime technologies and traditions. Exhibit panels will be accompanied by artifacts with related high levels of interpretive quality and an interactive player and wall screen for viewing a 15-minute documentary on the *Hennepin*'s discovery and documentation. It is important to note that St. Joseph remains a port of call for 70-80 self-unloading freighters annually. HMCC is negotiating with local shipping lines to develop a series of seasonal tours aboard these self-unloaders so visitors can view, first hand, their technologies and related aspects of shipboard life.

This exhibit will be complemented by a companion publication that will be offered to exhibit attendees and the general public at a reasonable cost. William Lafferty, affiliate of MSRA and Valerie van Heest will co-author this book, and Kenneth Pott will provide a "forward". The book will be published by the HMCC. This publication will be able to accomplish at a reasonable cost largely because of the massive amount of research that has already been done by William Lafferty and the underwater documentation already completed by MSRA. The grant request only includes the time spent to assemble the research into a cohesive book, and to produce the cover design and layout work necessary to go to print. Much of that work will be contributed by MSRA as a portion of the cost share of this project in large part due to the desire of MSRA, HMCC and William Lafferty to publish their work.

A curriculum guide will accompany "The Rise of the Self-Unloaders" exhibit and will contain teacher resources and lesson plans for use in the classroom. The lesson plans will be developed in accordance with Michigan state learning standards for middle school students, in the subject areas of social studies, science, and English/language arts. The entire guide will be available free of charge, as downloadable pdf files found on HMCC's website. For teachers who do not have computer access, HMCC will print and mail a paper copy to them.

## Update on National Register Nomination

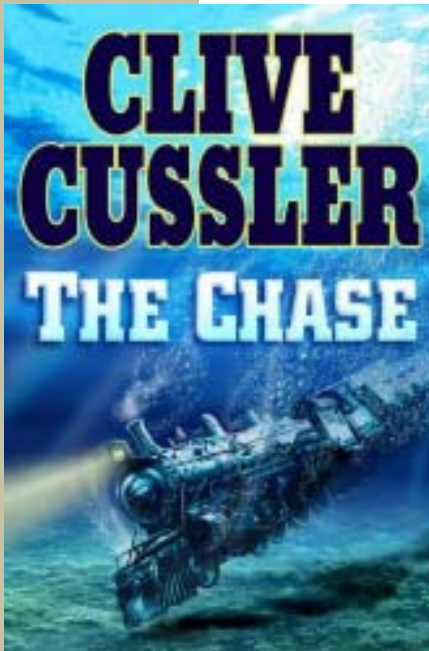
We had hoped that the listing of the *Hennepin* on the national Register would be complete by the end of the year. While the National Park Service has only 45 days to make the listing official after the individual states present their successful nominations, the State of Michigan has not yet forwarded the *Hennepin* nomination (or any of the other sites approved on the Sept 14th meeting. They are blaming the State Budget issues.

We have been assured that it will take place, but we are still waiting...

## Just for fun

You can read about board member Jack van Heest on page 6, but you can read what Jack wrote here. You may recall in the last issue of *The Explorer*, an article about MSRA's work for NOAA in locating a submerged and buried current meter. Jack rewrote the article a la Clive Cussler. This is Jack's nod to how our partner, Mr. Cussler, might have written about such a mission:

After reading THIS, you will want to return to the ever more popular writings of the real Clive Cussler!



Check out Clive's newest book: **THE CHASE**

Putnam editor in chief Neil Nyren says: "November marks Clive Cussler's first stand-alone. *The Chase*, a historical adventure thriller, revolves around the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. "It will also be the first book Cussler has not cowritten with another writer in four years."

There he was.....the weight of almost 1-1/2 atmospheres pressing on every square inch of his body, he had been searching for the *RADIO ACTIVE* acoustic current sensor for what seemed like hours, swimming endless search patterns in the frigid icy, crystal clear, cold, fresh water of Lake Michigan. Ross scanned left and right, looking at row after row of featureless ridges of sand, peering out into the water until the turbidity blurred things beyond recognition like a whiteout in a snow storm.

This was a last-ditch attempt to assist NOAA in retrieving their lost instrument, worth 1.2 million dollars, and it's priceless stored data before the beginning of the Great Lakes Monsoon season began, rendering all such operations utterly impossible, as the whole region would be under a relentless onslaught of decaying leaves, blinding even the most seasoned SAR professionals. NOAA had done MSRA many favors in the past, especially in hindcasting the storms that sank the *Chicora* and obliterated Flight 2501. Now was MSRA's chance to return the favor.

After all, aiding MSRA in finding the *Chicora* had turned up a century old encrusted three-lock box, containing millions in stolen confederate gold bars and had helped secure the MSRA operating budget for at least two more years of searching for mysterious SS *Platypuss* which had sunk enroute from London to the Chicago's World Fair in 1893 with it's cargo of the world's first working model of a perpetual motion machine. The amazing machine, the brainchild of Professor Larson, PhD, had taken 30 years to build and when notified of it's demise, he destroyed all known notes and drawings in a fit of rage.

The constant bombardment of sand particles against Ross' bare skin created a kind of painful burning friction that kept him from feeling the full effects of hypothermia. He wouldn't be in this position if he'd had listened to Captain Jack and better guarded his dive gear at the loading dock. Damn those al Quedia operatives....they seemed like they were everywhere. Luckily nature had afforded him with an abundance of body hair and it that sense he was almost able to do without a wetsuit. In his younger years while in the NAVY SEALS he had been nicknamed "Otter". Still the water was icy cold and not any thing to be fooled with. Better men than he had succumbed to the icy grip of death in these very waters.

Out of the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of what looked like a Burbit class Soviet *NUCLEAR* submarine running in stealth mode. It looked like time was running short for the MRSA team, indeed. Luckily the swirling silt cloud had camouflaged Ross and the team and delayed their discovery long enough to detect the frayed end of the instrument anchor line. With only 500 psi remaining in his scuba tank, Ross knew he had better secure the makeshift buoy that the ragtag rescue team had hastily assembled earlier that morning.

As he finished tying the last loop of a bowline knot to secure the buoy to the lost instrument, he felt the sharp sting of the poisonous zebra mussel. These mussel had infiltrated the lakes back in the 1980s and had cleared up the water considerably. The unwelcome pests had been considered a nuisance, but of no real concern. However, in the past years there had been an unexplained increase in diver fatalities. It had been rumored that the Zebra mussels, once thought to be harmless, were actually poisonous and on rare occasions had attacked divers outright when frightened, injured or backed into a corner. Beautiful and intelligent marine biologist, Dr. Valerie Van Heest, long time member of the MSRA team, had been studying the effects of extreme levels of E coli on the aggressiveness of mussels and had warned the group of her alarming findings. Perhaps there was a correlation between this and the increase in fatalities.

As Ross's quickly numbing brain processed this last thought, the sub had returned. He looked at his air gage, 100 psi! He was definitely in dire straits now. "I've got to warn the others!" It was the last thought he had before he blacked out from the extreme cold, Zebra mussel poison, and the impact of the sub.....

J. van Heest

# Valerie Receives Michigan State History Award

*Text from Historical Society of Michigan Press release.*

## 2007 State History Awards Presented at State History Conference

The Historical Society of Michigan presented its 2007 State History Awards at the 133rd annual State History Conference held in Macomb County, Michigan September 28-30. The State History Awards are the highest recognition presented by the state's official historical society and oldest cultural organization, established in 1828. Fifteen awards were presented in a variety of categories including Publications: University and Commercial Press, Local Societies, Publications: Private Printing, Publications: Children and Youth, Communications, Media, Educational Programs, Restoration & Preservation, Distinguished Volunteer Service, Institutions, Special Programs and Events.



Robert Myers presents Valerie the award on Sept 28th

In the category of **Distinguished Volunteer Service** the Society awarded Valerie Van Heest the State History Award. The research, documentation, interpretation and preservation of Michigan's underwater maritime heritage have occupied much of Valerie Van Heest's life for the past twelve years. Her work has focused on the discovery, documentation and preservation of shipwrecks, and educational outreach to both sport divers and the general public. After playing an instrumental role in establishing Southwest Michigan Underwater Preserve, Ms. Van Heest went on to co-found the Michigan Shipwreck Research Associates in 2001. This nonprofit organization is dedicated to the research and preservation of maritime history. Valerie Van Heest's volunteer work is helping Michigan ensure that a shipwreck found is not a shipwreck lost, but instead a shipwreck preserved.



Valerie will appear on the History Channel's program "Cities of the Underworld" on Feb 20, 2008 in an episode about Chicago. Called back to her home by producers wishing to cover a story on the loss of the *Wells Burt*, a ship that she surveyed in 1988, Valerie made a day trip over to work with the host Don Wildman. They explored the wreck together using full face masks with built in communications.



*Valerie to appear on History Channel*

**For anyone considering a year-end donation to MSRA, this is the year to do it! Your donation will be tax deductible!**

## MSRA filed for 501C3 Non-Profit

MSRA has finally taken the plunge (not in the water as we prefer to do) but into the big leagues of becoming an official charitable educational organization. MSRA has existed as a Michigan non-profit corporation since our filing in 2001, but felt that with the receipt of the Michigan Humanities Council grant and other significant projects we envision for the future, it is time to seek this status.

What this means to our donors and members who have been wanting to make donations, but who would prefer they be able to write such donations off on you taxes, now you can! The papers were sent in early December, and an accountant who advised us, said that any donations made after the postmark date of the filing, will be considered deductible.

So if you are so inclined to offer up a year end contribution to keep the work of MSRA going, we encourage you. One thing to keep in mind is that 95% of your donations go to the work of the group. There are no salaried staff and very low administrative costs. We believe its the work that matters most.

# MSRA Annual Meeting (Holiday Party!)



Thanks for all the great food!



The littlest guest



The hairiest guest

Members gathered for the second annual Holiday Meeting (party) held at the Van Heest's home on December 7th. Good conversation and food was had by all. Artist Bob Doornbos unveiled his two latest shipwreck drawings, the SS *Michigan* and the mystery schooner. (We're not mentioning the identity here). Only those who attended the event know for sure. We will see you at the May 3rd event for the official unveiling.



Artist Robert Doornbos, divers Todd White, Jeff Vos and Bob Underhill and surround the Michigan Drawing



The dive team takes a close look at the schooner drawing



The "unveiling"



Captain Chuck Cooper  
Robert Doornbos  
and his wife Cherie



The SS Michigan

If you would like you own copy of the SS *Michigan* drawing suitable for framing (16in. x 20in) you can purchase one through Robert Doornbos at [www.valerievanheest.com/shipwreckart](http://www.valerievanheest.com/shipwreckart) \$35.00 each

## MSRA Board of Directors

Jan Miller  
 Valerie Olson Van Heest  
 Craig Rich  
 Ross Richardson  
 Jack van Heest  
 Geoffrey Reynolds

# MSRA Board Member Profile

It's about time to meet Jack van Heest. I know him well, of course, he's my husband, but he is also an integral member of MSRA's board. His involvement dates back to when he and Craig Rich and I helped form the SWMUP in the mid 90s. He is often doing the behind-the-scenes work which is why you don't always see him.

Besides being a diver, certified back in 1985, Jack shares a love for maritime history... in fact, history of all kinds. He has a solid understanding of the past and believes we can not successfully go forward without looking learning from the past.

What makes Jack such a value to MSRA (as well as to me) is that he can do just about anything that needs doing. Whether captaining the boat, or doing mechanical repairs on it, or operating a side scan, or building an ROV, or duplicating MSRA DVDs or running equipment at our programs and annual events, or setting up computer simulations programs, Jack is on the job. His abilities stem from a few things. First: his good Dutch heritage (don't pay someone to do it if you can do it yourself). Second: his inquisitive mind. (He always wants to know how things

work). Third: He is a mechanical engineer (not only does he know how things work, he actually designs them). Jack graduated from Ferris State University and now works for Besser, Inc in Holland designing equipment for the concrete industry.

Here's an example of Jack's ingenuity.

When MSRA began searching in deep water in 2001, we needed a way to retrieve 500 feet of search cable with 200 lbs of weight on the end. Using a motorcycle rim, some scrap aluminum and a motor he found at the junk yard, Jack but a winch that electronically retrieves the sonar fish and cable. After Clive Cussler's side scan operator, Ralph Wilbanks, spent



Jack aboard Ralph Wilbanks's boat

just a few days retrieving his cable using manpower, he asked Jack to build him one too!

So when you attend the MSRA annual event on May 3rd next year, turn and look up in the balcony, Jack will be up there- the man behind the curtain, so to speak, like the Wizard of Oz, pushing all the buttons to make things happen.

Thanks Jack!

Submitted by V. van Heest

## Associates

William Lafferty, PhD  
 Director of Research

Arthur Allen  
 Oceanographer, U.S. Coast Guard

Brendon Bailod  
 Historian/Writer

Jed Jaworski  
 Maritime Historian

Dr. Guy Meadows  
 University of Michigan

Kenneth Pott  
 Maritime Archaeologist

Dr. David Schwab  
 Oceanographer, GLERL

Michigan Shipwreck Research Associates, is a Michigan nonprofit corporation, whose mission is to Preserve Michigan's submerged maritime history. To that end, the organization's work includes research, exploration, documentation and education regarding historic shipwrecks within Michigan waters, with an initial emphasis on the area off West Michigan. MSRA works in cooperation with State Agencies. As a Holland-based volunteer-driven organization, MSRA relies on memberships, fundraising events and grants to continue its work.



1134 Goodwood Court  
 Holland, Michigan 49424

www.michiganshipwrecks.org

## Mark Your Calendars

May 3, 2008  
 Knickerbocker Theatre  
 86 East Eighth St. 7:00

Please join MSRA and the Joint Archives of Holland as we present *Mysteries and Histories, An Evening Beneath The Inland Seas*, MSRA's 9th annual event.

The Evening will feature a program that reveals the identity of the schooner found two years ago off Holland entitled "A Freshwater Monsoon." David Trotter will discuss his latest discoveries and Ralph Wilbanks will be back to share with us another story of his work with Clive Cussler. Details will follow in the new year.



Jack tracks runs during the 2007 search