

# The Patriot Ledger

## 65 years later, sailors return to Hingham Shipyard

By Karen Goulart, The Patriot Ledger, Posted Sep 13, 2008 @ 02:00 AM



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Crew alumni Max Sierpind, left, Arthur Van Nostrand, Frank Slavin, Gordon Stewart, Leon Slavin, Ernest Molina, Daniel Brown and David Cantine display the flag that flew over the USS Charles Lawrence that was built at the Hingham Shipyard.

HINGHAM — For those simply passing by, this stretch of 130 harbor-side acres would appear to be just another other construction project.

In some ways it is. When completed, the reconstruction of the Hingham Shipyard will be replete with townhouses, condominiums, shops and parks.

But in one major way, it is much more than that. This place where people will soon live, shop and play saw 23,000 men and women build 227 war ships in three years during World War II.

It was a place where, 65 years ago, boys like Ernie Molina stepped aboard a ship and entered adulthood.

Molina was just 17 when he started his “on the job training” aboard the USS Charles Lawrence (DE-53), the third Destroyer Escort ship built at the yard.

On Friday, along with more than a dozen other DE-53 alums, Molina stepped back in time with a visit to the shipyard.

Organized by the Hingham Shipyard Historical Foundation, Hingham Historical Society and Samuels & Associates, the reunion of DE-53 veterans was a chance to return to the shipyard. After a presentation about the future of the yard, and a short tour, the vets gathered at Old Derby Academy for lunch and reminiscences, joined by Hingham residents with their own connections to the yard.

Molina, a Kentucky resident, said he’s only missed two of the group’s 20 reunions and was especially enjoying this visit.

“This is something I will never forget and it’s nice to see part of the crew – most of them are already gone,” Molina said.

Looking out over the water, standing beside one of the last structures left from the shipbuilding days, Molina recalled his days on the ship, sleeping on deck for weeks at a time to be close to the guns, and the Christmas storm of 1943 that left their convoy scattered in its fury.

“When you’re youngsters, you can take all that,” Molina said with a smile. “And if I was a youngster, I’d do it all over again.”

Barry Blackwell and his son, Andrew, attended the event to meet Molina and his shipmates. Barry’s father-in-law, Andrew’s grandfather, the late Lt. George “Dick” Seidlitz became their commanding officer in 1944.

“We heard a couple of good stories about Dick ...” Andrew Blackwell said. “That’s what we wanted to hear, we wanted to hear about his life on the ship.”

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