

## Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA)

August 27, 2006

**Section:** LOCAL NEWS PHILADELPHIA & ITS SUBURBS

**Edition:** CITY-D

**Page:** B03

### **Gazela** crew deflated at news

Phila.'s tall ship was to set sail for R.I., but a rudder problem scuttled the trip.

*Mari A. Schaefer INQUIRER STAFF WRITER*

Talk about disappointing.

Vacation plans were set, bags were packed, and the food had been ordered.

Then the day before Philadelphia's tall ship the **Gazela** was supposed to set sail for the Newport Wooden Boat Festival in Rhode Island, the trip was canceled when a problem with a rudder was discovered.

"I was heartbroken, crestfallen and devastated," said Marcus Brandt, 49, of Allentown, who along with his 16-year-old son, was one of 30 volunteer crew members planning to make the two-week voyage to the premier event.

Yesterday, a crane lifted the 3,200-pound wooden rudder out of the water and onto wooden blocks set up in a parking lot by Penn's Landing, where the **Gazela** is docked. Brandt and about 20 other volunteers began making repairs to the rudder and steering mechanism.

The **Gazela**, a 177-foot, three-masted barkentine built in 1883 in Portugal, is thought to be the oldest wooden square-rigger of its size still sailing. The ship made 140 Atlantic crossings during the 68 years it was with the Portuguese White Fleet fishing for cod.

Since 1971, when William Wycoff Smith purchased the tall ship, the **Gazela** has called Philadelphia home. The ownership was transferred to the Philadelphia Ship Preservation Guild in 1985, and it is now maintained by a crew of volunteers and donors.

"They took the news with obvious regret," said guild president Ed Stemmler, who was scheduled to crew on the ship's return voyage. "But there is no point to sailing if you can't steer."

Last week, Stemmler said, the captain noticed a stiffness in the steering when the **Gazela** was moved to the Great Plaza at Penn's Landing for the Peter Pan Festival. Divers were brought in to check the rudder and discovered it had moved out of its proper position.

The cost for the repair could run up to \$10,000, Stemmler estimates, and he expects to spend some of his time off acting as "a purchase agent for this new project."

As the volunteers lunched on hamburgers and cookies made in the ship's galley, Lenore Khan, 57, from Roxborough, said she was able to rearrange the time off she had taken from her job as a hospice social worker.

"Around here, you learn to adjust," she said, noting that the sailors tend to be a flexible group.

Khan joined the group about six years ago and said what she loves most about working on the **Gazela** is the mix of ages, experiences, and "day jobs" of the other volunteers.

"It is a community," Khan said.

The sound of hammers and scrapers could be heard pounding, as about 10 volunteers, including some of those who had expected to be sailing, were instead peeling back a layer of thin greenish copper and scraping off the disgusting mess of tallow, lime and Irish felt used to protect the 24-foot rudder from marine life.

If the repairs can be done in time, next up for the **Gazela** would be a trip to Baltimore on Oct. 7 for the Great Chesapeake Bay Schooner Race to Save the Bay.

"We have a month to get the ship back together again and at least have one good sail this summer," Stemmler said.

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#### **Gazela** Information

To find out more information about the tall ship **Gazela** and how to volunteer for the Philadelphia Ship Preservation Guild, visit <http://www.gazela.org/> or call 215-238-0280.