

## Gallatin decommissioned, crew switches to Dallas

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CGC *Gallatin/Dallas*

The life of a ship is its crew. The crew makes the spaces come alive. A crew lives its life a little more intensely on a ship, and the ship shares in that energy. This lesson was brought home to me these last few weeks in Portland, Maine, and especially today during the decommissioning of CGC *Gallatin* and the recommissioning of CGC *Dallas*.

Three weeks ago *Gallatin* pulled into Bath Iron Works (BIW), Portland Yard. As we moored outboard of *Dallas*, I looked at our new ship and wondered what we were doing. Hand hats crawled over the ship while new welds and patches looked like wounds in the sides. The rake of its bow said it was *Gallatin's* sister ship, but the different lines of its decks made me uneasy. Not for long, however, as work of offloading and backloading drove all other thoughts from the members of the crew.

The words "offload" and "backload" mean something to me. They mean up at 1530 and work until 2300, 2400, or whenever it takes. They mean hearing laughter ripple through the racks in the berthing area at the pipe "liberty, liberty, liberty, row liberty for all hands," as exhausted men fell back asleep. They mean being in a "Conga line" turning back and forth as thousands of boxes and

stripped of everything that wasn't welded to the deck. DC2 Ivan Jurado talked with me about walking through empty passageways, footsteps echoing, the slapping of waves against the hull, and the unexpected creak of frames for no reason. "It's kind of eerie over there, knowing that you are all alone in the middle of a berthing area where fifty of your shipmates lived," he said.

December 20 was a cold day even for Maine. But it was a clean clear cold, not a bitter one. Visitors looked on as the crew assembled on the flight deck of *Gallatin* for the last time. Captain Loy, Chief of Atlantic Area Operations, spoke briefly of the thoughts and feelings we have had these last few weeks. Then it came time for the final reports.

Cmdr. Toscano, Engineering Officer, "The engines are cold iron, the

bundles were passed from man to man to the forecastle, the flight deck, the fantail, or over one of three brows to the *Dallas* or to one of the waiting trucks on the pier. BIW's big crane lifted pallet after pallet, and truck after truck ran back and forth to the warehouse. Soon the long hours of hard work paid off as *Dallas* became liveable and its new crew moved aboard her.

Moving aboard I found that the differences that had made me uneasy before made me less now. "How do I get to..." became a popular phrase for a day or two, but a sailor has to know his ship and soon we were used to most of the new layout of *Dallas*.

We were beginning to settle in on the *Dallas*. The berthing and shops hummed with activity as equipment was checked out. Yardworkers soaked up the paint in passageways as crew members moved boxes of supplies around Support Center Boston civilian workers installing cables for the computer expert from Headquarters. RIO personnel checked off a discrepancy list. Still, all at once things are being finished and the workers begin to leave one by one.

As the *Dallas* learned with life, only watch was left on the *Gallatin*. It was

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stuffs are looked."

Lt. Rhienger, Weapons: "The ship's gun deck is spiked."

Lt. Hurst, Operations: "The chronometer had been allowed to run down."

Lt. Daly, Supply: "The galley fires have been extinguished."

Cmdr. Gonko, XO: "Capt. Newlin, the *Gallatin* is ready to be decommissioned." And it was over with a last salute going across the brow.

But *Dallas* is there to take *Gallatin's* place and carry on. The crew has a new home and Atlantic Area a new ship, better than before. Some of *Gallatin's* crew may well return to the ship after FRAM as ET3 Meglic did with the *Dallas*; putting it in FRAM in 1986 and bringing it back out today.

