

ON THE WATER

All hands on deck

Getting schooner ready for season is a big job

BY KRISTEN COUNTS

Special to the Record-Eagle

"It's sort of like owning a 200-year-old house that has to be remodeled every year."

That's how Dave McGinnis describes the caretaking of the schooner *Manitou*, a vessel and business he just took ownership of in March. In fact, summer staffers arrive long before the first passenger; it takes seven to eight weeks of work to get the ship ready to provide excursions to visitors all summer long.

The business may be more commonly recognized by the name of the schooner's predecessor, the *Malabar*. But now, the company is all about this replica of a 19th-century cargo schooner. Built in 1983, she is a two-masted, top-sailed schooner with a hull of steel and all wood on deck.

For McGinnis, the *Manitou* is a dream come true — the opportunity to be the owner of the ship after years of working on the *Manitou* and other vessels.

But before the *Manitou* can sail her first voyage of the season, she must be thoroughly worked over.

"We usually start the first or second week of March," said McGinnis. "It's a fairly massive undertaking. You have to sand and repaint or varnish virtually everything on the boat each year."

The pulleys are taken apart and regreased. The wire rigging is retarred. The standing and running rigging must all be rerigged,



Record-Eagle/Doug Tesner

Crew members Jeanne Nicolosi and first mate Matt Goacher paint a compartment aboard the *Manitou* to get it ready for the season.

and then some. This year, the ship's bottom must be repainted.

One cold day earlier this season, the ship looked much like a Conestoga wagon docked in West Bay, covered in plastic to protect her deck. First mate Matt Goacher and deckhand Jeanne Nicolosi, in wooly hats and gloves, were vigorously slathering white paint on the hull. Knowing all

they had to accomplish, the workers didn't stop painting for a moment while answering questions. They live on the *Manitou* in the summer, helping to sail the ship and take care of guests. Goacher has worked on similar schooners and loves to do it.

"I like living on a jungle gym and being outside," Goacher said. "I enjoy the musicians (that perform on

the ship). I have a captive audience on a ship and they're pretty not critical. It's just the right amount of challenge."

Nicolosi previously worked on a fishing boat and had other related experiences. She found out about the job opportunity through the American Sail Training Association.

"(Preparing the ship) is the easy work," Nicolosi said. "It's an eight-hour day. When we're up and running, they work from 7 in the morning until 9:30 at night. We sail her with a captain and three deckhands. It takes a huge amount of effort. It's a very physical job."

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