



Betty Boyer/Herald

That's her

Paul Overly kneels beside a welcoming sign that shows the battleship U.S.S. Des Moines. With him is Debbie Crook, who painted it. Daisy Mae is the ship's mascot.

Local man to host 100 shipmates for 1st reunion in three decades

By **BETTY BOYER**
Herald Staff Writer

The Des Moines CA134 battleship may be in mothballs in Philadelphia, but about 100 of its shipmates will raise it this weekend — at least in their memories.

Paul Overly organized the first reunion of those who served on the Des Moines, the flagship of the Mediterranean Sea during the 1950s. It will be held today and Sunday at his home on Route 258 in Jefferson Township.

Overly has had gatherings before of shipmates who live in the immediate area. This is the first time he has tried to go nationwide to find

his former friends.

He started planning in January, but that was too late to get in the service organizations' magazines. Many people have called to say they could not change or make vacation plans to join the group but look forward to a similar event next year.

"One fellow called and said he had been waiting 30 years for this," Overly said.

The Des Moines was commissioned on Nov. 16, 1948, and taken out of service in 1961. The 716-foot-long and 76-foot-wide ship carried a crew of about 1,800 and was named for the Iowa state capital. Its mascot was Daisy Mae.

For the reunion, Overly bought T-shirts and caps with the name and picture of the ship. Included in the activities for the weekend will be a five-piece band and a belly dancer.

"We have people coming from as far away as Maine, Oregon, Florida and Louisiana," Overly said.

Overly's son, Timothy, is in the Navy aboard the Iwo Jima, and has invited some of his shipmates to the party.

"We have begun making plans for next year. A committee will be appointed at this reunion. We may be going to Des Moines, Iowa, next year," Overly said.



