

## Naval museum planned

By Jay Jochnowitz

Staff writer

ALBANY — The city, which has seen five naval vessels bear its name since 1864, will incorporate a naval museum into its expanded visitors center next year.

The announcement of the planned display came over the weekend as veterans of the fourth USS *Albany*, a post-World War II cruiser, gathered here for the ship's first reunion. Common Council President Stephen McArdle disclosed the city's plans to more than 200 former *Albany* sailors and their families at a Saturday night banquet at the Turf Inn in Colonie, according to Wayne Van Amburgh, an organizer of the event.

Van Amburgh said Sunday that the decision likely will prove to be a major boost in efforts in recent years to secure parts of the cruiser and establish some kind of permanent exhibition.

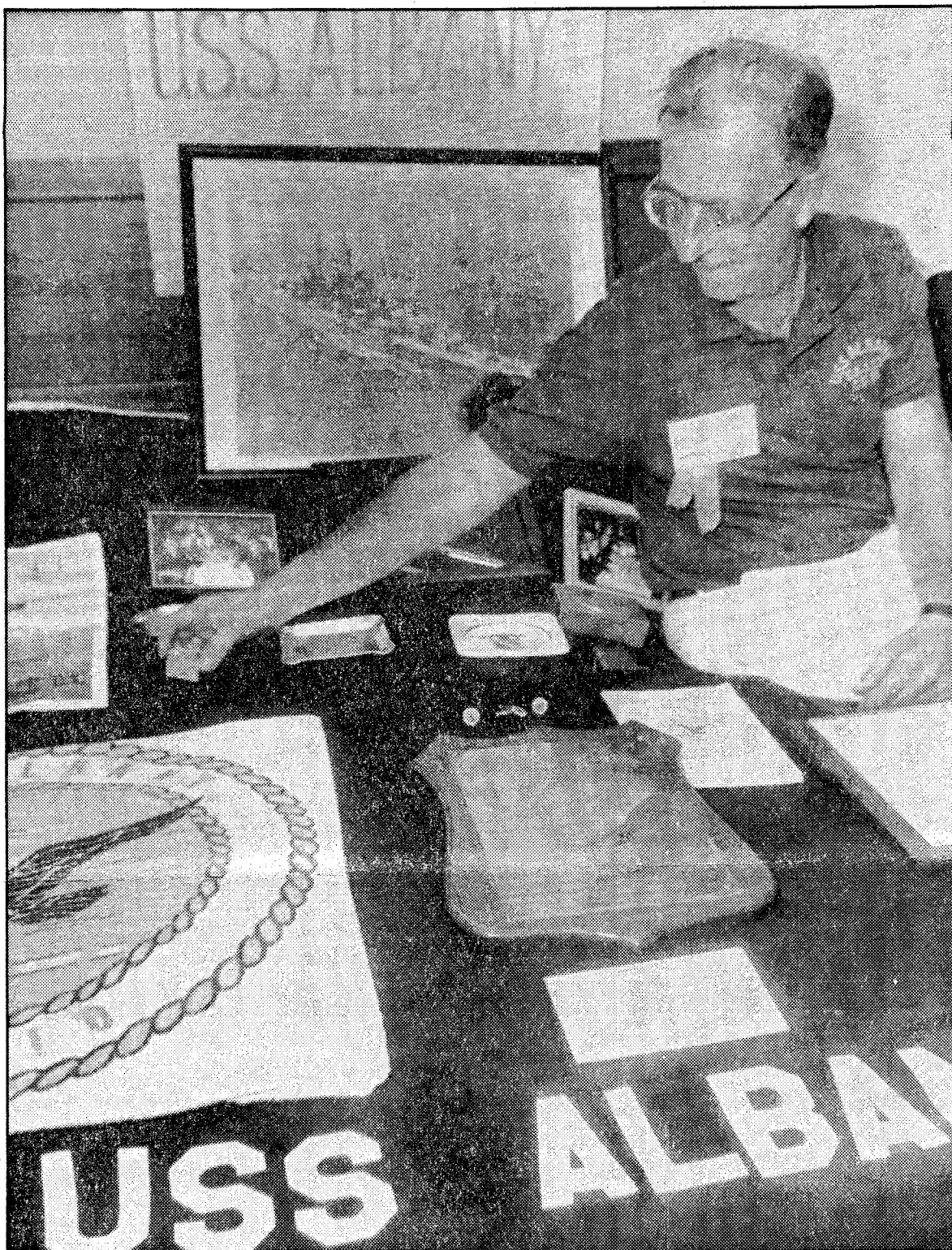
"I'm sure with the backing of the city now it'll help, now that there's a program," said Van Amburgh, adding that contacts are being made with Navy curators and the salvage company for parts and artifacts. "It's not just going into a personal collection. It's something for all the people of the city."

The idea of a museum keyed to Albany's maritime ties has been floated before without success or the city's support. Following the decommissioning of the cruiser *Albany* in 1980, proponents launched an effort to bring the ship here as a floating museum and designate it as a state veterans memorial.

But Mayor Thomas M. Whalen III questioned the practicality of docking the 700-foot, 13,600-ton vessel here, and he was also wary of the \$1.75 million setup cost for the museum and \$225,000 a year maintenance. The idea passed the state Senate but failed to find an Assembly sponsor.

The ship recently was sold for scrap, Van Amburgh said, drawing a winning bid of \$1.3 million from a Portsmouth, Va., firm, Jacobson Metal. When originally built as a heavy cruiser in 1946 with the help of locally sold war bonds, the *Albany* cost \$40 million. Retrofitting it as a guided missile cruiser in 1962 added \$175 million to the price tag, and in 1968 the addition of anti-aircraft warfare systems tacked on another \$10 million.

Van Amburgh said it was uncertain what parts of the ship



Times Union photo by Jack Madigan

**NAMESAKE** — Wayne Van Amburgh with artifacts from the cruiser USS *Albany*. Van Amburgh organized a recent reunion of the ship's crew.

and memorabilia would be incorporated into the display, or how large the exhibit would be. The Navy stripped down some of the ship prior to the sale, and was reported earlier this year to have such items as bells, engine room gauges, flags, an anchor and the ship's ribbons in storage in Portsmouth.

The weekend reunion also produced some artifacts of the ship's 34 years of service, including cuff links, ashtrays, a towel and a lighter from the ship's store. Veterans also brought with them a box full of paperwork, from log pages to several editions of the *Albany Seabreeze*, the ship's newsletter, an original program from the second commissioning in 1962 and an invitation to the third one in 1968.

Also emerging at the reunion

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was a plaque honoring the ship for "Excellence in Engineering" in a 1950 competition by the U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

Van Amburgh said he hopes to see the exhibit go beyond the cruiser and cover the other four ships that had the Albany name — a sloop-of-war commissioned in 1846; a screw sloop-of-war put to sea in 1868 and named for the propeller that drove it under power; a protected cruiser com-

missioned in 1900; and a nuclear submarine officially accepted by the Navy in April.

So far, Van Amburgh said, museum organizers are hoping for the donation of an oil painting of the first USS *Albany*.

"There's stuff out there that we just haven't pursued," he said. "There's no sense pursuing it if it's just going to go in a basement."