



# THE OVERFALLS BEACON

The Newsletter of The Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation

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## Float that Boat

The time is NOW! Suddenly things are moving very quickly on the project to get the ship to the shipyard. As *The Beacon* went to press, the dredge was mobilizing at the site. The dredging starts in early September. We hope to have her floating for the big 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Dredging sites have a way of being a bit odoriferous, but this time we welcome the smell of progress and success.

Following the dredging, our marine surveyor has to inspect the ship to certify to the U.S. Coast Guard that she is safe to tow. To strengthen our case (and the ship), Bill Reader has installed bracing in the forward hold where some frames are rusted out. With the tow permit from the Coast Guard and a good weather window, the ship will be off to the shipyard in Norfolk where she is due to come out of the water in mid October. Repairs in the shipyard will take six to eight weeks and she will be ready to come home with her new hull plates in place.

This is the event that our members, and the whole community, have been waiting for. It's a complicated process and it has been a long time in the works but we are finally able to see through to getting the hull below the waterline repaired. With the completion of the shipyard work, the ship will finally be out of the "at risk" category and sustainable. To help you follow the work, we will post a weekly Restoration Update on the web site, check it out at [WWW.OVERFALLS.ORG](http://WWW.OVERFALLS.ORG). Also, as the work begins, access to the ship may range between difficult and impossible requiring the Foundation to suspend our normal ship tours.

## Overfalls Lightship 70th Birthday Party

A champagne toast, food, birthday cake and cards, music and a very special present opening will all be part of a public birthday party at the ship on Friday, September 12 from 5 to 7 pm.

The entire community is invited to this festive event which will replace the traditional Closing Party this year. Bring finger food to share and a birthday card with a donation. Beverages will be provided. To help or to ask questions please call Merrill Kaegi at 645-9895. RSVP to Peg Stewart at 645-8655. In case of rain the party will be held on Saturday, September 13. Please join us and help make this a meaningful event in honor of our historic Lightship Overfalls.

The special present is a gift from Al & Joan Volpe of Scituate, MA. This is the most significant artifact the Foundation has ever received. Don't miss this!



Joan turning the present, wrapped in Overfalls red, over to courier Steven Humes for delivery.

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### Think About Next Season

By all measures, 2008 was a great year at the ship. The visitor count and sales in the Ship's Store were up. With the new hull plates and the ship floating, 2009 should be even better. Add to that, a new and exciting product line in the Ship's Store and our visitor count should increase significantly, especially as the evolving Canalfront Park draws more and more people to the waterfront.

It would be nice to meet that demand with expanded hours. To do that, we need more volunteers, both as ship guides and to staff the Ship's Store. Both are fun and a great opportunity to meet new and interesting people. Also both have an excellent training program so no prior experience is required. For more information call:

- George Elliott on 645-5071 for ship guiding, or
- Evelyn Kyritsis on 645-7168 for Ship's Store.

## VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Bob Humes, President



The view from the bridge of the Lightship Overfalls brightens and we will soon shut down the foghorn. I can now see all the way to the end of our long project. The front page article describes the near term dredging to free the ship from her prison of mud in preparation for the trip to the shipyard in Norfolk.

Now that things are happening we are reenergizing our fund raising campaign because there is much more work to do. Our biggest project will be the building the permanent slip with bulkheading to prevent the recreation of the prison of mud now holding her. Beyond that we want to make major landside improvements, including an "area of recognition" to honor our many supporters. I view these latter requirements as part of the City's beautiful Lewes Canalfront Park because we are part of this fantastic project. I've had preliminary discussions with the City and we are in agreement that our slip and landside improvements are clearly part of this special park project. In addition, we must ensure we have sufficient funds to meet our operating expenses with adequate provision for future maintenance of the hull in order to avoid the need for another major repair.

We will also provide resources in support of the City's Preserve America Grant which will make Lewes a 24/7/12 month a year tourist attraction, featuring signage and audio to explain our special and historic town. This project supports our third Strategic Plan initiative (Museum Without Walls) and the Overfalls will be a prominent part of the tour.

More positive news is the return of the Overfalls version of the "Eveready Bunny", Elaine Simmerman. Elaine returns to chair our very successful fund raising effort. The previous success was attributable to Elaine and her outstanding committee along with the professional support she recruited; they are ready to do it again. (See her report to you on Page 3.)

Truly, our success is because of the tireless support of our members, volunteers, city officials, community, and political representatives. We are indeed blessed to have such broad based support.

**None of us is as strong as all of us!**

## VIEW FROM THE STERN

Jon Joyce, Historian

This past July, I was fishing with long-time friend in Long Island Sound very near Cornfield Point on the slope of a famous widow maker, Long Sand Shoal. As the name suggests, the shoal is an elongated sand shoal paralleling the northern shore of Long Island Sound south of the Connecticut River estuary and the town of Old Saybrook. The slopes of the shoal are well known hang-outs for flounder and other game fish. However, the shoal poses hazardous passage to once active ports of Old Saybrook and Westbrook. Ships also routinely grounded on the shoal while in route to New York Harbor.

These hazards were addressed in 1856 when LV14 was reassigned from duty on Brenton Reef to the newly designated "Cornfield Point" station just south of Cornfield Point on the southern slope of the shoal at its midpoint. Ten years later the LV14 was nearly destroyed when it was rammed by a New London steamer in heavy fog. A year later it was retired and replaced by LV22. Both LV22 and its successor, LV23 were vessels converted to lightship duty, having been constructed for other purposes. They were wooden, lightly constructed and did not last long at the task.

LV 51 was the first modern lightship to serve on the station. It weighed 375 tons and was the first US lightship with an all-steel hull and the first with an electric illuminating apparatus, which was much brighter than the lights of its predecessors. It served only a short time as the permanent resident of the station although it served as a relief lightship on several occasions. On one of those occasions, she was struck on her port quarter by the Socony Oil Company barge # 58 under tow. LV51 sunk within eight minutes. All of the crew were able to get aboard the lifeboat and were saved. In 1938 our LV118 was built with funds specifically designated by Congress for a lightship to serve the Cornfield Point station. It served there until 1957.

The Cornfield Point station is now marked by a lighted buoy — the flounder fishing there is still pretty good!

## Funding, Status Report

This is the moment everyone has been anticipating. Shortly we will assemble to say Bon Voyage as the tug eases the lightship out of her slip and on her way to a shipyard in Norfolk for the big hull repair.

Two major Delaware companies are donating materials and services. Claymont Steel will provide the steel needed to replat the hull and Wilmington Tug, Inc. will tow the ship for just the cost of diesel fuel.

The past support of the Float the Boat Campaign has generated sufficient funds for the ship repair. This success has come from a combination of volunteer

*What we have,  
What we need*

labor, private donors, foundation grants, government generosity, the business community and big corporations. We still, however, need additional funds to build the slip and make the required landside improvements.

Consider making a generous donation by purchasing a part of the lightship (a naming opportunity) or a ship's rivet. Contact me at (302) 645-4733 or go to [WWW.OVERFALLS.ORG](http://WWW.OVERFALLS.ORG) for forms and information.

Elaine Simmerman

The ship's birthday is not the only one celebrated this year. Joan Reader showed up at the Dirty Hands lunch with a birthday cake for Chuck. In addition to good wishes and risqué presents from his crew, Chuck had to suffer through a beautiful rendition of Happy Birthday.



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### Mark Your Calendar

**Sept 12, 5:00 pm** Birthday party at the ship. See the article on Page #1 for more information.

**Sept 20, 6:00 pm,** OMMF's Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame (see article this page).

**Oct 4, Dusk--about 6:30 pm,** lighted boat parade on the Canal (the ship should be gone and not available as a viewing platform).

**Oct 10, 7:30 pm,** annual Foundation meeting with report to the membership and election of new Board members, St Peter's Parish Hall.

**Nov 14, 7:30 pm,** monthly meeting with speaker, St Peter's Parish Hall.

**Dec 12, 7—9:00 pm,** holiday party. Bring favorite finger food to share. Site to be announced.

### Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame

The second annual OMMF Delaware Maritime Hall of Fame banquet will be held at the Lewes Yacht Club on September 20, at 6:00 pm. The inductees will be honored for their contributions to Delaware's rich maritime heritage. From those nominated, the following were selected:

- Capt. James U. Carter, commercial fisherman
- Capt. Thomas Rowland Marshall III, teacher and advocate of sailing
- Gov. Russell Wilber Peterson, pioneer in saving Delaware's maritime environment
- Capt. Harry Hickman Rowland, founder Wilmington Tug Inc.
- Jonathan H. Sharp, marine-aquatic researcher

For one of the few tickets left call Joan Reader on 645-9290 (this will sell out). For other information call Bonnie Dougherty on 645-2140 or Ruby Schaeffer on (302) 423-4802 or see the web site [WWW.OVERFALLS.ORG](http://WWW.OVERFALLS.ORG).