



THE OVERFALLS BEACON

The Newsletter of The Overfalls Maritime Museum Foundation
Volume 6 Issue 4 Winter 2008

She's Off to the Shipyard

October 14th was a day we had looked forward to for years. The preparation was behind us: the ship was floating, the permits were in hand, the crew was aboard and the tug was securing the lines. The Rev. Jeffrey Ross of St. Peter's came aboard to bless the ship, crew and voyage. Did this well placed word have a hand in our perfect conditions sandwiched in a long period of foul weather? At 7:30am, as planned, the Lightship Overfalls left her slip, went down the canal and out Roosevelt Inlet cheered on by 2000 (WJMD's estimate) delighted onlookers. Late that day she transited the C & D canal, and then spent the 15th traveling the length of the Chesapeake Bay. Early the next morning, she arrived safe and sound at Colonna Shipyard in Norfolk.

It was a smooth operation that looked simple. That it went without incident was attributable to two factors: she is a great ship and the carefully executed advance work. This work compensated for the ship sitting in saltwater and mud while corrosion worked on her hull for 35 years. Further, rainwater infiltration had worked from the inside by rusting out many of the frames in the forward hold requiring timber bracing to provide stiffness to the hull in this critical location. To deal with the uncertainties of taking the ship to sea after all of these years and recognizing that Murphy's Law applies in these situations, restoration manager Bill Reader made extensive use of the three Ps: planning, preparation and practice.

The ten man riding crew was selected based on the specific attributes needed. They were divided into five committees, each responsible for a certain aspect (safety,

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Let's Bring Her Home

"Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try."
Unknown

Nine years ago, we made a decision to *try...* to save an historic lightship...to preserve our maritime history...and to build camaraderie in our community. With more than 30,000 volunteer hours to get us to this point, we can all agree that it hasn't been easy. But, we've never been afraid of a challenge. If we had a dollar for everyone who told us it couldn't be done, we wouldn't have to fundraise at all!

We watched with great pride as the ship sailed into the Delaware Bay on its way to Norfolk with 10 brave men on board and tug boats to keep her going. Now that she is in Norfolk for her "facelift", the biggest piece of this project left to do is build a permanent berth for her. How very proud we'll all be to welcome her back to Lewes to a brand

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Sunshine Person

The OMF Sunshine Person will be Marsha Davis. We all appreciate get-well cards, congratulations on accomplishments, and expressions of interest and sympathy during difficult times. Contact Marsha at 645-8105 or (302) 542-9750 (cell) when you know of an OMMF friend we should contact. Privacy wishes will always be respected.

At The Board

Ruth Edwards and Ruby Schaeffer have completed their terms on the Board with significant contributions to the success of Foundation events. We appreciate their valuable service. Even though they will no longer be on the Board, we look forward to their continued involvement. Tracy Mulveny was elected to fill the vacant Board seat (the Board will revert to the traditional number of 11 members).

make you proud of me.

Thanks for all the great gifts brought to my 70th birthday party. They will be put toward building my new berth. I'm sure I've forgotten someone I should have mentioned but all this noise at the shipyard makes it hard to concentrate.

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Bob Humes, President



(This issue's column is written by the Lightship Overfalls from her dry dock at Norfolk, VA.)

I'm really happy to be in Norfolk getting my hull repaired. Once that is over I'll feel like the day I was launched back in 1938. Where has the time gone?

I realize I probably wouldn't exist today if it were not for my wonderful, caring OMMF friends. I was in bad shape 9 years ago when Merrill Kaegi put an ad in the Cape Gazette asking for people interested in saving me to meet onboard. Those 24 people have grown to over 400 and I'm in great shape now.

I feel nostalgic, and happy thoughts and names keep popping into my control center. I remember it was George Elliott who arranged my transfer from the LHS to the OMMF, who has been training tour guides for many years and probably conducted more tours than anyone. I remember Gary Stabley really organized the group into a cohesive unit and was the first president. I remember Ted Kanakos wrote my first tour guide booklet. And Helen Schnoebelen planned some really great parties for us. Then there was Bill Reader who organized and led the fantastic group who made me look as good as new, the famous "Dirty Hands Gang". I love them as much as they love me!

Chuck Oakes visits me every day of the year, rain or shine. My duck buddies also think he's great. I hope he's doing ok without me. I realize that my hull repairs cost a lot of money (more than it cost to build me) and while many people have been involved in raising it, there probably wouldn't be enough if Elaine Simmerman hadn't assumed the leadership here even while she was president. Speaking of money, Joan Reader and her committee have raised a lot while providing much enjoyment to event attendees over the years. Ann Hilaman has procured and sold fantastic Overfalls merchandise. This marketing and sales effort is getting even more productive with the Ship's Store now under Evelyn Kyritsis' leadership.

And what about my web site? It exists because of Madeline Lewis and it's great. I couldn't do this column today if it were not for the dedication of Mary Bernheisel. And I can't thank Dave Bernheisel enough. He has helped me in more ways than I can remember. And my OMMF friends have initiated Delaware's Maritime Hall of Fame. I haven't attended the first two inductions but I've gotten fantastic feedback about them and the great job the event co-chairs, Bonnie Dougherty and Ruby Schaeffer, have done.

I'm looking forward to getting back home and seeing if my new berth is ready. I sure hope it is. I know it will cost more money but I also know you won't stop until the job is completed and I'll continue to do my best to



Dredging the slip began in early September and she floated on September 11.

By October 14 conditions were perfect for departure to Colonna Shipyard in Norfolk.



The Rev. Jeffery Ross blessed the crew and ship asking for a safe voyage for all.

The ship moves out into the canal, pushed by the Wilmington Tug boat, Carey.



Hick Rowland says good-bye to the riding crew.

Bob Gibson (l) & Chet Poslusny (r) kept the crew well fed.



Bert Long carved a Santa during some down time.



Bert and Bill Baughman feed the generator which ran constantly during the trip.



The ship passed under the Rt. 1 Bridge in the C&D Canal.

Arrival at Colonna Shipyard!!



See lots more pictures on our website - WWW.OVERFALLS.ORG

The Bell of the Ball

All summer the committee planned a September party to celebrate the ship's 70th birthday. It was a gala affair with lots to celebrate as this was also to say "bon voyage" to the ship which FLOATED in her slip, waiting to go to Norfolk.

When good things happen they often come in bunches. Right before the party, Joan Volpe from Scituate, MA called to say that she and her husband Al had a bell that might be of interest to the Foundation. It had been in their basement for many years and its path of travel prior to that was unclear. So, Joan wrapped their birthday present to the ship in lightship red paper and sent it off. The fact that the only thing the attendees at the party knew was that the gift box contained a significant artifact added to the suspense. The wait was well worth it when Merrill Kaegi opened the box and read the inscriptions as they were cast in 1938.

**U. S. L. H. S.
L. S. No. 118
1938**

This was clearly the ship's original bell. When the ship returns from Norfolk the bell will be mounted back on the mast in its original bracket just below the ship's whistle. That will give us two good noise makers on New Years Eve!!



Thanks to Our Supporters

Support from many levels is vital to the success that the Foundation enjoys. We try to acknowledge that support and may from time to time fail to emphasize it sufficiently. Strictly for the tow, in addition to many of our members and others in the community who helped in preparation, we would like to publicly thank:

- Wilmington Tug for the tow,
- Fast Mart/Shore Stop for a deep discount on the tug's diesel fuel,
- Dale & H.D. Parsons for the loan of the life rafts,
- Lewes Fire Department for the loan of fire extinguishers,
- Jeff Baughman for transporting the riding crew back from Norfolk, and
- Clean Delaware, Inc. for supplying the crew's comfort station (DNREC thanks you too).

National Historic Landmark

Three years ago, the Foundation embarked on a quest to have the National Park Service designate the ship a National Historic Landmark (NHL). In 1988, the ship was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as are about 75,000 structures and places in the USA. NHL is a much more prestigious designation, limited to about 2300. While there are other NHLs in Delaware, there are none in Sussex County. The quest took a favorable turn in June when Paul Loether, director of the Park Service's NHL Program, toured the ship and offered to reexamine our nomination document. His reexamination was long and thorough as he checked all of the source documents and evaluated new evidence not previously considered. Recently the Foundation received a letter from Mr. Loether saying that he determined the ship met the stringent NHL requirements and that he would work with the Foundation to have her so designated. From this point, the process is still long and complicated but at last it has started.

VIEW FROM THE STERN

Jon Joyce, Historian

As our ship, **LV 118**, left Lewes to keep its appointment to replace its deteriorating hull in the Tidewater shipyard, it came within view of the Overfalls Station at the mouth of the Delaware Bay. Although the **LV 118** never served on this Station, upon its return it will represent those that did serve there and educate future generations of the crucial role played by lightships in providing safety to Bay commerce. Safety, in turn, reduced the cost of shipping and costly insurance and thereby encouraged the growth of mid-Atlantic commerce and our nation's prosperity.

Peering into the fog of days past, its predecessors' images dimly appear in these old photographs:

LV 46 was the first lightship to serve on the Overfalls Station from 1898-1901. No photograph can be located of this ship.

LV 69 served on the Overfalls station from 1901 to 1925. It served on other stations, as well. This is a photograph of LV69 serving on the Scotland, NY Station. A stained glass window, donated by the crew, is in the Groome United Methodist Church in Lewes.



LV 101 served on the Overfalls Station from 1925 to 1951. This photograph was taken immediately after she was launched from the builder's shipyard in Wilmington. The ship is now a museum in Portsmouth, Virginia.



The last ship to serve the Station, **WLV 605** served from 1951 until 1960. In 1960, a Coast Guard Notice to Mariners stated, "the Overfalls lightship will be temporarily discontinued for a trial period of one year." In fact, the



ship never returned to the Station. The ship is now a museum in Oakland, California.

She's Off to the Shipyard *(Continued from page 1)*

damage control, food, etc.) In addition, the crew stood "round the clock" watches constantly looking for trouble. In the event of a leak, all hands would go into a three stage procedure: (1) patch the leak, (2) stay ahead of the incoming water with pumps, and/or (3) seal the leaking compartment. For a drastic leak in one of the large areas, a tarp would be dragged over the side (from the outside) and secured to seal the hole enough so that the pumps could stay ahead of the incoming water (a technique used by old sailing ships). There were actually only two minor leaks which were quickly patched with not even pumping needed...better over prepared and under worked than vice versa!

Hick Rowland who, with his father towed the ship from Baltimore to Lewes 36 years ago, donated the services of Wilmington Tug for the tow. In addition, he was aboard to supervise the process through the complicated turns in tight quarters until the ship was well clear of Roosevelt Inlet.

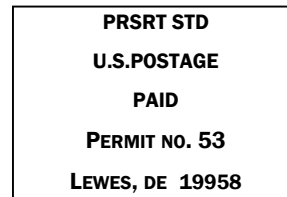
For complete coverage of the trip see our web site where there are links to several hundred photos and running commentary from the ship, our land based operation and others who had an interest. Through the magic of GPS, ham radio and other wizardry, Denny Karol and Joe Stormer set up a system to track the ship's progress in real time. The exact number of hitchhikers riding the tracking system will never be known, but, from comments we have received, there were a lot.

Now the ship waits under the watchful eye of the Colonna staff for her dry dock date in late November. As she waits, the steel for new hull plating donated by Claymont Steel continues to arrive. Our next newsletter will have complete coverage of the shipyard work and our web site will report on the work as it happens.

Congratulations to Bill Huber

Bill, the long time anchor of our Sunday ship tour program, is a finalist for the prestigious Jefferson Award, good luck Bill!

OMMF
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Mark Your Calendar

Dec 12, 7—9:00 pm, *Holiday Party* at the Inn at Canal Square. Bring favorite finger food to share. OMMF provides beverages and paper goods.

Jan 9, 7:30 pm. Monthly Meeting at St. Peter's. Capt Dennis Freezer, USCG, (Ret.) speaker.

Feb 13, 7:30 pm. Monthly meeting at St Peter's. Hazel Brittingham, Lewes Historian, speaker. Cape Henlopen Light House—topic.

Mar 13, 7:30pm. Monthly Meeting at St. Peter's. Wayne Kirkland, Lightship Researcher and author, speaker. Lighthouses and Liners—topic.

April 10, 8:30 am. Annual Breakfast Meeting at Lighthouse Restaurant..

May 22, 6-9:00 pm Opening Party at Virden Center.

Let's Bring Her Home (Continued from page 1)

spankin' new berth befitting of her stature as the symbol of Lewes's maritime history.

All estimates point to a cost of \$700,000 to build the permanent berth. We have more than half of the needed funds but must complete our fundraising in order to *even start* construction. We'll be in touch with you soon. Please think about how you can help. Can you donate money? Do you know someone who you think could help us? Would you do an introduction? Would you ask a friend? Do you have an idea how we could get materials donated? Let me know how you're willing to lend a hand. Help us "Bring Her Home".

Finally, as we move toward the holiday season, consider giving a gift of maritime heritage to a friend or loved one. We have a wide variety of naming opportunities at all price levels. Go to the website WWW.OVERFALLS.ORG or contact Elaine Simmerman, 302 645 4733 for ideas and more information.