



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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please)

Date: 12/12/08

Saturday, December 6th, a happy horde of about 500 came from as far away as Maryland to cheer and visit the tanker [Mary A. Whalen](#), home of [PortSide NewYork](#), during her 70th birthday party.

New York City's Economic Development Corporation ([EDC](#)) arranged access for PortSide to hold this, the first public event, in Atlantic Basin.

Venetia Lannon, Senior Vice President of Maritime/Transportation Policy of the EDC said, "Public access to Atlantic Basin is one of the demands that we have heard clearly from the Red Hook community and is key in formulating new development plans. The *Mary Whalen's* birthday party showed that PortSide, with its ambitious vision for public programming and inherent links to the community's maritime past and present, is a perfect partner to facilitate public access at the Atlantic Basin."

The tour guides were a salty lot: Bob Moore, Vice President of [Atlantic Container Line](#) a shipping line that calls on ports both sides of the Harbor, Gerry Weinstein and Mary Habstritt of the [Lilac Preservation Project](#), John Weaver, son in law of Alf Dyrland who had been captain of the *Whalen* for twenty years, and Will Van Dorp, author of the blog [Tugster](#) who sagely dubbed the harbor "the sixth borough."

The galley and engine room were clogged with visitors of all ages, including former crew members, maritime buffs and rank landlubbers. The latter included one woman who stepped off the gangway to say "where's the tanker?" but all had a grand time. Former crew members came bearing old photos and boat parts, from the *Whalen* and other tankers, in an effort to put her back together. Waterfront bloggers from Philadelphia and the Long Island Sound chatted over the wood stove; urban and ship preservationists found common ground while discussing things afloat.



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Guests arrived by water: PortSide partner the tug [Pegasus](#) attended, as did one working tug. The luxury yacht [Manhattan](#) came into Atlantic Basin for a salute. Two gigs from the [Village Community Boathouse](#) rowed over from Tribeca, and kayakers came from two other islands, Manhattan and Staten. Local Red Hook businesses got in on the action: [Atlantis](#), a home furnishings store, loaned their signature six-foot red velvet hook for the café area; [Steve's Key Lime Pie](#) compensated for the lack of a boathouse in Valentino Park (hello Parks Department!) and allowed visiting kayakers to leave boats in their garage. Maritime photographer [Jonathan Atkin](#) served as Master of Ceremonies.

Tours ceased during a half hour of formalities when proclamations were presented by [Anthony Chiappone](#) of the New Jersey State Assembly, the Brooklyn Borough President's Office, and Roberta Weisbrod of the [Working Harbor Committee](#). PortSide New York and the *Lilac* team gave Sal Catucci, CEO of [American Stevedoring](#) a Historic Ship Hero award—an illustration made by [Christina Sun](#)—for helping save historic vessels by providing free berths to three ships *Nantucket*, *Lilac* and *Mary Whalen*.

Carolina Salguero, Director of PortSide announced that most of the missing parts needed for the *Whalen's* cannibalized engine had been secured in Seattle thanks to the co-operation of Stabbert Maritime and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Derelict Vessel Removal Program which had just scrapped an old tanker similar to the *Whalen*.

Salguero also announced that the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation had invited PortSide to produce a performance on the *Whalen* in the Navy Yard, and she asked for performing arts groups with water-themed work to get in touch.



40° 41' 15"N 74° 00 19" W
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