Destroyer Escorts of Taffy 3
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Seventy-five years ago, the October 25th was a momentous day for destroyer escorts in the Pacific. That was the date of the Battle of Samar, and the date that USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS (DE-413), would go down in history. On 6 October 1944, she crossed the Equator, and participated in the traditional ceremony of turning pollywogs into shellbacks, while paying homage to King Neptune. It was shortly after this ritual that Commanding Officer, Robert W. Copeland, USNR received plans for the upcoming invasion of the Philippines. The ship would be operating with Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid’s Seventh Fleet, under General Douglas MacArthur’s command.

MacArthur’s plan was to have forces sent ashore on Leyte Island, on 20 October. By isolating Japan from Leyte and other islands of Southeast Asia, MacArthur hoped to keep Japan from vital sources of industrial and oil supplies.

SAMUEL B. ROBERTS arrived safely off of Leyte on 19 October, and joined Rear Admiral Thomas L. Sprague’s Escort Carrier Task Group (TG 77.4). This task group was comprised of three escort carrier task units, Taffy 1, 2, and 3.

Taffy 1 was stationed off of northern Mindanao, Taffy 2 guarded the entrance to Leyte Gulf, and Taffy 3 maintained station northward off of the island of Samar. Taffy 3 was made up of escort carriers, affectionately known as “baby flat tops” or “jeep carriers.” They were: KITKUN BAY (CVE-71) FANSASHAW BAY (CVE-70), KALININ BAY (CVE-68), SAINT LO (CVE-63), WHITE PLAINS (CVE-63), and GAMBIER BAY (CVE-73). They were guarded by destroyers JOHNSTON (DD-557), HOEL (DD-533), HEERMANN (DD-532), and destroyer escorts SAMUEL B. ROBERTS (DE-413), JOHN C. BUTLER (DE-339), DENNIS (DE-405), and RAYMOND (DE-341). Each Taffy group operated 30-50 miles apart.

From the morning of 20 October to the evening of the 24th, the mission of the task group was to provide air support for the landings. The group also supported the inland advance of the Army’s Northern Attack Force, in the Tacloban area on Leyte. The mission of the DEs was to protect the aircraft carriers from submarine, air, and surface attack.

All four DEs were John C. Butler class, powered by two “D” Express boilers and geared turbine engines, turning two screws, capable of moving a maximum of 24 knots. Each ship was equipped with two 5”/38 guns, three 21” torpedoes, four 40mm anti-aircraft guns, one Mark 10
hedgehog projector, eight Mark 6 depth charge projectors (K-guns), and two Mark 9 depth charge stern racks. The crew consisted of 14 officers and 201 enlisted men.

Lieutenant O. Carroll Arnold, the CIC Officer on DENNIS, reported on the 24th, “Carriers launched planes for the morning; we prepared to make a routine day of it, chipping paint, and bitching about MacArthur having called us ‘his’ seventh fleet.” The chipping wouldn’t get done this day, but the sailors went to work, nonetheless.

The Japanese planned to converge on the Philippines at three points; a center force through San Bernardino Strait, a southern force through Surigao Strait, and a northern force deliberately drawing attention off of Cape Engano. Japanese Admiral Ozawa, in the North, had been making noise and smoke, trying to draw attention from the American force. Halsey knew that Japanese aircraft carriers had to be kept away from Leyte at all costs, but he took the bait on 24 October, taking his 3rd fleet north to strike the Japanese, leaving Taffy 3 to guard the American Invasion Fleet on the island.

Lieutenant Arnold described how lucky they felt to be in the presence of such a large fleet, to be side by side with carriers. “I remember how secure and smug we had felt the afternoon before. We were standing off of Samar with our carriers, enjoying the late evening breezes and exchanging scuttlebutt. How safe we felt to know that those fast carriers of the Essex and Independence classes, those immense battleships – New Jersey, Massachusetts, North Carolina, South Dakota, and others – were on our side.” And then they left. Just like that, three destroyer escorts and three destroyers were the only defense in front of six escort carriers and the entire invasion force on the island.

Halsey’s run left the San Bernardino Straight open when Admiral Kurita, of the Japanese Navy, arrived. The Japanese center force sailed towards Leyte; the mission was the destruction of American forces attempting to seize Leyte. Kurita issued orders to “Advance, counting on Divine assistance.” He was certain he was going to meet Halsey’s fleet and have his work cut out for him. Kurita and his force made their way through the San Bernardino Strait under the cover of night. Unknown to any Americans, they steamed along the fog-covered coast of Samar, boasting four battleships, including Yamato, with 18-inch guns, six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and eleven destroyers.

Just after 0630 on 25 October, a pilot from FANSHAW BAY, Ensign W.C. Brooks, radioed Taffy 3 “enemy surface force sighted 20 miles north of task group and closing at 30 knots.” Brooks then nosed his aircraft over and dropped two depth charges on an enemy cruiser. As he leveled the plane back, the horizon was now filled with Japanese masts. He called for help, and Admiral Sprague ordered a change of course at flank speed and launched all available planes. General Quarters was called aboard the destroyers and destroyer escorts, realizing they were all that stood between the Japanese and the American invasion forces.

A moment after launching the planes, the Japanese opened fire at 17 miles. Lookouts aboard ROBERTS reported “splashes from heavy caliber shells” leaving green and purple dye markings between their ship and JOHNSTON. The Japanese dyed their shells so gunners could gage accuracy. It is speculated that radio communications were not working properly aboard ROBERTS, because from Copeland’s account, no report from the pilot occurred. Their first knowledge of the Japanese force were shells landing next to the ship.

Aboard the other ships, every radio transmission, every frightened face, and the frantic yells coming down the voice tubes from the bridge confirmed, “It’s the whole damned Japanese fleet!” All the crews knew “destroyers were never meant to withstand battleship fire, much less the shells of a super BB. Such shot, of course, would burst a DE as a pistol shot would burst an egg.” Over the IMC aboard ROBERTS, Copeland told his men calmly that they were about to enter “a fight against overwhelming odds from which survival could not be expected, during which
USS JOHN C. BUTLER made it through the Battle of Samar with no personnel or material damage. Sprague could only run. Most of his planes were in the air. He turned his ships southward for a lengthy sprint, and then shifted southwestward toward Leyte Gulf. They found their way into a rain squall, which was helpful in hiding from the enemy. Kurita provided the desperate Americans with a break. Instead of sending his ships south to cut off the approach to Leyte Gulf, he split his force three ways, in an effort to box in the Americans. The rain squall provided enough concealment that ships could get into better position, and cause this box plan to fail.

Admiral Sprague hoped to scatter the enemy ships, by commencing a torpedo attack that would also give the escort carriers time to turn and escape the situation. The destroyers JOHNSTON, HOEL, and HEERMANN were tasked with the first attack. Destroyer Escorts DENNIS, RAYMOND, JOHN C. BUTLER, and SAMUEL B. ROBERTS were tasked with the second.
Never before had US Destroyers, let alone Destroyer Escorts rushed in to trade blows with such a force of heavy ships. Commander Thomas from HOEL gave the torpedo attack order. SAMUEL B. ROBERTS and their malfunctioning radio, asked for some clarification, did he want both DDs and DEs attacking? The DEs, who were slower than the DDs, had been ordered to launch their attacks after the destroyers in a second run, but he didn’t get that. So he ordered his ship to go on the first run with the destroyers. Copeland acknowledged the order, and later admitted “my hands were ice cold from fear.”

Copeland turned his attention on an enemy cruiser, and fired three torpedoes at the cruiser, then turned the helm 180 degrees. The ship hurled sharply starboard and shells splashed all around them. Imagine the elation from the crew when a column of water shot up into the sky, followed by flames and black smoke just aft of amidships of the enemy ship. They had torpedoed a Japanese cruiser, and now were streaking back into their own smoke screen.

The other three DEs commenced their torpedo runs immediately. DENNIS fired her torpedoes at 8,000 yards, then turned and raced back to the carriers. During this torpedo run, she fired her 5-inch guns. She scored several hits, but because of the rain and smoke, she couldn’t see the results of her torpedo attack.

RAYMOND put her helm over and came to a northerly course to close the range, placed the target dead ahead, and commenced fire with the forward 5-inch gun. As the range decreased, nine enemy destroyers deployed in a torpedo attack. Their torpedo wakes came close, one passing close to port and another passed under the bottom, heading for the carriers, none of which scored hits. RAYMOND fired a spread of three torpedoes at an enemy cruiser, at a range of 10,000 yards. Several observers stated that she hit the target, but visibility was so reduced from smoke that there is uncertainty as to who may have scored the hit. While returning to formation at flank speed of 24 knots, she maintained continuous fire on the enemy cruiser, and five direct hits were obtained.

Captain J. E. Pace, aboard JOHN C. BUTLER, ordered preparation for a torpedo attack. She turned to join up with the other DEs, but couldn’t. The smoke was so thick that
they couldn't see them. Her surface radar was being used solely for gunnery at the time, and CIC couldn't help to determine the location of the other DEs.

An enemy destroyer was spotted on the starboard quarter, and BUTLER opened fire at 18,000 yards. When the range was closed to 16,000 yards one hit was recorded. After 15 minutes, BUTLER came out of the smoke into fair visibility, located DENNIS and tried to form up. An order came in from Admiral Sprague for BUTLER and DENNIS, to interpose between the formation and an enemy cruiser on his port quarter. They went into action, laying smoke as they went. BUTLER learned at this time that all other DEs had launched their torpedoes, and the order was again given to prepare for a torpedo attack. However, the enemy cruiser was drawing up the beam of the formation at speeds in excess of BUTLER's top speed and it was determined that she could not close the range for a torpedo attack unless the cruiser headed for the formation. Heavy firing was exchanged between the cruiser and DENNIS and BUTLER, at ranges from 16,000 to 13,000 yards.

ROBERTS gunners opened fire with the two 5-inch guns, and “beat a regular tattoo on the Jap cruisers’ upper works.” There were cheers and wild excitement on the deck, as they could see their shells exploding all over the cruiser. ROBERTS was handing out all the fire power she was capable of. When enemy fire got too close they broke off to change the range and bearing, and raced in again. Even while racing away from cruisers, ROBERTS was still firing upon other targets of opportunity.

RAYMOND was ordered to intercept an enemy cruiser approaching the formation on the port quarter. At this time, the smoke supply was exhausted, and they had no torpedoes left. It was simply a miracle that they weren't hit. The enemy cruiser retired at 25 knots. Observers and the gunnery officer reported that during this phase of the action at least fifteen hits were obtained.

Heroism was the order of the day for all the ships, but luck was about to run out for a few. The carrier GAMBIER BAY had taken several hits, the forward engine room was flooded, and YAMATO closed in to fire at point blank
range. That was the end of GAMBIER BAY. Fire spread throughout the ship and explosions rocked the crew. Just after 0900, the ship rolled over and sank. Destroyers HOEL and JOHNSTON had been drawing fire away from the carriers, taking shells, and shelling out some damaging hits. They also found themselves dead in the water and sunk.

At 0850, DENNIS took a direct hit on port side, 3 feet above the first platform deck. The shell passed through the deck and out the starboard side, three feet above the waterline. It exploded after it exited the ship dealing considerable damage with shrapnel that pierced the hull.

LCDR S. Hansen, USNR, aboard DENNIS, decided to partake in the naval maneuver called “Getting the hell out of there.” While turning, she took four 8-inch shells at once broadside. The ship shuddered but maintained speed, completed the turn, and dodged into the smoke. After gaining some distance, the damage report came in. Her forward 5-inch gun was knocked out. She also had one hole forward through the Chief’s quarters, and a hole through the engine room, through both skins of the ship. A direct hit on the aft 40mm gun director killed four men.

At the same time, DENNIS took her first hit. An 8-inch shell put a hole below the waterline in the forward fireroom of the ROBERTS. With one fireroom out of commission, and only one remaining, her usual flank speed of 24 knots was reduced to 17.

Battleship KONGO fired her 14-inch guns at SAMUEL B. ROBERTS. A high-explosive shell found its way to ROBERTS. A crew member compared the impact “to that of two trains colliding head-on.” The shell struck near the waterline in the communications and gyro room, destroying the radar, cutting out all lights onboard except battle lanterns, and knocking out communications between the captain and his crew.

A shell tore through the lower handling room of gun 51, slamming many of the gun crew to the deck or against the bulkhead. Flooding began immediately. Another shell entered the main deck, crushing two sailors in its path, before tearing a 4-foot-wide hole just aft of the hatch leading to the after engine room. This shell also ruptured the main steam valve. All but two men were instantly scalded to death in the temperatures that soared to more than 800 degrees. Engine room 2 was demolished while fuel and oil burned on the fantail, and several smaller fires broke out below decks. Several sailors on the 20mm guns died as they were struck by shrapnel.

The engines were blasted into silence, leaving ROBERTS without power, motionless in the water. She had become a ghastly, inert mass of battered metal, incapable of propulsion or combat. Dead in the water, SAMUEL B. ROBERTS could not outrun her pursuers or mount a defense. Commander Copeland stated that “we were then what you might call a, sitting duck in a shooting gallery.” The Japanese continued firing at her and several destroyers rushed in to finish the job. The aft 40mm gun crew fired upon three torpedoes streaming towards the ship to no avail. As the crew braced themselves for impact, they were relieved to see torpedoes pass below their keel. Copeland later noted that his ship “was simply shot to pieces the last 15 minutes she was in action.”
Only the aft 5-inch gun, captained by Gunners Mate, third class (GM3c) Paul H. Carr, remained in action. All power was lost from the ship. They had no communication and no compressed air to fire the gun. The crew continued to load and fire their gun, knowing full well the hazards this action involved. The failure of the compressed air gas ejection system caused an internal explosion within the gun, killing all but three members of the gun crew.

Machinist Mate 2c Chalmer Goheen found Carr grievously wounded, defiantly clutching the last shell. Torn open from the neck down to his groin, his intestines splattered throughout the gun mount. The dying gunner begged his shipmate to help him load and fire the final shot. He couldn’t see that the breech had been blown into a shapeless mass of steel, and there was no way to load the shell.

Goheen took the shell from Carr and helped him to the deck, before checking on other wounded men. Goheen carried a wounded man missing a leg to safety, and by the time he returned, Carr was again attempting to load the gun with the last round. Once again, Goheen took the shell from the determined gunner, helped him away from the gun mount, where the 21-year old gun captain died minutes later. GM3c Carr received the Silver Star posthumously for his heroic actions during the battle, as well as a ship named in his honor.

Copeland sent the officers around the ship to assess the damage. It was clear in the wreckage of equipment and the number wounded and deceased men, that his ship was in no condition to continue fighting. At 0935 on 25 October 1944, Commander Copeland ordered his crew to abandon ship. The crew destroyed all important equipment and
secret documents, and abandoned what had been their home for the past six months.

SAMUEL B. ROBERTS sank stern first, and her ensign still snapping from her battered shell as she plunged to the bottom. Her survivors watched mournfully as she slipped below the waves, and they clung to three life rafts and two floater nets.

Lt. Arnold from DENNIS recalled that “Taffy 3’s situation had changed from normal desperate to double indemnity desperate.” Admiral Sprague gave orders in very plain language. “Small boys, small boys, interpose; I say again interpose, interpose!” They were to be target practice for the Imperial Japanese Fleet. Their job would be to draw fire away from the carriers. RAYMOND and BUTLER steamed their way in front of the carriers, almost certainly to their own deaths.

Admiral Sprague gave an order for BUTLER to move up on his bow. At this time, BUTLER was the only ship capable of laying an effective smoke screen on the port side of the formation. On the starboard side of the formation, RAYMOND got within 5,700 yards of a Japanese cruiser, and fired 16 shells into their superstructure and threw three torpedoes. Admiral Sprague recalled, “At 0925 my mind was occupied with dodging torpedoes when, near the bridge, I heard one of the signalmen yell ‘God damn it boys, they’re getting away!’ I could not believe my eyes, but it looked as if the whole Japanese fleet was indeed retiring. However, it took a whole series of reports from circling planes to convince me. And still I could not get the fact to soak into my battle-numbed brain. At best, I had expected to be swimming by this time.”

After two hours of fighting, Admiral Kurita gathered his forces and retreated toward San Bernardino. DENNIS reduced speed and returned to her patrol station. Captain Hansen secured the ship from GQ as peace returned to the battered DE. Six of her crew were dead, 19 were wounded and her superstructure was shattered. The crew that had been at battle for two hours, was now tending to damage pumping flooded compartments, caring for the wounded and mourning the dead.

Taffy 3 had just enough time to count their dead and assess damage before the air attack began. At 1050 “General Quarters, man your battle stations!” Japanese land-based planes from Manila suddenly appeared overhead. DENNIS opened fire with her aft 40mm gun or
a plane off the starboard bow and splashed it into the sea. BUTLER shot down one of the planes attacking the ST. LO, but another managed to break through the defense and crash into the flight deck of the carrier.

Violent explosions and fire erupted from the stricken carrier. It was the first American experience with kamikazes. Japanese kamikaze pilots took aim; trading in one plane and one pilot for one carrier and 600 men. The remaining carriers were zig-zagging away from the attack area. Another enemy plane dove on the carrier USS ST. LO, and she blew up and split into pieces, her crew clinging to rafts and debris while floating in the sea.

DENNIS, BUTLER, and RAYMOND were ordered into the area to recover survivors, as the crew of the carrier began to abandon ship. RAYMOND lowered their whaleboat to expedite rescue work, and they picked up 109 survivors. BUTLER rescued 130, and DENNIS rescued 35 pilots and 400 men. Adding hundreds of men to an already tight ship, you could say they were happily overloaded. The remaining DEs were then ordered to re-join the formation at 1700. They secured from GQ, having continuously been at battle stations since 0700.

SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, GAMBIER BAY, HOEL, and JOHNSTON were not so lucky to be rescued immediately. Survivors were miles away from one another throughout the sea. Survivors had heard stories of the merciless Japanese sailors who would open machine gun fire to sailors in the water. Thankfully, that was not the case today. The only shooting these Japanese sailors performed was with their cameras, as they sailed away.

A new saga began as the rest of the task group sailed away, leaving survivors in the water. They tied themselves to life rafts and desperately tried to stay afloat. The water was covered in thick black oil and so were the sailors, rubbing your eyes made them burn. Some attempted to back float and were carried away by the waves, while some struggled to swim back to the group through the oil. Wounds from the battle were excruciatingly painful in the salt water.

Sharks were circling and feasting on sailors not strong enough to fight back. As the sun sank on the 25th, survivors had to come to terms with spending the pitch dark night in shark-infested waters. In the darkness of the night, the curses and splashes of other men fighting off sharks filled the silence. There were occasional screams of agony and terror, as some of the sharks succeeded in their attacks. Some could hear the trashing sounds of the predators as they tore apart the sailors who had been cast adrift.

Captain Charles Adair sat aboard USS BLUE RIDGE (AGC-2), the flagship of Admiral Daniel E. Barbey on the afternoon of the 25th and noticed that there were many reports of ships that sunk, but heard nothing of ships rescuing the men in the water. Armed with a copy of the message, Adair made his way to his boss, Admiral Daniel E. Barbey. Adair made the case to form a rescue force using the landing craft and patrol vessels at their disposal. His plan was approved and Adair went to work. Task Group 78.12 was formed in less than an hour, and they were on their way, although they wouldn't arrive until the next morning. They consisted of Submarine Chasers PC-623 and PC-1119, Infantry Landing Craft LCI(L)-74, LCI(L)-337, LCI(L)-340, and LCI(L)-341.
For the entirety of the 26th the survivors had had no sign of anyone coming to their rescue. By the second night, the sharks had become an afterthought. The real adversary now was thirst. Some men had given into the temptation to drink the seawater and were paying the price. Accidentally swallowing salt water caused one to begin retching and vomiting, caused severe stomach pains, hallucinations, and psychosis. The kapok lifejackets were becoming waterlogged and it became a struggle for many men to stay afloat. Sleep became a constant enemy, because men who gave in and fell asleep frequently drifted away from the others, and had to be brought back, through much exertion. Some drifted away and were never seen again.

Task Group 78.12 arrived in the area on the 26th and found nothing but floating debris and oil slicks. By late afternoon they finally spotted a survivor clinging to a wooden box but were disappointed to find he was Japanese. They rescued him, searched for weapons, and issued food, water, and medical attention. The “rescuers” watched the sun sink into the sea with heavy hearts, knowing that the survivors, if they were still alive, were going to have to spend another night in the water.

They continued combing the water through the darkness, knowing full well how difficult it would be to see much of anything in the darkness. Then at 2220, PC-623 sighted several flares off to the west. Within 15 minutes, they began rescuing survivors from GAMBIER BAY. By 0348, they had accumulated over 200 men, and PC-1119 was dispatched to transport the survivors back to Leyte Gulf. There were still three other American ships that went down in the battle, and not one of their men was found yet. It was not until the next day that survivors from the other three ships would be rescued.

At 0745 on the morning of 27 October 1944, one sailor shouted to Copeland that he could see a ship with the American flag flying. Copeland, not quite believing it himself, thought that the man might be hallucinating. Several survivors could make out the ship now, and they started yelling and waving frantically, in order to get the lookouts attention. The LCI fired her 20mm guns, signaling that they saw the survivors.

Hours went by as the LCI approached. Many aboard the LCI had heard of Japanese playing possum in the water, waiting to be rescued from US sailors, and then attempting to kill them in the process of rescuing. As the LCI approached, the sailors on board had their guns drawn and ready to fire. One of them yelled out “Who won the World Series?” Several of the survivors shouted back, “St. Louis Cardinals!” The answer was correct of course. Cardinals played their cross-town rival St. Louis Browns, winning the pennant in six games.

Some survivors spent 50 hours in the water. Salt water had rotted the skin off of their bodies; the sailors in life rafts had been baked in the sun. Most were transferred to hospital ships and taken to Australia. Then they began their 10,000-mile voyage to San Francisco, where they arrived in early December, making it home for Christmas with their families. The six rescue ships recovered 800 sailors from GAMBIER BAY, 141 from JOHNSTON, 86 from HOEL, and 120 from SAMUEL B. ROBERTS.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf is considered to be the largest naval battle of WWII, with over 200,000 naval personnel involved. Though the US lost 6 ships in the entire battle, Japanese forces lost 26 vessels. Most importantly, the task group did protect the Invasion Force on Leyte, and the Japanese failed in their attempt to keep their industrial and oil supply chain functional.

DENNIS was left with her superstructure in shambles, 6 of her sailors killed and 19 wounded. RAYMOND and JOHN C. BUTLER were the only ships in the entire group to emerge without personnel or material damage. BUTLER would transfer the wounded, and escort the surviving carriers of Taffy 3 to Pearl Harbor. She would fight again at Iwo Jima, and deliver a stunning blow to kamikazes in the picket line at Okinawa.

In the thick of battle, for two hours and twenty minutes, firing 414 rounds of 5-inch shells, RAYMOND emerged without a scratch. LCDR A.F. Beyer, Jr., USNR, was depicted in his account of the battle, as a no-nonsense type of guy. He wrote in his report “enemy fire was not too accurate, though they were beautiful with the colored dye loaded projectiles. Enemy cruisers either did not open up rapid fire or were not capable of maintaining it. The cruiser did not maintain continuous barrages against this vessel, but shifted fire from time to time to other vessels, then back to us apparently only when they were bothered by our fire. The enemy ships did not take advantage of the several opportunities to close the range and finish us with their superior fire power.”

SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, perhaps the most memorable of all DEs, earned her fame as the DE that fought like a battleship, even though she sank in the battle. C.O. Copeland remarked “We succeeded, largely through the
Providence of God, the chasing of salvos, the smallness of the Japanese patterns, and the inaccuracy of enemy fire, in escaping damage for almost two hours before the first hit was recorded.”

The Battle of Leyte Gulf is a fascinating story that has been studied thoroughly since WWII. Many books, articles, and documentaries have covered the subject in depth. This article dusts the surface of the engagement, and does not come close to expressing all the emotions, interactions, and significance that the battle entailed. The bravery displayed on that day will not be forgotten, nor the sacrifices made to benefit future generations. One historian said it best when he wrote “the ship is merely a weapon to be chipped and dulled, even broken in the din of battle. But the men who wielded the weapon well, they are the stuff of legend.”

Tour guide Herb Marlow, the saltiest looking of our tour guides, always dresses the part.

Chairman’s Report - cont’d

Recently, we were notified that we had won another competitive grant, the Federal Save America’s Treasures Grant. When matched by 2021, this will yield over $350,000, to abate and remediate asbestos and other environmental conditions aboard ship. To be clear, our ship has been tested and no concerns noted as our asbestos is encapsulated but it is time to fully abate and remediate, and we are excited to receive this grant. Like our Maritime Heritage Grant, this grant is to provide historic preservation funds to protect culturally and historically significant sites, for the benefit of future generations.

So, like every living organism, we continue to evolve, blessed with our past and optimistic about our future.

Thank you, SLATER family, for your support that enables our success!