

# Restoration Project On Film

By David Ambro

The communitywide project of restoring the 102-year-old Little Jennie for Opsail '86 has been captured on film.

The public premiere of *Freedom's Glory: The Restoration Of The Little Jennie*, a 58-minute video by John Stevens, will be aired December 8 at the New Community Cinema on 25A in Huntington Village at 7:15 p.m. The program will serve to raise funds for the non-profit Little Jennie Inc., which owns the historic sailing vessel and is attempting to develop a maritime heritage and educational center in Huntington Harbor.

In 1984, William Perks paid \$1 for the rotting hull of the Little Jennie, an 85-foot bug-eye built in 1884 in the Chesapeake Bay for oystering. Mr. Perks mustered the support, help, donations and labor of family, friends, local business and elected officials and eventually much of the community to help restore the vessel so that it could sail to New York Harbor for the Fourth of July celebration in honor of the Statue of Liberty.

The trials and tribulations of the restoration project were captured on hours and hours of film by Mr. Stevens and a video crew. The tapes were recently edited into an hour long program which its producer hopes to someday air on a public service television station.

The program gives the background of the restoration project,

shows footage of the dangerous but exciting effort to pull the bulky hull out of the water so that it could be worked on, explains how the restoration had been attempted before and failed and tells how it was accomplished by Mr. Perks and his growing crew of supporters this time around. The program ends happily with the Little Jennie and its crew in the foreground and the Statue of Liberty in the background as fireworks light the night sky.

"It is nothing less than spectacular," said Mr. Perks in a recent interview after having aired the program for *The Observer* and a small group of local officials and contributors at the Vanderbilt Museum. "It enabled people who could not be on the boat to really experience Op Sail . . . It is unbelievable. It captures in 58 minutes the sweat and toil that took two years and untold man hours."

Mr. Perks and Mr. Stevens will be on hand at the New Community Cinema December 8 to discuss the project. Tickets are \$10 which includes champagne and hors d'oeuvres. The proceeds of the tickets will be used for the Little Jennie Inc. project. For more information call the theatre at 423-7653. It will be the first time the Cinema airs a video as opposed to a feature film.

"This documentary is going to make or break the whole project," said Mr. Perks, who is hoping that the 350 seat theatre will be full and enough money raised to pay debts

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**—Bill Perks**

and produce the foundation that will lead to the maritime heritage center.

Mr. Perks said that while filming Mr. Stevens and his crew were among the most helpful of the hundreds of local volunteers to work on the project. He explained that the crew would get the shots they needed and put down the

equipment and go to work. In certain critical situations, crew members were also reported to abandon filming and leap into action on the Little Jennie project.

"They would grab a paint brush or sand paper or even help bring equipment to the truck. The crew's efforts were endless," concluded Mr. Perks.