August has been an exceptionally productive month for our ships, which makes this edition necessarily longer. We’ll go into more detail further on, but a quick summary includes the painting of the submarine Croaker, substantial plumbing improvements aboard the light cruiser Little Rock, and cleaning, painting and electrical repair aboard The Sullivans.

All of these efforts are continuing along with the very big, very positive development - the selection of Naval architect/marine surveyor Work on The Sullivans continues, and while we haven’t lost focus on the major projects, we took the time to complete a smaller one. In the image to the left is one of the access panels on the front of the forward 5” Mount 51. As we prepared it for painting, we discovered that some of the original fittings and hardware were made of brass, and probably not seen since she left the shipyard after her launch.

It was a joy to remove the paint, clean and buff these detail pieces as we bring this historic warship back to life.

This is an exciting time of change, improvement, and proactivity. We’ll keep you informed as we reach each new phase in this process.
THE SULLIVANS ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION PROJECT

A major goal in The Sullivans recovery effort is to restore the ship’s inherent electrical distribution system. From the outset, it was recognized as an ambitious project, but under the right conditions we were hopeful it’d be attainable.

The main electrical distribution panel, located on the starboard side of the aft engine room, was fully immersed in oily water at the time of the incident. The very justifiable fear was the system would be unrecoverable due to its extended time under water and the continued effects of moisture-laden air in the weeks after she was raised and stabilized. Additionally, the skills and experience to undertake a complex, specialized restoration like this with all the safety measures required were beyond the scope of staff and local commercial electricians.

It was our exceeding good fortune to have a retired Naval electrical engineering officer, Barry Witte visit us from the Albany-based museum ship Slater and offer his guidance in this project. With him came a fellow electrician and civil engineer to offer their assistance. Adding to the team we had 6 local volunteers offer their time and hard work.

As originally designed, The Sullivans would receive all its electrical power from shore. From there, it would be distributed throughout the ship from its inherent distribution system. After the flooding incident, all power is supplied through a new shoreside transformer to two temporary portable electrical distribution panels, both located on the main deck; one midships near the quarterdeck on the port side, the other forward on the starboard side. These two panels provide power for the commercial dehumidifiers throughout the ship, air movers, pumps and temporary lighting and little else.

Restoring the original system required extensive cleaning once all necessary safety precautions were in place. Removing 80 year old breakers, disassembling them for fresh and distilled water baths followed by isopropyl alcohol and testing with an ohm meter were conducted under the supervision of the electrical engineer.

More work is needed, but we’re now confident the ship will be using its own electrical distribution system soon – our hard-working volunteers have made this possible. We’ll keep you posted as we continue making progress.
SUBMARINE CROAKER

The submarine Croaker is a combat veteran of the Gato class, having seen action in the Pacific theater of operations in the Second World War.

After conferring with our veteran submariners and our curator, we decided that her deck should be painted black as she would’ve appeared during her 1940’s wartime service.

As of this writing, her deck is completely repainted as is much of her starboard side.

Painting our ships isn’t just for the aesthetic value. The paint, when properly applied after sufficient preparatory work, acts as a barrier from the ravages of weather. If left untreated, the metal rusts at an accelerated rate, resulting in substantial corrosion. Over time, the deteriorated areas of the ship allow rain water to penetrate into the interior causing even more extensive damage.

With the assistance of our volunteers, we can keep ahead of the corrosion.

The caretaker of the Croaker, Jim Marzullo preparing to paint her deck with the assistance of fellow staff members and volunteers.

The main deck of the Croaker after receiving her first coat of black paint. She’ll require multiple coats along with non-skid to prevent slips.
The sinking of USS The Sullivans was a devastating event for the Buffalo Naval Park and a bellwether for other museum ships located around the country and across the world. In addition to the ship board artifacts that were part of her structure, we had hundreds of donated artifacts on display.

Soon after the incident my thoughts turned to disaster and preservation plans that we’re taught in school and yet hope to never have to use. I understood that I, as Curator, would have to summon help. I turned to a conservator I have worked with in the past. We prepared a measured approach to the complex problem the sinking created. We addressed how to best remove the artifacts from the ship, where to establish a triage preservation room, what types of contamination should and could we expect, what products would need to be purchased, among other needs.

Gabriel Dunn, the conservator, prepared me with a comprehensive list of materials needed, and requirements for the preservation space. Concurrently, I put out a call for volunteers and we received interest from four individuals that would like to help with the preservation of the artifacts. They received training from Gabe and became knowledgeable on the protections for themselves and the artifacts. They have begun working on the collections and everything is going off without a hitch.

As the artifacts are cleaned, I’m cataloging the items and placing them in new storage bins along with a finding aid to make certain those items are available and easily accessible to the next Curator.

This process, with the immeasurable help of Gabe and the volunteers, will ensure that the artifacts remain in our possession and are viable long into the future.
JOIN US

Our ships afloat and the artifacts displayed at the Buffalo Naval Park have important stories to tell, and we invite you to help us share them.

DOCENTS
Our uniformed, trained cadre of docents are the guides and storytellers aboard our ships afloat. They know the histories, battles, sailors, and personal anecdotes related to these ships. If you’re interested in becoming a docent, we’d love to hear from you!

MAINTENANCE
If you enjoy working with your hands and have an interest in restoring rare artifacts so essential to American history, we’ve got an abundance of opportunities! We’re especially interested in having skilled metal workers, electricians, plumbers and carpenters volunteer with us, but all, regardless of skill level are welcome.

COLLECTIONS
Caring for and cataloging our unique artifacts takes a great deal of time, patience, and dedication. Under the direction of our curator, you could help preserve these precious objects so they’ll be available for future generations.

EVENTS
The Buffalo Naval Park is the premier location in all of Western New York to celebrate, participate and elevate. Making these events happen in a seamless, organized and timely way requires a committed staff of volunteers to help in setting up, promoting, staffing, organizing, and putting everything away after it’s all done so it’s ready for the next event.

CONNECT WITH US
Online volunteer form: Click here!
Email: info@buffalonavalpark.org
Phone: 716-847-1773
Website: Click here!
Buffalo Naval Park Youtube Channel: Click here!
Looking for a unique, first-time ever experience? Please consider joining us for our inaugural cornhole tournament taking place right on the flight deck of the USS Little Rock! Sponsored by our good friends at Ingram Micro, check the details below for how to register and participate in this historic event!

USS LITTLE ROCK’S
BATTLE OF THE
BAGS
CHARITY CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT 2022
SEPTEMBER 17, 2022
8:30AM-4:00PM
ERIE COUNTY AND BUFFALO NAVAL & MILITARY PARK: USS LITTLE ROCK
FIRST PRIZE: $400  SECOND PRIZE: $200  THIRD PRIZE: $100
CHROMEBOOK + CORNHOLE BOARD RAFFLES
SCAN OR CODE TO REGISTER
$75 PER TEAM | 32 TEAMS
DOUBLE ELIMINATION
WATER + SNACKS PROVIDED

PRESENTED BY: INGRAM MICRO