The month of October marked another period of significant progress aboard our ships. Our primary focus has been winter preparations: heating, dehumidification, air movement and systems to prevent ice from forming around and within the hulls of our ships.

Work has continued on The Sullivans electrical distribution systems, along with topside painting, repairing and project planning. We’ve got some exciting plans we’ll be sharing with you further along in this edition.

Aboard the Croaker, lighting system repairs and patching are ongoing, along with planning for display improvement for the coming season.

Aboard Little Rock, improvements to the ship’s CHT system are ongoing, as well as more display work in CIC. Our winter projects are ambitious, but we believe they’ll be well worth the effort.

The survey work on all three ships begins this month, after which we anticipate having a clear path forward for ship repair solutions.

Restoration work on the hull and topside continues, and the boat is looking very much like she did during active service – check out the newly applied red paint along the bottom of her hull – great work by our volunteers!
MARINE SURVEY

We’re compiling all the necessary ship plans and drawings in our collections in anticipation of the in-depth survey process. As of this writing, Joe Lombardi, the retired Naval architect from NavSea who will be leading the survey team, is expected in Buffalo at the end of the first week in November.

Our first priority is The Sullivans hull condition. Mr. Lombardi will start his assessment work there, and provide the data as a preliminary before moving on to the other areas of the ship and her sister vessels. Armed with that information, we can then begin laying the complex groundwork for her repair options and planning.

Each one of the potential repair solutions requires considerable assessment and logistical support, whether it’s temporary cofferdams, permanent cofferdams or drydocking. And all require very substantial financial resources, which the Naval Park is working hard to assemble and have ready when needed to get our ships repaired.

Once The Sullivans hull condition survey is complete, the Croaker is next on our list of priorities. The boat’s pressure hull – the interior space occupied by her crew, is in relatively good shape. Our concerns lie with her exterior ballast tanks and superstructure, all of which have experienced substantial deterioration. The ballast tanks wrap around the pressure hull and are the means by which she could submerge and resurface. As with The Sullivans, there are areas along the splash zone (a band about two feet above the water line and another two or three feet below) where the exterior steel is largely thin and degraded.

The Little Rock hull we believe to be solid, but her superstructures have been largely compromised in the upper levels. Additionally, after The Sullivans incident, we need an accurate assessment of any remaining hazardous materials so a plan for their safe removal and disposal can be devised.

We’re committed to the best possible outcome for our ships, and it all starts with this survey.
It’s difficult to be brief when describing the ongoing work aboard The Sullivans, but here goes: Painting the exterior surfaces of the ship does enhance her appearance, but it also provides a protective barrier against the weather. Thus far, we’ve completed painting the forward superstructure from the top of the fire control platform to the main deck and much of the aft superstructure including her main armament. New nonskid has been applied to nearly all the entire main deck area and should be completed by the time you read this. Our intention is, once the main deck is covered in new non-skid, the entire main deck level will be open to visitors - a very big step in bringing her back.

Below decks, work continues on the main electric distribution panel and is nearing completion. We’re testing the main bus tie connecting the aft panel to the forward distribution panel, which, if things proceed as we expect, both panels will again be operational.

We’ve been unsuccessful thus far in bringing in skilled metal-working volunteers, so we’ve tested a steel epoxy material that, to date, appears very effective in sealing seams and small holes resulting from corrosion. This work and assessment will continue, but we’re pleased with the current results.

A project we’re gearing up for is the restoration of the aft berthing spaces, funded by a grant we’ve applied for. We intend to remove all the lead paint using a product that renders the lead inert, after which we can repaint and repair.

Testing the main bus tie. Chief Mario Roy of the Coast Guard station here in Buffalo has been an invaluable member of our volunteer corps and has been working with Barry Witte from the Slater to bring the electrical distribution system back online.

The aft berthing spaces of The Sullivans. With the financial support of a grant we’ve applied for, we can restore this space to tell the stories of the sailors who once lived here.
From Brian Wroblewski:

It took a year, but my project in the CIC and Gun Plot rooms of the USS Little Rock here in Buffalo have finally come to a conclusion. When I started out on this mission, these rooms were all dirty, dark, and dangerous. After a lot of hard work between myself and a few fellow volunteers that helped me along the way, they are now clean, lit up, and safe for visitors to tour for the first time since the ships arrived in 1977.

Stage one started with a massive clean up job that Carl Mottern helped me with by lugging his own Shop Vac all the way down there multiple times to vacuum up all the debris on the deck. Then after I got some lighting going so we could see better, Paul Mullen helped me haul down a truckload of custom cut steel and aluminum plates that generous members of my Facebook group donated. I had previously primed and painted them in my shop at home with a gritty texture to make it safer to walk on. We installed these plates all over the holes in the decks where equipment had been removed years ago. The third phase was taking apart the old gun plot mechanical computers and cleaning out all the powdery corrosion that had accumulated inside. John Kelly helped me clean and scrub all those machines down to get the dirt off and looking pretty good. While we were doing all this, I received donations for some additional new lighting and other items we needed from former Little Rock sailors Hank Henning, Ken Thomas, and Bill Baird.

The last phase was just completed on October 21st, when I brought down three new signs and installed them where the missing gun fire control computers had been. These can now be used as talking points on the upcoming curator tours to showcase the equipment removed in the 1980s by Navy contractors for spare parts on the Battleship USS Wisconsin.

I wouldn't call what we did a full on "restoration", but more of a "stabilization" to stop any further deterioration and help preserve what's left down there in a presentable manner. The rooms are now safe from trip hazards, brightly lit, and clean. Getting them respectable again was somewhat of a limited goal, but the conditions were so harsh, that if it could be accomplished, this would be a pretty good start. At the top of my future "want list" would be a permanent power installation for all three rooms along with a major painting project, especially the decks, but those things will have to wait for now until some funding and the right people come along to help achieve loftier goals.

Hopefully, visitors to the park that spend the extra money for a curator tour will now have a better experience when they come down there and be better able to take in these important pieces of history, displayed as they should be for the first time. What seemed like a monumental task a year ago has now come complete circle and given me the satisfaction of knowing that I set some personal goals for myself and with the help of all these people I mentioned, along with a few others, and the Naval Park staff, it's finally done.
LITTLE ROCK CIC PROJECT
The following images are from Brian Wroblewski – enjoy!
Over the past month and for the predictable future, we'll be focusing on preparing the Croaker for Buffalo’s typically harsh winter conditions.

Our plan is to add appropriate portable heaters in key spaces throughout the boat, aided by fans and air movers to better distribute the warm air. The benefit will come in terms of both habitability for staff and volunteers to continue maintaining and improving the boat throughout the winter months and prevent frost and ice from forming within the pressure hull causing significant damage.

Another part of the overall plan is to add bubblers or a bubbler system around the boat (as is the plan for all our waterborne vessels) to prevent ice formation around the exterior of the hull, exposing the degraded 80-year-old steel plating to damage from ice. Each bubbler is a 3/4 horsepower electric motor with an exposed impeller which agitates the water when submerged to 4 to 6 feet below the surface.

All of these preparations are costly, and part of our efforts will be expended in raising the capital to pay for these necessary measures.
Saving Our Ships Newsletter

Images of smaller projects going on about the ships

Replacing the Jack on the Little Rock.

Repairing exterior door to Admiral’s spaces.

Debris removed from weapons control.

Freshly painted fire control director, deck, and bridge of The Sullivans.

The fine work of U.S. Navy Chief selectees, making the brass on the bridge gleam.
“Continuing with updates from USS The Sullivans, I am working with ‘The Fine Art Group’ out of New York City to get a loss appraisal on the items that we did lose in the capsizing event of USS The Sullivans. Their expertise will help us put a dollar amount to the photographs and letters that were not recoverable. Having an accurate accounting will bring us the funding to go and seek out similar items related to USS The Sullivans.

Also, this time of year bring my involvement in Erie County’s ‘University Express’ program. This program, offered in the Fall and Spring allows me to go into the community to tell the story of the Naval Park and our ships. This year I’m focusing on USS The Sullivans and the way forward after her capsizing. If you would like to attend one of these events, you can find more information through Erie County’s Dept. of Senior Services. (https://www4.erie.gov/universityexpress/).

Lastly, we have an exciting presentation coming up called ‘The Legacy and Loss of USS Juneau: A deep water wreck analysis.’ This program, presented by Blair Atcheson with Navy History and Heritage Command’s Underwater Archeology Branch, will give an in-depth analysis of the ship the five Sullivan Brothers were on that fateful night of 13 November 1942. Blair will give her expert analysis and perceptions of the wreck site giving insight into how and why the ship went down. See you next month from the Corner.”
ARMY/NAVY FOOTBALL GAME
JOIN US AT THE BUFFALO NAVAL AND MILITARY PARK!

Ready to register to join us on game day, December 10th at 2:30PM? CLICK HERE!

ARMY-NAVY GAME WATCH PARTY
Saturday, December 10 at 3:00 PM
Doors Open at 2:30 PM
Buffalo Naval & Military Park’s Hangar Building

Registration Required    Food and Beverages Available

Join the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park for the rivalry game of the year! We’ll be watching the Army-Navy Game on the big screen inside the Hangar Building. There will be food, drinks, games, prizes, and giveaways!

This event is open to the public with a recommended $35 donation at the gate. All proceeds from the game will be donated to the Buffalo Naval & Military Park to help maintain and preserve our ships.

www.buffalonavalpark.org/event/watchparty/

"It's not looking good."

“That’s not what I meant when I asked you to spike the punch.”
We’ve gained tremendous momentum this season, and we don’t want to lose any of it. With that, we will continue to offer volunteer opportunities throughout the winter – something we haven’t done before.

Some of the exciting projects we’ll be tackling will be the Admiral’s spaces, with the object being to restore them to what they were at the time of Prince Ranier and Grace Kelly’s 1969 visit. We’re doing the research now and have identified a good deal of the information needed. At the end of the project, we’d like to have an elegant, yet functional space where guests can stand in the same spot as below and have their own photos taken. In addition, we’re exploring the possibility of hosting dinner events in the space, or make it available to others for similar purposes. If you’re interested in volunteering in this restoration project, email Brendan at brendan@buffalonavalpark.org.
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.

_Online volunteer form: [Click here!](#)
Email: info@buffalonavalpark.org
Phone: 716-847-1773
Website: [Click here!](#)
Buffalo Naval Park Youtube Channel: [Click here!](#)