# SAVING OUR SHIPS

## PROGRESS REPORT JUNE 2023

After the completion of a thorough survey of all three ships afloat and the final reports submitted to the Buffalo Naval Park Board of Directors and the City of Buffalo, the best option for The Sullivans, as the immediate need, is now clear.

We've aggregated the financial figures for all the component parts of the repair, and we still have some distance to go before we have the total necessary. We're working with political leaders and private industry to cover the funding gap.

On the next page of this newsletter, we'll cover some of the myriad details necessary to prepare the site, our three ships afloat, and in particular The Sullivans for this momentous and historic repair event.

From site preparation, trip & tow plans, getting the ship tested and made as seaworthy as possible, and multi-agency coordination, this will be the largest harbor project Buffalo has seen in many years.

## PTF-17

The final details are being completed aboard the boat, and the Buffalo Naval Park is reviewing different options for accessibility. In our efforts to preserve this important artifact, we plan to limit topside access to small groups guided by our curator Shane Stephenson. We're also looking at structures that could be placed around the boat to provide improved viewing.

## CROAKER WORKING PARTY

Our first Croaker working party comprised of veteran submariners was a tremendous success! There was great participation, enthusiasm, and the work that was completed has improved visitor experience aboard the boat.

The spaces have been cleaned, painted, and nearly all of the mechanical control arms in the maneuvering room are now movable - something that hasn't happened since the boat was retired.

With this first success in the books, we're optimistic that there'll be more Croaker working parties and even fuller participation.

# SAVING OUR SHIPS

## THE SULLIVANS REPAIR PLANNING

Getting The Sullivans to a repair facility is a bit more complex than it may sound, and with that, the cost of the enterprise exceeds the expectations of many. Below is a chronological flow of events required to get The Sullivans out of her present berth and underway using the power of tugboats to a repair facility.

First, the site has to be prepared. We're working with both private industry and government agencies in a dredging plan to release the ships from the river silt than now partially encapsulates their hulls. Once open channels are created, the Little Rock and Croaker have to be temporarily moved to provide access to The Sullivans.

The Little Rock is firmly moored to several structures that are embedded deep into the underlying bedrock at the harbor's bottom. The structure, or mooring tower at the front of the Little Rock was designed to be removed via a bolted flange near the base, and will be craned out of the water to create a navigable path for The Sullivans and the tugs that will extricate her.

In conjunction with the site preparations, the ship must also be ready to endure an open water transit. A "Tug & Tow" plan is being written, which then must pass muster with the experts of the Coast Guard.

To be prepared for emergencies that could occur during the time she is underway, a team of damage control personnel would be pre-positioned on one of the two accompanying tugboats, ready to address any developing incidents. The ship is currently being fitted with a state-of-the-art flood alarm system which will send a signal remotely to those tasked with preserving her watertight integrity.

The ship continues to undergo a series of inspections to determine areas of potential weakness. We're examining her transverse bulkheads, particularly where they meet with the hull plating in the bilges to seal any developing compromised or weak spots to prevent open communication of water between spaces.

We're looking at the rubber gaskets in all the watertight doors and will replace those no longer capable of creating a watertight seal. When the ship was decommissioned, much of her machinery was removed, but the connected, and now open, piping was not. Those open ends will all be capped as we prepare for her first open water event since she arrived in Buffalo decades ago.

The work scope described above will help preserve the ship even after a successful drydocking.

# THE SULLIVANS

## FLOOD ALARM SYSTEM

One of the most significant projects now underway aboard The Sullivans is the installation of a flood alarm system throughout her hull using cutting-edge cellular technology.

With a generous grant from the Ralph Wilson Foundation, were able to work with Great Lakes Building Systems to design an array of sensors in a way that provides the earliest possible warning of a problem, followed by a second array that will indicate the rate and extent of a flooding event.

Notifications of activated sensors are sent cellularly to smartphones of key personnel and to the Emergency Flooding Response contract holder, who will provide a quick-response team within a designated period of time.

In addition to the benefits the system will provide while the ship remains pier side, the same system will be in use during her transit, powered by topside portable generators. In the event of a flooding incident during the transit, response personnel will be alerted immediately and will decide the most appropriate course of action in real-time.

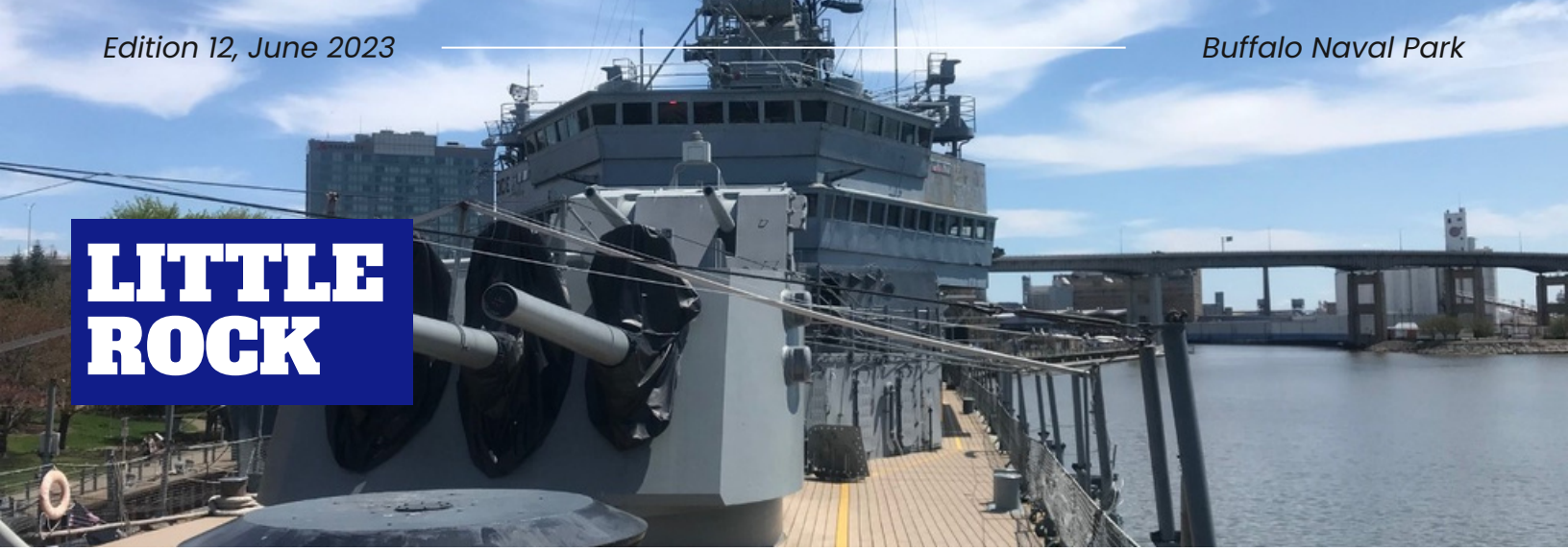
We anticipate the completion of the flood alarm system install by mid-June, 2023.

## THE SULLIVANS, ENGINEERING PROJECT OF THE YEAR AWARD

On the evening of June 9th, 2023, we were deeply honored to be the recipient of the New York State Society of Professional Engineers Engineering Project of the Year Award, in partnership with the professionals at Bidco Marine Group and the Senior Engineer with the City of Buffalo.

We were nominated for the award by a member of the society who had learned of the challenges in recovering and stabilizing The Sullivans after her partial sinking in April of 2022.

Our deepest gratitude to the NYSSPE - thank you!



# LITTLE ROCK

## WEAPONS CONTROL

Aboard the Little Rock, there is a space that had the potential to change the course of human history - Weapons Control. The Little Rock was a nuclear armed warship and Sixth Fleet flagship. When forward deployed in the Mediterranean Sea, she could have come face to face with her Soviet adversaries.

When you step into Weapons Control, with some of her missile firing consoles still in place, you get a sense of the gravity of those tense moments.

For the first time ever, we're making the Weapons Control space accessible to small groups, guided by our curator, Shane Stephenson. You will see things that the majority of the crew who served aboard would never have gotten near - an armed Marine sentry was stationed nearby to ensure that only those few with a need and clearance to enter the space would be given access.

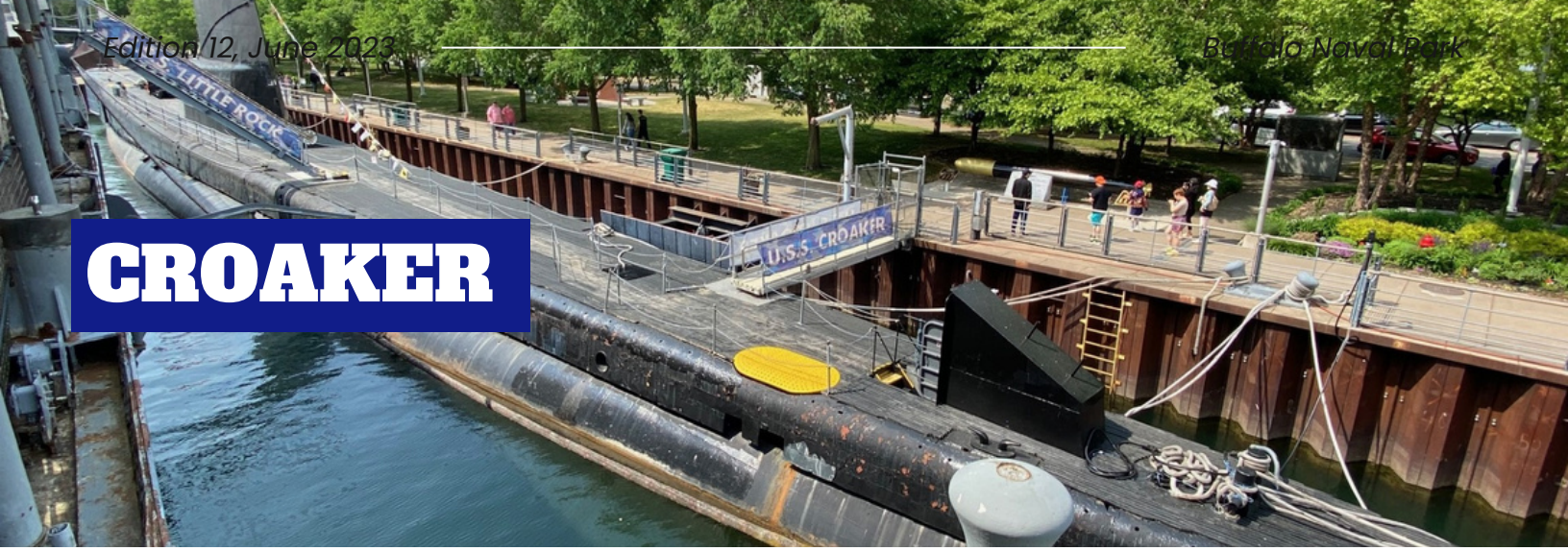
This is one of the only sites in the world where you can enter a nuclear weapon launch space - and we've got one right here in Buffalo. For more information on this exclusive tour, **CLICK HERE.**

## WEAPONS CONTROL REFURBISHMENT

For decades, the Weapons Control space, located in the aft superstructure, remained a dark, spooky unexplored area where discarded materials were stored. There was no power, hence no lighting and no real understanding of the importance of that space in its historical context. Late last season, staff began cleaning out the space and researching its purpose. And the more we learned, the more excited we became in reviving it.

Staff cleaning Weapons Control after repowering and relighting the space. The original missile launch consoles are visible in this image.

Cleaning below the deck plates revealed a treasure-trove of original missile launch console buttons that had been removed and discarded.

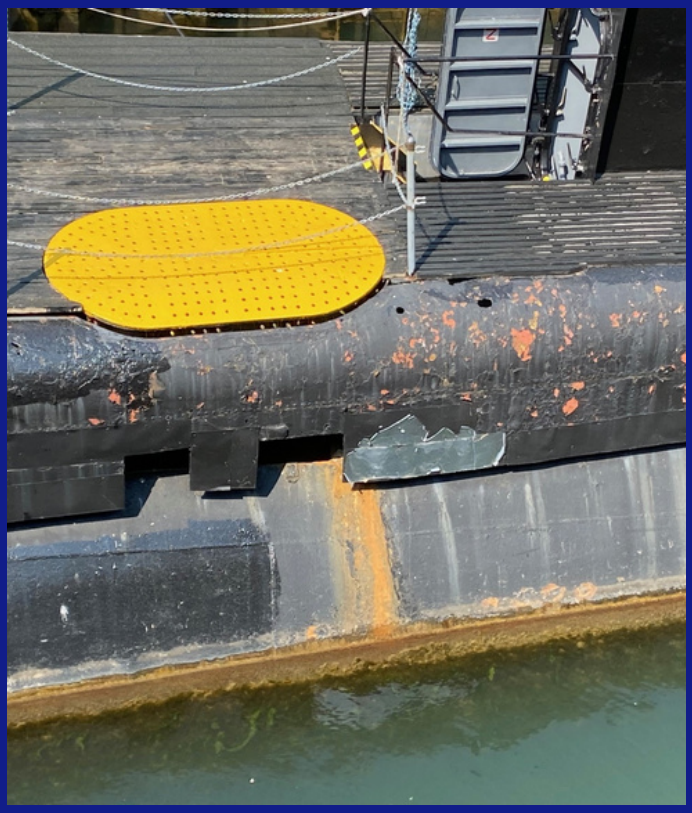



# CROAKER

## LET THERE BE LIGHT

One of the ongoing projects being undertaken by our industrious volunteers Mario and Karl is the improvement of lighting aboard the boat. We're installing additional emergency lighting units throughout the spaces as well as better exit lighting. In addition, areas within the sub are currently too poorly lit to display key artifacts, so Mario and Karl are determined to provide a remedy.

Another major improvement this month is the redesign and reinstallation of the winter storm-damaged shore power line. When the install is complete, the line will be elevated and have an installed spring system to allow slack for significant boat movements.



## LONG-TERM REPAIRS

The Croaker has a distinguished record of combat service in the Second World War as well as her actions as a hunter/killer sub during the Cold War. As such, she's an important part of American history and richly deserves to be preserved and her stories shared.

We are working on funding sources to either have her join The Sullivans in a simultaneous drydocking for both vessels, or to take her to a repair facility shortly after the return of The Sullivans.

There would be a significant cost savings in having the vessels repaired at the same time as unnecessary redundancies in site preparations, expensive resources and personnel on station and mooring/unmooring could be avoided.

More to follow ...

# CURATOR'S CORNER

One of the 'artifacts' recovered from below the deck plates in Weapons Control. One man's trash is a future curator's treasure!

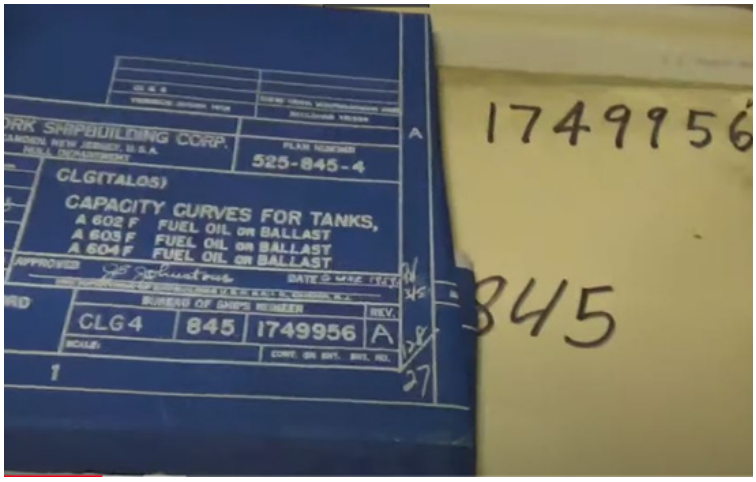
## BY SHANE STEPHENSON

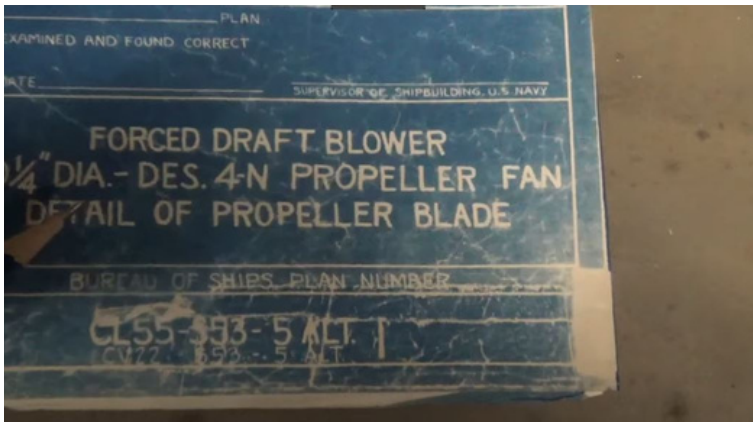
A few months ago, I mentioned that we had volunteers named Ryan and Morgan working on the blueprints to USS The Sullivans. Since that time, I have also found a dedicated team of volunteers to begin working on the blueprints for USS Little Rock. The folders are labelled with the blueprint number, but there is another serial or series number that I don't yet have the key for. I'm hopeful this first layer of processing will help me to begin building a usable index of the blueprints we have on board for USS Little Rock. I haven't found similar onboard blueprints for USS Croaker, but I will keep looking.

A YouTube video that explains a little more about this process can be found here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkUXANQ5Vfw

If you'd like to volunteer to work in the blueprints, or the larger collections, don't hesitate to visit our website and fill out a volunteer form.





# JOIN US

**DOCENTS/TOUR GUIDES:** 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.

**GARDENS AND GROUNDS:** If you've visited the park, you've no doubt seen the immaculately maintained grounds enjoyed by so many. If you enjoy gardening and wish to be a part of this dedicated team, please let us know - we'd love to have you join us!

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