PROGRESS REPORT
AUGUST, 2023

We hate to sound redundant, but July proved to be another eventful and productive month for our ships afloat. We are very happy to announce that we’ve been awarded a substantial security grant, which will help us to protect these precious artifacts from the increasing incidents of vandalism and unlawful intrusions.

We’ve completed the planning phase of the flood alarm system aboard Croaker, and continue to carefully plot out the flood sensor system for Little Rock.

Another very welcome bit of positive news was notification of a successful National Grid grant - a relatively modest but crucial source of funding for The Sullivans electrical restoration work. With that financial resource available, we can proceed without delay on the electrical portion of our survivability plan.

Our LED light upgrade efforts aboard Little Rock and The Sullivans are already paying dividends in the form of reduced strain on their aging electrical systems. Each one of our three vessels afloat have seen significant progress over the last month, and the following pages will detail that and more.

PTF-17

Our intrepid volunteers continue their progress aboard PTF-17, installing the stanchions for life lines, the mast, and best of all, rigging the mast so that the Stars and Stripes can once again wave proudly in the wind. Planning continues for a catwalk system around the boat for curator-led tours – stay tuned for more on that.

THE TANGLED WEB WE WEAVE

This is Bob. Bob is a spider. Bob is a horrifically big, creepy spider who has taken up residence in the aft berthing space aboard The Sullivans. We try not to make Bob mad. Bob is scary. We don’t know if Bob can jump, and a mad, jumping Bob the spider would make us not want to work anywhere near Bob. And we have to work near Bob. As far as we know, Bob doesn’t eat people. We’re cautiously optimistic.
THE SULLIVANS SURVIVABILITY PROJECT

STEADY, EVEN STRAIN

As of August 3rd, the flood alarm system is up and running, with 39 sensors distributed throughout bilge spaces aboard ship. Notifications will go out to key staff members as well as designated persons at Bidco Marine, the Buffalo Naval Park’s Emergency Flooding Response contractors. Should a space begin to take on water, the sensor will activate and send a signal via the cellular antenna that was installed. The smartphone app will provide information on the location of the flooding, and if it’s an engineering space, we will soon be installing surveillance cameras to help determine precisely the extent of the incident. There is also a second array of sensors placed 18” above the first set to help us determine the volume of water entering the space and the rate of the flooding. This system is a major step forward in being able to detect a problem early and get qualified people on scene to prevent the incursion from becoming catastrophic. Thanks go out to Great Lakes Building Systems for their hard work in getting the system in place. Below are images of two of the 39 installed ‘waterbugs’.

Our first priority in our survivability plan is reestablishing watertight integrity of transverse bulkheads throughout the ship. We have to be able to contain water from spreading in a potential flooding event both horizontally and vertically. All watertight doors, hatches and scuttles below the main deck have to have their original and badly rotted gaskets removed and replaced with new gasket material in accordance with Navy standards and replacement procedures, which we’ve been able to source through a company in Chesapeake, Virginia.

For those who’ve worked with door gaskets in the Navy, you know they can be pretty difficult. We ordered 50 feet of material (in the image above) to make sure it’s the correct profile and to use in training – enough to do a couple watertight doors, a scuttle and a hatch. Then we’ll place our fuller order of hundreds of feet and put the work in high gear.
THE SULLIVANS SURVIVABILITY PROJECT CONT'D

With watertight integrity restored aboard ship, we’ll be able to close and dog down all the necessary doors, hatches and scuttles to prevent a flooding event from travelling throughout key spaces and becoming catastrophic.

Once we’ve set material conditions accordingly, we then have to pay close attention to air quality. Without clean air being drawn in and foul air forced out, breathing conditions below decks could become unsafe. Our answer for that is restoration of the ship's inherent ventilation system, or as much of it as we can restore, supplemented with commercial air movers where original equipment can’t be brought back into safe operation.

In the image to the right is one of the air handling units located on the starboard side midships of The Sullivans near the docent locker. Each one of these units must be thoroughly cleaned, greased and tested, including their respective motor control units and corresponding circuitry.

Speaking of circuitry, volunteer Mario continues to lead the charge in restoring electrical systems aboard ship. His hard work and dedication is directly responsible for the safe operation of the electrical distribution system aft, and nearing completion on the duplicate system forward. With those panels back in operation, we have more power available for the added load needed for ventilation, heat, deicing bubblers, dehumidifiers, etc. as we get closer to the pending winter season.

In the image to the left, Joe and Mike work on disassembling the air handling unit on the port side of the docent locker. The space requires cleaning and stabilization before we can progress.

In the image to the right is the top cowling surrounding the fan unit. Once work in the space is complete, the unit will be scraped, painted, reassembled and tested. With a heavy dose of luck, we’ll be able to bring it back to life.
This month we were very fortunate to have a group of volunteers from Linde join us for a very productive day of work aboard The Sullivans. They broke up into several smaller groups and did an excellent job scraping down and painting the aft depth charge racks and depth charges. Another group went into the ship’s galley and refreshed all the white paint in the overhead, then shined up all the stainless steel in the space. A third group worked with Mario to get an accurate accounting of all the circuits needing fuses, so we could calculate how many we’d need to continue our cleaning and safety checks of circuits.

Above, Linde volunteers scrape off old layer of paint and wire brush accumulated rust on the aft depth charge racks. Below, the depth charges after being fully prepped and painted. The depth charges now reside in their racks for the first time since the partial sinking in April 2022.
With all the work necessary for The Sullivans survivability program, the crew here still managed to get an impressive amount accomplished aboard Little Rock.

S5 berthing, home to the shipboard supply department and Marine NCOs, has gone through a major renovation, from the overhead to the bulkheads and decks, with LED lighting upgrades added throughout. The objective is to restore the space in a way that allows for its use as a habitable, comfortable and safe sleeping space for one of overnight programs. The images on the next page provide an indication of the amount of work involved and the impressive results.

Speaking of LED lighting, the project continues at full steam, with better than 50% of the ship’s habitable spaces now retrofitted. We will be expanding our efforts into spaces that have remained unlit since the ship arrived in the 1970s. This gives the park the opportunity to expand the areas open to our visitors, either through self-guided tours, curator or docent-led tours and more. There are a tremendous number of stories on this ship we have yet to tell, and the spaces where they occurred is the best place to tell them.

Now that The Sullivans flood alarm system is fully operational, we’re turning our attention to Little Rock for an identical state-of-the-art set up. The Naval Park is working with Great Lakes Building Systems to determine number, placement, and logistics for the array of sensors to be installed, and where the cellular antenna system wiring can be routed. Since we’re continuing with our watertight integrity initiatives, and working with armored decks, running wires has to very carefully planned, using original ship’s drawings and damage control plates, as well as innumerable walkthroughs of the affected spaces.

As luck would have it, one of the main post-service air conditioning units that were installed aboard the ship and which provides cooling to many of the forward spaces aboard decided to end its serviceable life at the height of the summer heat. We’ve been working with our climate control contractors on replacing the unit and plan to have the system online within a few weeks.
LITTLE ROCK CONT'D

S5 and Marine NCO berthing deck before:  

S5 and Marine NCO berthing deck after:
Our intrepid volunteer Karl has been hard at work aboard Croaker, adding to the number of emergency lights and exit signs aboard the boat, to better prepare us for a potential power outage.

Karl has also been working on improving interior lighting as we move from the original and expensive fluorescent lighting to the more economical LED. We’re looking to better illuminate areas of the boat that haven’t enjoyed much attention in the past, and to enhance the overall visitor experience.

As with The Sullivans, final planning is wrapping up for the Croaker’s flood alarm system. There will be an array of sensors distributed throughout the lowest points within her pressure hull and a topside cellular antenna to reach designated staff and emergency personnel in the event of a major flooding incident. This, coupled with an enhanced watertight integrity policy, will help us deal with situations that might otherwise become catastrophic.

Our sincere thanks to the Linde volunteers who joined us for a day of cleaning and maintenance aboard the boat. The crew started in the forward torpedo room and worked their way aft, tidying and shining their way to the aft torpedo room. They did a fantastic job, and we look forward to having them back.
CURATOR'S CORNER

This corner is excited to report something BIG is coming to the Buffalo Naval & Military Park soon!

An exciting historic artifact currently located in South Bend, Indiana will be making the journey to Buffalo for permanent display on USS Little Rock, the last remaining Cleveland/Galveston-class guided missile cruiser.

Stay tuned as we unveil more details in an upcoming newsletter. Subscribe to our mailing list at https://buffalonavalpark.org/newsletter to ensure that you don’t miss any updates from the Naval Park.
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!

Online volunteer form: https://www.buffalonavalpark.wufoo.com/forms/zljxfxjq1uqolw0/
Email: info@buffalonavalpark.org
Phone: 716-847-1773
Website: https://www.buffalonavalpark.org
Buffalo Naval Park Youtube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/@buffalonavalpark