

SAVING OUR SHIPS

PROGRESS REPORT JANUARY 2024

It's hard to believe another year has ticked by, and as we look back on 2023 we realize what an incredibly impactful year it's been. And we're expecting 2024 to be far more so.

Foremost in our efforts has been the drydocking of The Sullivans and Croaker. Active Navy vessels cycle through drydockings every two or so years. For museum ships, the recommendation is every 15 to 20 years maximum, with annual dive inspections to ensure no significant problems are developing in the interim. For our ships afloat this will be their first in well over half a century 1965 for The Sullivans and 1968 for Croaker - a situation we don't intend to repeat. Once The Sullivans and Croaker return with their long-term repairs completed, we'll begin our planning for the Little Rock.

The long and the short of it, at the time of this writing, is the projected costs to get both The Sullivans and Croaker into drydock is about \$20,000,000. We've got \$8,000,000.



We work daily to close the gap as we're keenly aware every year that ticks by reduces the likelihood The Sullivans in particular will be able to endure a long open-water transit to a repair facility. We'll keep you posted as we continue working with private entities, local, state and federal officials to get over the finish line.

Aboard our ships, we're continuing to hammer away at our list of winter projects. It's ambitious, but we know the effort will be well worth it. As we've stated in the past, it's a commitment to our guests to have a new story, space or shipboard experience available every season as we open. With three ships afloat, that's easier said than done.

We want to take a moment and thank our staff for all the hard work and challenging tasks they accomplished in 2023. To put it in perspective, the combined number of active-duty crew that maintained these three ships while in service was about 1,500. Chipping, painting, fixing, repairing - everything necessary to keep these ships in prime condition. We've got 3 full-time and 4 part-time maintenance staff pulling a very similar, and sometimes heavier load.

Lots to report in this edition, so please read on.



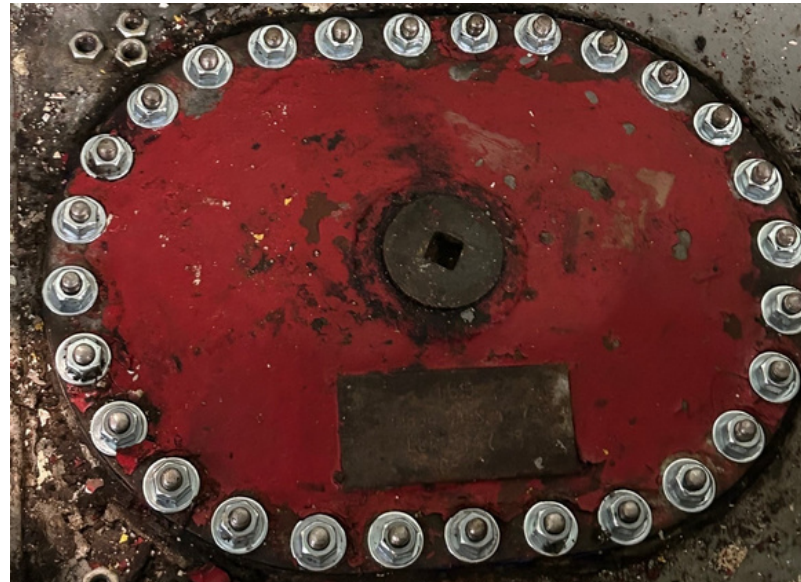
THE SULLIVANS SURVIVABILITY PROGRAM PROGRESS

The Sullivans Survivability Program has been running full bore since clearing the administrative hurdles on December 22nd. In the few weeks that have passed, this is what we've been working on.

If you've read previous issues of this newsletter, you'll recall the need to repair and augment the watertight integrity of the transverse bulkheads. Those are the 'walls' that span from the bottom of the ship to the main deck for the purposes of containing water within that space in the event of flooding. In order for us to add the epoxy in the shell plating/bulkhead seam, we first have to remove any oil or oily residues, otherwise the epoxy won't adhere to the underlying surface. US Ecology, a national environmental company had been brought in to thoroughly clean those spaces. To date, the aft boiler space has been completely cleaned, inspected, prepped with an industrial rust inhibitor, and marine grade epoxy applied. The objective was to then proceed to the next space in front of it, the forward engine room, but asbestos debris was found in the bilge requiring a separate, and unfortunately, more expensive mitigation plan.



Above: the seam of the transverse bulkhead and hull plating after the application of rust inhibitor and marine epoxy in the aft fire room.



Above: all tank covers below the main deck have new rubber gaskets and hardware. Previously, many of the nuts and washers had been missing, but are now fully replaced and tightened down.

Once the asbestos debris remediation is complete in the bilges of the forward engine room, US Ecology will again be able to address the residues in the space. In the meantime, they've redeployed their equipment to the forward fireroom and continue their clean-up work there.

After Buffalo Naval Park staff completed the replacement and chalk testing of all the door, hatch, and scuttle gaskets below decks, Bidco Marine Group is now working on replacing tank cover gaskets and hardware, which had been missing for some years. They're also repairing and adjusting all watertight door hardware to ensure functional integrity between spaces in the event of a serious flooding incident. Given the state of the hull plating, periodic leaks are sure to continue developing until she's safely home from drydock.



THE SULLIVANS

Our goal for the opening of the 2024 season is to have major portions of the forward superstructure open to the public - something that hasn't happened since the partial sinking in 2022.

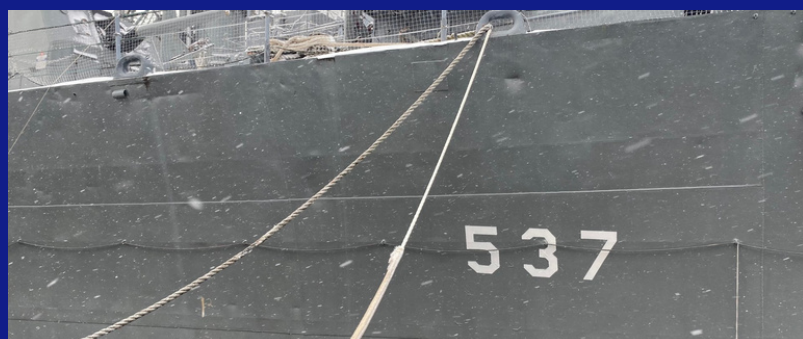
As mentioned in previous newsletters, the space we're most excited about is the Memorial Wardroom, where Sullivan family artifacts will be on display. The space required complete gutting due to major steel degradation in the bulkheads and deck edges, all of which must be remediated before restoration work can advance. Once done, we'll install new insulation and begin populating the space with artifacts.

The passageway leading up to the Memorial Wardroom, when approached from the aft side of the superstructure, also contains spaces we're looking forward to reintroducing to the public. The Combat Information Center, or CIC, the captain's in-port stateroom, the wardroom pantry in particular, all of which will receive some much-needed attention.

The Sullivan has so many incredibly important and historically timely stories to share with us, and the most elegant articulation is expressed through experiencing the spaces in which they occurred for yourself. We hope you'll allow us to share these refreshed spaces with you soon!

WINTER CHALLENGES

We've thus far been spared the severity of last winter, but the mid-January wind and snow storm did leave its mark. In the image to the right, a new mooring line we'd just set up to supplement the existing lines in anticipation of the storm had its sheath severed and snapped back. Fortunately, we were able to replace it.



A major challenge in advancing our projects is the existence of hazardous materials. In the case of the Memorial Wardroom, we tore out the deck installed by the museum in the 1980s or 1990s due to rotting two-by-fours that were sponging up and retaining moisture which contributed significantly to the degradation of the steel below. Once removed, we found original tile and floor leveler

adhering to the deck. Before we could remove it, we had to have the tile and underlying mastic tested for the presence of asbestos. While today we recognize the hazardous nature of the material, it was used in the Navy and many industries as a fire-proof insulator. Aboard The Sullivan it's in floor tile, the tile adhesive and pipe insulation. If the tests return positive, we'll work with an accredited removal company.



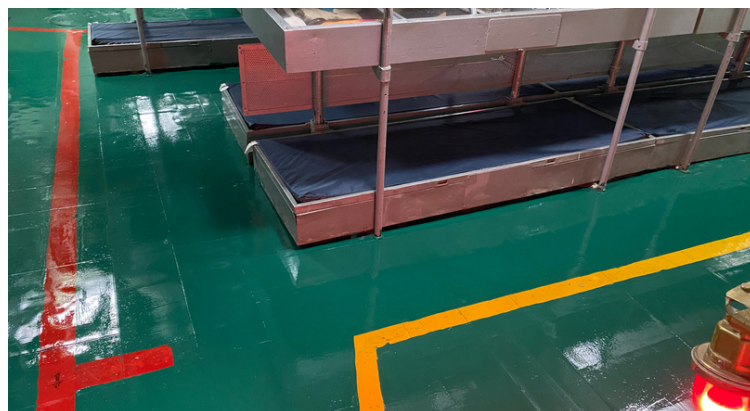
LITTLE ROCK

Aboard Little Rock, the list of completed projects is already getting long. The original ship's store is complete and our curator Shane is busy populating its shelves with period-appropriate merchandise. The ship's onboard entertainment radio station is also complete and, as with the store, Shane is acquiring records and equipment that you might find while the ship was in service. Near the crew's mess decks, the crew lounge has been restored and we're on the hunt for furnishing that likely would have been used in the space.

Another major undertaking was painting and clear-coating the deck all along 'Broadway', the main tour-route that spans the interior length of the ship.

Inside the engineering spaces work is proceeding to repair and restore original lighting circuits that, for whatever reason, had been severed at some distant point in the past. Our volunteer electrician Karl has been doing an amazing job rebuilding the transformers, after which testing will begin on the affected circuits.

If all goes well, the engineering spaces, which have remained dark for the better part of 45 years, will again be fully relit, but this time with efficient and brighter LED lighting. We can then begin assessing the four main engineering spaces for work we'll need to do and, hopefully, to make them sufficiently safe for guests to visit. Much is yet to be done, but it's our goal to share these amazing spaces that the vast majority of our guests have never seen.



Above, a main berthing space with its deck painted, clear coated, and directional lines refreshed.



Above, the officer's gally with a coat of fresh paint and clear coat.



Above, the newly restored crew's lounge awaiting period-appropriate furnishings.



Above, the reconstructed ship's store awaiting an inventory of goods from the 1960s and 70s for the hard-working sailors to purchase.



Aboard Croaker, the LED lighting upgrade continues along with preliminary planning for her drydocking. As with her sister ship in the waterborne fleet at the Buffalo Naval Park, funding remains the primary roadblock to her much-needed and long-overdue hull repairs.

In the meantime, we've been working with the submarine veterans on another working party in May. You may recall from a previous edition of the newsletter, subvets came from far and wide to participate in last-year's working party, enjoying overnight accommodations aboard Little Rock and working each day to improve the boat. Their hard work and technical expertise resulted in a number of exciting improvements, including freeing up the levers in the maneuvering room for guests to better understand how they operate. The levers had been frozen in place since the Navy decommissioned the vessel in the late 1960s.

Due to the onset of heavier winter conditions, we've been making a number of adjustments to her mooring lines keep the boat secure while allowing for the sometimes substantial changes in harbor depth. The Lake Erie phenomenon

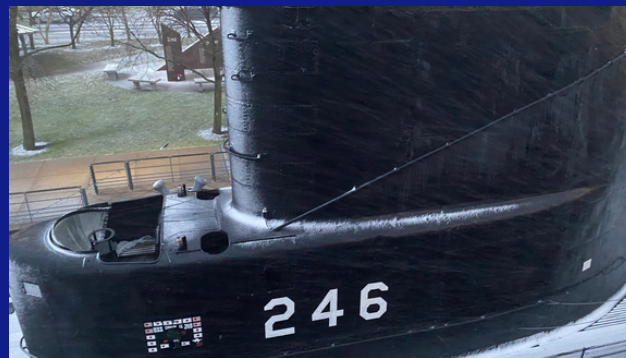
known as 'seiche', where the predominantly southwesterly winds push a huge volume of water into the harbor and raise our three vessels afloat as much as 7 feet, which is the edge of the adjoining sidewalk. Without sufficient slack in the lines, they could cause the ships to heel to the shore side, or results in the lines parting and allowing the ships to swing into one another. Conversely, if we leave too much slack, the ships also move more than we'd prefer.



Above, Bidco Marine Group and members of staff adjust the stern line of Croaker in anticipation of inbound heavy winds and sea conditions.



The images to the left and right illustrate conditions far removed from her service life in the South Pacific. Severe winter storms, seiche, and punishing winds are frequently experienced and must be part of our planning here in her permanent home in Buffalo Harbor.



CURATOR'S CORNER

BY SHANE STEPHENSON

The Buffalo Naval Park's YouTube channel will again be hosting our 28 in 28 video series. One video a day will be released on our channel for the month of February. There's the added bonus since this is a leap year, this will be 29 videos in 29 days!

Starting this series in 2022, it was skipped in 2023 for the work that we were all attending to on USS The Sullivans. Video topics for this year include spaces aboard all three of our vessels, four live sessions, special videos off site visiting a cemetery, old factories which made war material, and Buffalo's two historic armories. I'll also be covering other vessels of the US Navy such as USS Iowa, BB-4, USS Galveston, CLG-3; USS Topeka, CLG-8, Independence Class Carriers, and discussing the Bison Shipyard, which constructed 360 Landing Craft, Tank for the US Navy.

We hope that you'll join us for this exciting and hopefully informative series.

Visit our channel at:
<https://www.youtube.com/@BuffaloNavalPark/videos> or click the YouTube icon below:





JOIN US

While our 2023 season ended months ago, our need for dedicated volunteers certainly hasn't. Cleaning, preservation, collections and restoration work continues through all seasons, and we take the time we're closed during the winter months to work on new displays and areas of the ships, so that each year brings new experiences for our guests.

If you'd like to contribute your time and expertise to our small fleet of historic vessels, we'd love to speak with you. Whether it's basic cleaning or more complex electrical work, we've got a need for you. Please consider joining 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.buffalonaivalpark.wufoo.com/forms/z1jxfxjq1uqolw0/>

Email: info@buffalonaivalpark.org

Phone: 716-847-1773

Website: <https://www.buffalonaivalpark.org>

Buffalo Naval Park Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@buffalonaivalpark>