



# SAVING OUR SHIPS

## PROGRESS REPORT MARCH 2024

It's here - the 2024 season for the Buffalo Naval Park has arrived! We're opening our doors to guests once again this month (March 2024) and we're looking forward to sharing the new spaces and exhibits with you.

Aboard Little Rock, we have 4 brand new, never before seen display spaces to share with guests, and they're all along the original tour route.

On The Sullivans, we've been renovating the

main passageway in the forward superstructure, including the Combat Information Center, the captain's in-port stateroom, the officer's pantry, and a communications space. While it won't be ready for opening, you'll see staff working hard at the top-to-bottom restoration of the Memorial Wardroom, where original Sullivan family artifacts will be displayed.

Croaker has been prepped to receive guests and we've been working with the submarine veterans to develop a plan to bring new displays aboard her as well.

All three of our historic vessels afloat have something new to offer!



## THE SULLIVANS SURVIVABILITY PROGRAM UPDATE

The most critical areas of the Survivability Program have been completed, but there's more to be done.

The program has been funded by a grant pledged by Congressman Higgins and we've been carefully working to make every penny stretch as far as we can make it.

First on our list was restoring watertight integrity below decks. In the event of a hull breach, it's imperative the flooding be limited to the space in which it occurs if possible. We tore out and replaced many hundreds of feet of door, scuttle, and hatch gaskets after which each was chalk-tested. Since most of the gaskets dated back to the 1950s or 1960s, that was no easy feat.

The areas of the bilges that came in contact with the transverse bulkheads - the walls the stretch from the bottom of the ship to the main deck, were extensively cleaned of all oil and oily residues. It was necessary to complete mitigation in those areas so that the marine epoxy used to seal the critical seams at the bottom of the bulkheads could adhere to the metal surfaces. There were substantial areas of advanced corrosion that compromised those critical areas.

The critical need remains with the hull and will continue to be the case till she safely returns from drydock, now targeted for October 2025. But that's not the only need. The superstructure has also suffered substantial degradation, and in order for us to develop a repair plan, we first

have to expose the underlying steel and find where exterior water from rain, ice and snow are penetrating. Exterior water travels to the lowest point, pools, and over time causes substantial metal degradation. These are primarily interior decks, and those are often covered with asbestos tiling and mastic used to glue them to the steel. We've had a number of those areas mitigated by a qualified contractor and can begin addressing the surfaces beneath.

Our work in this program is far from done. We're reviewing the remaining available funds from the grant and prioritizing work accordingly. Safety and security systems like fire detection sensors and cameras in the most vulnerable spaces such as engineering top the list. Additionally, steel work on degraded load-bearing structures, electrical distribution and circuitry, high-capacity bilge pumps, and additional mitigation all have to be carefully prioritized for the dwindling funding left.





Mother Nature was less cooperative this year as it pertains to our scheduled opening date of the 23rd of March - ice and snow on the decks of our ships made it too unsafe to allow guests aboard, so we rescheduled for the following Wednesday. Despite the delay and the chilly mid-week opening, the event was still a success.

We had the privilege to honor Van Taylor, a man who's given so much to the park and to our troops deployed. Mr. Taylor was selected as the first to board The Sullivans for the season, acting as the ribbon cutter and proclaiming the 2024 season officially open.



To the left, Mr. Van Taylor takes the first steps across The Sullivans brow. At the commencement of each season, the Buffalo Naval Park selects a person who's contributed in a singularly meaningful way to the park, to active-duty military or the veteran community and Mr. Taylor abundantly exemplifies selfless service to those groups. We're grateful for all he does and continues to do!

Our talented and dedicated docents honor Mr. Taylor with a hand salute as he crosses The Sullivans brow, announcing the official opening of the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park for the 2024 season. If you'd like to join our docent community, please check the last page of this newsletter for more information.



# THE SULLIVANS CONT'D



Above, U.S. Navy Chiefs reenlist on the bow of The Sullivans.



Above left, one of newest and hard-working volunteers paints inside the officers' pantry. To the right, the newly painted captain's in-port stateroom, looking like she just left the shipyard.



# LITTLE ROCK

As with The Sullivans, the Little Rock has been bustling with activity. Now that we're open, guests will be able to see the four brand-new, never-before seen spaces and their displays: the ship's store, the ship's radio station, complete with period-correct records, the crew's lounge, and Radio II. You'll no doubt see the completely refreshed tour route decks and their glass-like finish - very much like you'd expect aboard the flagship of the Sixth Fleet.

Something we're very excited about is a new program we're rolling out - the opportunity for individuals and families to sleep aboard! We've refurbished a number of officer's staterooms,

most of which have large, comfortable bunkbeds, ladders and safety rails. Each space has an officer's desk, drawers and a comfortable chair or two. If you're feeling particularly posh, we will, at times, allow guests to rent the Admiral's quarters - the historic space where the commander of the Sixth Fleet slept, and in the large meeting space, where movie stars, heads of state, and the highest-ranking military officers enjoyed lavishly elegant dinners. The Admiral's quarters were extensively researched and restored to their 1960's appearance - a major overhaul that our crew and volunteers completed just last winter. It's now one of the premier spaces for our guests to explore and learn about.

To the right, a recently refurbished officer's stateroom aboard Little Rock. Our first overnight guests (the first not related to our Encampment or Sea Cadet programs) will be enjoying these overnight accommodations for the once-in-a-lifetime eclipse that's occurring on Monday, April 8th. As we get farther into the season, we'll be announcing dates of availability for those with an interest in this first-ever and exceptionally unique experience. We have staterooms available for individuals, families and private groups - check our website for updates.



To the left, Mark, with an ecstatic enthusiasm, works in one of our officer's staterooms, cleaning, painting and improving throughout. To the right, Joe, dressed apparently for space flight or ghostbusting has done an amazing job this winter and joins Mark in the fun.





# CROAKER

We mourned the loss of the Croaker caretaker and all-around extraordinary human being Jim Marzullo this winter and seek ways to honor him. The boat wouldn't be what it is now without his hard work and passion for its legacy.

This month we'll be welcoming Ken, a United States Navy veteran submariner to take on caretaker responsibilities. Ken brings a tremendous amount of maintenance experience to the table and with his extensive background on active-duty submarines, he'll be a perfect fit for the Croaker and the Buffalo Naval Park maintenance team.

We're excited about the possibilities for the Croaker. We recently inspected the conning tower - the area made famous in many submarine movies where the captain and his officers are depicted peering through the periscope at enemy vessels and launch their torpedo attacks, and we're getting a plan together to begin restoration. The space has suffered from many years of weather penetrating inside and general degradation, but it's too important a space to leave to chance. First, we'll need to weatherproof the sail and seal the openings for now long-missing equipment, then begin the process of stabilizing the artifacts, surfaces and structures within the space.

Another possibility we're exploring is the reintroduction of a functioning periscope aboard Croaker. And it just happens, we have one. While not the original, our research to date indicates it's of the correct manufacturing vintage (1943) and may be the correct type and dimensions to be reinserted in the periscope aperture in the sail - we'll keep you posted!



# DRYDOCKING

As with her sister in the Buffalo Naval Park fleet, The Sullivans, the Croaker is working toward a major repair in drydock. The current estimates we have at this time, for both ships to be repaired, come in at about \$21 million dollars. At the time of this writing, that puts the

shortfall at about \$13 million as we currently have approximately \$8 million in committed funds.

The target date for drydocking is now October of 2025. We remain in periodic discussions with the three candidate facilities for the repair to ensure they've got the space open for our vessels and can complete the work by the following Spring.



# CURATOR'S CORNER

## BY SHANE STEPHENSON

It's always a welcome sight to have visitors back on board the ships, and that also means for me, I can invite the passionate artifact volunteers back on board too!

For various weather related reasons, I typically don't ask my volunteers to do work over the winter. This season's projects will be focused on building the collections for the research library and includes two major areas of interest. The first project is to assist in the processing the collection of the US Navy Cruiser Sailors Association. This collection once processed and made available to the public will be of great interest to those researchers who love all things US cruisers.

The second project is to create a Ready Reference file filled with articles from US Naval Institute's Proceedings magazine. I will be creating an Index with scores of subject headings, and the volunteers will be paging through years worth of magazines, looking for articles that fit these



subject headings.

Creating this Ready Reference file will go a long way towards offering general information to our visitors on a variety of topics such as advances in weapon technology, ship construction, specific engagements, classes of ships, US Navy policies, and more.

A general overview of the collection shows that the bulk of our magazines on hand are from the 1950s – 1980s, with some editions going back to the 1920s. Creating this file will also free up some space in the collections. As you can see from the image, better rehousing is a requirement!

I look forward to the continued passion and commitment from the artifact volunteers.





We're open! The 2024 season for the Buffalo Naval Park is officially underway. There's still lots of important work to do for us to present these ships to our guests in a way that honors their service.

Without our dedicated corps of volunteers, the positive experience our guests enjoy wouldn't be possible. 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. Our luxurious gardens that have become the premier outdoor space in all of Western New York owe their beauty and meticulous maintenance to our volunteers. If you enjoy working outdoors and wish to contribute to our historic waterfront, we'd love to have your participation. 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](mailto:info@buffalonaivalpark.org)

Phone: 716-847-1773

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

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