



BUFFALO... A WINNING CITY!

Buffalo has just completed the hosting of a unique and historic event.

On 16 December 2017, the USS Little Rock (LCS 9) was commissioned at Canalside. This marked the first time in the Navy's 242-year history that a ship was commissioned beside her namesake ship.

The 17 days that surrounded the event all worked to define Buffalo as a warm, gracious and welcoming port. It also helped to define Buffalo as a city that can stand tall while operating on a national stage. I would like to thank Mayor Byron W. Brown for his steady and unwavering support from the earliest days of planning through the days leading up to and including the Commissioning. In addition, The Buffalo Renaissance Foundation, Inc. provided the committee's initial funding, once Buffalo had been chosen as the commissioning site. BRF's generous financial and administrative support set the stage for a most successful event.

Our Committee also benefited from the support of many federal, state and local elected officials including Lt. Governor Hochul, Congressmen Higgins and Collins, New York State Senators Gallivan, Jacobs and Kennedy and Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz.

As the Chairman for the commissioning event, I have received many accolades and much praise for which I am most appreciative. The accolades and praise are more aptly directed to my extraordinary Commissioning Committee, the USS Little Rock (LCS 9)'s Blue and Gold crews and my wonderful fellow Buffalonians who so enthusiastically embraced the Commissioning. In addition to making all the Sailors feel so welcome during their time in Buffalo, over 9,000 hardy Buffalonians braved the cold and snow to actually attend the Commissioning. The rule of thumb is that two-thirds of ticketholders normally attend. Not so with Buffalonians! We had a virtual 100% turnout!

My understanding is that, in 2017, the only Commissioning with attendance exceeding ours was for the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), an event that took place in Norfolk, Virginia and was attended by the President of the United States.

Buffalo's corporate community, including companies like Try-It Distributing, American Demolition and Nuclear Decommissioning, Delaware North and Moog, among many others,

were generous in their support and gracious with their hospitality. Individual patrons were very generous in support of the Commissioning as well, and, in true Buffalo fashion, chose anonymity over recognition.

Colvin Cleaners provided dry cleaning services for the Sailors and David Beaton's Tim Hortons operations kept the Sailors well provisioned with coffee and donuts.

The Sailors of the Blue and Gold crews enjoyed many events during their time in Buffalo. The festivities commenced with a viewing of the Army - Navy Game at Buffalo RiverWorks. Despite the final score, the Sailors had a wonderful time.

Other events included the Officer's Welcome at the Buffalo Harbor Museum; the Crew Reception at Pearl Street Grill and Brewery; the Commanding Officer's Reception at the Marquis de Lafayette Ballroom, catered by the incomparable Molly Koessler; and the Chairman's Reception held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. All of the venues were spectacular!

The Sailors also had the opportunity to be a part of history by attending the Bills / Colts "Snow Bowl". In addition, many of the Sailors attended a Sabres game during their stay. Kim and Terry Pegula and the team at Pegula Sports and Entertainment were remarkable in their support of our Sailors and are to be warmly commended. In addition to the Bills and Sabres

games, the Pegula organization graciously allowed us to stage our post-Commissioning Reception in the hospitality building that was being constructed for the World Junior Hockey Tournament. This saved the Navy a good deal of money and provided a better enclosure than would have otherwise been constructed.

Another highlight included a Gold Star Mothers' Luncheon, hosted by the Katharine Pratt Horton Buffalo Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). The National Society DAR also hosted the Sponsor's Luncheon which was held aboard the USS Little Rock (LCS 9); their generosity and enthusiastic support were greatly appreciated!

Commander Todd D. Peters, Commanding Officer, made it clear that he wanted all of the Sailors to be out in the community during their time in Buffalo. Trips to the Food Bank of Western New York and work with Habitat for Humanity helped to accomplish that goal. Sailors also paid visits to the new Oishei Children's Hospital and to both the Batavia and Buffalo Veterans' Hospitals.

As with every other detail, our local law enforcement agencies did a wonderful job throughout the event. The Buffalo Police were on hand, braving the elements and spearheading security throughout the ship's time in port.



The Erie County Sheriff's Office, led by Sheriff Tim Howard, provided, among other things, an escort for the Sailors as they made their way to New Era Field.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Thomas Dee and the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation

for allowing us to use their Canalside venue for the Commissioning. Special thanks to Jon Dandes and his great team at Be Our Guest, Ltd. They had only 60 days to prepare for the Commissioning and had to be sensitive to all of the Navy's security needs.

Adding to Be Our Guest's challenges was the need to complete the site work for the World Junior Hockey Tournament which commenced a short two days after the USS Little Rock (LCS 9) departed. Be Our Guest handled all of the details with calm and cool professionalism; that professionalism made our job much easier than it would have otherwise been.

Buffalo's news media did a fabulous job of telling the story before, during and after the 17-day event. Collectively, the media communicated to the public what a truly remarkable event took place in our hometown.

Upon reflection, my only regret was that given time constraints, we were not able to accommodate all of the veterans and their families who had requested a tour of the ship; the crew simply did not have the capability to honor every request and for that I am sorry.

Let me close by saying that the Commissioning of the USS Little Rock (LCS 9) was a grand event that was embraced by all Buffalonians. It truly was a wonderful "feel good" moment for the entire community. In a word, "Buffalo was talkin' proud!"

So, thank you Buffalo, for a job well done! We made many friends throughout the proceedings and now even more folks understand that unique "thing" that makes Buffalo such a wonderful place to live, work and raise families.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

Maurice L. Naylon III
Chairman, USS Little Rock (LCS 9)
Commissioning Committee

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