

Plan to Save & Restore America’s “Most Famous Yacht”
and to have her inspire future generations of sailors

12
US 55
Stars & Stripes



Draft 1 – March 25, 2021, not for public release.



The most famous yacht in America is “Stars & Stripes,” the 12 Meter sailed by Dennis Conner and his intrepid crew which won the America’s Cup back for the USA in Freemantle, Australia in 1987.

This event was, and remains, the apex of American yachting. It was a moment which inspired the nation and put sailing on the cover of Time magazine.

This yacht, the team, and their triumph are all symbols of the American spirit and American success.

This story, the people, and the yacht have a special and well-earned place in the American lexicon of heroes.

Now is the time to save and restore “Stars & Stripes” and to gather her story, burnish her legends and record her myths.

It is time to solidify Stars & Stripes’ position as “America’s Most Famous Yacht.”

This is how we do it.

Background

The most famous yacht in America, the 12 Meter “Stars & Stripes” has come for sale. She is the yacht which won the America’s Cup with Dennis Conner in 1987. This is a unique opportunity to acquire and restore America’s most famous boat.

Stars & Stripes had been earning her keep as a charter boat in St Maarten. The operators would invite cruise ship passengers to buy tickets and sail aboard to recreate the excitement of America’s Cup 12 Meter races.

Hurricane Irma devastated St Maarten in 2017. Stars & Stripes was sunk, dismantled and severely damaged. The owners hoped to restore her because they understood the magical star-quality of this yacht. However, the cruise ship industry was subsequently hit by COVID. After holding on to Stars & Stripes for several years, the operators have now decided to pass her to the next caretaker who is better equipped to bring her back to life.



Stage One – Acquisition

The acquisition cost is expected to be \$90K to buy, and \$30K to ship back to the US (\$120,000 total).

The NY Harbor Sailing Foundation will serve as the administrative entity. We are a 501(c)3 charity and we have the experience of owning and operating 12 Meters for 14 years. We will invite up to four corporate partners to join this project. Each partner would contribute \$40,000. This will secure the boat, get her back to the US, and cover any incidental costs.

Stage Two – Restoration

The restoration cost is estimated to cost \$1 million. There is extensive damage to the starboard side which would require welding in new ribs and plating. Estimates for repair are: \$400,000 for new plating; \$150,000 for new mast; \$75,000 for new engine; \$50,000 for new sails; \$250,000 for misc. As in any restoration, if there is not strong oversight, costs could run away. Likewise, costs could also be reduced by finding partners and manufactures who understand and appreciate the importance of this yacht and would be willing to assist to make the restoration as authentic as possible.

To raise the \$1 million, we will develop a fundraising committee of:

- A) The original Stars & Stripes crew and supporters who participated in the 1987 Cup
- B) All the top sailors in the US who support the restoration of “America’s Most Famous Yacht.”

Once the committee is in place, we will draft a letter to all sailors in the US inviting them to make a donation and help restore America’s Most Famous Yacht. We will raise the money through this national grass roots campaign. We will find a fisherman in Rhode Island who gives \$30, a farmer in Iowa who gives \$20 and a tech executive in CA who gives \$100. It is important that all-Americans who love sailing and who remember and were inspired by the victory of Stars & Stripes have an opportunity to participate in her restoration.

If this project captures the inspiration of the country (and we believe the time is right for this), then it is likely that a grassroots campaign could raise the needed funds.

This grassroots campaign will also be augmented by a program which solicits larger gifts from individuals as well as

companies and foundations. Stars & Stripes is the most important sailing yacht in our nation and this program is about historical preservation.

The national scope of the fundraising is part of the story. Stars & Stripes will be restored by the “People of the United States of America.”

The four corporate partners will not be expected to contribute funds beyond their initial \$40,000. Instead, their help will be requested to publicize the fundraising campaign through social media and advertisements, and to help the project in other ways based on their specific abilities.



Stage Three – A Floating Museum & Visiting Yacht Clubs Around the Country

Once the yacht is restored, a program will be created which enables Stars & Stripes to inspire the next generation of sailors. The plans would be discussed by a Stars & Stripes Committee set up by the Foundation and populated by the original crew and team members, corporate partners & major donors.

Here are some preliminary thoughts:

No racing. It is probably not a good idea to have Stars & Stripes participate in any normal competitions. The legacy of Stars & Stripes has already been written. Any additional racing could only tarnish the already stellar history. While there is 12 Meter racing still in our country, boats from the 1987 era



which participate have been modernized with new keel designs, new equipment and more. It is important that Stars & Stripes remains as authentic to the year 1987 as possible and safe (given certain advances in areas like running rigging).

No Sitting in a Museum. It is difficult to show off any sailboat in a museum because of its masts and sails. A museum also presents a static story which is not that engaging. And people need to travel to a museum. The beautiful if a yacht is that it can travel to the people.

Maybe a Floating Museum. Stars & Stripes will have a great amount of star power for the next 25 years or until another American yacht captures the imagination of the country, if ever. And as a restored yacht, she has the ability to go to the people. She will be a floating museum which engages the public and tells the story of America's greatest moment in sailing. This will be a traveling road show with the boat, video, ambassadors & a party.

Each summer, Stars & Stripes could do a tour by selecting 5 yacht clubs to visit. At each Club, there could be a few days of history, sailing, dinners, and adulation of the achievements of this great yacht and her crew. Over the course of 10 years, 50 clubs could be visited in person by Stars & Stripes. These tours could be sent to all sections of the country wherever there is sufficient water depth.

When not on tour, Stars & Stripes could generate the annual revenue needed to support herself by taking tourists sailing in New York Harbor (as she did in St Maarten).

Non-Profit Venture

This project will be done as a non-profit venture. The directors and officers of the NY Harbor Sailing Foundation all volunteer their time and do not draw any salary or compensation.

As much as possible, this restoration should be overseen and managed by a volunteer committee with a special emphasis of getting the original crew back involved to ensure authenticity.

Whenever possible, we should work with partners and companies who can provide materials, labor and support on a complimentary or cost basis. It does not matter how quickly Stars & Stripes is restored. What matters most is how she is restored and the stories of everyone who contributes, why they contributed and the overall can-do spirit of America which Stars & Stripes will represent.

Overall Concept

This concept is very much in its initial stages, but it may develop quickly. Feedback is needed and welcomed.

I have recognized the importance of the 1987 America's Cup for many years. There is a need to gather, preserve and interpret this history, and to keep telling the story of Stars & Stripes because it is inspirational to our nation.

Please send comments or suggestions to:

Michael Fortenbaugh
commodore@myc.org
917-816-3799