A few years ago, while I was attending the U.S. Coast Guard National Memorial Service, during the Coast Guard Festival here in Grand Haven, I had the pleasure to meet David Sparks. He was a member of the USCC Woodbiner reunion group who visited every year. During our initial meeting we found a common thread, the Coast Guard and Lighthouses. Over the years we would meet during Coast Guard Week, typically at the Retirees Dinner and Memorial Service, we also golfed together during his visits.

My inclusion of him in the article it two fold, first I would like to draw your attention to the attached photo, the Gold Life-Saving Medal he received in 1961 while on watch, as a member of the U.S. Coast Guard, maintaining our Grand Haven Entrance Light.

Second, I would like to invite you to tell your story, share any information you hold which would add to the interpretation of our iconic lighthouses as we move through the planning stages to our public opening. You can contact me at dgkarpin@gmail.com or send a note to the City of Grand Haven, Attention Grand Haven Lighthouse Conservancy.

~BMC David G. Karpin, Ret. United States Coast Guard

Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program Grant Research

In effort to better understand the expectations of the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and to improve our chances to receive grant funding from the Michigan Lighthouse Grant Assistance Program (MLGAP), the Grand Haven Lighthouse Conservancy members took a trip to the St. Joseph lighthouse last summer. That lighthouse was beautifully restored following a $2 million capital campaign. Renovations were completed last spring.

The Grand Haven group was met by St. Joseph City Manager John Hodgson, who provided a narrated tour of the recently rehabilitated lights and catwalk. Much of the discussion surrounded the type of partnerships they formed on behalf of the lights, the successful fundraising and grant efforts as well as the quality of work they received throughout the various aspects of the rehabilitation project.

The City of Grand Haven and the Lighthouse Conservancy will continue to research area lighthouses and work with the staff and volunteers of those organizations to garner the information needed to be as effective and efficient as possible in the restoration lighthouse project in Grand Haven.

~ Marci Cisneros, Vice President GHLC and Director GHACVB

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The South Pier of Grand Haven Harbor is undergoing much needed structural repairs to its deteriorated concrete surface. Construction to remove and replace the South Pier’s concrete cap is currently underway, marking the first major repairs to the iconic pier structure since the 1950s. The South Pier will have its interior stone fill replenished and receive a new concrete cap which will improve and reinforce its overall structural integrity, assuring its role in protecting federal navigation interests for many years to come.

In efforts to reduce risks to navigation interests, the US Army Corps of Engineers requested and received federal funds to design and make the necessary repairs to the crumbling concrete cap on the South Pier. The US Army Corps of Engineers awarded a construction contract to Vaisseau Commercial Contracting, LLC in August 2016. Vaisseau is a minority owned emerging small business headquartered in Kansas City, MO with a regional office located in Holland, MI. Vaisseau has subcontracted with The King Co., a marine contractor, also located in Holland, MI, to perform a majority of the marine based work.

The current project requires approximately 1,400 linear feet of structural concrete cap of both the upper and lower slabs to be demolished, replaced and repaired with new reinforced concrete. Prior to the placement of concrete, the interior of the structure will be examined to assess the condition of the structural steel members. Structural steel will be replaced and the cap will be reconstructed as necessary. It is estimated that 1,650 cubic yards of concrete will be used for the project. To allow for access and load restrictions on the structure, the majority of repairs will be completed from marine floating plant and crane barge.

Before construction could begin, coordination with the City of Grand Haven took place to have the historic catwalk structure temporarily removed so the repairs to the concrete cap could take place. The City of Grand Haven, which owns and maintains the catwalk, entered into a separate contract with The King Co. to have the catwalk disassembled and removed. This work was accomplished in August 2016. The catwalk will be refurbished and reinstalled after completion of the concrete resurfacing.

Construction on the project began in early October 2016. The King Co. mobilized its marine plant and commenced demolition of the cap. Selection demolition began on the upper slab landward of the inner lighthouse to determine the best means and methods for excavation. After several days of demolition and removal of approximately 100 feet of cap, work was halted for the season due to high waves. The current schedule indicates demolition will resume in the spring of 2017, as soon as weather allows. Concrete placement will take place through the summer and it is anticipated that completion of the project will occur by late summer/early fall 2017. The structure will remain closed to pedestrians through completion.

The US Army Corps of Engineers Detroit District is pleased to work in cooperation with the City of Grand Haven and community, is proud to provide a project that will benefit navigation on the Great Lakes and is hopeful this project will serve as an exemplary example of the Corps’ mission to provide quality, responsive engineering services to the nation.