



# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

USS Slater DE-766

PO Box 1926

Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943

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**November has come and gone, and aboard USS SLATER, that means we have closed our hatches and gangways to the public for the winter.** That also means no more ticket sales, no more quarterdeck donations, and no more overnights or events to bring in money. Those of you who have been long time supporters know where I am going with this... help us keep a volunteer warm this winter by donating to our Winter Fund Drive.

**As I watched the tour season wind down and look ahead to another long Albany winter, I ask myself how we are going to get through another winter without draining our cash reserves?** The answer, as it has always been, will be you, our dedicated supporters. As we look to get through the next four months with no visitor income, we again look to your Winter Fund donations to enable our volunteers and staff to keep improving USS SLATER while we are closed to the public.



***The arrival of the port-a-john is a sure sign that our tourist season has ended.***

**To say we had an extraordinarily successful 2023 is an understatement.** In our 26th season in Albany, we hosted the Farewell DESA Reunion, the Historic Naval Ships Association

Conference, built our new Visitors Center, and had a banner year for our education, collections, and maintenance crews. If you're following us on Facebook and reading SIGNALS each month, you know what a great year we've had; the ship has never looked better. With the exception of our two trips to the shipyard, 2023 has been our most productive year since USS SLATER arrived in Albany. When you count the accomplishments this past year, it is almost staggering.



***The acquisition of our Electronic Cypher machine was one of the great improvements of 2023.***

**The biggest news in our Collections department this month was the renewal of one of our most important loans, the Electronic Cypher Machine (ECM).** In the Fall of 2022, a visitor on tour learned we did not have an ECM on display, though we have the safe for it 15 years. He made some calls and the National Cryptologic Museum reached out, and offered to loan us a unit! We agreed to a one-year loan period, and last winter the Coding Room was fitted out with the ECM safe, some manuals, and the ECM.



***RPI Midshipmen getting a lesson in naval history.***

**John has been working to digitize our collection throughout the year. You can view his progress here: <https://usslater.pastperfectonline.com/>.** The goal is to make our collection of Destroyer Escort history and artifacts accessible to all, even if you can't get aboard the ship to view it for yourself.

**Our education team definitely had some time on their hands as walk-in tours slowed down with the colder weather, but we did have events and groups to keep us engaged! We**





*It was a great year for tours.*

welcomed 37 members from **Amsterdam High School's JROTC** on 1 November, 46 from **RPI's ROTC** on the 8<sup>th</sup>, and 42 students from **Granville** ventured aboard for a tour on the 16<sup>th</sup>. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, **Charles Starks** traveled to Ravena, to give a presentation at the local library about Destroyer Escorts. We also welcomed aboard 66 Cub and Boy Scouts this month, as they participated in our overnight program.



*Jo Ann celebrated her birthday with a Danish and a candle.*

**On 5 November, a WWII Pacific Theater class from Williams College visited the museum. John** gave them a two-hour tour, culminating in a hands-on experience with Pacific Theater related artifacts from our collections. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, John and **Tyler** gave a presentation at the **Albany Institute of History and Art**. Attended by around 25 visitors, they talked for about 90 minutes on the history of USS **MASON (DE-529)**, and the heroics of the ship's company. Each person left with a **SLATER** sticker and a copy of our quarterly newsletter.

**A new event for us this fall was courtesy of the Swedish Metal Band, Sabaton.** This band has a strong interest in history, and their songs refer to historic events. To celebrate their new album about WWI, they created an animated movie with their songs contributing greatly to the stories covered, and offered museums around the world the opportunity to show the movie and profit from the exposure. Shanna was not convinced that this topic or band would be popular enough to garner an audience, but she tried it anyway. And boy was she wrong. The first showing sold out in 4

days, so she added a second, and it sold out too. We sold tickets for a 4 PM tour (just about dark at this time of year in Albany) to all movie attendees and gave them a tour of SLATER. Then we led our visitors into our Briefing Room, where they were given coffee or soft drinks, popcorn, and shown the Sabaton Movie “The War to End All Wars”. It was



***Carl Camurati has been guiding visitors Thursdays and Fridays since 2017.***



***Tom Corigliano has been guiding visitors on Thursdays since 2021.***

a huge success, and we made new friends that we might not have attracted without the help of Sabaton.

**Our tour guides were amazing this year.** With any luck they’ll be back aboard in April to show off our ship for another year, as SLATER turns 80! On Wednesdays, **Alan Fox, Greg Healey, Greg Bischoff, Bob Wheelock, and Bob Matuszewski** filled our roster. Thursdays were manned by **Carl Camurati, Tom Corigliano, Dennis Murray, and Richard Wallace.** Fridays were held down by **Ken Kaskoun, Charles Starks, Jim Kuba,** and Carl pulling a second shift. Our busiest day, Saturdays, were worked by



Charles, **Paul Guarnieri**, **Fred Sirois**, and **Scott Clayton**. “What happens on Sundays, stays on Sundays,” so I don’t know what goes on, but apparently **Art Dott**, **Grant Hack**, and **Chris Soulia**, showed up every week and didn’t burn the place down! They were also helped by **Bill Goralski** and **Chuck Longshore** periodically. This team of volunteers was rounded out by our college interns, who pulled shifts on multiple days throughout each week. They were **Gio**, **Tyler**, **Andrew**, **Austin**, **Cassidy**, **Viktor**, **Henry**, **Caroline**, and **Dan**. Thank you all so much for your hard work, dedication, and helping us share the history of SLATER and all the other destroyer escorts.

**Each month, John has been co-hosting a podcast on our YouTube channel, in which he talks about museum ships.** The next episode is on 13 December at 2000, and we will be joined by Richie Kohler, who helped identify the wreck of U-869. U-869 was sunk off the coast of New Jersey in February 1945-either by its own torpedo or by two destroyer escorts (depending on who you ask). We’ll also be discussing the book [Shadow Divers](#). Kohler was the co-host of the TV series, *Deep Sea Detectives*.



***Volunteers from Alpha Phi Omega Fraternity helped Walt and Thomas cover the guns.***

We've added several new volunteers to our roster this year: tour guide **Bob Matuszewski**, quartermaster **Jim Leslie**, shipfitters **Dale Setford** and **Bill Kubizne**, machinist **Len Deroo**, painters **Ashley Morrison** and **Chandler Jones**, and radioman **Steve Page**.

A former tour guide, **Evan Sanders**, made his return to the ship this month. He brought along 15 of his 7<sup>th</sup> grade students from South Colonie School District, to help us out with a maintenance project and take a tour.

I kept them busy with stowing our whaleboat equipment for the winter.

The Monday following our last tour day, **Doug** and the crew completed draining all the fresh water off the ship. They blew RV antifreeze through the freshwater lines,

sewage line, and poured antifreeze into all the "P" traps, commodes, and urinals. **Walt Stuart**, **Thomas Scian**, and the deck gang stowed all the hedgehog projectiles, pulled out the gun covers, and with the help of **Alpha Phi Omega Fraternity** brothers, covered all the guns. All the water-based paint is being moved from the paint locker to the CPO quarters, so it won't freeze.

Work continued on the flying bridge and in the main battery gun director tub, as **Ron Prest** and **Thomas Scian** continued



*Sea Cadets from the Albany Division were present for*



*Work continues as we seal leaks on the flying bridge.*



**scaling, trying to punch holes in the deck.** This was done so Doug and the shipfitters can finally locate all the holes and get all the leaks welded up once and for all. As part of the process, they removed temporary covers on the base of the Main Battery (MK-52) Gun Director. These temporary covers have been in place since before the ship came to Albany, and removing them revealed a rat's nest of corrosion and wasted stuffing tubes under the gun director. Accessing the area for preservation is next to impossible. The shipfitters fabricated more permanent steel covers, then drilled, tapped, gasketed, and bolted them in place. On our next trip to the shipyard, we plan on lifting off the gun director to preserve the area underneath. A complete repainting and restoration of the flying bridge is on the agenda for 2024.



***Another annual event is moving the work float to the Dutch Apple dock, so it can be hoisted ashore for the winter.***

**Danny Statile completed the restoration of the aft three-inch gun ready service ammunition lockers.** The steel in the bottom of the of the lockers and the supports was completely renewed, and all the brass ring dogs were restored and replaced. He is now fabricating a new watertight door for the forward end of the interior main deck passageway.

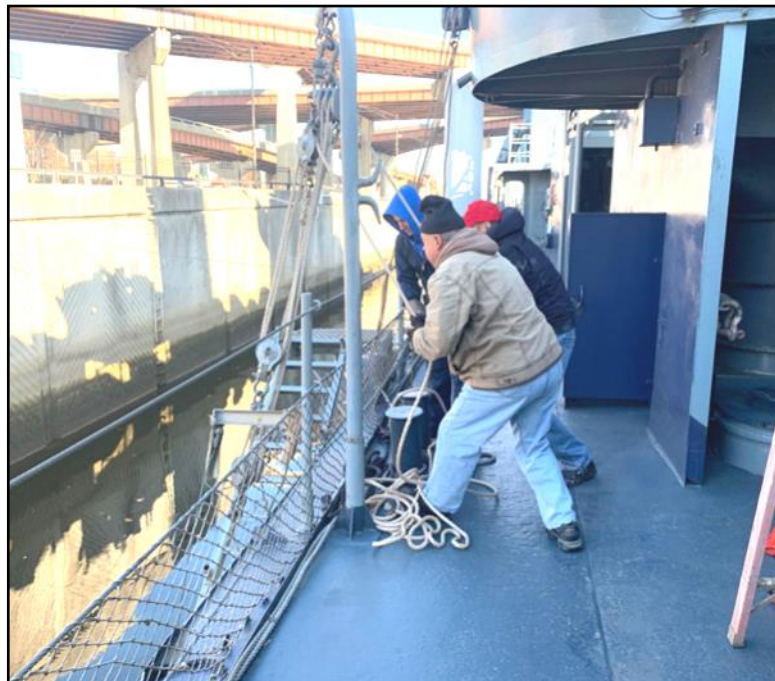


***The new to us air compressor passed it's test run following overhaul.***

**We received two donated air compressors from Rob Goldman at NYS Marine Highway.** He had purchased them at an auction, and externally they looked brand new. However, close inspection revealed that they apparently had been in a flood, because there was water damage to the internals. Not one to be deterred,

Doug and his team set up the forward engine room as a shop, and proceeded to overhaul the first compressor. The team took it completely apart and first cleaned the compressor crank case, which was loaded up with gunk. They pulled the oil pump, inspected the cylinder walls, removed the unloader tubing, visually inspected the unloaders, and flushed them out with Marvel Mystery Oil. They proceeded to clean the pistons ring grooves, the piston head, and the piston rod and pins. Then they honed the cylinders to remove corrosion, finished cleaning block and head pieces, cleaned the oil sump, and cleaned and lapped the valve seats. The team got the whole thing back together, mounted it, and it ran beautifully. They are in the process of piping it into the ship's LP air system and adding an oil separator. The whole process went a lot faster than I would have

anticipated.



***Hauling up the accommodation ladder for the winter is one of our seasonal tasks.***



***A winter project: addressing wasted metal in the wardroom.***

**Richard and Henry Bourgeois are happy to report that USS SLATER now has a fully functional working MK14 gunsight and air unit, our first complete set.** This air unit needed a new cylinder head and an “organ transplant,” to replace the original 10v transformer with a new one meant for a doorbell. The sight appears to track when swiveled on their workbench chair.

**This winter, we have several other maintenance projects planned.** We are still working on a replacement for the ship's service air compressor in the aft engine room. This may be a



significant expense. Work will continue on the flying bridge, to identify and repair leaks that have been allowing water to get inside the ship. We will continue work to replace wasted metal on the starboard side of the Wardroom and Stateroom 203. Restoration of aft steering, bilge, and tank preservation in the aft machinery spaces, and repairs to gun-32 will continue. The engineers will also move forward with their efforts to start a main engine for demonstration. None of these projects are possible without your support.

**To get back to where we started, our volunteers and staff will be working for you all winter long.** We hope that you can support our effort with a donation to “Help Keep a Volunteer Warm this Winter.” To set the example, I have always tried to be one of the first to make a \$100 donation, but this year I’m doubling it to \$200. I hope you can do the same. If you can give more, please do. If you can give less, we will make every dollar count. We couldn’t do it without you!

**See you next month,**  
Tim



***Stowing the hedgehog projectiles is another sure sign that winter is coming.***