



SLATER SIGNALS

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

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Don't you hate getting those fundraising letters where the writer beats around the bush for three or four pages before getting to the point? We're a no-nonsense organization. Let me get right to the point. Send us money, help us keep a volunteer warm this winter.

November. You long-time USS SLATER supporters know what that means. As I watch 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. We have three big expenses pending. First is the installation of our modular visitor center that we hope to have in place for the start of next season. Next, we are embarking on a program of fuel tank preservation, with the initial funding provided by our Tin Can Sailors Grant. And third, it's not too early to be looking toward our next dry docking in 2030, and making sure that we have funds available for that journey.



The time is coming when we'll have to dig our way to the work bench.

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 will 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.

To say we had an extraordinarily successful 2022 is an understatement. In our 25th season in Albany, our shipfitters completed rebuilding the weather deck battery locker, and restored and installed three watertight doors on the 02 level



Richard led one of the last tours of the season.

around the pilothouse. They also located and welded the last of the leaks on the flying bridge, restored all of our hedgehog projectiles, and rebuilt the fo’c’s’le hatch.



The deck gang has covered all the guns for the winter.

The deck gang wasn’t slouching off either. They chipped and repainted the decks around the three-inch gun mounts, the aft 40mm gun tub, and the boat deck. They painted all the depth charge projectors, roller loaders, and off-loaded, repainted, and reloaded the 300-pound MK 9 depth charges. **Gary Sheedy** and his team are making remarkable progress in aft steering, and, as with Gary’s reefer deck restoration, the level of detail will be extraordinary.

Down in the engineering spaces, the volunteers opened and cleaned the diesel

gravity day tank in B-4. They made repairs to the B-3 ship's service generator and ran the diesel for the first time since we returned from the shipyard in 2020. They also completed bilge scaling, cleaning, and painting in the aft engine room. This is our number one priority for the long-term preservation of the ship.

Thanks to our Save America's Treasures Grant, we did vital restoration work in the muffler room and on the first and second decks forward. And thanks to our Tin Can Sailors Grant, we were able to repaint all the areas that we restored, including the CPO Mess, forward berthing, officer's country, and the wardroom.



The engineers have winterized the diesels. With your support they will be working on bilge preservation throughout the winter.



The Adirondack Battalion of the Sea Cadets served as our Color Guard for Veteran's Day.

In a critical case of inter-ship cooperation, electricians Barry Witte and Gary Sheedy traveled to Buffalo following the sinking and recovery of the destroyer USS THE SULLIVANS (DD-537). These two shared their expertise by helping to clean and restore electrical systems aboard THE SULLIVANS. In return, three members of Buffalo's crew participated in our fall work week, to get a sense of how we manage and organize our volunteers.

Our education department finished our 25th Season in Albany in great success! Shanna planned a Veteran's Day ceremony that was the most well attended event we've ever had

on-site! Over 125 people huddled on our observation deck to attend our ceremony. Our Board Chairman, **BJ Costello** served as our emcee, with volunteer, **Dick Walker** leading us in prayer, and intern, **Gio** informing us of the history of the day. **Steve Stella** and his bugle performed Taps, volunteer **Ken Kaskoun** led the **Adirondack Battalion of Sea Cadets** as they served as our Color Guard. The Sea Cadets brought a whole new look and feel to the ceremony as they lined the gun tubs in their uniforms. Our favorite quartet, the **Pitch Hitters from Racing City Chorus** performed the National Anthem and the Armed Forces Medley. We had 20 **Cub Scouts from Pack 1701** in the audience who showed their appreciation to Veterans by distributing handmade cards and thanking them for their service. Both the Cub Scouts and the Sea Cadets stayed for a tour of the ship. It was nice to see so many people in uniform aboard SLATER again.

For the first time this month we hosted a technical deep dive, the Fighting Lights Demonstration on the evening of the 18th. This event was the brainchild of **Chief Art Dott**. He approached **Shanna** and **Barry Witte** to help plan the event and give the presentation respectively. Though there was some hesitation if anyone would be interested, we moved forward with the event. “We’ll give it a shot.” Shanna got to work on creating a poster, sending press releases, sharing on social media, and spreading the word to tour guides to share on their tours. Barry started creating a presentation showing the history of fighting lights, why so few people have heard of them, waiting for them to be declassified, researching and fabricating the



Our fighting lights demonstrations was a huge success! We packed the briefing room.

lights, and installing them. Art started digging up enough souvenirs that everyone could take home a challenge coin featuring SLATER on one side and the fighting lights on the other.

Surprising us all, we sold out of tickets. Our briefing room was packed. Barry's presentation turned out great and people were fascinated by the process it takes to restore the ship the correct way. We all stepped outside and lit the fighting lights for the first time for the public. They lit and pulsed different patterns and configurations. We even took requests from the audience. Art and a few other tour guides then started an abbreviated tour, where we focused on the Pilot House and the restored fighting lights panel. Then, they continued up to the flying bridge – where the public does not get to go during normal hours. The event was a

USS SLATER

FIGHTING LIGHTS

DEMONSTRATION

18 NOV

5:30 PM

ENTRY \$20

- Learn about the restoration of our fighting lights and see them in action.
- Tour the ship after dark.
- Access a rarely seen area of SLATER.
- Earn a special souvenir.

GET TICKETS AT
USSSLATER.ORG/FIGHTING-LIGHTS

Shanna's poster for the Fighting Lights Demonstration.



We hosted three overnights this month.

huge success, and we plan to host more Technical Deep Dives next year. Let us know what topics you think we should focus on next!

Our tour guides are second to none. We seldom hear a negative comment after someone has taken a tour of USS SLATER. This season we brought 13,286 people aboard, and our guides took care of each and every one of them. We've also hosted over 500 overnight campers this season! It's so great to be able to host these

memorable experiences for visitors of all ages with guides who are truly amazing at sharing the history of DEs.

This season we have continued to grow our podcast, “DE Classified.” The show has over 6,000 downloads, and we get requests every day for which ship people want to hear about next! We had a huge push to grow our social media presence this year. You all know that we post to our Facebook page every night. Shanna has also been keeping up with Instagram and Twitter and works hard to continue our outreach to area libraries, schools, legion posts, and senior centers.

At the beginning of this season, Shanna and John set the goal to expand the YouTube channel to 1,000 subscribers. We achieved this goal thanks to the consistent videos from John and volunteer **James Miles**. John has been producing a weekly video series tracing SLATER’s World War II service through her



Cold weather won't stop the chippers.



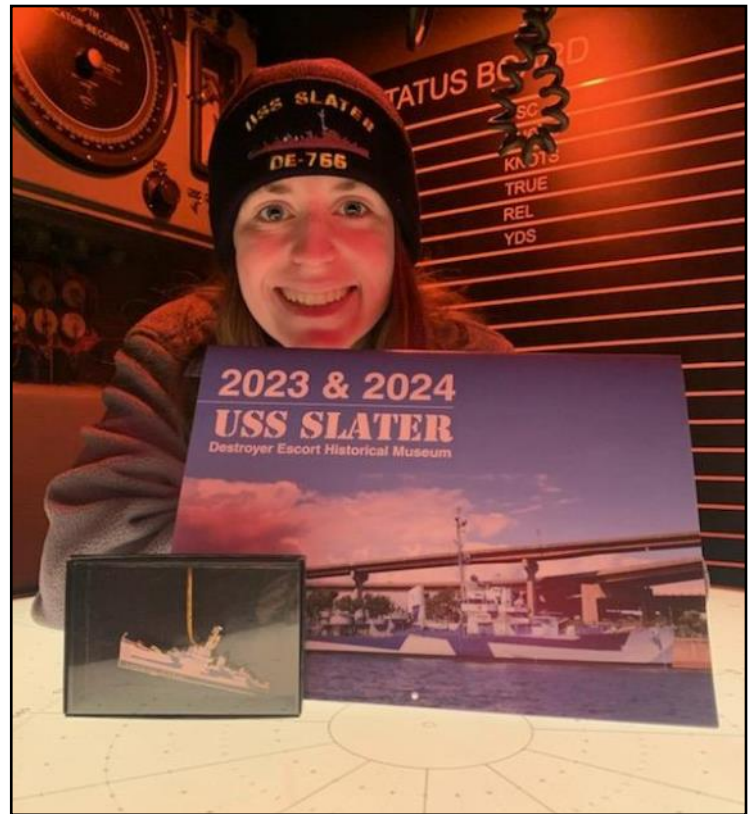
Walt and Super Dave and the rest of the shipfitters will continue to work all winter long.

Deck Log. James has been filming our maintenance volunteers at work on Mondays and keeping us up to date on the progress they are making. The video that went viral, “USS SLATER...Start Your Engine” was a credit to James and has over 140,000 views!

The Ship’s Store continues to be stocked with interesting and thoughtful merchandise. Shanna outdid herself with new products this year, with our special 25th Anniversary T-Shirts and Jackets, as well as plush hedgehogs (displayed as if they were the Hedgehog weapons aboard ship). With every dollar earned going back to the restoration and preservation of USS SLATER. We encourage you to support our Ship’s Store online this

winter. Shanna also has her hands full making preparations for the new Visitor's Center to be installed, planning the Historic Naval Ship's Association's Conference, continuing the educational programming that we depend on, and training new staff and volunteers in the spring of 2023.

In our curatorial department, 2022 opened with John Epp taking over the collections management. Ten thousand objects, photographs, and documents have been accessioned over the years. This year, John began a few ambitious projects. The first of these has been the digitization of the collection and making artifacts publicly accessible online. It will also create a "backup," of each item. The physical object is stored at the museum. John is also in the process of making available all the information the museum holds on a



Kara is showing off our 2023 & 2024 Calendar, Watch Cap, Ornament, and 25th Anniversary Jacket. You can support SLATER and get all of these items in our Ship's Store (CIC red lighting not included).



Danny and the shipfitters continue to work on the supply vent.

particular ship, as well as any War Diaries, Deck Logs, and Muster Rolls which mention their name. This is sent in a Google Drive folder that can be emailed to the family of a serviceman, to learn more about their family member's destroyer escort service. All this work will continue through the off season, when the museum loses most of its funding. John will continue his progress in caring for our artifacts and making them accessible to the public, both online and aboard the ship, through the winter.

In the unsung heroes department, we need to thank Lynn Wetterau for over a year of archival work, quietly done at home, copying past issues of DESA news. When his wife retired, **Bill Wetterau** generously suggested that she would have a lot of time on her hands, and that she might be available for a SLATER project, if we had something she could work on at home.

Be careful what you ask for. In boxes below the Collections Space there were five decades of newspapers from the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association (DESA). Contained in these newspapers are hundreds of first-person historical accounts of historic events and descriptions of routine life on Destroyer Escorts. These articles are an incredibly unique and important primary source documents for DE related research. To improve access to this information, Lynn reviewed each newspaper for historically significant articles or letters. Pertinent items were photographed to provide digital access to the information and organized



Lynn Wetterau has been busy saving the history within DESA's newsletters.



Cathy Wheat secured the wardroom for the winter.

by ship in page protectors to be filed in ship specific binders. Scans of each account were placed in the individual ships' electronic files. Articles were found for 400 individual destroyer escorts. The final phase of the project is to consolidate and reconfigure the existing binders to include the articles from DESA News. Lynn took on this challenge and we now can make the historical accounts from DESA newsletters available to researchers.

Another SLATER hero, started as a visitor to SLATER earlier this year. Charles Stein, while on tour, noted that USS SLATER was missing her decoding

machine. Charlie was connected with the **National Cryptologic Museum** in Maryland. After checking with us, Charlie made an inquiry with their Collections Manager, **Spencer Allenbaugh**, about the possibility of receive a Sigaba Cipher Machine on loan. Spencer responded immediately that such a loan was possible, and he would make a machine available. We immediately involved trustee **Greg Krawczyk**, who lives in Maryland. Greg made arrangements to pick up the machine and transport it to Albany, along with an assortment of tubes he had for the radio gang. The delivery was made on November 18th, the night of the Fighting Lights Demonstration. We are now one of the few historic ships to have an authentic ECM on display.



John is posing next to his late mother, Carolyn Chitester, holding an item from his father's WWII service aboard USS GRISWOLD.



Tim & Greg pictured with the cipher machine.

That led the start of the restoration of our ECM machine cabinet. We acquired the cabinet off the USS CLAMP back in 2006, and it has been sitting in the wardroom ever since. The acquisition of the ECM machine brought attention back to the cabinet. **Warren Brozio, Doug Tanner and Earl Herchenroder** spent a couple days figuring out how to get it open. Warren is planning on restoring the cabinet, installing the ECM, and ultimately placing it on display in the coding room.

On a less exciting note, sadly we have another volunteer loss to report. We learned that **John Chitester** passed away

last summer. John made an important contribution to us for many years, coming up from New Jersey a couple weeks before opening day, to help us get the ship cleaned for the visiting public. Affable and always cheerful, no job was beneath John's dignity. He supported a number of military veterans' organizations throughout his life, but USS SLATER was special to John. His father had served aboard USS GRISWOLD (DE-7) in the Pacific during World War II, and this was John's way of honoring his father's service. A bunk strap now honors John and his service to USS SLATER.

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. This year I have doubled my contribution and have given \$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



Make sure you order your 2023 & 2024 Calendar!

They are available on our website (usslater.org/ships-store) or give us a call (518-431-1943).