

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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Open Days: The big news is that we are now open to the public Sundays from 12-4 starting on April 19th. The tour is limited to the weatherdecks and tickets are \$4.00 for adults, \$2.00 for children with kids' six and under free. Initially, all tickets sold will be honored for one year following the date of purchase for a return visit. This "Bounce back" ticket will allow visitors to see the progress we are making aboard SLATER. On our first Sunday the people waited in line all afternoon to see the SLATER in the rain. The second Sunday saw us move almost 500 people through the ship in four hours, and the weather was lousy again. We can't wait to see what happens when the sun shines and it warms up. We owe a special debt to Gordon Lattey for his organizing parking and pier security every Sunday. Rumor has it he has run yellow caution tape all the way south to Ravena.

We need you on Sundays! We can't express enough thanks to all the volunteers who have come out of the woodwork to help us on Sundays. With ten guides stationed on the ship, ticket sellers, the souvenir table, parking and pier security, it takes twenty people to man the operation on open days. Our volunteer tour guide staff has been trained, but we can always use more volunteers. They are being lead by Nancy Buxton, who has a great deal of experience as a docent at Jefferson's home Monticello. Our volunteer guide crew is a fine mix of experienced old salts and novices who love the SLATER. If you enjoy working with people, and would like to train for our tour guide program, please contact us by calling guide coordinator Annette Beauchaine at 518-465-2856. The Tour Guide Training Manual is available for distribution. We are holding tour guide training classes. We can work you into our rotation weekly, bi-weekly or monthly as you are available. There are also slots available that don't require shipboard training such as security, in the parking lot and at the sales desk. We hope to be up and running several days a week in late May.

Shipboard Progress: The electrical gang has the LP air compressor back in operation, building on the work Jim Moore did in Manhattan. They have also restored lighting throughout the ship, gotten the welding machine back on line for the shipfitters. Our next big priorities are completion of the fire and flood alarm system and the emergency lighting system. Then we will go topside with weatherdeck lighting and install the original style W.W.II cargo lights. The Interior Communications gang finished installation of all the original W.W.II style RCA exterior IMC speakers. As of this writing they are all in place, and new cabling has been run to them. This is a combined effort between local volunteers and members of the Glens Fall naval reserve center. They are now working on the microphone stations. Hal Hatfield has donated his firm to repair, check out and overhaul the air search radar antenna. We have talked to Frank Keane about moving the ship back a couple hundred feet so his large crane can set the antenna in place prior to leaving the port while we are still pierside.

The Engineers are continuing work to activate the emergency diesel generator in the aft motor room. They filled the crankcase with fresh lube oil. Frank Lasch got us three deep draw 12 volt batteries donated from Contractor Sales Company, Inc. They are also working on the

firemain. We received permission to run an 1 1/2" firehose from the pier to the ship, and were are putting pressure on the firemain in sections and repairing leaks as we go. This is a slow process. We only have the hose hooked up when we're aboard. It's great to have water for cleaning and the coffee, and to be able to do a topside washdown. We can also proudly report that the test of the magazine sprinkling system was successful.

The Deck Force doesn't have to do it by hand anymore. After scaling with chipping hammers and scrapers for two months, they think they have died and gone to heaven to have compressed air and needle guns. They have completed the exteriors of all the portside 20mm, 40mm and director tubs, as well as the port spray shield. They are also working on scaling and painting 40mm gun 42 and 20mm mount 23.

The Volunteer Shipfitters and sailors from the Glens Fall Naval Reserve Center lead by Kent Chase and John Bennett shipfitters have been working replacing the expanded metal in the cage below gun 42 that was all rotted out. They are also working with volunteer Frank Bonesteel removing the torpedo deck that was added in the sixties. They added an inclined ladder on the 01 level aft to improve traffic flow during our tours.

The Sea Cadets have reported aboard in a big way. Their first drill weekend was the day before we opened, and they were a great help in getting the ship cleaned up for the big day. They swept, swabbed, and did the first topside washdown the SLATER has had since she came to Albany. They moved 120 mattresses from the warehouse and stowed them aboard the ship, and hefted two 12" signal lamps from the aft magazines to the bridge. They were aboard the next day to help handle the crowds. We couldn't have made it without them. Bravo Zulu.

A big lift came on Wednesday, April first when the Albany Water Department brought down a crane and crew to get the whaleboat off the ship. The boat was moved to the nearby Scarano Brother's boatyard where they are storing it under cover. They are experts in the building and repair of wooden boats, and we are working on a grant to enable them to restore the boat. While the Water Department crane was alongside, they also moved the generator to the 01 level to get it out of the traffic path, and lifted the radar consoles to the 02 level, the radio transmitters to the 01 level, and the sonar stack to the 03 level. The water commissioner Bob Cross and his folks have proved to be real friends of the project and have offered their services whenever we need a hand.

Accessions: Barry Witte, Ron Frankowsky and Scott Dessingue made a four day run to Portsmouth to obtain lifeline cable and turnbuckles, talkers' helmets, circuit breakers and other electrical spares from the old WM. C. LAWE (DD763) and old LST in the James River Reserve Fleet. Chris Nardi of the Battleship Massachusetts had the gear off loaded and drove the truck back north with it. It adds up to about a ton of very scarce gear. We now have enough lifeline to run phosphorus bronze along the whole 01 level.

Deaccessions: We had a few unintentional deaccessions. The ship was broken into on the night of Saturday, April 11. The major loss was the steering compass out of the pilothouse. We also lost a dummy three inch shell, a Greek officer's hat, a gas mask, small first aid kit, and a photograph. Chris Fedden's faithful kerosene heater was in the passageway near the open door, so we came close to losing that. The local media treated it like a major crime, and it was reported throughout the region. Nancy Buxton learned about it overhearing two ladies in a supermarket talking about it. The plus side is that retired supply corps commander Ron Gunther donated a replacement compass he had obtained off a wrecked coastal steamer in Panama. It's the same model as the one we lost. The donation made the front page of the Times Union. The

publicity a week before the opening was a great help, and Ron has signed on as a volunteer to boot. All bad things have a bright side, and the ship is locked up much tighter now.

Funding: We completed our Maritime Heritage Grant application for money to restore the second deck forward next winter. We will apply for a NYS Environmental Historic Preservation Grant to paint the hull. We still have the Business Incentive Grant pending with the county. We hope to use that money to paint the forward superstructure, install the alarm system and purchase additional lifeline fittings and snaking. Fleet Bank made a \$5,000 corporate grant to the project. Finally, with the open days we are averaging \$2,000 a week in earned income, so financially, we are staying afloat.

Lonax Painting completed work on the mast and it looks great thanks to Ray Windle's \$5,000 grant. That was a major step forward in improving the appearance of the SLATER..

The Snow Dock mooring is nearly complete. Our benefactors at the Albany Water department are installing water service at no charge. Local contractor John DeJulio is donating the equipment for the job. Hal Hatfield has lined us up with Kevin Haggerty of Flex Electric on the power installation. We met with Niagara Mohawk representatives to outline our power needs. That is well in hand. Albany department of General Services did a great job on the bollard installation. We are indebted to Andy Martello and Tom Kelly for their supervision of that project. Now all we need is the barge. We met Marty Davis on Staten Island and looked over two single hull tank barges at Eckloff Marine that would be suitable. He is working on the acquisition and lining up work on the barge and the tow from Staten Island. We can only assume that the process will take about six weeks, which means it will be June before we get to the Snow Dock. That's about all for now. Come down and see us Wednesdays, Saturdays or Sundays.