

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER'S Volunteers

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Vol. 1 no. 11 November, 1998

The *Slater* celebrated the First Anniversary of her arrival in Albany on October 26th. It's hard to believe a year has gone by and the enthusiasm of the crew continues as the restoration work goes on. Roger and Claire Oesterreich (DE-680) hosted a celebration party for the "old timers" who made it through the year! Trays of food and beverages were spread on the fantail, messhall and wardroom areas of the ship following a Sunday's tours. It was a beautiful fall evening and a good time was had by all. We are preparing for the long winter ahead; current temperatures have been struggling to reach fifty during the day and usually dipping a little below freezing at night. As of this writing, no snow or ice has arrived. Our hardy ticket and souvenir sellers are still manning the tables outside on the pier. Attendance wise the month has been pleasantly surprising. We've had a couple of very good weekends, so we are still making over half of the \$10,000. a month we need to operate. Your contributions to DEHF will make up the difference.

Veteran's Day was a big event on the *Slater* and here in Albany. It came as a shock to the Ship's Superintendent that the day was actually celebrated on the 11th, and not on a weekend. It came as a bigger shock when he realized that he would lose a perfectly good maintenance day to visitors and ceremony! It's really hard to hear the tour guides speaking over needle guns and pneumatic chippers; they don't go well together despite providing the authentic atmosphere of a ship restoration in progress! We let any Veterans aboard for free, and the weather was perfect. The Ship's Super- stopped whining when we counted the day's receipts.

As part of the Veteran's Day activities, Deputy Commissioner Winthrop Aldrich, of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites, presented us with our State and National Historic Register Certificate. He also spoke of the history of Destroyer Escorts, *Slaters* significance to Albany and paid tribute to DESA and DEHF for their efforts in acquiring *Slater*. Gordon Lattey had the beautiful bronze plaque made to commemorate our status on the Historic Register. Roy Gunther (DD-711) and Chris Fedden (DD-711) drilled and bolted it in place on the portside quarterdeck, and it was unveiled during the ceremony. The new plaque also serves as our builder's plaque. The ceremony was well attended by our visitors, volunteers, Dr. Joe Meany- NYS Historian, Mark Peckham and Dave Meyersburg of Parks & Recreation.

We also participated in the Albany Veterans Day Parade. Chief Clark Farnsworth (CV-32) put on his uniform and drove Ray Windle's (DE-640) *USS Slater* jeep in the parade with a procession of several other restored military vehicles. Following the parade, the *USS Slater* jeep will be placed in an exhibit at Crossgates Mall along with two WW II dioramas including one of the Destroyer Escort, *USS Pettit -253*, in an effort to increase local awareness of the *Slater* Project.

Back to Nuts and Bolts- Supply Officer, Roy Gunther organized another scrounging party to the troop transport *USNS General Walker* moored in the James River Reserve Fleet. Volunteers Bob Callender (DE-744, Al Urquhardt, Leo Charbonneau (DE-531), Larry Williams (DE-246), Gordon Lattey and Gordon's van made the trek down. Those old guys must have really hustled because they returned with four 25-man (400 lbs. each) balsa life rafts, a pile of mattresses, pillows, life jackets, electrical parts, messtrays and dishes. How they maneuvered those crafts out of the cargo hold and up a ladderwell without killing anyone is a story in itself. They're planning a return trip in March!

Al Urquhardt went down on behalf of the engineers to try to locate a replacement cylinder liner for the emergency diesel. He failed to locate any Cleveland 268-A parts, but found a pile of stuff for the main engines, 278's. With the knowledge that no parts were available, volunteer and Conrail engineer, Gus Negus (SS-347) donated a ring and gasket set and our angel of the *Slater*, Pat Perrella (husband, Frank (DE-326) donated the purchase of the cylinder liner. Both cooling pumps have been overhauled and the engineers are glad to see things going back together instead of coming apart.

On deck, we are trying to complete three projects- the interior of the gun, three-gun tub, the 01 level 40 mm guns, and repainting the 01 level deck aft of the stack. We just need a couple more warm sunny days. In Albany, it looks like you may as well give up on outside painting after Halloween. The painters keep complaining that the paint is too cold to spray or brush; use more thinner, and if that doesn't work, try a trowel. Anyway, it's about time to give up and start work on the Chief's quarters.

The Electrical crew has moved. The scuttlebutt is that they have set up shop in a compartment closer to a coffepot & heater, so keep a look out for the "fuse team" and stay on their good side.

Down in the Aft crews quarters, Dave Meyersburg continues to sort and catalog numerous contributions to the *Slaters artifacts*. Travis Bowman, who will specialize in arranging 3-D collections and Joanne McFadden, an archival assistant have joined him in his efforts. Some of the items donated are a WW II camera, Dress Blue uniforms, foul weather jackets, saltwater soap, a seabag, wool blanket and various books. A more complete report will follow in a future newsletter. All of these items will eventually adorn the restored areas of the ship.

Our winter plans have firmed up. We are planning to move to the Port of Albany on Tuesday, December 1. We will be on the Rensselaer side of the Hudson River and remain open for tours Friday to Sunday 11-4 PM, (weather permitting). Thursday will become a maintenance day. We plan to move our gift-shop operation into the aft crew's washroom. Tom Beeler (DD-712, DD-878) built shelving over the sinks and we are mounting a heater in there. That area will become our winter quarters and we'll keep enough heat in there to keep our drinking water, coffee and paint from freezing at night.

The *Slater* continues to welcome special visitors. The New York State American Legion Department Adjutant, Richard M. Pedro toured the ship and presented us with a check for \$1,000. on behalf of the Legion! Dick is an APD sailor who served on the Kleinsmith (APD-134) and really boosted our spirits with his interest and contribution that will help us get through the winter.

Bill Humienny (DE-531, BB-61) and John Mohr (Merchant Marine) spent a day with us on November 8th. They were the first guys to volunteer when the *Aetos 01/ USS Slater-DE766* arrived in NYC in August 1993, and spent four years working with the early restoration efforts. They had the dubious honors of hacking out the Greek heads along with the other associated accumulation of debris. Now, dese guys speak “Brooklyn” but they sure know every inch of the ship and we enjoyed their visit and the useful information they contributed. We also sincerely appreciate their generous contribution to the “coffee fund” and hope they can return soon and swap more stories with us!

News has reached us through the Volunteer grapevine of the untimely passing of Amelia Prager, wife of Ted Prager (DE-239) who co-ordinated the electrical projects in the restoration work done in NYC. Mrs. Prager spent many hours providing support during the “field days” and enthusiasm during those 4 years the ship was in NYC. The Albany Staff & Volunteer crew extend their sympathy to her family and friends from the *NYC Slater* volunteer group.

Notes from Nancy: The Guides and Pier Staff continue to be stalwart volunteers. Thanks to everyone who responded to those last minute Friday calls, cheerfully showing up for duty the next day. Saturdays have been difficult to staff, so if you can come on that day, let me know. Welcome to new guides Chris Soulia (this time with his name spelled correctly), *USS Slater* veteran Ed Elze, Doug Schultz (CG-60, PHM-3) and Greg Krawczyk (FFG-22) who is on shore duty at the Albany Reserve Center.

In just a few weeks we will go into our “winter mode”. In anticipation of the January chill, I am now conducting experiments to see how many layers of clothing a person can wear and still get up if they stumble and fall. So far I’ve completed the successful test of wearing seven layers.

A special message for Pat and Betty Cancilla (DE-441). We miss you a lot and we hope Betty feels well very soon.

The Slater volunteers are pleased to learn that their fearless leader has received the “Casper J. Knight, Jr. Award” from the Historic Naval Ships Association. This is the highest award given by the HNSA for recognition of his outstanding work with Historic Naval Ship preservation. Captain Casper J. Knight, Jr. was a founder of the HNSA in 1966. His important contribution was the preservation of Admiral George Dewey’s Manila Bay flagship, the Cruiser *Olympia*, which today is boarded by thousands of visitors in Philadelphia, PA.

We are researching proper Naval protocol procedures in regards to this award, Tim, and as soon as we locate a proper Bo’sn’s mate we promise to pipe you during those special duties of trash removal and camel cleanup. Seriously, we all congratulate you on this well deserved honor and feel proud to serve with you aboard *Slater*!

As this issue will probably overlap the holiday season, we extend the most sincere wishes to all at this special time of year. We appreciate all the efforts provided to the ship and remember to bring your guests along to visit in our “Winter Retreat”. Here are the directions to that berth.

If you are coming from the NYS Thruway, continue to use Exit 23. Instead of taking the Right turn towards the Port of Albany, Stay on I-787 and take the Bridge ramp toward “Rensselaer-Rt. 20”. As you cross over the Dunn Memorial Bridge Turn **RIGHT on Broadway**. Continue for about a mile and the entrance to the ship will be on the Right. You can't miss her, as she is the only ship painted battleship grey along the river. A visit to the ***USS Slater DE-766*** will be a special treat for your holiday guests and although we will be closed on 25 December, the 26th & 27th will be open days.