

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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I managed to grab two weeks off in August, which the crew still doubts that I deserve. I spent the first four days sick, but I didn't dare tell anyone down at the ship, because if anyone else caught my bug I didn't want to be pinpointed as the source of the plague. Then being a new homeowner, I spent the next four days painting rooms for my wife. This homeowner thing is taking some adjusting. Barry Witte was kind enough to present me with a lawnmower. The last time I mowed a lawn, gas was 36 cents a gallon, and the lawnmower didn't have a safety stop or warning labels, and spewed all the grass out the side. That finished, my wife and I got to head down to Highland Lake in the Catskills, where we rented a bungalow and had the use of a Sunfish sailboat. We sailed about four hours every day and returned to find the shipboard situation well in hand. I always think they get more done when I'm away than when I here. Since the last writing the major effort of the crew has been getting the SLATER looking as good as we can for the DESA convention coming the first week in September. As I write we have one week left until the convention, and we're finishing the final touches. We finished repainting the hull freeboard portside forward of the camels and only have the boottop left to do. The color matched up almost perfectly since it was a year ago that we rolled out the after two-thirds.



The chippers, Don Miller, Earl Herchenroder, Peter Jez and Chris Fedden have finished the entire 01 level deck aft of the superstructure. Erik Collin is in the process of getting the deck blue non-skid on there, as well as the last section of the fantail and the starboard side. As I type I can hear the noise as Earl and Don are chipping the three ventilators above the galley. Erik has put the word out that with all the decks freshly painted he doesn't want the shipfitters screwing them up with weld slag and grinding grit until after the DESA convention.

Erik Collin applies the finishing touches to the new 01 level paint job.

We have a large hole in bulkhead 99 on the starboard side between the aft motor room and the aft engine room. Bill Siebert stiffened the bulkhead with steel channel and then used the electric Sawzall to cut the passageway to minimize the sparks. The next step is the installation of the frame and watertight door. Unfortunately, our leading shipfitter Doug Tanner got sent to Guam for two week on a consulting job for ExxonMobil. The rest of the shipfitters, Clark Farnsworth, Tim Benner, Chuck Teal and Gene Jackey were afraid to jump on the job, figuring none of them could read Doug's mind, and he'd probably tear out what they did anyway. So we await his return.

Elsewhere in the aft motor room, all kinds of work is in progress to get ready for the DESA convention. I have a great relationship with the engineers. I don't ask what they are doing down there and they don't tell me what they're doing down there. But B-4 is looking really sharp. Karl Herchenroder's son Bruce and his business partner Joe Campbell volunteered to haul off and steam clean all the deck gratings and diamond plate from the motor room. They carried every piece ashore, and then once clean, Karl persuaded his "younger" brother Earl to needle gun them. They repainted the frames and vacuumed the bilges while the deck plates were out, got them all back aboard, painted them deck red and bolted them back in place. For those of you non-snipes who haven't experienced this evolution, this was a pretty arduous process done in some pretty hot weather. The LP air compressor, air tank and diesel day tank have all been chipped and look like new. The below decks place is really starting to look civilized. Up as high as you can get, on the flying bridge, Larry Williams, Ken Kaskoun, Bob Callender and Bill Coyle have been working on restoring and repainting the instrumentation on the forward bulkhead including the IMC, pitlog indicator, annunciator, alarms and a potful of junction boxes.



Karl Herchenroder chips over 60 years worth of paint off B4 deck plates after they were steam cleaned.



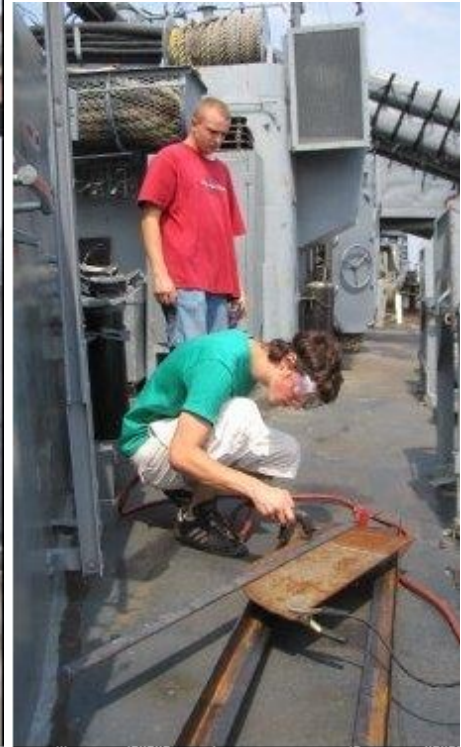
Repainted B4 deck plates, air tank and compressor.

Barry Witte took advantage of this situation of leaderless shipfitters and gathered the team around the roller loaders that his Colonie High School industrial technology students have been

pre-fabricating over the past two years. Working with Chris Dennis and the rest of the shipfitters, he kept them employed during Doug's absence and the new roller loaders are looking so good that now we are projecting down the road to what repairs we will have to do to the old ones to bring them up to standard. Gene and Clark also got out the depth charge projector bases that Doug had fabricated five years ago and began drilling the bolt holes through the 1" thick circular plates. We make progress slowly and in small increments.



Tim Benner and Barry Witte measuring pieces for one of the new depth charge racks.



Josh Tomafzewski cuts some plate as Chris Dennis watches.

We had another gun casualty. If you remember, the HUSE gang and our engineers had just finished doing a complete overhaul on the starboard side twin 40mm gun number 41 to replace a disintegrated bearing in the pointing mechanism. With that back together and working smoothly, the train mechanism failed. Turned out that a coupling under the loader's platform broke when the bolts sheared due to age and corrosion. Russ Ferrer tackled that one, and after John Whalen chipped the years of paint off the coupling, he got it apart and replaced the bolts, so that gun is back to fully operational for the kids on tours. Speaking of guns, Les Yarbrough has completed seven of the nine covers needed for the 20mm guns. He is out of canvas, so it's time to reorder. Les will be leaving us in October as his wife has taken a position with a college in Texas. As that's his home state, Les is glad to be going home where it's warm. We will miss our duty sailmaker badly, so if any of you gents or ladies out there are interested in taking Les's place on the sewing machine one day a month, give us a call. On the twenties, Rich Pavlovic is back with us and in the process of a complete tear down of 20mm gun 25, the forward 20mm on the starboard side adjacent to the stack. He has the splinter shields off and the left gun removed so he can restore and repaint all parts of the back and cradle. Those babies are heavier than they look.

Frank Peters has finished computer cataloging all the ordnance drawing books

stowed in the gunnery officer's safe. He then completed a reinventory of all the books in the shore side classroom. And Rocky is working away on the whaleboat down at Scarano's. They removed the decking over the bow and the coxswain's stand and found a good bit of dry-rot in both of these hard to reach places. Rocky has been working with Scarano's carpenter to replace the rotted members. As it seems with every restoration, the rot was a lot more extensive than we had anticipated, but we're taking our time in an effort to get the boat right. Back aboard ship Bosun Bill Haggart and Nelson Potter have been working to get the rigging on the whaleboat davits

in shape. They are also experimenting with different ways of rigging the davit guys to try and alleviate some of the problems we've encountered swinging the boat in and out. In the radioroom Joe Breyer continues to try and make contact with the outside world using the newly restored TCS through the black hole caused by the bridges that surround us. Gary Sheedy continues his eight-year restoration of the reefer deck, finishing up the last of the needle scaling around the reefer doors. Through it all, this effort is supported by Stan Murawski, back cooking lunch for the crew on Saturdays and Chief Bernie Smith who has taken on the Monday duty cook role.

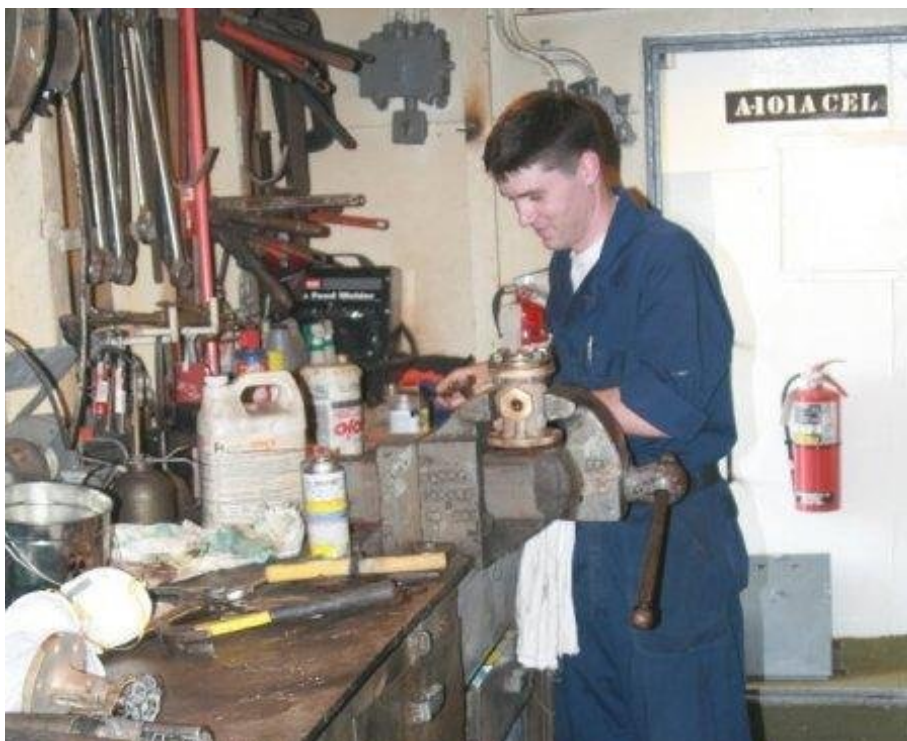


An original depth charge rack in the foreground with two partially complete racks in the background.

As we approach the 10th anniversary of our arrival in Albany it's important to remember that the restoration history of the SLATER didn't start in Albany. What has taken place here was a continuation of the work started by the late Lou Yacullo, Ted Praeger, and the rest of the Manhattan volunteers down at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum back in 1993.



To get the ship ready for the recommissioning ceremony twenty regular volunteers, mostly from the SOLDESA, Connecticut and Jersey DESA Chapters busted their butts removing all the garbage and dead rats, yes, dead rats from the galley and mess hall. They mostly worked two days a week, some on Wednesdays and Saturdays, some on Thursdays, others on Fridays. They brought and used their own tools and scrounged or bought their own supplies. They removed miles of non-original rubber cable that the Greek Navy had installed. They ran all the smoke detectors and fire alarms and had the



John "The Valve King" Whalen continues work on refurbishing valves. He is now working on valves from the messdeck.

system 90% complete before the ship moved to Albany. Their most massive undertaking was unloading and stowing two full shipping containers of ship parts, about twenty tons, of salvaged WWII era shipboard equipment that was donated by Captain Bob Rogers and shipped from New Mexico. We are still installing those parts today. The shipment included the two brand new 24-inch searchlights that they installed on the bridge after removing the old ones. They reactivated lighting throughout the ship. They removed many of the Greek modifications in the wardroom. They also cleaned and installed the operating lights and installed ductwork that was removed. They did the initial restoration of the galley, wardroom and pilothouse. We have a classic video of their guys removing the Greek commodes from the heads, as well as a video of Leo Baehler giving a tour in Manhattan, something he is still doing here in Albany. They replaced the missing bulkhead between the ship's office and captain's quarters. They began the restoration of the CPO mess and did a lot of chipping in there. They repaired the windlass and a pile of gear too long to list here. Their biggest accomplishment was the amount of paint chipping and painting they did topside. That arduous task put us years ahead. Their work enabled us to get the ship open for topside tours in April of 1998. When the SLATER arrived in Albany, it was much improved over the ship that arrived in Manhattan in 1993.

As long as I'm discussing those folks who don't get the credit they deserve, I want to take a minute to thank our tour guides. Most of these newsletters focus on the restoration of the ship with an occasional brief mention of what our tour guides have been up to. Some of our readers probably don't realize how many tour guides we have aboard the SLATER and how hard they work. Our tour guides aboard the SLATER this year are: **Leo Baehler, Les Beauchaine, Bob Bull, Joe Burke, Mike Collins, Paul Czesak, Bob Dawson, Robert DeRanieri, Bob Donlon, Russ Ferrer, Alan Fox, Ernest Friedon, Dan Goldstein, Bill Goralski, Grant Hack, Glenn Harrison, Floyd Hunt, Ken Kaskoun, Jim Kuba, Kelly Lassonde, Gordon Lattey, Mike Long, Steve Long, Chuck Lossi, Jack Madden, Chuck Marshall, Tom McLaughlin, Mike Milian, Luke Peleggi, David Pitlyk, Nelson Potter, Bill Scharoun, Fred Sirois, Greg Sleasman, Chris Soulia, Chuck Teal, Al Van Derzee, Dick Walker, John Whalen and Larry Williams.** These men and women are the public face of the SLATER. Their efforts change a bunch of painted steel into a living piece of history.

We had a baby. Well, actually, we didn't have a baby. Those of you who have been around long enough to remember legendary tour guide Kira Zaikowski; it is she who had the baby.

Considering that she had wedding pictures taken on the SLATER, I think we can all feel like proud relatives. James Walter arrived on July 12 and weighed a little over 7lbs. Mother, father and James are doing well and adjusting to their new lives! They are already planning on bringing him to Albany for his first SLATER tour. Kira writes that she's still proud of her association with the SLATER and our volunteers, as her Dad was a former navy aerographer's mate, so it's all in the family. Then on the other end of the spectrum, Doug Tanner became a grandfather while he was in Guam. He doesn't seem old enough to be a granddad.

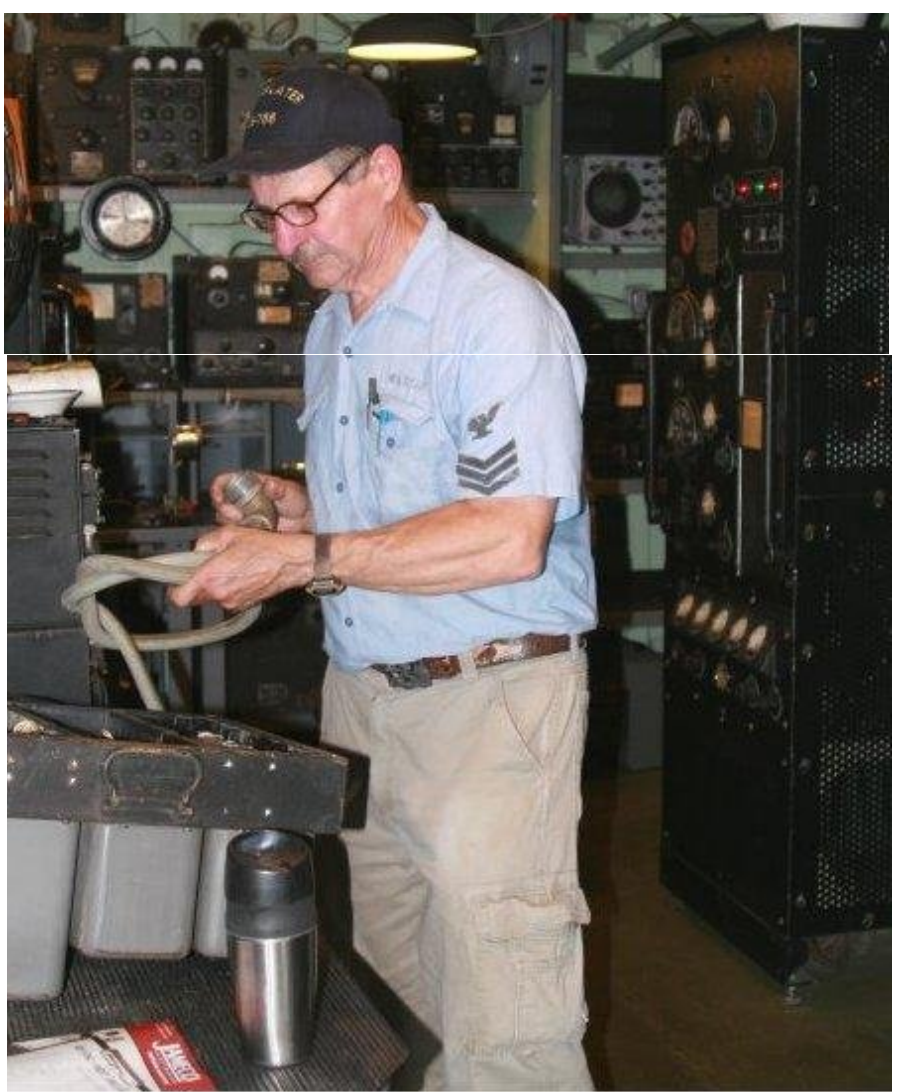
Finally, maybe it's the upcoming DESA convention that is making me nostalgic, but I recently read an obscure

passage in an obscure book that really moved me. This is also in the "You always want what you know you can't have" department. Those of you who have been following my exploits long enough know that SLATER is my third restoration project, following five years on the JOSEPH P. KENNEDY JR. DD850 in Fall River and fifteen years restoring the USS KIDD DD661 in Baton Rouge. Rumor is those two were practice so I could get this one right. Those who really know me know that I would have traded all three of them for the chance to restore a fourpiper. If I lost you, just skip to "See you next month." If you're still following me, you're either really old, or a devoted destroyer man. I just finished reading a history of the GEORGE E. BADGER DD-196/APD-33 by James H. Patric. There was one little quote in there near the end that really moved me. It was by one of Patric's shipmates, a watertender named Bob Malloy. In it Bob wrote, as they tied up at Terminal Island at the end of the war.

"Alongside the dock, I shut down my boilers for the last time. As the big Sturdevent blowers wound down I sat on a tool chest, lit up a smoke and just thought. The past three years had been quite an event. I looked up at some of the shattered lagging on the pipes, blown off by being too close to our own depth charges. More lights came on; the dock has hooked us up, steam from the dock. My work here was done. I sat there for a while and stared at the four fuel pumps we had worked on so often. The boilers were cooled off by then. My fireroom was dead. I stepped through the airlock and up the ladder. What the h-ll was the matter with me? I was feeling bad!"

I know, somewhere in there, lies the essence of what continues to draw volunteers back to the SLATER.

See you next month



Joe Breyer finishes up working on the summer long thorn in his side - a radio transmitter power supply.