

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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January is a strange month. Some days the ship is dead, with **Erik Collin**, **Kelly Lassonde** and I the only ones aboard. Other days it bustles with activity as the crew works to complete a pretty intensive schedule before spring. The weather vacillates like the crew attendance. We went from typical Albany freezing cold misery to the January thaw in which we saw sixty degrees and sunshine. Through it all the crew has continued to plug away at the ship that is never finished. Walking aboard the ship on a typical workday, you come down the gangway and walk forward on the starboard side to the machine shop amidships. Stay on the cocoa mat and hang on to the lifelines because the decks can be icy. First stop is the logroom to sign the volunteer log, and then go forward into the machine shop. The machine shop is always crowded, and not necessarily because of all the work going on. It's generally crowded because it is home to the biggest electric heater on the ship. The engineers in particular seem to spend a lot of time in there. Down in the aft motor room, **Barry Witte** and new volunteer **George Gollas** have joined **Gus Negus**, **Karl Herchenroder** and **Gary Lubrano** as they are completing restoration of the aft maneuvering board. This is the project that was started by **Guy Huse** back during the USS HUSE field day week, and is now nearing completion. The board looks like it just came out of the factory. They have also been working on restoration of the degaussing panel, the log desk and various IC indicator panels around B-4.



Eric Rivet and Kelly Lassonde are sorting flag bag flags looking for the ones in the best shape.

Up the passageway from the machine shop and the galley is the old armory, now the Curatorial Office. Inside the armory you will find a female of the species, our curatorial intern, **Kelly Lassonde**. Kelly has the unenviable assignment of having to take over the collections management duties with the "retirement" of **Pat Perrella**. Pat left Kelly and all future curators a detailed set of instructions on how to manage and care for the collection. Kelly is immersed in reading these instructions, accessioning the new artifacts that have come in, writing the thank you letters and in general feeling her way into the new job.

Up a deck from Kelly, in the code room, Erik Collin has been toiling away recording your Winter Fund donations, preparing deposits and printing out the "Thank you" letters for me to sign. And there have been stacks of "Thank you" letters to sign. Erik has the ability to post donations and accurately generate thank you letters and envelopes faster than I can sign and fold them. I believe he has me on closed circuit TV, because every time I get near the bottom of the stack, he brings me a new stack of letters to sign. The bottom line is that your generosity has been overwhelming. As of January 20th, 1,000 of you have contributed \$70,000 to get us through another Albany winter, with more coming in every day. We are already ahead of the amount you donated in 2007 and it's only January.

On those rare occasions when Erik gets caught up, he climbs the ladder to the 02 level where he and Paul Guarnieri have been busy in CIC and the chartroom. After Tom Moore completed the addition to the chart table with the well for the chronometers, Erik fabricated the padding and felt lining so the three chronometers could be properly installed according to a photograph right out of the Quartermaster 3 & 2 Rate Training Manual. There is a major discussion going on about the location of the DAS Loran Receiver. This wonderful piece of antique electronic gear, the first generation of LORAN receivers in the Navy, which was removed from the USS NEMASKET AOG-10 in the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet and sent to us several years ago by our San Francisco benefactor **Rich Pekelney**. NEMASKET was scrapped, but her LORAN survives. It arrived as removed, covered with NEMASKET pigeon dung. **Larry Williams** lovingly restored the set cosmetically, and **Clark Farnsworth** built a shelf and mounted it in the chartroom, the logical location based on all the other destroyers I have seen. However, we now have photographic evidence that on SLATER the unit was located on the port bulkhead in CIC. However, it doesn't fit there now, because the PPI for the SA radar occupies that space. If you'd like to weigh in on the debate as to where the LORAN receiver was on your ship, email us at info@usslater.org. Photos are always appreciated! Erik and Paul have also been working in CIC. Erik has nearly completed the external restoration of the SA radar and it looks factory fresh. Paul is working on the restoration of the SA radar transmitter; carefully sanding and painting the unit to it will be ready for display in the spring

Forward and down a deck in the ordnance workshop aft of gun two, John Whalen works in solitude on the train gear drive on gun one. To make a long story longer, a couple years ago the train gear bearings disintegrated on gun one. We moved the gearbox from gun one, which had previously been moved from gun three, and that solved the problem of having one gun operational that the public can access. Then, thanks to a generous donation of machine shop time by **Jack Bertsch, John Hake** and **Thomas Pelczynski**, we repaired the train gear drive on gun two, the forward mount on the 01 level that no one gets to play on. Of course, at the end of this season, the old gun two gears that are now on gun one failed.



John Whalen carefully disassembles the #1 gun training mechanism to reach faulty bearings.

MM2 Whalen took it upon himself to remove the gear box from gun one and hoist it up to the 02 level workshop, where he is spending the winter delving into the mysteries of WWII-era train drives and rebuilding the unit. Gus, Karl and Russ, previous victims of this duty, all send their sympathy to John. And you know what they say about sympathy in the Navy. We say the same thing in the SLATER navy. For those of you who don't know John, he is an active duty Navy Machinist Mate Third Class who just finished Nuclear Power training at Ballston Spa. Our good fortune is that instead of being sent to sea, John has been extended and is going to instructor school and will remain with us for another two years. I can't tell you how thrilled we are about that.

Three decks below John is the messdeck, still a special place. For the early birds on Saturday mornings, **Doug Tanner** always whips up bacon and eggs, but there's one catch. You have to eat the grits. We don't know where a hardcore Yankee developed a fetish for grits, but we believe he was subject to too many rebel cooks in the Coast Guard. We are learning to enjoy our grits, and in another couple of months we may be even asking for seconds. For lunch, **Stan Murawski** can be counted on to provide for the crew. Stan has developed into quite the gourmet cook. This last Saturday he baked a ham with homemade squash and sweet potatoes. That old "R" Boat Quartermaster **John Kolinchick** brought in a box load of rolls, pies, and pastries from the bakery.

Four decks directly down from John is the reefer deck. Yes, you longtime readers know about the reefer deck. That's where electrician **Gary Sheedy** has spent the last ten years "working." Most of the rest of the crew wonders what could be taking so long to restore one of the smaller spaces on the SLATER, but Gary is a perfectionist. And perfection can't be rushed. Gary also works upwards of eighty hours a week as a commercial refrigeration technician, so it's kind of amazing that he spends whatever time he has off on the SLATER's reefer deck. Additional comments on how "amazing" that is can be obtained by talking to Gary's wife. At any rate, we now smell "Bondo" coming from the reefer deck and hear the sound of bulkheads being sanded. It could be that the end is in sight. But the fact that the refrigeration compressors and motors have yet to go back on their foundations indicates that it may still be a long road to perfection.



Jim Gelston won the battle for the right to wind the clocks... this week.

Moving forward, the next major work area is the forward crew's head But to get to the crew's head, you have to get past the Chief's quarters and the coffee pot. Not many volunteers can do that. This is where you can usually find most of the crew. There's **Bob Callendar** keeping the volunteer logbook up to date and tallying up the hours with **Bill Coyle**. You'll find **Don Shattuck** and **Jim Gelston** arguing about whose turn it is to wind the clocks. The winner gets to wind the clocks. The loser has another cup of coffee. Paul Czesak can usually be found down there with his laptop working up the insurance proposal for rebidding. The CPO mess is also the scene of one of the bitterest disappointments the crew has faced this year. Each year, in addition to all the Christmas cards we receive, Santa

brings one eagerly anticipated gift to the crew. That is the Taschen Pin Up calendar. If you are not familiar with the Taschen Pin Up calendar, it is a tasteful reproduction of the girly pin up art that decorated ships back in the forties. A politically incorrect throwback to another time. But isn't that what we're all about? I mean, how can we appreciate how far we've progressed if we don't have a benchmark to know where we were? As historic preservationists, we're happy to serve as that benchmark. But back to the source of the crew's disappointment. When the 2008 Taschen Pin Up calendar was unwrapped and hung it was quickly observed by some of the more astute members of the crew that the "artwork" was the same as last year's calendar. So much for looking at new "faces." Some how we will carry on.



Gene Jackey grinds off the remains of a tripled bulkhead.



At the other end of the compartment Earl Herchenroder grinds a bulkhead.

Moving forward we finally enter the forward crew's head. The first step's a killer as Doug cut out the hatch going down to the storeroom to rebuild the frame and replace the deck. Mondays, the chippers rule here as **Don Miller, Chris Fedden, Earl Herchenroder, Peter Jez and Gene Jackey** chip paint and grind away, prepping the space for welding and painting. Saturday the shipfitters rule as **Tanner, Benner and Chuck Teal** cut away wasted metal and fit new steel with **Nelson Potter** as the fire watch. The entire lower half of the portside passageway bulkhead is being cut out as it's too wasted to save. It looks like Swiss cheese.



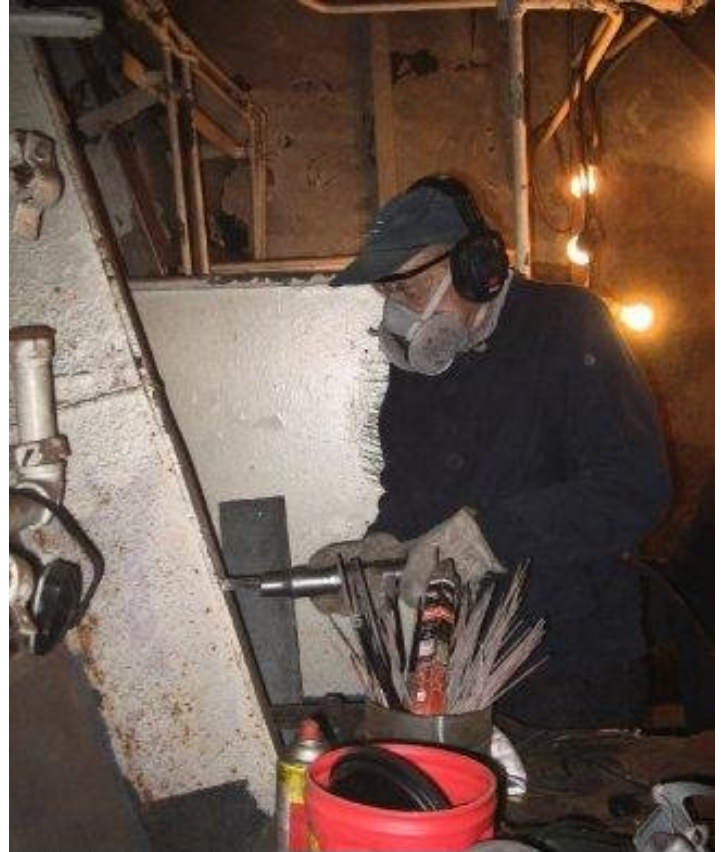
Doug Tanner has cut so much wasted metal from the forward head that the bow rose 3 feet in the water.

Sometimes, Doug Tanner worries me. I write about Doug a lot because he does a lot. Sometimes I think he does more than me, but we won't get into that. Doug is a former Coast Guard Damage Control Man who served on the 311 USCGC GRESHAM, a Merchant Mariner who shipped with the Coast and Geodetic Survey, a structural steel consultant and Level Three Welding Inspector. Doug gets paid to make inspections, attend meetings, give opinions, and write reports. People don't always like Doug's opinions.

Usually they bring in several more "Educated" consultants to review Doug's opinions. And then they find out Doug was right to begin with, and his opinion was a lot cheaper. On SLATER, Doug is always thinking about the next project and how to make the SLATER better. Like the forward crew's head. There was a lot of wasted metal in the forward crew's head. You've all heard our lectures on "Doubblers"--slapping a piece of metal on top of a wasted piece instead of taking the time to cut out the rotted metal and fit a new piece in. Doug hates doublers. It's like operating on cancer, but leaving the cancer. It doesn't go away. There was so much rot in some areas of the forward head, that it was the first time we had ever encountered "Triplers," or three overlays of old metal, and Doug even found a "Quadrupler".

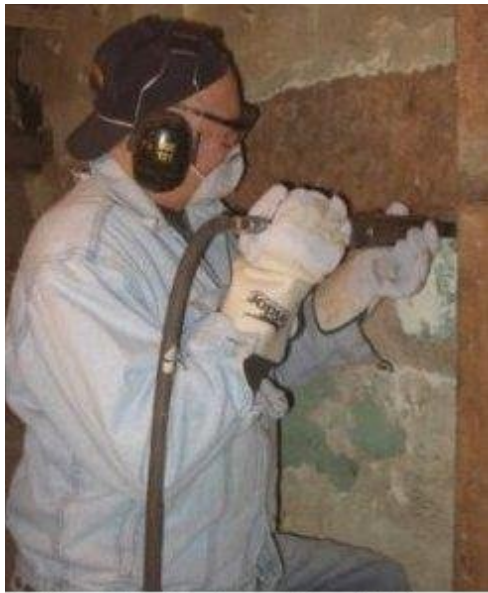


We managed to convince chipper Chris Fedden into doing some grinding.



"Rocky" Rockwood is done working on the whaleboat so he has volunteered to chip.

Doug is happier doing work than writing about it. Doug's opinion in the forward crew's head was that we needed to cut out a lot of wasted metal. A lot of metal. Doug went at it with his torch and this is where he worries me. Once he gets going with that acetylene torch and molten metal is flying everywhere, Doug gets very happy. I almost believe that this guy would be just as happy scrapping the SLATER as restoring her. I could really see him down in Brownsville scrapping ships with his acetylene torch, and being quite happy doing it. And the pay would be better. Fortunately, thanks to family ties, wife, kids, and grandkids, scrapping ships in Brownsville is not in his immediate future, but saving the SLATER is.



In the Chief's head Don Miller works on the forward bulkhead.



Barry Witte and George Gollas are working on replacing a switchbox in the forward passageway. (When the engineers give them leave from B4.)

Doug turned 65 this January 2nd. The only one of his shipmates who remembered was his buddy **Tim Benner**. Not to be outdone, **Clark Farnsworth** turned 86 a few days later. Referencing last month's SIGNALS, that's two more birthdays I didn't remember. Tanner is finally showing a little respect for Clark's age, trying as much as he can to give him bench work. But Doug says if he doesn't tow the line, it will be back to bilge work on his stomach and overhead welding. But for now, Clark spends his days in the machine shop working on the hatch Doug cut out of the forward passageway. They saved the hatch and dogs, but are fabricating a new frame and deck section. Doug is also installing a brand new door and frame on the head. This is a door that Barry Witte brought back from a salvage run to the USS PUGET SOUND AD-38 in Philadelphia. My reaction was the usual, "Where are we going to stow this damned thing, and it will probably lay in the hold forever. Needless to say, Doug found a use for it and wishes Barry had brought back two.

It's probably time for me to make an annual mailing list appeal. If you are reading SLATER SIGNALS on line, and getting a copy in the mail, please let us know if we can pull your name from the snail mail list. The postal mailing list has grown by about 200 names this past year, and if we can cull that back a little, we can save a lot in postage. Don't worry. We won't pull your name from the Winter Fund solicitation list. Nobody gets off the hook that easy. Just drop me an email at tim@ussslater.org if we can remove your name from the postal list. It is probably also time for me to mention **Les and Annette Beauchaine, Al Van Derzee and Mike Collins** for the hours they spent punching out dogtags at Crossgates Mall over the Holidays. I shouldn't overlook them since that's the earned income we have in the winter.



Finally, in a successful attempt to avoid interference by the paparazzi, our business manager Rosehn Gipe and ten year SLATER volunteer Cdr. Barry Witte were married in a recent private ceremony. I don't know how many weddings SLATER has played a role in during her service in the US and Greek Navies, but I assure you the ship played a major role in this one. We wish them many years of health and happiness together.

See you next month.