



# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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Vol. 11 No. 11, November 2008

**The last month of the season, the month that we start to button up and get things ready for the trip back over to Rensselaer.** We always plan our season to stay open through Thanksgiving weekend, a month longer than most other outdoor riverfront attractions. The reason is a gamble. All kinds of out of town relatives come in for the holiday, and if the weather is good, what else is there to do in Albany after you've stuffed yourself with turkey except go see the SLATER? And if the weather is bad, what else is there to do after you've shoveled all that snow except go see the SLATER?



**Clark Farnsworth, Art Dott and Paul Czesak hold up the Capital District Chief Petty Officers's award plaque showing Lawrence "Rocky" Rockwood as the latest honoree.**

**We'll see how it goes, but this year it looks like the gods are conspiring against us.** We've had overnight encampments all month, with the last two being on the weekend of November 22<sup>nd</sup>. Now, our fresh water system isn't set up for arctic conditions, so normally we like to drain down the system by November 15<sup>th</sup>, but this year because of the Scouts, we have to keep the water on a week later than normal. And, of course, because of these extraordinary circumstances, the weatherman cooperated by giving us two of the coldest November weeks I've seen since I arrived in Albany. To compensate we had to keep the heat set a lot higher than usual, keep a faucet cracked

so the water would run and keep the hose from freezing. On Monday the 24<sup>th</sup>, our long missing leading Damage Controlman **Doug Tanner** was back aboard to drain down the fresh water system for the season. We got through the month without any waterline breaks. Doug's work was slowed a bit by the efforts of **Chief Smith** and **Ernie Friedow**. They prepared a pre-Thanksgiving dinner for the Monday crew that included all the trimmings, turkey, stuffing, homemade mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry, salad, homemade apple pie and chocolate cake. Those galley guys really went all out for us, and it really makes the ship feel like home. I hate to say it, but the real thing at home is going to be anticlimactic now.

**As soon as they had the pots and pans cleaned up, Doug moved his team into the galley and they started pulling down the water.** Assisted by **Rich Gallagher** and **Dave "He's everywhere" Mardon**,

it took them until about 1400 to get everything drained down, blown out with compressed air and winterized with potable antifreeze. It's good to have Doug back from Maine, but now some outfit is trying to get him to go to Japan! If you're looking for a career, apparently structural steel tank inspectors are in high demand. Hopefully all these seasonal aspects of operating the SLATER will be solved when we obtain a permanent mooring on the Albany side of the river. Then we will be able to justify the investment in an insulated year-round water and sewer connection so we can run our programs twelve months a year. To that end, we have received a \$25,000 advance on the \$300,000 grant to build the permanent mooring dolphins. We have engaged the engineering firm that the Port of Albany uses for their pier work to do the initial design so we can begin the permitting process for the project.



**RPI Midshipmen help collections manager Katie Kuhl clean out the depth charge magazine.**



**RPI Volunteers tearing down the bathythermograph winch for restoration.**

**Another one of the issues we deal with this time of year is getting the whaleboat aboard.** Since it's been down at Scarano's Boatyard for the past two years undergoing a lengthy restoration, it's been a while since we had to deal with it. By dealing with it, I mean dealing with the two radial davits and hoisting the boat aboard. Handling a whaleboat with radial davits is getting to be a lost art, and we don't do it enough to get good at it. However, this year we had a new secret weapon in the form of **"Boats" Haggart.** Now "Boats" spent most of his Navy time on tugs, a jeep carrier and an ASR, the old USS KITTIWAKE. No radial davits on any of them. But he spent months studying the davits and trying to figure out the problems we would encounter when it came time to raise the boat and swing her in.

**At this point one of the great sources of naval information once again came to our aid.** I asked our old friend **Ed Zajkowski** to check into his archives and see what he had on destroyer escort whaleboat handling. It took him about a week, but he came up with the original whaleboat handling blueprints for a CANNON class destroyer as built. He delivered a copy of the plan to us about a week later. We noticed some differences in the way our davits were rigged and the way it showed on the plans, particularly with regard to the davit guys. When we went back and rigged things according to the plan we learned that the alterations were born of experience and actually made swinging the davits easier than the original installation. "Boats" was so eager to try out the rig that he had the snatch blocks rigged a month before the actual event.





**Barry Witte and Chuck Teal ready to haul away on the whaleboat.**

**Normally we like to wait until there's a foot of snow on the ground and the lines are coated in ice to bring the boat aboard, but this year we decided to break with tradition and hauled it aboard on the last Saturday in October.** That day we only had to deal with moderate drizzle. The crew mustered for a leisurely 0900 start, with "Boats" supervising the operation. The boat falls were then fair led up to the capstan, just the way the plan showed. The crew was standing by, split between handling the lines on the capstan forward and the davits amidships. It didn't take long for them to have both davits swung out and the falls lowered to the river.

**We waited for the engineers to show up so we'd have someone to run the whaleboat diesel without screwing it up, but they were so tardy, we decided to take matters into our own hands.** We took a poll of the group, and decided that **Tim Benner's** owning a lawn mower and snow blower repair shop qualified him as "Boat engineer." Between the two of us, we managed to hold the glow plug down long enough and spray enough ether into it that we got it started before we killed the battery. I had the honor of being Coxswain for the last run of the season, another on my list of outlaw accomplishments since I don't hold a NYS Boat operators license because they weren't required the last time I ran a boat. While they readied the falls, we took a leisurely cruise up to the pump station and back so Benner would stop bitching that he never got a boat ride this season. We brought her back down river past SLATER, swung her upriver, and glided under the falls.

**We hooked up the Raymond release hooks, pulled out the tiller and once we were secure, "Boat's" hoisted us up about two feet off the water to make sure everything was running the way he planned.** The most critical part here was testing his rattail stoppers to make sure they held everything okay. He applied the stoppers and the fo'c's'le gang slacked the capstan and the boat stayed right there. We even jumped up and down a couple of times to make sure. When he was satisfied, Benner and I elected to climb the pilot ladder that the crew thoughtfully provided for us. Not that we didn't trust them, but why tempt fate? This year the boat went up unmanned.



**Raising the whaleboat...**



**and swinging her in takes a lot of volunteer power.**

**Rocky was probably the most nervous, as he's put so much love and labor into the boat.** But when the time came, she was hoisted up without difficulty. "Boat's" experience with winches paid off and he knew how to slack the lines on the capstan to keep the two fall lines from binding together. Once they got the technique down, things went well. His rattail stoppers worked find. Our only problem was that we hoisted the boat all the way up before swinging her in. That's when we remembered that the boat wants to hang down about six inches when swinging so the aft fall clears the top of the rudder post.

**We got her swung in and chocked up. Stan Murawski was on hand with his gas powered pressure washer to clean the bottom before the marine growth had a chance to harden.** Over the following days the engineers got the engine winterized and Rocky cleaned out the interior of the boat. With the boat in the cradle, it was now possible to access the head blocks on the davits. "Boats" took the boats falls apart and disassembled and lubricated the lower blocks. Doug inspected the falls and after ten years we're probably looking at replacing all the line this coming spring. **Gene Jackey, Don Miller and Karl Herchenroder** got the aft head block off and down to the machine shop for disassembly. Upon inspection, the bearings didn't look that bad. The weather closed in before we got the forward head block off, so that may wait for spring. At least Rocky got the boat covered before the first snow. Down in the aft engine room, Gus Negus, Karl Herchenroder, **Gary Lubrano and Mike Dingmon** have continued work on the aft ship's service generator 8-268A. They have repaired the lube oil leak on the full flow filter assembly and made adjustments to the raw water system and tested it. The did a forty minute test run and found the cooling system works fine. They will continue detail work over the winter. They have also test run the three cylinder emergency diesel generator in B-4 so they are ready to keep the coffee hot when we cross the river.



The Chief's gather for Veteran's Day.





**Stan Murawski pressure washing the bottom of the whaleboat.**



**The boat fall lower blocks disassembled for inspection in the machine shop.**

**We also managed to put together a road trip in the middle of it all.** Thanks again to **Ed Zajkowski**, we sent a team of four SLATER volunteers to Philadelphia to their annual fall open house to pull parts off the ships about to be scrapped. The target this time was the old LPD, USS AUSTIN, open for the first time and reported to be full of equipment. Since no advance scouting is permitted, we figured we'd best check it out for ourselves. **Ed, Greg Krawczyk, Bill Siebert** and **Will Donzelli** all made to trek to Philly and were first ones aboard the AUSTIN on Monday morning. What they found was a stripped out hull with slim pickings. They did bring back two needed stainless steel deep sinks, one of which will find its way into the CPO Quarters for our Coffee mess.



**The Marine Corps Birthday celebration on November 10th.**

**In the middle of all our winter preparations, we put together two ceremonies.** The day before Veterans Day was the Marine Corps Birthday. Having done the Coast Guard Birthday and the Navy Birthday, **Paul Czesak** felt an obligation to ask our Marine brethren if they would like to celebrate their birthday on the SLATER. I mean, a lot of Marines were hauled around on APDs. They readily accepted the offer, and we really didn't know what to expect, but don't ever underestimate the Marines.

Over fifty of them showed up and you've got to believe me, they looked sharp. They put together an outstanding ceremony that included cutting a cake. We hope it will be an annual event.



**Veteran's Day remembrance aboard the SLATER with Steve Stella playing TAPS.**



**You can hear Steve by clicking the link to the gun salute video.**

**Paul went on to put together a nice Veterans Day commemoration the following day.** The weather was rather cold and bleak, and we started our ceremony at 1100 on Tuesday, which coincided with the start of the Veterans Day Parade in Albany. Nevertheless, the Ceremony was one of our best attended ever by the public. There was standing room only on the observation deck and the crowd spilled into



**The group at the Fort Orange Club Fundraiser.**

the parking lot. The SLATER volunteers paraded the colors and our professional orator **Steve Long** gave the Veterans Day Tribute, in a reflection on his naval service and what it meant to him, as well as a reading of the President's Proclamation to the Nation. CDR **Steve Stella** played taps, **Jerry Jones** handled the music over the 1MC and **Dick Walker** filled the roll of chaplain. The high point as always was **Erik Collin's three shot volley** from number three 3" gun, assisted by a contingent of Midshipmen.

**We held our fifth annual dinner at the Fort Orange Club on November 8<sup>th</sup>, and as always we remain indebted to our lone female trustee, Doris Fischer Malesardi, for putting together a wonderful event. She was assisted as always by Geoffrey Bullard, Tony Esposito, Gordon Lattey,**



**Paul Czesak, Frank Lasch and our own Rosehn Gipe.** This black tie affair raised over \$10,000 for



**Our guests of honor, Annette and Les Beauchaine, recognized for their years of volunteer service.**

the SLATER, and our master of ceremonies CDR **Bill Kraus** presided over several awards that were presented. A Historic Naval Ships Russell M. Booth award for historic preservation was presented to the Technology Department of Colonie Central High School in recognition of the work **Barry Witte's** students have done in fabricating parts for the restoration of the SLATER. The SLATER was presented with an award from the U. S. Naval Academy in recognition of the role the ship has played in serving as a meeting and interview site for prospective midshipmen, proof that SLATER still serves the Navy. And, for me personally, the most significant award of all was the Annual USS SLATER Trustees award presented to **Les and Annette Beauchaine** for their eleven years of service to the project, giving tours and selling dogtags. Annette didn't let anyone forget about her first visit to the SLATER when I put her to work cleaning up rat poison, and almost left her stranded aboard when the tide went out seven feet and she had no way to climb to the pier. And to see Les, the guy who would never tuck in his shirt, accepting the award in a tuxedo, well, it just shows how far we've come.

**Finally, my annual warning and a reminder.** Included with the next issue, the December SIGNALS, we will be sending out our annual Winter Fund appeal. I know you can't wait because an amazing number of you have already sent in your donations to "Help keep a volunteer warm this winter." We'll try and catch you in the Christmas spirit. Also, if you worked for a corporation that matches your gift, don't forget to register your donation, especially all you GE alumni out there.

See you next month.

