



# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum  
USS Slater DE-766  
PO Box 1926  
Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123  
Vol. 11 No. 09, September 2008

**It's all so anticlimactic. All the movie people packed up and left just before Labor Day weekend. The old routine now seems dull and boring.** We enjoyed our time in the spotlight, and now it's over. To all the people who asked me how it was, all I could say is that it was wonderful. We'll miss them all: Sho, Shin, Miyama, Shunji, Nao, Mr. Sakura, Takuma, Yuki, Masa, David, Joe and Eric, and all the people I didn't get to know that well. When people ask how it went, I said, "They kept all their promises, treated us and the ship with the utmost respect, paid all their bills, and left the place cleaner than they found it. I can't imagine having a better experience."



**A recent aerial view of the SLATER taken this September.**



The SLATER Volunteer crew mustering for Stan Murawski's annual Polish lasagna dinner. Photo credit: Richard Andrian



Gene Jackey hard at work grinding off old stubs in the forward head.

The crew is back to the old routine. The chippers, led by **Chris Fedden, Earl Herchenroder, Don Miller, Peter Jez and Rocky**, are all taking turns scaling and painting forty millimeter gun mount 42 on the port side. **Tim** "I never get mentioned in the SIGNALS" **Benner, Chuck Teal, Joe Breyer and Dave Mardon** have been continuing the work in the forward head. The new stainless steel septic tank is now fully welded and full of water as it goes through its hydro test. They have been challenged by the absence of **Doug Tanner**, who is away on a job in Bangor, Maine, through October. They are soldiering on without him. The next step will be the installation of the sewage grinder pump in the tank, a step **Doug** will have to be involved in. Having completed the restoration of the upper level of the aft motor room, the engineers, **Gus Negus, Karl**

**Herchenroder, Gary Lubrano and Mike Dingmon** are taking a break from painting and have gotten back to the mechanical work that they love so much. They are back on the eight-cylinder ship's service generator in B-3 and hope to have it up and running before the cold weather sets in. They believe they have solved the vibration problem on the emergency diesel generator by tightening a loose hold-down bolt.

**Gene Jackey, Bill Siebert and new volunteer Bill Houghton are back on the chocks and are working on the repair of one on the starboard side just forward of the "K" Guns. Greg Shippie** was back aboard from Vermont working on the sonar transmitter with **Jerry Jones**. **Rich Pavlovic** is now restoring the fantail 20mm guns. **Barry Witte, George Gollas** and students **Joe Tassarotti, James Conlon** and **Spencer Reid** have been working on improvements and an expansion of our intrusion, flood and fire alarm systems. And at Colonie High School, Barry is also breaking in a new group of students who soon will be fabricating the roller loader for the number six depth charge projector. The RPI Midshipmen are back with us. **Brian Schuessler, Ray Osborne, Austin Jolley, Kevin Higgins, James Cassell, Joe Fassanello, Sage D'Aprile, Vince Morganiti, Liz Church, Cale Hays, and Sam Kunimula** are working on the restoration of the firemain system, the three-inch practice loading machine and B-3. They spend a lot of time studying the piping diagrams in the Damage Control Book and overhauling valves. One recent Saturday, they got a break from all that and **Erik Collin** gave them a chance to ride in the whaleboat. Erik gave them each a turn at the tiller, an experience they won't get many other places.



**LTC Gary Meyer, US Army, gave his father a tour of the SLATER to celebrate his Dad's 94th birthday. He may be one of the oldest DE veterans we've welcomed aboard.**



**Angelo Bracco, Gordon Lattey, and Dave Mardon take a break during what may be our last scavenger run to the ex-USS GAGE APA168. Photo by Bill Siebert**

**Ken Kaskoun, Gus, and Larry Williams** have been exercising the whaleboat weekly and she is running great. **Nelson Potter and "Boats" Haggart** have been tending to the mooring lines and have put all the wires back in place following the movie. **Bernie Smith and Ernie Friedow** continue to keep the crew fed on Mondays. **Volunteers from the Albany Fire Department, including Dave Newton, Lt. Maria Walker, her son William, her father Frank McGarry and Will O'Leary** have been covering the galley on Saturdays. **Two of our shipmates are on the binnacle list. Don Shattuck and Clark Farnsworth** have been making it down Mondays to join us for chow while they are on the mend, and **Bill Coyle and Bob Callender** have stuck with us.

And since we reopened to the public, tour guides **Leo Baehler, Les Beauchaine, Joe Burke, Mike Collins, Paul Czesak, Bob Dawson, Joe Delberta, Bob Donlon, Russ Ferrer, Alan Fox, Ernie Friedow, Dan Goldstein, Bill Goralski, Paul Guarnieri, Grant Hack, Sam Hall, Glenn Harrison, Floyd Hunt, Ken Kaskoun, Jim Kuba, Gordon Lattey, Steve Long, Jack Madden, Chuck Marshall, Tom McLaughlin, Luke Peleggi, Dave Pitlyk, Nelson Potter, Bill Scharoun, Chris Soulia, Lou Sussman, Chuck Teal** and **Al VanDerzee** have been showing off all that work to the visiting public. God help me with the names I forgot. Oh, and **Gary Sheedy** is still down in the reefer deck doing something, and **Frank Peter** is cataloging books. We also had the support of members of the local Naval Reserve volunteer training unit, VTU 201, from the Navy Reserve Center in Schenectady. Ten sailors spent a Sunday working in the aft motor room. The CO **CDR Buanno, CDR Jackson, CDR Myers, SOCS Mach, MMCS Gagnier, ENC Kelly, HMC Post, GMGC Hansen, SKC Almy**, and our own **CSC Art Dott** all were aboard to lend a hand with the restoration.

**Gordon Lattey led a final expedition to the James River to the USS GAGE.** The Maritime Commission gave us permission to take some watertight doors off the second deck, something that is very rare indeed. In the past, we have never been allowed to disturb a vessel's watertight integrity. We had to work fast, because the ship was open for bid inspections on September 15<sup>th</sup>, and that left us with one week to put the trip together and grab the doors. Once bid inspections begin, no removals are permitted. The GAGE has the same style quick acting doors as SLATER, so MARAD relented and let us take a few prior to the vessel being bid for scrap. **Bill Siebert, Bill Houghton, Dave Mardon** and **Angelo Bracco** joined Gordon for the trip down. In one day they staged six doors on the fantail for removal by crane. They are now ashore awaiting pickup in the spring.

**For us, we are looking forward to the arrival of the Fall Field Day crew next week. Michigan Dick Walker** is organizing an expected group of about fifteen volunteers who will spend the week aboard working and repairing the SLATER. For the first time in many years, they are without a cook. Our own Monday Chief Commissary Steward **Bernie "Smitty" Smith** has stepped into the breach and volunteered to cook for them for the week. His only stipulation is that he won't clean up, so they will be providing their own messcooks. We have several jobs lined up, including continuing the work in the forward head, continuing the chock replacement, scaling and painting the forty millimeter guns, repainting a portside fanroom, and if the weather goes really bad, working in B-3, the aft engine room. We'll give you a full report next month.



**The crew getting ready to take the whaleboat out on it's weekly run.**



**The SLATER Color Guard at the USS COFER reunion.**

**I attended the DESA Convention in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky and it was great to see so many old friends. I recognized so many nametags from the "Thank you" letters we write, and my apologies to you if I didn't get a chance to thank you personally for your support. I carried my laptop computer around so I could set up and show pictures of the whaleboat restoration and the movie production at a moment's notice. I also did two formal presentations, one at the invitation of **Ron Zarem** at the USS BROUGH banquet, and the other at the DESA Men's Night. In both cases there was a lot of interest in the pictures of the movie production, and the most asked question was, "When can I buy a copy?" All I can say is we'll keep you posted. Our understanding is that it won't be released until June of 2009, and we're not sure if the movie will be released in America. If subtitled DVDs are produced, we will let you know and hopefully carry them in our store. We also previewed the dry-docking fundraising video that the Albany Guardian Society is producing in conjunction with WMHT. The audience had several significant comments that**

we will incorporate into the final version. The winners of the DESA LA Chapter SLATER raffle were announced at the banquet. Our thanks to DESA Board members **Tom Kidd, Rex Thorne, Dean Hoover, George Weidman**, and of course our own **Sam Saylor, Ron Zarem, Earl Johnson and Dori and Ed Glaser** for their help and support over the year.

**One sad note during the convention was that Alice Montgomery, wife of W. W. Montgomery died of a massive heart attack. W. W. and Alice have been among our staunchest supporters over the years, and at every DESA Convention W. W. has made beautiful handcrafted wooden clocks that he auctions off, with the proceeds benefiting the SLATER. W. W. is also the creator of "Ozward Dumbrowski," the coconut headed bosun's mate, who never missed a DESA convention until he was restricted to the SLATER, where he presently resides in the aft head. Our thoughts and prayers are with W. W. during this time of mourning.**

**Another group that has been touched by tragedy is our sister DE, the USS STEWART in Galveston, Texas. The ship is in trouble and has a long road ahead for recovery.**

Those of you who have been following the saga of the USS STEWART DE238 and the submarine CAVALLA know the story of those ships. Established as Seawolf Memorial Park in Galveston by the Texas Submarine Veterans, both ships were dry berthed on the Bolivar Peninsula. The ships fell into disrepair back in the eighties and were not well maintained until the mid-nineties, when former submarine Master Chief **John McMichael** took the helm. Under his direction, the ships have been making



**An aerial view of the USS STEWART and USS CAVALLA at Seawolf Park after Hurricane Ike.**

an astonishing comeback. He oversaw the complete ripout and reconstruction of the CAVALLA's superstructure deck, perhaps the most extensive rebuild that a historic ship has gone through outside a shipyard. This past year, he had STEWART completely sand blasted and repainted and was making great strides towards her restoration.

**Hurricane Ike devastated the Pelican Island and battered Seawolf Park.** According to the information we have received and photos that were taken of the damage, the storm surge lifted STEWART out of her dry berth and set her back down with a fifteen degree list to starboard, hull down forward and her stern up. CAVALLA fared better, but all the support buildings and structures were demolished or washed away.

**As of this writing, we have little other information.** Sam Saylor reported that this is not the first time this has happened. He said when he first saw STEWART in the early eighties as they prepared for DESA's Houston Convention in 1984; STEWART had been listed by a storm surge. She was up and running in time for the DESA Convention's 1984 Memorial Service and we are confident that they will be able to get her right again. Our thoughts and prayers are with John, the Seawolf Park Crew and all the people of Galveston who were touched by this tragedy.

**Looking at STEWART heeled over gives me a definite feeling of, "There but for the grace of God go I."** I first saw STEWART in 1987, and it was love at first sight. I was ship's superintendent on the KIDD in Baton Rouge at the time, and as the KIDD's restoration moved towards completion, I would have desperately liked the chance to restore STEWART. However, my appeals to the Park Board over the next several years fell on deaf ears. But in the end, it was my involvement with STEWART that ultimately led me to **Sam Saylor, Marty Davis**, and put me on the path towards the SLATER. That was a fortunate thing for STEWART and CAVALLA, because I never could have accomplished the miracle John McMichael has performed down there, particularly with regards to CAVALLA. I thought she was a goner, but he performed a resurrection. He'll need all the support he can get to recover from Ike. And as for me, suddenly shoveling snow and paying for heating oil doesn't seem so bad.



**The restored fantail aboard USS SLATER**

**The discussion about the STEWART has led to the question, "Exactly how many DEs are left?"** To the best of our knowledge, ex-McANN DE179 is still afloat as a museum in Brazil, still fitted with her single twenties and original torpedo tubes. Ex-HURST is operated by the Mexican Navy, and was recently photographed underway by our Japanese friends, who will use the footage in the upcoming movie "Orion in Midsummer." Ex-ATHERTON is still in service in the Philippine Navy and ex-HEMMINGER still serves THAILAND. One final DE remains: the FORSTER DER334 was transferred to the South Vietnamese Navy. She did not escape the Fall of Saigon and is reported still to exist over there as a training hulk. The hull and superstructure of the USS RUCHAMKIN APD89 is on display as a naval exhibit in Jaime Duque Park, near Bogotá, Colombia. And then STEWART, memorialized in a dry berth at Seawolf Park, and SLATER here in Albany. If you have knowledge of any more DEs or APDs in existence, we would certainly like to update our records. We have to take care of the two we have left in this country.

**See you next month.**