

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Normally I don't make this pitch until the November issue, but it sure seems cold enough to start thinking about the **Winter Fund Appeal**. I'm about to order our first heating oil delivery for the season. It will definitely be well into November by the time this gets to you. And to kick start the Winter Fund Drive, DESA Ladies Auxiliary President **Phyllis Gruber** put a most eloquent Winter Fund solicitation on the front page of the latest DESA news. They actually beat me by a month. So maybe it's just time to go with it. All the signs are here. The leaves are almost all off the trees. The whaleboat is back on board and the engineers are winterizing the engine, as I type. It won't be long before we have to drain down the water system aboard, start hauling water for coffee, and rely on the shore head until we get to Rensselaer. Then it's back to the Port-A-John, known around here as the "Blue Room."



Our volunteers are the key to our success.



The USS SLATER rests serenely against the new mooring pilings as we close the season for 2010.

A look back at the year will show you what we have accomplished, and why we hope you will continue to support us. We had a great year aboard!

Restoration-wise the big accomplishment was the installation of the two mooring dolphins. What this means for me is no more camels. Remember those seven-ton wood floats I used to complain about rigging in and out every year? That is a thing of the past! We have discussed the option of staying on the Albany side year-round with engineers, and they have advised it is a bad risk. Once the ice deflection barrier is built ahead of the ship, deflecting ice outboard, we will use agitators to keep the water inboard of the SLATER ice-free. However, without the deflection bulkhead, heavy sheet ice can flow down between the ship and shore, and would easily overcome the agitators. Once that 24 foot area freezes over, ice build up will put unacceptable pressure on the mooring lines and bitts.

So for now, we will continue to move. The only downside was that the total cost of the project was \$45,000 more than the state funded, which came out of our operating budget. The next major accomplishment was the arrival of the TBL radio transmitter from Alameda, California restored by Tom Horsfall. Shipping this restored 800-pound antique and getting it aboard and into the radio room was no easy task! As we said on our Facebook page, it was a four-year, 3,000-mile project. And it isn't finished yet. We won't be happy until we have actually transmitted a message with it. Today **Jerry Jones** and **Joe Breyer** have been working on the installation of the motor generator set that will eventually power the unit.

The engineers and all the people who supported them deserve a lot of credit. The cosmetic detail painting and restoration work continuing in the aft machinery spaces is nothing short of remarkable. When we want to impress a potential donor with our progress, we take them there. What is most impressive is the preservation work that has been done in the bilges. These ships rot from the inside out, and it is that bilge cleaning and painting that will do the most to insure the future of the SLATER.



The "Last of the Original Chippers," Chris Fedden received the Capital District Chief Petty Officer's Association's SLATER Volunteer of the year award for his years of dedicated service, during their Navy Birthday celebration.

Speaking of unglamorous preservation, Gary Sheedy and several unnamed helpers completed the stabilization and preservation of the steel under the false deck in the reefers; and the reefers are all back together. Gary is now putting his effort into the fine detail of the refrigeration compressors themselves, and you can now see some visible progress. All I can say is that, when he finishes, it will be the most perfectly restored compartment on the ship.

A major safety check was made this October. Led by **Brian Goodman**, the electricians rented an ultra- sophisticated and very expensive circuit breaker tester and tested every circuit breaker on our main distribution boards to make sure they would trip at the specified load.

They also checked all our accumulated collection of fifty spare breakers to make sure they are satisfactory as replacements. After four years, the long forward head project has been completed. This September, an individual, who will remain unnamed, quietly and privately christened the commode in the forward head. The system is now available for use by overnight campers and work crews, eliminating the long walk aft or going ashore. The area looks shipyard fresh, and it's been a long time coming. We have several overnight encampments scheduled for November. After those dates, we will have to secure the fresh water aboard to protect the plumbing from freeze damage.

With regards to other ordnance, Rich Pavlovic has just about completed the restoration of the fantail 20mm guns, and we got three-inch gun number 2 repainted. All the ordnance is now in good shape. With Erik Collin's coordination, Jack Bertsch fabricated replacement shoulder rests for all our 20mm guns that are being installed as I type. . And thanks to our friend Stu Scace, the ready service racks on the amidships forties are almost completely full of ready service clips of replica 40mm ammunition.



Bosun Walt Stuart renewing the non-skid on our "USS Franklin" ladder.

Gene Jackey and **Don Miller** have been fabricating the tie-down railings, and **Angelo Bracco** is making the canvas covers to protect our new rounds over the winter. Coupled with the fuses Stu made for the hedgehog projectiles, and the replica pistols for the depth charges, it's safe to say we have one of the most detailed ordnance displays in the historic fleet.

Number six depth charge projector roller loader is nearly complete. All that it is lacking is the hinged loading frame and the dolly that rolls the reload charges from the rack to the arbor. The rack has been painted and looks beautiful. Our thanks to again to Barry Witte, and all the students from Colonie Central High School who work on fabricating the parts for the rack, as well as all of our shipfitters who put it together.

We successfully lowered and raised the whaleboat twice. The first time was onto the dock in Rensselaer, which made it a whole lot easier for **Rocky** to repaint the outboard side. The second time was to put her in the water in Albany, and then take her out of the water for the winter in October. The last operation went so smoothly we can tell that we're starting to get good at it! Grinding down those welds on the capstan and using polypropylene line allows us to surge one fall while taking strain on the other, and that helps a lot.

And then there is painting. Thanks to our friends from the **Coast Guard**, we got the entire starboard side repainted, except for the boottop. The Michigan Crew can look forward to that next spring. We also got two-thirds of the portside repainted, including the boottop. The fo'c's'le was completely chipped and repainted this year, and we'll be moving aft on the decks next year.



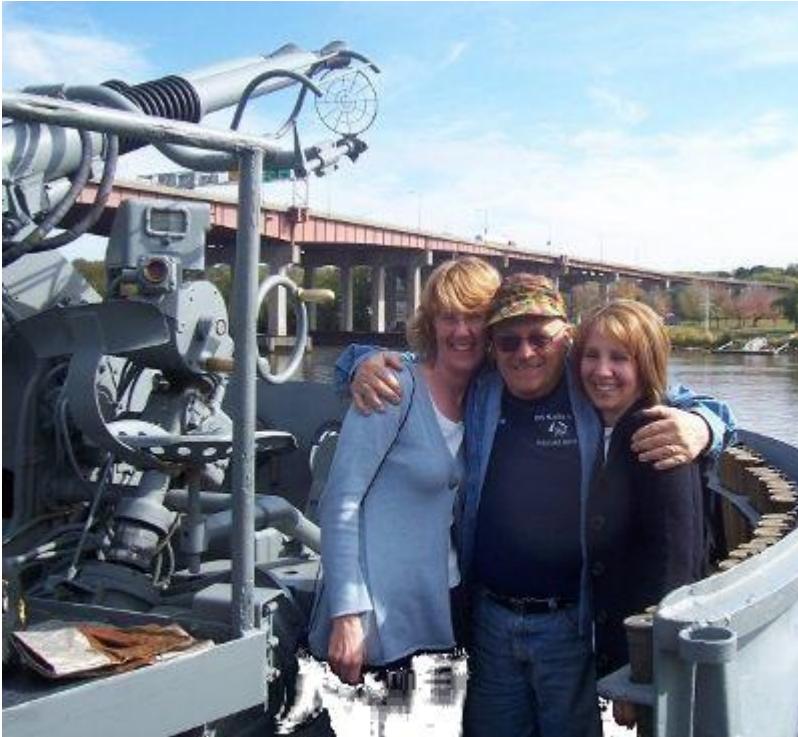
RPI Midshipmen assisting with the restoration of the electrical distribution board in B-3.

Then there are all the things going on that don't involve paint, welding rods or fuse pullers. Our Collections Manager, **Katie Kuhl**, is making a great deal of progress moving our collections documentation into a professional museum artifact database called "PastPerfect," so we can keep better track of your donations. Also, she is in the process of scanning all of our photographs into our computer database so they can easily be digitally copied. Her most important accomplishment was to digitize all of our 16mm and 8mm movie footage so it has been preserved, and to make DVD copies. The original silver nitrate film has been turned over to the Naval Historical Center for proper storage. Katie has also taken the lead in revamping our website, working with volunteer web designer **Dottie Baltz**. Our present website has been unchanged since volunteer **Mike Stenzel** did the original design in 1997.

Times change, and many advances have been made in website design since then. The new site will go online in December, and we hope you will find more information and easier navigation on the new site. In addition, Katie has done a great job revitalizing our Facebook page, and putting all our SLATER videos online.

Linda Wruck came on board as our new Education Coordinator, the first certified educator we have ever had in this position. Under her guidance, we now offer programming that is fresh and interesting for our returning visitors, as well as first-time guests. Everyone, from the Girl and Boy Scout groups, to ship reunions, senior centers, public and home schools, college interns, and the modern family, step into July 1945 when they board the SLATER. She has worked to broaden our focus, so that time spent with our volunteer veterans and staff will provide visitors with the significance of a democracy, the necessity of civic responsibility, life on the home front, the power of propaganda, and the causes and effects of the Holocaust, all told through the Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1945. The creation of the Victory Garden and Observation Deck displays help the public understand what the concept of "Total War" meant for the home front. Scout groups "cross over" our gangway, earn merit badges, hoist the morning colors, or stay overnight onboard.

Groups can choose to visit us or reserve a Museum in a Bag. For use at their location, in which they will see and hear the complexities of life on the battlefield and the home front, during World War II. The new *Museum in a Bag* themes and lessons that are available in spring 2011 are *Call to Duty* and *In Service on the Home Front*. Coming in fall 2011 are *The Four Freedoms*, *Truman's Cold War*, and *What is an American? Racism and Segregation in the U.S*



No shipboard task is too demanding for Super Dave Mardon, shown here assisting Education Coordinator Linda Wruck as she showed her sister around the SLATER.

Paul Czesak organized several promotional events and commemorations this year. We fielded promotional teams to the Reading, Pennsylvania Air Show, the Albany Tulip Festival and the Altamont Fair. We commemorated Memorial Day, DE Day, the Fourth of July, the Coast Guard Birthday, Patriots Day, the Navy Birthday and Veterans Day. We hosted reunions including USS BENNINGTON CV20/CVA20/CVS20, USS LEWIS DE535, USS ALBANY Association, USS OSTERHAUS DE164, USS BOWERS DE637, and Division 15 DEs.ER crew.

We had our personal losses, too, with the deaths of founder Marty Davis and volunteers Stan Murawski and Al Van Derzee. But, before you write off the "greatest generation," keep in mind we still have 17 WWII vets active in the local crew.

The local chapter of our Capital District Chief Petty Officers Association celebrated the Navy Birthday on October 13 by putting on a luncheon for our volunteers. Each year they name a CPOA USS SLATER Volunteer of the Year. This year they chose our oldest active chipper, Christian C. Fedden. Chris is a former radioman who served on the USS EUGENE A GREENE DDR-711. He started volunteering aboard SLATER when she first came to Albany, and he's been chipping paint for 13 years. He is considered the last of the original chippers. Both Chris and his wife Trudy were on hand to accept the award, because we all know that without a patient and tolerant wife, Chris wouldn't be chipping paint on the SLATER. Way to go Chris and Trudy. And thanks to Art Dott and all the CPO's who put on the event.

Trustee Bob Cross's book on destroyer escorts, *Shepherds of the Sea* was published by the US Naval Institute Press in May. The book has been a best seller in our Ship's Store, and has been garnishing great reviews. We have had to restock the book several times since the first shipment arrived. Bob signs all his books that we sell, so if you want a signed copy, get it here! We're proud to have been able to assist Bob with the research for this great addition to DE history.



Visitor Brianna Guckemus checking out our semaphore flags.

Erik Collin and Sam Saylor completed the transfer of our membership records to Albany, so now all of our administration is handled under one roof, or overhead, as the case may be. This was a major accomplishment that our Board of Trustees fretted over for five years, but Erik made the process easy. Again, if you weren't paying attention, there will be some changes in how we handle your memberships. These were necessitated by a need to simplify the process. The hand-typed laminated membership cards and stickers will be a thing of the past. The new membership card will be computer-generated, non-laminated, and a new card will be issued every year. The card style and letterhead have changed to be consistent with the letterhead we generate here in Albany. For you life members, your old cards remain valid and won't need to be replaced. The first batch of renewals has already gone out.

There may be some glitches, so bear with us as we learn the ropes, and try to keep all you members as happy as Sam did. Finally, we have quietly launched our Hull Fund Drive by going to our 100 largest donors and requested their participation. They were sent a packet of information and a DVD regarding the USS SLATER's hull preservation fund in the hope that they will consider making a three-year pledge before we go public with the drive to our general membership. We recognize that it is the common "Bluejacket" making small donations that has been the backbone of this project since its inception. Before we go back to you again, we are hoping to show that the entire burden of supporting the SLATER does not rest on your shoulders alone; that there are larger donors with means backing up those smaller contributions. As of October 1, the hull fund has received \$77,737 in pledges and \$267,119 in actual donations. While we have a long way to go to reach our \$3 million goal, we are encouraged at the support we have received at this early date.



One thing that hasn't changed since 1944 is how cold a steel hull can be in the winter.

During the spring, summer, and fall months, many visitors, reunion groups, etc., come to see and tour the ship. They pay for the tours and some even make donations. This is really great, but we don't make ~~enough~~ to cover our winter expenses. We can dig into our savings or ask for extra help. During the winter months, the ship is closed to visitors and moved to the other side of the Hudson River. This is due to the ice on the river and the problems it can cause to the hull of the ship. However, the work on her must continue. While this work goes on, the money that comes in during the good months is no longer coming in to pay the bills. We cannot have our volunteers coming to work on the restoration without electricity, heat, and the things they need to get the job done. The restoration cannot continue without the necessary funds.

But, you've heard the pitch from me for so many years, maybe it's time I let someone else do the talking. This is what DESA Ladies Auxiliary President **Phyllis Gruber** wrote in the lead article in the latest DESA News in answer to the question, "Why is it important to give to the Winter Fund?"

"Because it's your museum, your ship, your history and the stories of all of you who served on those small but mighty ships. Somebody said to me, "You are so passionate about the USS Slater." Yes I am. I was there on the pier in New York City the day she arrived from Greece along with my husband **Tom, Sam Saylor, Marty Davis** and all of the DE sailors who had served on the Destroyer Escort ships. They all saw her as this beautiful ship that they had once served on and had tears in their eyes. I saw this rusty bucket of bolts and said to myself "what in heavens name are they going to do with this thing?" Well, I found the answer to my question very quickly as the volunteers, under the direction of **Lou Yacullo**, started working on her. We spent many days, weeks and several years in New York City as the work progressed. I was there in Albany, New York when she arrived at her new home at the Port of Albany. "

End of Quote. I'm on my own from here. As in every winter past, I would ask all of our supporters who can afford it to donate \$100 to the Winter Fund. By the time you will read this, I will have made my own personal donation of \$100. We hope that you will, too. If you can afford to give more, please do. If you can't give \$100, please give what you can. For you folks reading this online, it's time to click the "Donate Here" button and do your part to help keep this history alive. Think of these guys and gals who will continue to work aboard in the cold, and do what you can for them. Please be as generous as you can to the Winter Fund!

We'll keep taking good care of SLATER for you. See you next month.