



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. 13 No.
11, November 2010



Move Day 2010.



The USS SLATER heading south to Rensselaer for the winter with the Donjon tugs CROW and EMPIRE alongside. Photo by Richard Andrian

Once again, let's not talk about how I am really writing this, the November edition of SLATER SIGNALS, on Pearl Harbor Day, wondering how I got so far behind. What could possibly be keeping me so preoccupied that I can't crank a simple newsletter out, describing the last month of the 2010 season.



We celebrated the Marine Corps Birthday on Wednesday, 10 November commemorating their 235th birthday. The event has grown exponentially since its small start three years ago. This year the ship and the observation deck were filled with a veritable sea of red jackets as over 150 Marine Corps veterans, reserves and active duty personnel flooded our facility. The ceremony began at noon on a picture perfect day as Emcee Thomas DeMeo seated the invited guests. Among the dignitaries who attended were Congressman Paul Tonko, Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings, Albany County Executive Mike Breslin, Rensselaer County Executive Kathy Jimino and Assemblyman Bob Reilly. Keynote speaker LtCol Eric Larson, XO of the RPI NROTC Unit, gave a rousing commemoration to the Corps. As is tradition, Tom DeMeo had the oldest Marine present, Capt Arnold Townsend, present the first piece of birthday cake to the youngest Marine present. Erik Collin and the RPI Midshipmen fired an impressive three round salute. The event finished with birthday cake for all on the observation deck.



Award winning volunteers Clark Farnsworth, Chris Fedden and Doug Tanner on Veteran's Day.

The following day was our Veterans Day Commemoration and, considering the show the Marines put on the day before, we had a tough act to follow. Let's just say that it was a small family affair. We had good press coverage and the event was a chance to formally award **Doug Tanner** with the Historic Naval Ships Association Maintenance Preservation Award that had been announced in Baltimore in September at the annual HNSA Convention. The international award recognized one of our most dedicated volunteers and trustees. Anyone who has been reading SIGNALS over the years cannot be oblivious to the contributions Doug has made to the SLATER. A former Coast Guard damage controlman (potentially a very useful talent)

Doug has been a volunteer aboard the SLATER for 12 years. The award only credited him for ten, which he was quick to point out. Doug retired from General Electric as a pressure vessel and welding quality-control-authorized inspector certified by the National Board of the American Welding Society. He used his welding skills and knowledge of construction and maritime codes as he helped restore the structural integrity of the SLATER. This past spring his knowledge of codes and contracts was invaluable, as he took on the task of managing the construction of two mooring pilings for our historic destroyer escort on the Albany side of the Hudson River. We also recognized **Chris Fedden** of Colonie, who received the Capital Area CPO Association's Volunteer of the Year Award during a ceremony aboard the SLATER the previous month. Chris earned his award on the 235th birthday celebration of the Navy for his volunteer work in helping to restore the SLATER. He became a volunteer in 1998 and is cited as being the last of the original chippers.



The British are coming! Dick Walker honors David Regan of HMS ALYMER and his family by hoisting the White Ensign,



while George Smith of HMS BAYTUN views the SLATER from the Rensselaer side of the river.

We've had an influx of British visitors this fall. England sponsors the Big Lottery Fund's Heroes Return 2 Program which awards grants for WWII veterans to make commemorative trips back to the places they served. The USS SLATER has been fortunate enough to have hosted several veterans who served on Captain Class Frigates. These men could have traveled anywhere in the world they served and they chose to visit us. This year several groups made the trip across the Atlantic including **Eric Bennett** from Kent and **George Smith**, an ERA in HMS DACRES and HOSTE, who came with his daughter **Jane** and son-in-law **Roland Watts**, and turned to with **Gus Negus** in the engineroom. **Eric Airey**, a signalman aboard HMS BAYNTUN and HMS INMAN, came over with his son Bob. Last, but certainly not least, was **David Regan** from Wales who was a radarman aboard HMS ALYMER. He was escorted by his three lovely daughters **Julie, Lindsey** and **Helen**, as well as our own **Dick Walker** and **Jerry Jones**. They got the best deal of all because they came on the Monday before we moved, and got to enjoy a Thanksgiving Dinner that **Clark Farnsworth** prepared for the crew. And, I must say that the girls got more attention from our crew than David did. They even brought over a British flag, so in honor of all you Brits who sailed our DEs into harm's way, we flew the White Ensign for an afternoon. It was an honor to have you all aboard and we hope the program continues.



Dick Walker and Grant Hack explaining the SLATER to the last school tour of the season.

The remaining weeks of the tour season wrapped up in November. Visitors included families, school principals, college students, the independent curiosity seeker, and scouting groups who stayed overnight; it was chilly, but they made it! The fickle weather was no deterrent to the launch of a new addition to the current scouting program for girls and boys. On two separate occasions, **Linda Wruck** and then **Jim Kuba** welcomed scout groups to board and assemble on the fantail where they learned flag etiquette and the symbolism behind each of the 13 ceremonial folds, hoisted morning colors, and received a USS SLATER AMERICAN FLAG ETIQUETTE ribbon for their participation. The scouts hoisted their new ribbon with the morning colors. Upon leaving the ship, the scouts received cards designating each one as an Honorary Crew Member. The scout group that Jim hosted was a friend from his work place. We love it when you talk about us "behind our backs!"

The visitors who come to the USS SLATER carry on the legacy of our preservation and educational missions. But sometimes there are folks who cannot come to the ship. Linda answered the call to take our mission on the road; Beacon Pointe in Clifton Park asked us to share our program with their residents. It was a learning experience both ways as Linda had the opportunity to ask questions of the men and women who lived through World War II, on the battle front as well as the home front. We look forward to meeting more groups who would like us to bring our stories and artifacts to them. Remember, the ship is open to the public April through Thanksgiving weekend, but our programs, including Museum in a Bag, will travel year round!

As many of you know, we here at the SLATER are continually striving for excellence and perfection. It was with that doctrine in mind that our Collections Manager, **Katie Kuhl**, under the encouragement of the SLATER's Business Manager, Rosehn Gipe, entered a contest titled "Worst Archive Ever," sponsored by **Gaylord**, our museum and archival supply company. While only a few lines and one photo were required to enter the contest, Katie sent along numerous photographs and waxed on for several paragraphs about the SLATER's "unique" storage of thousands of pieces of paper, hundreds of photographs and countless artifacts. It may surprise you to note that storing these precious collections within a rusting steel shell known for a propensity to alternately broil and freeze its cargo is not generally considered ideal in the museum field. Add to this already bleak existence the inability to install environmental controls due to this particular shell's listing on the National Register of Historic Places and the fact that it sits in a river 12 months of the year, it seemed impossible that the SLATER could lose this contest! But lose it we did. However, in keeping with our ability to use misfortune to our advantage, Gaylord found our situation to be pitiable enough to send us over \$1,000 in free archival boxes. They will keep Katie happy for months to come. Our hats are off to Gaylord!

The arrival of the TBL transmitter has breathed new life into the radio gang. **Joe Breyer** and **Jerry Jones** are back and fully engaged in how to make this unit operational. They were chomping at the bit to start welding and grinding in the radio room, something I wanted to avoid while we still had visitors aboard. Now that SLATER has been moved to our winter berth and regular visitor tours are suspended until spring, progress on the installation of our "new, 1942" TBL high frequency radio transmitter should accelerate. The transmitter and the radar are believed to be the last ones available for acquisition anywhere, and so, are priceless as museum pieces. The TBL, salvaged from USS CLAMP, was restored to operating condition by **Tom Horsfall**, WA6OPE, delivered to the SLATER in September, and brought aboard to the radio room in October. The installation of the TBL is the "winter's work project" for the SLATER's radio gang. from Barry Witte doing the controller and power cable work.

Our goal is to have the TBL operating "on the air" as the centerpiece of SLATER's ham radio station, call sign WW2DEM. USS CLAMP was in the fleet at Iwo Jima and Okinawa in the spring of 1945, her SL radar surely saw the Kamikazes attack. She was awarded four Battle Stars for WWII action. After the war, the Navy took over the war prize Japanese Battleship IJN NAGATO, and had it underway to Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands to join the other target ships in Atomic Bomb test "Operation Crossroads". The NAGATO broke down and had to call for help from USS CLAMP, which towed it to Eniwetok. These radio orders were surely carried by "our new" TBL transmitter. Both the TBL and the SL-2 carry these significant bits of history with them. Lately the radio gang has been concentrating on the installation and wiring of the motor generator set with assistance

Sailmaker Angelo Bracco has done some great work lately. He has spent many hours behind our sewing machine working on canvas covers. One of the most critical needs were canvas covers to protect all our replica 40mm ammunition that **Stu Scace** made for us. We wanted to cover it just like the ships did in WWII. Of course this meant replacing all the missing lash down rails and brackets. This is where **Gene Jackey, Clark Farnsworth** and **Chris Fedden** came in. They spent the month doing the metal work for the canvas covers. Angelo spent the month fabricating the covers out of some new navy blue material that replicates the old canvas but will last a whole lot longer. If you recall, in the old days the white canvas covers were sewn and then dyed dark blue with the stain they used to camouflage the teak decks and carrier flight decks. Angelo completed the covers just as Gene completed the tie downs, and all our ammo is covered for the winter.

Local law enforcement used the SLATER as an exercise platform to practice their marine skills this month. The Albany Police Dive team, Albany Fire Department and New York State Police all came to together to practice their dive skills on an actual ship and we were the beneficiary of the exercise. In the process, they used an underwater camera to view the condition of our zincs and sea chest blanks. From what we could see, the condition of the zincs and hull looks very good and the paintwork is intact. This however has led to a long discussion among our engineering types about the proper material for cathodic protection in fresh water, since the zincs have not wasted away. The consensus of the SLATER brain trust and the US Navy seems to be that magnesium is the best material to use in our environment. We'll plan to do a test by dropping a couple magnesium anodes over the side and monitor them.

A lot of preparation goes into getting ready for the Albany winter. All the ventilators have to be covered with sheet metal outside and plastic inside. All the guns get covered. The fresh water and sewer systems all get drained down, blown down and then we'll blow potable antifreeze through them. "Rocky," Paul and "Boats" got the whaleboat covered for the winter. The heating system gets checked out. Electric space heaters come out of storage. Erik has a mystical directional antenna he rigs so we can get high speed internet from Rensselaer.

And, Rosehn orders the dumpster and Port-a-john, has the phone line and shore power turned on, and notifies the alarm company of the change of location. Doug Tanner has a new challenge. He's concerned about the ice damaging our new \$30,000 fenders, so he rigged straps and hainfalls from the fenders to the tops of the pilings so he could pull them up out of the water when the ship moved. More on that adventure later.

The last tour day was Sunday November 28th. I had made arrangements with **Chris Gardella** over at **Donjon Marine** to call him at 0700 Monday morning to check on the availability of the tugs. I had the whole crew and a crane to lift the gangways on standby. I have a love/hate relationship with the move. On one hand, it causes me more stress than any other event of the year. I never sleep well before move day, and once again I didn't get much sleep. I'd probably be in tough shape if I were on a real ship that actually went to sea. Either that or I'd get used to it. But on the other hand, to watch the crew come together to make this major event happen, and watch all the equipment go into action and get used the way it was supposed to be used is what makes the SLATER a ship and not a building. It's a real morale builder for everyone who participates. Anyway, I called Chris at 0710 Monday morning and he said he only had one tug available and that it looked liked Wednesday would be the next opportunity to move the ship. I called Mike and canceled the crane and emailed the crew to stand down. The day was beautiful, calm and sunny with just a little chill in the air. When I got to the ship, most of the Monday regulars were arriving, planning a day of routine maintenance. Doug showed up planning to double check the work **Tim Benner** had done in draining the fresh water system for the winter.

Erik was in the process of warning me that the forecast for Wednesday looked really bad, and if we did move on Wednesday, I'd probably kill half the old guys with hypothermia. I told him I'd take that into consideration, but I just wanted to get it over with and get settled in for the winter. It was about that time I got another call from Chris and in essence he said, "Hey, I looked at the forecast and Wednesday looks pretty bad. Can you be ready by noon if I have the CROW come up river?" I told him I'd get back to him and called Mike. Mike said he could still get the crane, and volunteers didn't look like a problem. I called Chris back and said we were a go for noon.



Don Miller and Clark Farnsworth prepare a turkey dinner for the Monday crew.

Rosehn made the comment this year that as a small organization unencumbered by bureaucracy, "we can turn on a dime" and we certainly did that morning.

Another email went out to the crew; we shifted gears and got ready to move. The crane arrived at 0900 and got set up. We broke the main communications cable that handles all the alarms, phone, 1MC and the all-important Internet connection between the ship and shore. Then the forward gangway was lifted and set onto the benches on the observation deck. When that task was completed, **Tommy Moore** supervised the lifting of his beloved paint float onto the pier for the winter. While we were waiting for the tugs, most of the crew helped with ancillary projects like pulling in the gangway safety netting, putting the canvas covers on the guns, and removing the donor recognition boards and putting them inside the classroom. **Erik** and **Bill Wetterau** disassembled number seven roller loader and moved the "K" gun off its base to make way for the gangway in Rensselaer.

We took off all the mooring wires except the two amidships springs. Down in the aft motor room, Gus Negus, Gary Lubrano and Mike Dingmon did the checks and lit off the emergency diesel generator. When the diesel was good and warmed up, Larry Williams, Ken Kaskoun, Bob Callender and Guy Huse shifted the load to the emergency diesel generator and pulled the shore power cable aboard. In the galley, **Doug Tanner** had brought all the fixings for lunch, and he turned his apron and chefs hat over to **Clark Farnsworth**, and Clark took care off feeding the crew.



Rigging the chain falls to hoist the fenders.

coming up river. Chow was hastily finished and the crew came topside to station the special sea detail. **Erik** handled the fo'c's'le and **Doug** took the fantail. We got the EMPIRE cabled to the stern bitts, with **Chris Gardella** himself in the pilothouse. When she was secure, we lifted the aft gangway, let go the two spring wires and singled everything else up. We put a line around the forward dolphin. When the tugs were ready, we started letting go from aft to forward. The last line off was the line around the forward dolphin. "**Boats**" **Haggart** shifted the colors and we were on our way. As of late, most years they have just pushed us down river stern first, a little undignified, but efficient. This year Chris decided to turn us so he backed a little and then let the current swing the bow around. I was really glad we had **Richard Andrian** and **Jerry Jones** ashore photographing the evolution, as the turn is an impressive spectacle.

We had one casualty on the shore side. **Don Shattuck** got tangled up in a cable and scraped his leg. It probably would have been nothing, but the Coumadin he was on made it look like he was bleeding to death so **Linda Wruck** took him to emergency, and as Don says, "They glued me back together." Literally. For the rest of us it was a slow leisurely trip south, with the CROW leading the way. It was a perfect day for a cruise. The trip gave the crew time to fake down all the mooring lines and wires, move the gangway aft and check the fenders. The approach to Rensselaer was perfect and it took about thirty minutes to get the ship in perfect position. When we had enough line on to hold her, we waved the tugs off and said, "See you in the spring."



**Bosun's Bill Haggart and Walt Stuart
prepare to shift colors.**

The gangway was rigged and the rest of the afternoon, and in fact the rest of the week, was spent doubling up, rigging the six mooring wires, rigging the chaffing gear, rigging the gangway safety net, rigging the shore power and telephone cables and going back on shore power, securing the diesel, rigging the agitators that prevent the ice from forming, and putting down the cocoa mats that keep us from slipping on the ice. While all this was going on, **Doug Tanner** and his indomitable team of Benner and Mardon boarded the EMPIRE and went back to the mooring dolphins to hoist the fenders with the chain falls so they won't get torn up by the ice. This they managed to accomplish, but when they got back to the ship there seemed to be a consensus that they needed to find a better technique. The best part for me and several other volunteers is that we no longer have to worry about getting the camels out of the river. The ship was secure and everybody was out of there by 1630.

As a footnote, Wednesday was way worse than forecast. It was warm, but the wind was gusting out of the southeast at fifty knots, pushing us off the wall. However, the ship held her position fine. But, there is no way we could have moved Wednesday in that wind. We were rolling so badly that I kept losing my Internet connection. What could be worse than that! It was so bad that **Chris Gardella** called over to see if we were riding okay and if we needed any tug assistance. Since I was cut off from the world of my computer and I got nervous about the wires, I spent the afternoon getting soaked putting on extra cable clamps. By Thursday, the wind was back out of the west pushing us against the wharf, so **Doug, Katie** and **Super Dave** came down to take in the mooring line slack. Coastie Doug's comment was that the ship looked like it had been tied up by a bunch of drunken Navy guys.



Ken Kaskoun catches the first line over in Rensselaer.



Once secure, the crew aft rigs the gangway.

We lost another one of our friends from afar, I. Roy Coates of Long Beach, California. Roy's contribution to the SLATER should not be forgotten. A Navy vet who served on the cruiser HOUSTON in the 1930s, Roy spent the war years building ships, and the postwar years scrapping them. As part of his duties with National Metal and Steel Corporation at Terminal Island scrapping ships, Roy oversaw the scrapping of many destroyer escorts. He was thus in a unique position that makes him the envy of all us scroungers. Roy had an incredible sense of history and service. Not only did he make it a point to see that historical artifacts were saved from all the ships that saw their end at Terminal Island, but also he made sure that these artifacts ended up being donated to ships and museums up and down the West Coast. Roy Coates' generosity and sense of history was responsible for helping many museums and historic naval ships. Among them was USS SLATER DE766 located in Albany, NY.



Roy supplied an estimated twenty tons of shipboard equipment from teak to troughs, and everything in between. He shipped the material to property he owned in Belin, New Mexico, where he planned to establish a museum resort. For personal reasons, Bob decided to stay on the West Coast after retirement. Thus, he had twenty tons of ship parts looking for a home. We met Bob when he was cruising the Mississippi on the Riverboat Delta Queen. He offered the parts to us on the KIDD, but KIDD's restoration was nearly complete, so I suggested he contact Sam Saylor about donating the material to SLATER. He did; they said yes; the material was appraised; and two work parties in the New Mexico desert heat later; the stuff was on its way to the SLATER in New York. It sounds so easy on paper, but all the volunteers who had to load, unload and stow it will tell you a different story. We're still installing the parts that Roy and Bob got back in the seventies. If you get to Albany and you tour the SLATER, you will see the old radios in Radio Central, the bunks in the CPO mess, the aluminum lockers, the proper officers' desks, the 24" searchlights, the seats on the troughs, and the 1MC quarterdeck station. That is all part of the generosity and legacy of I. Roy Coates.

And I can't close without telling you all about how appreciative we are for your support of the 2010-2011 Winter Fund Campaign. Our ticket sales were down about 15% this year, but your support is as strong as ever. Thus far we have received \$8,570, which compares to \$7,930 that we received this time last year, towards the new campaign. And our mailing hasn't even gone out yet. It is all through the website, DESA news, and Facebook. Thank you for doing your part to get us through another winter and keep us all warm and working this winter.

See you next month.