



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Knock on wood, but we hope the worst of another winter is behind us and we won't have many more days like this.

16th, so it's going to be interesting.

It's March first. I hesitate to comment on the weather, because we've dodged more snow here in Albany than is justifiable. I just turned down the heat and took my sweater off for the first time this year. I am torn with the following mixed emotions, on one hand so grateful that the light is at the end of the tunnel, and on the other hand, wondering where the winter went and why I've gotten so little done.

I hesitate to get my hopes up, but on Friday February 26th, C.D. Perry and Sons moved a crane barge up to the SLATER's wharf in Albany. The sight of the equipment there gives me cause to believe that we might actually get the breasting dolphins in this spring. They are in the process of installing the temporary platforms that will support their work on the breasting monopiles. I can see already that the start of this season will be a nail-biter. Normally, we would plan our first opening day to be the first Wednesday in April, which is the 7th. But the steel for the monopiles isn't scheduled to arrive until March 20th. Then, they must be driven and filled with concrete. The concrete must cure and the fenders need to be installed. If they hit an obstruction, or the river runs high, the project could be delayed. Rosehn has the first overnight encampment scheduled for April

To answer the most asked question, "Will we still have to move?" The answer is yes. We are in the process of the first phase. We only have funding to put in the two breasting dolphins that will replace the camels. This is being funded by a New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation EPF Grant that was awarded two years ago. We will still have to move the SLATER each winter until we complete the additional components of the project: the ice deflection bulkhead and the two mooring pilings. We now have the permitting to complete these projects, but are waiting on additional funding. We have a grant application pending, and will make additional applications for EPF funding as well as the DOS Waterfront Development Funding this spring.



Former USS IOWA machinist mate Mike McEnteggart applying bondo in the forward head.



Super Dave Mardon practicing his welding on the work table on the CPO head.

Aboard ship, the work continues on three fronts: the endless reefer deck project, the endless forward head project and in the aft engine room B-3. The endless reefer deck project basically came to a standstill after the false decking was torn out. The real deck underneath was all scaled and it was just a matter of waiting until it got warm enough to paint. One day, when it reached forty degrees, we figured that was time to send **Chris Fedden** and **Don Miller** down to Corroseal the area. The following Monday, it reached forty degrees again and Don Miller and Earl Herchenroder went down to put yellow chromate over the Corroseal in two of the reefers. Due to the cold, it's taking the chromate a little longer to dry than normal, which is about two weeks. We expect **Gary Sheedy** will be putting the false deck back in shortly.

Up on the endless forward head job, the crew head on the portside has been completed, except for painting. Doug Tanner, Chuck Teal, Super Dave Mardon, Mike McEnteggart, Earl Herchenroder and the crew are working in the passageway and the CPO head. For the immediate future we plan to utilize the CPO head as a paint shop. The plan is to relocate our sandblasting cabinet into the CPO head for the time being. This means purchasing a dust collector for the cabinet and installing it in the storeroom below, which also contains the septic tank and grinder pump. Additional work we are doing includes; welding a steel plate to the outboard bulkhead for a work table, converting the shower stall to be utilized as a spray paint booth and improving the ventilation. **Tommy Moore** is doing a great job insulating the space. **Gary Sheedy** and **Barry Witte** are installing new light fixtures and finishing up the electrical work.

Down in the aft engine room, Karl Herchenroder, Gus Negus, Gary Lubrano, Mike Dingmon, Ken Kaskoun and Larry Rockwood continue to be a force to be reckoned with. The engineers are very possessive and they really know how to operate. For example, on a recent Monday, **Tim Benner** drove all the way down from Glens Falls to do some welding in the forward head, but he needed a fire watch. Knowing that there were plenty of guys working in the aft engine room, he made the mistake of going down there to see if one of his shipmates would give him a hand. They all said they'd be glad to



Gary Sheedy replacing the false decking in the starboard reefer.

fire watch for Benner, as long as the welding was in the aft engine room. That was the end of the head progress for that Monday, and Tim spent the rest of the day welding up light fixture brackets and cable supports in the engine room. With plenty of people fire watching, I might add



Mike Dingmon scaling the log booth in the aft diesel room.



Tim Rizzuto points out to Gus Negus that the B3 overhead needs to be lowered a bit.

In the same space, Barry Witte is doing a beautiful restoration job on the aft switchboard with the help of his student workers and Paul Guarnieri. Paul doesn't receive enough recognition around here because his name is difficult to spell and I have to look it up every time I mention him. So, guess what.... Paul, who like Super Dave does it all, including giving tours (something Dave has yet to try), has been working with Barry Witte in B-3 doing detail work on the electrical boxes located down there. The quality of their restoration work is factory fresh out of the builder's yard.



"Rocky" Rockwood and Paul Guarnieri are two more deck hands who have been impressed into Black Gang service...



...by the boys in B-3, doing detail work on the electrical box restoration.

We owe a significant debt of gratitude to Hal Hatfield and his crew. Actually, we owe many significant debts of gratitude to Hal, especially since he agreed to be the Board Treasurer under duress. However, in this particular case, it involves engineroom deck plates. The SLATER, and I assume all her sisters who came out of the Tampa Shipyard, had rather unique deck plating with a special raised square non skid pattern that was different from the traditional diamond plate we all know and love. So, when it came time to replace the missing pieces of deck plate, we obtained diamond plate. I was fine with that and the rest of the world would have been too. Deck plate is deck plate, and it would have stayed had it not been for **Barry Witte** and the LSM-45. I would have let it go, but Barry seemed obsessed over the problem. The first thing Barry noticed when he went aboard the LSM-45 was that the ship had the same original square pattern deck plating as SLATER. Barry took what he needed of the slimy, oily, grease-caked plating to replace all the missing deck plating on SLATER. When we unloaded the truck in Albany, I made sure all of those scummy deckplates were delivered to **Hal Hatfield's** steel fabrication shop, where I figured it would remain until Hal retired and sold his business.



The mess deck water heater gets valve handles courtesy of Will Tryon.



Gary Lubrano scaling the high pressure air compressor in B-3.

Not so fast. Apparently Mr. Witte isn't the only purist. It didn't take **Karl Herchenroder** long to come up with a list of the specific sized plates he needed to replace all of the non-original diamond plates in the engineroom. I dutifully forward this list to Hal Hatfield at Karl's request. Over a three month period, Hal's crew took advantage of their downtime to completely clean, sandblast and shear the deckplates to Karl's specification. When they were too small, they welded smaller deck plates together to make larger ones. The restored plates arrived on the pier this February with a fresh coat of gray primer that made them look brand new. Midshipmen **Brian Schuessler**, **Austin Jolley**, **Chris Osapai**, **Mike Froeschle** and **Liz Church** helped our gang strike them below. All of our purists are happy because B-3 has matching historical authentic deck plating. Up on deck, **Gene Jackey** and **Clark Farnsworth** have continued to work on the depth charge davits. "**Boats**" **Haggart** is getting ready to re-rig the davit guys on the whaleboat. **Jim Gelston** keeps the clocks wound, while **Smitty** and **Tanner** keep the lunches coming. **Katie Kuhl** has substituted in their absence.

In regards to repaying past debts, on February 23rd, Les Beauchaine, who sold dog tags at Crossgates Mall for 11 years, and Paul Czesak, presented a framed picture of the USS SLATER to Jennifer O'Leary, Marketing Director of Crossgates Mall, in appreciation for the Mall's support of the SLATER. In addition to allowing Les and his wife Annette to sell dog tags on weekends at the Mall, they also provided space in the Mall for displaying a large diorama depicting a DE in rough weather along with a sign directing Mall shoppers to visit the SLATER. Jennifer promised to continue promoting the SLATER and said that the picture will be prominently mounted in their newly remodeled office. Over the years, **Les and Annette Beauchaine** have generated over \$50,000 for the project selling dogtags. This would never have been possible without the cooperation of the kind folks at Crossgates Mall, who donated the space for our project.

Longtime SLATER supporter, and our favorite author, Trustee Bob Cross, continues to gain notoriety. His publisher is the US Naval Institute. Bob now has his own webpage. His new book, Shepherds of the Sea, continues to garner great reviews. Recently, former Secretary of the Navy **John Lehman** wrote, "The DEs, like the LCSs and the amphibs, were disdained by the regular Navy, from JO to Admiral. By default, they became the empire of the "90 day wonders" and enlisted teenagers of the Naval Reserve. Now, they finally have a writer worthy of their heroic story. Using their own words, the historic accomplishments of the DE sailors now take their place in naval legend." Again, we can't thank the members enough who collaborated



Paul Czesak and Les Beauchaine present a framed picture of the USS SLATER to Jennifer O'Leary of Crossgates Mall for all their support of the SLATER project.



Tim Rizzuto takes a break from grant writing to compliment Tim Benner on his gourmet hot dogs.

with Bob on the project. Bob will be our keynote speaker and hold a book signing at our 2010 Memorial Day Commemoration this upcoming May 31st at 0930.

I personally spent most of this month working on Federal Appropriations to try and receive funding in order to get the ship in drydock. As you may be aware, funding for museums and historic preservation is tight in this day of stimulus. No stimulus money was made available for historic preservation. The President is recommending the elimination of the Save America's Treasures program from the FY2011 federal budget. However, each Senator and Congressman receives a certain amount of funding for their state or district, resulting in forms to fill out and lobbying to be done. This is the seventh year we have gone through this process, learning a little more each year. It's an arduous process and I'm sure you can imagine what the odds are of it paying off. We don't have a high powered lobbying firm supporting us, or a large sum of money to throw into a campaign fund. It's a true David versus Goliath challenge, but as the lottery ads say, "To have a chance to win, you gotta buy a ticket."

This year we made requests through both New York Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, as well as our own Congressmen Paul Tonko and Scott Murphy of the adjacent 20th District, and Mike McMahon, from Staten Island, where the shipyards are located. Do you

remember the great success we had when we asked all of you to write your legislators in support of our Save America's Treasures Grant application a couple of years ago? It was heartening that so many of you responded, even though the result was disappointing. Therefore, this is the time to ask all of you to please try again. I ask that each of you living in New York State to please email, phone or write our senators on our behalf. If you don't live in New York, but have children, friends, or relatives who do, please ask them to make the call to support us. If you happen to live in one of the districts represented by Congressmen Tonko, Murphy or McMahon, please do the same on our behalf. If you live out of state we're not sure there is much you can do at this point. We will let you know. Maybe we can win one for the little guy. We are definitely indebted to Mayor **Gerald Jennings** for the letters of support he wrote on our behalf to our legislative delegates. Without his support, we couldn't get out of the starting blocks.

If you live in one of the districts represented by a congressman we have made a submission to, we encourage you to contact them. We have listed their phone numbers below. **Please let them know that you are calling in support of the appropriations request by the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum for the drydocking of the USS SLATER.** Let them know why it is important to you. They will probably want your name and address for verification. You may contact them by email by going to their websites.

Senator **Charles Schumer** 202-224-6542

Senator **Kirsten Gillibrand** 202-224-4451

Representative **Paul Tonko** – 21st District – 202-225-5076

Representative **Scott Murphy** – 20th District – 202-225-5614

Representative **Michael McMahon** – 13th District – 202-225-3371

We will continue to seek funding through our local state grant programs, primarily looking for state funding to complete the permanent mooring. There are two state programs available to us; the NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation's Environmental Protection Fund Grants and the NYS Department of State's Waterfront Revitalization Programs, as well as the Federal Save America's Treasures Grants. We will continue to make these applications, as we have since 1999. I should point out that the OPRHP's EPF Program has been very good to us, continuing to give us project grants for ship restoration and maintenance, as well as funding the two breasting dolphins totaling \$509,000 since 1999. We couldn't do it without their support.

Prior to his leaving, Eric Rivet completed two important applications. The first was the application for the Permanent Museum Charter from the New York State Department of Education. We have been operating under a provisional charter since our incorporation as the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum in 2001. This application, if approved, will give us permanent museum status in New York State.

The second application is to be considered as a National Historic Landmark. We were placed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 7th 1998 for National Significance. This is the highest level of recognition for a historic site. The process is long and involved, but we are working through the first phase. In addition to Eric, we are indebted to **Katie Kuhl** for her follow up work on the application, as well as **Mark Peckham**, the New York State National Program Coordinator, for guiding us through the process and not allowing me to let it slip to the back burner.

And speaking of Mr. Rivet, he regularly keeps in touch with us to keep us up to date on the burdens of operating under the pressure of being in a museum that recently received a twenty million dollar federal appropriation. (You see why I can't give up). After receiving over seventy applications and interviewing twelve candidates, we have selected his successor. We were seeking someone with a strong education background and who can relate well to school age children. We selected **Linda Wruck**, originally from Chicago and lately with the Montana Historical Society where she coordinated historical education programs. She has a strong interest in World War II history. She says that she grew up on a steady diet of *Victory at Sea*, as her dad was a Navy man. Her father's uncle, her grandma's brother, served as a career Navy man, a machinist mate who was lost at sea in March, 1942, when the USS Pillsbury DD227 went down with all hands during the evacuation of Java. She is a history teacher with Master's degree in Museum Education and extensive experience with educational programming, event planning and community fundraising. She is familiar with the history of Stalingrad, the tactics of Rommel, victory gardens, Operation Torch, fireside chats and the Berlin Airlift. She definitely has the background. All we have to teach her is the nuts and bolts of destroyer escorts. She looks forward to using the power of shared stories in keeping the history and devotions



Linda Wruck will be joining us in March as our new education coordinator.

alive. Linda's background includes extensive experience with event planning, including reunions, creating educational programming, writing, giving tours, recruiting the ever-important volunteers, and supervision of day and overnight camps. We look forward to having Linda aboard the third week of March.

Finally, one of the most important undertakings Katie Kuhl and the curatorial department have undertaken this winter is the inventory, screening and digitizing of our entire collection of historic VHS tapes, 16mm and 8mm movie film.

Most of this screening has been done by volunteer archivist **Rebecca Ralph**. Rebecca is to be commended for her extraordinary perseverance in patiently viewing over one hundred hours of raw

footage of documentaries, naval training films, reunion footage and oral histories. Several titles have stood out, especially for me, including the two reels of, "The Operation of the Diesel Electric Propulsion Drive in Destroyer Escorts." For Rebecca, while several have stood out, none had more impact than when she discovered, much to our surprise that buried in our collection of VHS tapes was a copy of the wartime cinematic classic "Ship of Shame, The Story of DE-733." I was more than a little apprehensive when I learned that she had stumbled upon this film without being forewarned. Based on the reviews, I never had the inclination to watch this film, but many of you may remember this wartime classic. While maybe not on par with such acclaimed films as "Action in the North Atlantic" or "In Which We Serve," "Ship of Shame" nevertheless documents a critical and often overlooked part of naval service, and sent an important message to all the naval personnel who saw it. Why the Navy chose a destroyer escort to be the centerpiece of the documentary has been debated at reunions for years. Even though the DE-733 never really existed, having this film in our collection demonstrates our commitment to preserving all aspects of destroyer escort life, and also demonstrates that, in viewing a film I have not screened myself, Rebecca has more intestinal fortitude than I will ever have.

See you next month



We've got plans for the whaleboat.