



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Lowering the whaleboat for painting in Rensselaer.

We spent the first two weeks of April waiting for concrete to cure. The completed mooring monopiles were in place and filled with concrete, but there was a wait involved. We took advantage of the time to complete additional maintenance work while in Rensselaer. One job was lowering the whaleboat on to the pier. If you recall the drill in previous years, "**Rocky**" **Rockwood** would caulk and paint the portside of the whaleboat, and then we would lower it into the water and pick it up backwards so the starboard side was now inboard, readily accessible. Well, this year it occurred to us that as long as we were alongside the Rensselaer wharf, we may as well put it on the ground and **Rocky** and **Dennis Nagi** could paint it there. Rather than mess with the anchor windlass, we rigged two chain falls, swung her out and lowered

her into a makeshift cradle. Rocky and Dennis went right to work and in the space of five days had the whole outboard side caulked, painted and done.

Meanwhile, back down on the endless reefer deck project, Gary Sheedy got going on the portside reefer. To do this he had to cut away the cooling coils to access the deck, and then cut away the false metal. As expected the fiberglass insulation below the false deck was soaked with water, whose source has still not been determined. As of this writing the area has been dried out, but has yet to be chipped and painted.

Down in engineering Gus, Karl, Gary and Mike readied themselves for move day by testing and prepping the emergency diesel. In another maintenance loss, the B-4 batteries froze over the winter, so we lost them. Fortunately, thanks to Rocky's foresight, the whaleboat batteries had stayed warm and dry in the radio room all winter, so they were highjacked down to the engineroom where they provided the starting power.

Up on deck the shipfitters have been busy. Gene Jackey, Clark Farnsworth and Chris Fedden have been busy making up the reload davits for the depth charge projector roller loaders. They have



Regulars Clark Farnsworth, Chris Fedden, Mike Dingmon and Gus Negus in the machine shop.

eight done of the ten they will need including the reload davits for the fantail depth charge racks. These will serve a secondary function of supporting a new fantail awning. After resisting this proposal for thirteen years, I've finally broken down and had an awning ordered under a certain amount of duress from our collections manager **Katie Kuhl**. This should keep our Archives and Special Collections space a lot cooler in the summer, which will help a great deal in preserving the artifacts and documents that we have on board. It should also be noted that the last of our original chippers, Radioman **Chris Fedden** has finally given up chipping and decided to strike for shipfitter. He figures that since he and Clark have been aboard longer than anyone, they should stick together.



Will Donzelli and Greg Krawczyk take a break during our recent foray to the James River Reserve.

The endless forward head project is in its final stage. All that needs to be done is the installation of the floats for the holding tank pump and alarm, and then final testing. Across the passageway, we will be moving the sandblast cabinet and installing a dust collection system. The hang-up on this project is that **Doug Tanner** recently had a hernia operation. He says it's a result of carrying Benner for so long, but he's been carrying a lot heavier load than Benner for a long time around here.

While all this was going on aboard ship, Barry Witte, Greg Krawczyk, Will Donzelli and Gordon Lattey led a group on our annual spring trip to

the James River Reserve fleet to gather parts. They were backed up by youngsters **Mike Malone** and **Adam Shaker** from Maryland, both providing a little more muscle. They worked three days on the ships and brought back a truck full of non-historic, mostly consumable items. The World War II-era gear is gone, so now it's a chance to stock up on consumables such as gaskets, light bulbs, fuses, brand new coils of line, chipping hammers, wire brushes, scrapers, coffee mugs and galley gear. The gear is from newer ready reserve ships that are now headed for the scrapyards. They filled a U-Haul truck with useful gear that is aboard, stowed and now in use.



Super Dave Mardon working on the gangway roller.



Larry Williams disconnects the shore tie on move day.

We had been waiting for the large donut fenders that were to slide over the monopiles to arrive before we moved. But there were continual delays in the delivery, so we made the decision to make up temporary fenders and hang them from the ship. **Doug Tanner** again scrounged six tires and bought four 4x4s and with the help of **Tommy Moore, Rich Gallagher, Tim Benner** and **Super Dave Mardon**, bolted them together to make two fairly substantial fenders. We hung them over the port side at the location of the monopiles. We planned to move as soon as tugs were available so we wouldn't lose the whole month of April to visitors.

We received word from Chris Gardella of DonJon Marine that he expected to have two tugs available on Saturday April 24th. He was true to his word. As one group was cleaning up from an overnight encampment, another crew readied the ship for the move. **Barry Witte** took advantage of the day to reinstall the motor on the air search radar antenna. He had removed the motor in the fall to replace the brushes, and he made sure we were rotating before we got underway. About 0900 we saw the EMPIRE and the CROW head up river past us to look over the new mooring situation. By 1000 they were back and made up to us waiting for high tide. We made up the tugs, disconnected and stowed the water line, cranked up the generator, shifted from shore power, rolled up the shore tie cable, took the wires off, singled up the lines, hauled the gangway aboard, let everything go and shifted colors. The day was perfect, calm, warm and sunny. Our first approach to the new monopiles was perfectly executed and no paint was scratched. **Dean Kanellis** was there with C.D. Perry to lift the gangways, and everything was engineered just as it had been planned. I think the happiest person was **Tom Moore's** wife Debbie. She was on hand to greet the ship and quite happy about the fact that we will never have to lift camels again. By 1600 we had the ship pretty well secured and ready for another overnight encampment that Saturday night.

The HUSE crew began arriving aboard the next day, Sunday April 24th. **George Amandola** may not have been a Marine but he was true to the Marine officer spirit that the officers don't eat until the troops are fed. George manned the galley as chief cook and made sure all his troops were well-fed. He was assisted by **Joe Coletti** and **Robin Larner** topside. Robin, another field day faithful, was there with her father Jim who served on USS DAY during WWII. Robin maintained her reputation as being the real brains of the whole operation, thanks to her understanding of the alarm system and having an incredible grasp for detail. George didn't want to let her out of his sight for fear she'd end up on paint detail, but she did sneak away long enough to paint the floater net floats. Down below **Wally Bringslid** served as messcook and messdeck MAA and did a great job keeping the messdecks clean and organized. Back aft, **Ernie Aeschlman** and **Jim Larner** maintained the ship as compartment cleaners, keeping the heads and living spaces in 4.0 condition.

The paint locker was manned by Roland Robbins and Bill Meehan. They didn't have much to do the first part of the week because of rainy weather, so they spent the time cleaning brushes and tidying



The SLATER back in Albany resting against the new mooring monopiles.
Photo by Rich Aubin of C. D. Perry.



The USS HUSE field day week crew.

up after the regulars. Roland had to bail on Thursday with his grandson Jeff, coincidentally the day that the sun finally came out. All of a sudden, everyone needed paint, and Bill was on hand to provide it. His only complaint was he had to do more work in one day than Roland did all week.

Gene Hermanson, Lew Shelton and Joe Delfoe tackled the forward bunk lockers. As many of you may remember, when SLATER arrived

from Greece all the bunk locker tops were missing. When the ship first arrived **Tom Beeler** fabricated wooden ones to get us through our first couple of seasons. Then **Hal Hatfield** came along and fabricated proper steel ones, but without the hold down clips. This year we made the decision to put hinges on them to keep anyone who stepped on the lockers from falling though. Gene, Lew and Joe went through the CPO berthing and the forward crew's quarters and over the course of the week installed hinges on all the bunk lockers and also replaced several missing bunk hold down clips.

If you remember last fall, Frank Heckart from Texas got into the problem with the bad elevation drive on 40mm gun mount 42. He got far enough to determine it was a bad bearing on the main elevation drive shaft, but because it was late in the season we decided to button it back up and deal with it in the spring. So now it's spring. We detailed **Doug Streiter, Stan Suzdak and Paul Suzdak** to



Paul Suzdak, Stan Suzdak and Doug Streiter tearing down the elevation drive on the port forty.

begin the disassembly under the direction of WWII gunner's mate Stan off the USS KEY. It only took them three days to break it down and have the main shaft on the machine shop work bench. They pulled the carcass of the bearing off and gave it to **Karl Herchenroder** who was tasked with finding the replacement. Of course, it turned out that it wasn't an off the shelf item and had to be ordered from some place in California. Thus, we ended the week with the gun still apart and the reassembly left in the hands of the arriving Michigan crew. Any mechanic knows it's never a good idea not to have the guy who takes it apart put it back together. We'll let you know how this comes out.



Joe Delfoe, Gene Hermanson, Lew Shelton and Bob Hysel working on the forward bunk lockers.



A couple of hard working girls Gail Esker and Tami Hysel chipping behind the hedgehog.

The third project the crew handled was chipping on the fo'c's'le. We had two new women with the group, **Gail Esker** whose uncle had served in **TWEEDY** and **Tami Hysel**, who came with her father Bob, a veteran of service on **HUSE**. Gail and Tami were joined by **Brandon Easley** and **Jeff Robbins**, and that crew worked harder than anyone. By the time I arrived aboard at 0730 the needle scalers were going, and it seemed the only time they stopped was for chow. When it started to rain, they rigged a tarp so they could keep going.

Bob Kehrer, his sons Jeff and Dave got all the difficult topside painting jobs. Jeff, in particular, did a lot of high wire work under the watchful eye of his bosun father. Together they scaled, primed and painted the radio antenna insulators on the starboard side of the main deckhouse, the aft whaleboat davit, and the overhead under the forward 20mm gun tubs. Where muscle was needed these guys provided it, and they pulled all the fenders aboard that we had rigged against the wall in **Rensselaer** and stowed them. They also did a lot of water way painting between rain storms.



The Kehrer family, Jeff, Bob and Dave hauling fenders aboard.

Last year Global Products had donated an oil boom to us. Now that we don't have the camels, we no longer need to rig oil booms to deflect trash, so one boom with cylindrical floats was broken apart and cleaned to become replica floater net floats. **Bob Hysel and Dennis Tracy** took on that job, as well as scrubbing the hammock that we have on display on the messdecks.

Finally, down below in the aft motor room, Guy Huse worked alone continuing the reassembly of the fire and flushing pump. The difficulty is that this has been apart for so long, parts have been scattered and there are no plans for the piping. But Guy is rising to the challenge. He plans to stay through the Michigan Field Day week to try and finish it. In the same space, **George's Amandola's brother Anthony** helped the engineers with some of their lighting projects. The crew had a very successful week, and completed most everything on their list. I just hope it was as much fun for them as it was productive for us. It was great having them aboard.

Linda Wruck is keeping the education department busy with training and new projects. Even though we didn't get open to the public until April 28th, she handled her first three overnight encampments pierside in Rensselaer, followed by a fourth the day we moved. Thanks to "**Stretch**" **McLaughlin, Glenn Harrison, Jerry Jones, Heather Maron and Joe Delberta** for their help there. Linda has created several new programs to help interpret life on the homefront during World War II. One is the creation of a Victory Garden and she is writing accompanying interpretive material. Gardening has created a lot of interest. **Walt Stuart, Karl Herchenroder, Earl Herchenroder, Don Miller, Greg Fox, and Dick Stankus** from the Men's Gardening Club of Albany, disassembled two of the sagging picnic tables/benches and fabricated a framework to house the raised bed of the Victory Garden. Osborne Mill Nursery delivered the topsoil and dumped it on the sidewalk whereupon her "gentlemen" hauled it to the grassy area.

Dolores Ferrer, tour-guide Russ Ferrer's wife, is our Master Gardener who recently joined the crew. Since the initial creation of the garden, she has planted all of the donated flowers and vines that she gathered from her various sources, that will create a sweet-smelling privacy cover on the lovely chain link fence, rhubarb next to the deck, veggies in the garden. Dolores commented on the terrific and caring attention to her needs the crew has given her. Smitty's wife, Carol, donated all of the day lilies bordering the low concrete wall along the river. **Dick Stankus** planted the lilies. **Dennis Nagi** repainted the shore head and is organizing the store room next to the head. So they will no longer have to pull out all of the unnecessary and heavy items just to get to the trowel. **Doug Tanner** was so moved watching his shipmates help with the gardening, that he immediately went out to Home Depot and bought them all flowered gardening visors and gloves so their hands wouldn't get calloused and their finger nails dirty. And **Alan Fox** brought in a hose and sprayer so no one would forget to water.



Tour Guide Glenn Harrison supervising morning colors for overnight campers in Rensselaer.

With the help of our Chief Commissary man Smitty, Linda is working on installation of cleats on the observation deck to teach knot tying. She is also looking to fabricate a set of bitts for training ashore. This might improve our line handling on move day. In addition to knot tying and splicing she is also planning to use guides to put on demonstrations on flag etiquette, aldis lamp signaling and the use of sound powered phones.

The new crew handled their first large group on Friday April 29th when a group of 105 visitors, from Massachusetts' Arlington High School Performing Arts program, came aboard late in the afternoon. The comments were extremely good and the visitors were aware that we all had a job on our hands with moving them through the ship without having to talk over a nearby group or bump into each other.



Boy Scout Troop 80 Campers from Hyde Park man gun one.

Finally there is an excellent new SLATER video on Youtube. If you have been following the TBL saga, the transmitter that was removed from the old ARS CLAMP was taken in hand by radio expert Tom Horsfall for restoration out in Alameda in 2006. Tom posted a video demonstrating the operation of the TBL he has restored for the SLATER.

So we're back in business, on the Albany side, resting against the monopiles, ready for the tourist

season. Things are still jumping. The bunks were still warm from the HUSE crew when the Michigan crew began stowing their seabags. More about that next time, as well as the installation of the new fenders, the Tulip Festival, Greek Festival and Memorial Day with author Bob Cross speaking about his new book on DEs "Shepherds of the Sea." I've got to go mix paint for the Michigan crew.

See you next month.