

SLATER SIGNALS

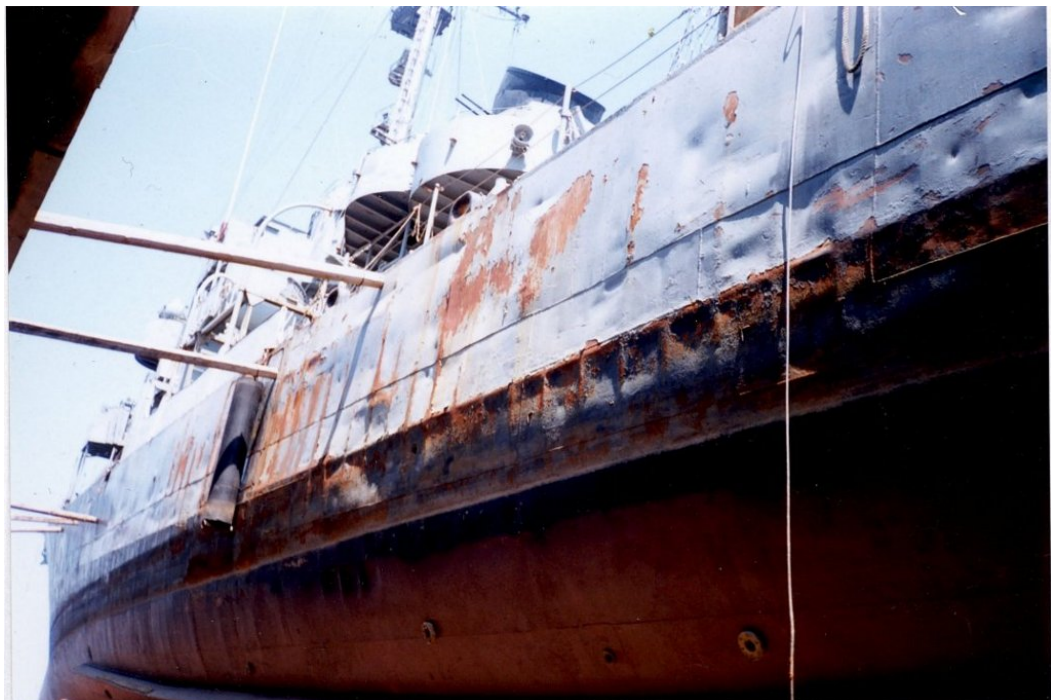
The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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I sit here in this same hot little ship's office that so many of you yeoman sat in for so many days. It's 94 degrees out. The porthole and the weather deck hatch are open, the little black fan is whirling, the ventilators are running full bore, and the guides continue to joke with the visitors about how much effort we go through to manufacture the authentic heat and humidity so that our visitors can experience the same tropical conditions that you Sailors endured. Some visitors appreciate the humor, some don't. It got so bad this afternoon, I took a tour of the ship to see if I could find a cool spot to eat my lunch. I went everywhere. I even went down to the lower deck plates in the aft engine room, and you know what. There was no cool spot.

By now or in the near future all of you who get this by email should have received your solicitation to contribute to the USS SLATER's Hull Preservation Fund. If I had known that fourteen years into this I would not have found a "Sugar Daddy," I would have sent off this appeal a long time ago. But, all of us responsible for this program do feel a sense of guilt at having to turn to you to fund this hull preservation. You all have been so generous for so long. And, during that time period, we have seen so many other projects funded, it seemed inconceivable that our effort would be overlooked by the big money funders, both private and governmental. But it has, and we feel we have let you down by not bringing in the outside support we all would have expected. So, now we turn to you again.



This was the condition of our hull in 1993 in Greece, and it hasn't gotten better.

All the federal programs that would have supported a project like drydocking SLATER have dried up. Back in the nineties, several ships received support under the Department of Transportation's non-highway enhancement program. We've made multiple applications through that program with no success. We had high hopes for support through the Save America's Treasures Program, particularly with the word that we should receive National Landmark Status next year. However, funding for that program was cut completely this spring. Many ships have received direct support through Congressional Appropriations. We have continually tried that approach, but with no success. And, we've worked all the major defense contractors and corporations that you would think would be sympathetic to our effort, but without anyone on the inside to plead our case, the answer is almost universally, "Your project falls outside our parameters of support. Good luck in your search for funding."

The one group that has continued to be there for us is the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation through their EPF Grant Program. They have continued to support us annually with restoration grants and the funding to get the newmooring dolphins. Mayor **Jerry Jennings**, the one who gave SLATER a home, has been there for us with all the help he is able to provide. Our local State Legislators, Assemblymen **Bob Reilly** and **Jack McEneny** and Senator **Neil Breslin** have continued to support us with state legislative member items, but these funding sources don't come near the kind of money we need to do the bottom.

Part of the problem is that from the start this has been an effort of the little guys. From my days with the USS KIDD in Baton Rouge, the whole project there was the brainchild of our local Congressman, **Henson Moore**. He took ownership of the effort and was able to enlist the support of the Governor and many powerful civic leaders and politicians. The result was 1.5 million dollars to restore the ship and three million dollars to build a shore side museum. SLATER has never had that kind of Godfather. SLATER is the creation of a lot of unknown little guys working together to obtain a common goal. If we'd been doing this back in the seventies or eighties, things would have been different. So many of your officers and skippers were sharp Ivy Leaguers who rose to the highest ranks in business and government. Names that come to mind include **Charles Adams**, CO of USS FOGG, DE57 and later CEO of Raytheon Corp., **Graham Claytor**, CO of USS LEE FOX, USS DOYLE and President of Southern Railway, **Jim Scripps** of USS HALLORAN who was publisher and owner of Scripps Howard Publishing, **Franklin D Roosevelt Jr.**, CO of USS ULVERT M. MOORE, Senator **Ed Muskie**, Chief Engineer of USS BRACKETT DE41, **Sam Gravely**, the first African American Admiral and CO of FALGOUT DER324, and many others. These were men who had the influence, energy and motivation to get things done, much of which was in part a product of their DE experience.

However, most of your original officers and skippers are long gone. And, as with most DE sailors, the most tangible part of their legacy is a little ship in the Hudson River. In a sense, SLATER is a great equalizer, because if you served on a DE, whether you rose to be CEO of a large corporation, or worked in the stock room of that same corporation, SLATER honors all of you.

It's not all bad. In a time of bloated budgets, deficit spending and bankruptcy, SLATER has lived within her means. There is no debt on the project. Getting to the shipyard is critical, but it is yet not a crisis. There is no leakage anywhere. All the bilges are dry. Corrosion from the inside has been minimalized. And we have a continuing program for repainting interior voids and bilges progressing, albeit slowly. We continue to find and deal with the worst corrosion. But we've always tried to stay ahead of the problems, and that's why the time is now to try and address the hull issues.



"Super" Dave Mardon rigging the safety railing on the accommodation ladder.

The maintenance crew is doing everything within their power to stabilize SLATER and keep the rust at bay. To that end, work continues in the aft machinery spaces, cleaning and painting the bilges and overhauling valves to improve water tight integrity. In addition, the engineers are repainting the high pressure air compressor and preparing the two mains in B-3 for painting. Topside, as I write, repainting of the portside and fantail maindeck is nearly complete and the deck force is moving up the starboard side. The boottop on the starboard side is complete. The accommodation ladder has been completed and is hanging back in its original location and ready to receive the whaleboat.

We've put the finishing touches on number six roller loader for the depth charge projector. And three new displays have been installed. On the Observation Deck we have a series of signs that show what the ship looked like when she came over from Greece. In the classroom, **Frank McClatchie** created a wonderful exhibit on the successes of high frequency radio direction finding against the U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic. And down in B-3 the engineers have created an exhibit that compares a lawnmower piston to a car piston to one of SLATER's pistons so visitors can compare the relative sizes. We're once again indebted to **Herb Dahlhaus** who managed to come up with the 268A piston and rod.



No computer simulation here. This is real history.

While we put a lot of our energy into restoration and maintenance, the real purpose of the ship is to educate. I've said before, SLATER is not a concrete and granite memorial designed by powerful people close to the seat of power. It is a creation of the veterans themselves, a living breathing ship. That life has been reaffirmed this summer by all the tourists who continue to visit the ship. Upon entering our Ship's Store, visitors sign the log book, which becomes a geographic chronicle of those who now cross the gangway in search of a connection with the past. Many come far and wide from places like Denmark, Tokyo, Berlin, and Rome, while others cross the border from Canada or the Hudson River from East Greenbush.

While most visitors come to us, we also bring USS SLATER to the classroom. For teachers who would like the SLATER experience and first hand stories in your school or organization, all you need to do is call. We will bring our *Traveling Classroom* program right to you! You might not smell lunch wafting from our galley, but we can assure you that the *Traveling Classroom* is an unforgettable experience. You may call **Linda Wruck** at 518-431-1943 to schedule. We'll bring you the veterans among our volunteer crew who are living characters. Aboard the ship or in the classroom, these veterans chat with you, demonstrate how to tie a bowline, or share the meaning behind the thirteen folds of the American flag. Radio operators, electrician's mates, sonarmen, bosun's mates, and submariners not only perform maintenance according to their rates on the ship, but several cross into the world of education, as tour guides. If you're lucky, you'll end up on a tour that is led by a guide who is a bit dirty from his day's work onboard ship. Visitors even get to see the galley in use as weekly chow is prepared for the entire crew.



This photo off USS EDSON shows the type of repair we hope to do on SLATER.



Down in the engineroom Mike Dingmon, Rocky Rockwood and Karl Herchenroder continue cleaning the main engines.

Our volunteers are an eclectic group. As you would expect, the core group is old DE sailors and retired Chiefs. But we have many who never served on DEs including Coast Guardsmen, Army Vets and many who have never served including homemakers who want to be part of the SLATER story. The boys who were seventeen and eighteen years of age when they joined the Navy have aged a bit, but their enthusiasm and dedication has not diminished one bit. These young men fast became the seasoned veterans who now, nearly seven decades later, teach the rest of us kids about the meaning of dedication and duty. Their duty included placing themselves in harms way, aware of the risks involved with antisubmarine warfare. Our veterans of all wars are living history; the rest of us are quite fortunate to continue each day to absorb their experiences and lessons.

And example of this passing of the torch is long time SLATER Trustee and volunteer tour guide, Alan Fox. The son of **Sam Fox** of the USS HAYTER a representative of our younger generation of volunteers, Alan says he is “enthusiastic to be an ambassador of the past. This is an important story. This is a story that not many know.” Alan’s sentiment and dedication are representative of the SLATER volunteer crew. I thank my good fortune every day that SLATER has such a dedicated, dynamic and multifaceted crew of volunteers.

If you want to become part of this crew here’s your opportunity. The Michigan Fall Work Week is scheduled for September 25-30, 2011. The event is for working sailors, male and female, who want to participate in SLATER’s restoration. This fall we anticipate scaling and repainting the portside boottop of the paint float, continuing to scale the starboard side main deck, and working in the bilges in the aft machinery spaces. You’ll live, work and eat aboard the ship just like you were back in service. If you’re interested in participating, contact me here at the ship at 518-431-1943, email shipsde766@aol.com or “Michigan” Dick Walker, phone (616) 676-1392, email cascadewalker@cs.com You’ll be part of the Tin Can tradition of taking care of ourselves.



Our poster girls for the Hull Fund Drive.

The Tin Can Navy has always been at the bottom of the heap when it comes to recognition, funding and supplies. There's a wonderful passage at the end of Theodore Roscoe's epic "United States Destroyer Operations in World War II." In it Roscoe quotes an unnamed submarine Admiral who recalled the plight of the DD sailors in the early days of the war. "Poor devils. The destroyer men certainly took it on the chin. They grabbed their grub on the fly, and they picked up their repairs where they could find them. Things were tough for submarines in the early days of the Pacific War, but there was usually free beer and entertainment waiting for our boys when they came in from patrol. When the destroyers came in there was no one on hand to meet the crews with tickets for a ball game or transportation to a rest camp. Like as not, they had no time for leave and liberty, and would turn right around and go out again. They put up a rugged battle in the North Atlantic and in the South Pacific."

And that's the spirit that drives SLATER to this day. But it all depends on the funding to keep SLATER sound and in good condition so we can pass her on to the next generation. She is the little ship that has overcome the odds to make good. Let's keep that spirit going. Please contribute to the SLATER HULL FUND through the home page of our website. It's a tradition of the Tin Can Navy. Nobody is going to do it for us. It's up to us to take care of our ship.

See you next month.