



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Our first winter on the Albany side.

As 2013 ends, once again we can't thank you enough for your support. The Winter Fund checks are arriving *en masse*; it is you, our members, who have kept this ship alive. Looking back on our 2013 revenue, we received exactly \$1,000 in government funding from a City of Albany Arts Grant for public programming. **Other than that, every dime we've spent this year came from earned income and contributions, plus all the donated services that keep us in the black.** Additionally, the upcoming dry-docking is being funded totally by your donations. SLATER exists because you want her to exist and we can't thank you enough for that.

We are now dealing with two pressing issues: getting the permitting to stay at the Albany berth year-round and preparing for the upcoming dry-docking. With regard to the permitting, you may be aware that the reason we move every winter is that the seawall where we are tied off in Albany isn't designed to handle the lateral stress that a mooring wharf can handle. The State's primary concern is that ice working between the ship and the seawall might damage the wall. Volunteer **Charlie Poltenson** obtained five years of ice data from the Coast Guard and Board President **Tony Esposito** set up meetings with representatives of the NYS Department of Transportation and prepared a report that covered all the contingencies should we have to leave in an emergency. Based on the Port of Albany being able to provide temporary berthing, the Coast Guard being able to break us out, some rearrangement of the mooring wires and the use of the Kasco circulators to keep ice from forming around the ship, DOT is approving our request. This gives us a chance to get some experience wintering on the Albany side. On a side note, we rigged the twelve circulators around the ship to keep the area between the ship and the seawall ice free. They worked perfectly during the first hard freeze when the river froze over. We're grateful for all the help DOT has given us through this process.

Since we made the decision to go into the shipyard, the focus of almost all our energy has been to get ready for that event. Our target date is still February 15th. The towing company has been contacted, as have the pilots. The proper paperwork is being submitted to the Coast Guard.



We sure have collected a lot of stuff over the past twenty years. It's been interesting finding out what we have and getting it organized.

All of the lower magazines and lower storerooms have been cleared out by the volunteers. To prepare for the hot work in the shipyard, the yard workers need access to the hull from the inside for fire watch. That's a six and a half-foot band inside the ship, all the way around for fire watch while the hot work is going on. There can't be any combustible material near the hull. Rosehn made arrangements to have four portable storage units, PODs, put in the parking lot and the volunteers have just about filled them with everything from archived financial records to spare 12" signal lamps. Boxes of rate badges, hundreds of uniforms, at least a thousand old signal flags, dishes, searchlights, engine room tools and decking have all been moved ashore. When filled, the plan is to move the PODs to their secure storage area.



Help offloading from Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs.



Our Navy friends have been a big help during this process of shipyard preparation.

“Boats” Haggart, Dick Walker, Gene Jackey, Larry Williams, Bob and Thomas Scian, Bill Wetterau, Chris Fedden, Dave Mardon, Jim Gelston, Ron Mazure, Walt Stuart, Chuck Teal, Barry Witte, Mike Marko, Gary Sheedy, Ron Prest, Ken Kaskoun, Austin Tyron, Paul Guarnieri, Erik Collin and the guy I always forget have done an incredible job clearing out those holds. We also had Sailors from **Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs**, who were aboard two days this month, toting and hauling the heavy stuff, thanks to the support of **CWORick Croft**. The engineers, **Ken Myrick, Karl Herchenroder, Gus Negus, Gary Lubrano** and **Mike Dingmon** have taken responsibility for the machinery spaces, clearing all cabinets and material away from the shell plating. They also unbolted all the manhole covers and left two nuts on each cover hand tight. As we go through this process of “unbuttoning” the ship, I can’t help but think how the battleship CALIFORNIA sank, partially because she was unbuttoned for bilge inspections just like we are.



Gary Sheedy taking apart his beautifully-restored reefer.



Bob Kibbey building shelving to help get our electronics spares organized.

Gary Sheedy deserves special mention for the difficulty he had clearing the engineering storeroom and removing the sheathing and insulation in the starboard reefer, after restoring it to **pristine condition**. And, poor **Bill Wetterau, Ron Mazure, Mike Marko** and **Mark Gardner** have been doing the lion’s share of the fiberglass insulation removal, a miserable job under any circumstances. We’re taking advantage of the mass movement of material to inventory what we have and get our storerooms better organized. To that end, **Bob Kibbey** is back building shelving against the

inboard bulkheads in three of the magazines. **Tommy Moore** is doing the same thing in B-2. There will be a lot of consolidation and reorganization of stuff when we put it all back together. It's also a chance to get all these spaces and bilges vacuumed out, and touch up the rusted areas with Corro Seal and paint.



Back in the B-3 bilges.

In an effort to save time and money we've hired our friends at West Central Environmental to do bilge and tank cleaning here in Albany. For 16 years, **Dave Cummings** and **Bill Goodine** have been handling our industrial waste disposal as a donation. Their first project was the B -3 bilge; they filled two 55-gallon drums with gunk and wiped the space down with cleaner. They will move into B-1 shortly after the holidays. We've had our gang working from the top down vacuuming and cleaning ahead of them so all the debris on the upper levels won't be

falling into the clean bilges.

Two marine surveyors, our insurance surveyor Claudio Crivici of Castlerock Risk Management and Charlie Deroko, have volunteered valuable advice. Also, **Ted Miles** of the San Francisco Maritime Museum sent us this encouraging email, "Doubler plates are a good thing! The Balclutha has been floating on a band of doubler plate since the early 1960s. Also, our tug Hercules has a waterline band around the hull, as well." And, in a wonderful case of inter-ship cooperation, **Lisa Simmons** and **Dewayne Davis** with the USS STEWART in Galveston sent us their whole blueprint index. STEWART has the same hull as SLATER and was donated back in the day when the donee got every scrap of paperwork on the ship. **Ed Zajkowski** went through the index and identified 16 critical drawings that we may need for the dry-docking, such as details about the sonar dome, hull frames and longitudinals. Lisa was kind enough to loan us those 16 blueprints which we had scanned by **Hal Hatfield's** son **Mike**.

Right now, based on Caddell's numbers for a 4' ice barrier and magnesium anodes, the cost is estimated at \$945,000. Throw in 85K for towing and insurance and \$17K for paint and we're at \$1,047,000. That doesn't include any survey work, welding inspections and contingencies. The concern is we will find something we haven't anticipated.

The shipyard is planning on nine weeks to do the work. I will be looking for groups of 4-6 volunteers to stay aboard the ship in one-week shifts to help out with incidental work that needs to be done and a couple guys to stay aboard for security on the weekends. Tony has graciously volunteered to shuttle people back and forth, so I expect to be aboard during the week and home on the weekends. Ed Zajkowski and Gary Sheedy have volunteered to stay aboard with me.



Tanner and Wetterau picked a nice day to work topside.



The insulation gang.

Meanwhile, a couple other projects are continuing. Doug Tanner, Tim Benner and SuperDave Mardon finally got that annoying leak repaired in the overhead of the Chief's Mess that was under the hedgehog projector. And, the radio gang must have missed an action dispatch about the planned dry-docking, because **Joe Breyer, Jerry Jones and Mike Wyles** are up in the shack like nothing unusual is happening aboard. But, there is a reason for their focus.

During the summer of 2012, we were approached by some ex-Navy hams who wanted to participate in the prestigious Italian Naval Old Rhythmers Club, an event that was a great success and generated a lot of publicity for us, including a QST article. One of the participants, **Stan Levandowski**, who served aboard USS BOXER LPH4, got very involved with us, trained to be a tour guide, and has been guiding tours every Thursday for the last season. He drove over an hour each way to get here. While he's also a lover of the old gear, Stan lamented that there was no fast and easy way for him to get quickly on the air between tours and promote the SLATER. So Stan and Jerry began working toward getting SLATER equipped with a "Real American" ham station, something that was state-of-the-art, powerful, and could operate both Morse CW and Single-Sideband voice. They imagined the ideal situation where one switch would be flipped to power up the station and then the state-of-the-art transceiver would automatically tune the antenna in milliseconds. One could be on the air within a minute or two. Stan felt strongly that the mission of the radio gang isn't just preservation; it's also promotion of the 'SLATER project' on the air.



Hiding the new radio setup.

Stan donated his Elecraft K2/10 low power QRP transceiver and, working with Dale Putnam WC7S of Cheyenne, Wyoming, Tony Baleno N3ZN, and Ken Kaplan WB2ART, a 100-watt linear amplifier was added. All the equipment was checked out and sent back to Stan's house. The downside was that Stan had been diagnosed with non-fatal leukemia late last summer, but was still giving tours even while undergoing chemo treatments in the fall. All was going well until he contracted pneumonia and things took a turn for the worse.

Jerry drove to Stan's house to pick up the equipment and the crew has been working feverishly to get it online. They reported to Stan, who was in the hospital, that they had made their first contacts a couple of weeks ago using the ship's original antennas. They are now on the air most Saturdays and have accomplished the first part of what Stan set out to do, spreading the word about SLATER. They report that the K2 transceiver is really an amazing piece of equipment.

Of course, a modern radio in a vintage shipboard radio room is most certainly out of place. We solved that problem by installing the entire station in a vintage 1945 locker cabinet. When those doors are closed, there is absolutely no evidence that SLATER has anything but vintage equipment in Radio Central. Now, some may argue that a historic ship should use its vintage equipment if it wants to put its signal on the air. We are striving to get SLATER's equipment up and running, but it's no longer 1945. Today's amateur radio bands are crowded and frequency agility is a must. With the old Navy radios, once set on frequency with the old LM frequency meter, you stay there. In addition, single-sideband was not invented until more than a decade later. On today's ham bands, there is little AM phone used. So, while the SLATER'S vintage equipment is partly operational and can be used for special occasions, if one of the functions of the radio shack is to promote the Museum and be a worldwide presence, communicating with modern equipment is as essential as being able to communicate with the original old gear. Look for SLATER's ham station, call sign WW2DEM (WORLD WAR 2 DESTROYER ESCORT MUSEUM) on 7062 kcs CW, 7262 kcs SSB, 14.062 mcs CW, and 14.262 mcs SSB. We have a nice QSL card which we send to all stations 'worked' who send us a SASE. Check our QRZ page.



Heather has to pack up a lot of artifacts.



Chief Smith grilling the Christmas party steaks.

We're losing a couple of friends this month, but not really. In addition to December 31 being **Mayor Jerry Jennings** last day in office, longtime friend, historian, author and Trustee **Robert F. Cross** is leaving his position as Water Commissioner. Thank to Bob's support over the past 16 years, many tasks that would have been almost impossible to accomplish were made easy thanks to the support of the Albany Water Department, **Bob, John Kosa, Mike Ruede** and **Butch**. But we're not really losing Bob. He's remaining on our Board and is still the Chairman of the Albany Port District Commission, and taking John Kosa with him to the Port.

We also had a couple special events this month. On Saturday December 7th we co-hosted the annual commemoration of the Pearl Harbor attack with Albany County Veterans Service Bureau and the Zaloga American Legion Post 1520. Seventy-two years after 2,403 Americans were killed in a surprise Japanese air attack on the Hawaiian naval base, only three veterans who lived through it are known to survive in the Capital Region.



The old and new Navies joined forces on Pearl Harbor Day. (Times Union Photograph)

Two, **Charles Ebel**, 93, who served aboard USS CURTISS and **William Langston**, 92, who was a fireman aboard WEST VIRGINIA BB-48, attended the 8:30 a.m. Pearl Harbor Day Memorial Observance. The SLATER Color Guard was out in force, joining with Sailors from our local Naval Reserve center to form a color guard of the old and new Navies. Our Board Chairman BJ Costello served as emcee for the event and did his usual professional job at moving the program along. The Pearl Harbor Survivors Association estimated last year that only 3,000 remain. The 53-year-old association disbanded in 2012 due to aging membership. Locally, we lost three Pearl Harbor survivors since last year. Our thanks to Charles Burkes and Harvey Martel who organized the event.



It's always nice when people recognize our effort. From left, Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation Ruth Pierpont, Mark Peckham, Acting Director, Bureau of Historic Sites, myself, and NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation Commissioner Rose Harvey.

We were also invited to a ceremony at Pebbles Island, the headquarters of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. We were among the six recipients of the 2013 New York State Historic Preservation Awards. Established in 1980, the State Historic Preservation Awards are given each year to honor excellence in the protection and rejuvenation of New York's historic and cultural resources. The citation for USS SLATER read in part,

“Fortunately, the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association, a nationwide organization dedicated to recognizing the importance of destroyer escorts and those who served on them, came to the ship's rescue. The Greek Navy donated the ship to the association, which raised money to bring it to New York and established the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum to take charge of its restoration. The project's great success is a testament to the effectiveness of the museum as well as the commitment of its volunteers. In addition to being an educational asset, the Slater has become an important patriotic symbol, honoring all those who serve the country in the military, especially the United States Navy.” Again, our thanks to longtime friend **Mark Peckham**, who shepherded us through the Landmark process and no doubt had a role in this recognition.

In better times the award, coupled with our National Landmark status, would have certainly garnered us some governmental financial support, but these aren't better times. So once again, I end with our thanks and the request that if you haven't sent that Winter Fund donation yet, please do so now, and be as generous as you can. Go to the donate button on the homepage at www.ussslater.org or print out the donation form there,

See you next month.