



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Vol. 16 No. 9, September 2013



USS EDSON in Bay City. I'm glad I don't have to paint it.

September always seems to be my travel month and this year was no exception. The month started with a trip to Michigan at the request of Trustee **Ron Zarem**. Ron also serves on the board of the Saginaw Valley Naval Museum, a group that brought the destroyer USS EDSON DD946 to Bay City last year. At the request of the group, he asked me to come up and look over the ship and their operation, and give some opinions on how I'd deal with their situation. As much as Ron has done for us all organizing the work weeks over the past 16 years and despite my suspicion at his involvement with "that other ship," I could hardly say no to a man who has done so much for SLATER. So they bought me a plane ticket and off I went to donate a couple

of days to the USS EDSON. It only seemed right considering how much charity I have received over my lifetime. The visit resulted in a 15-page report that I presented to their board and a real feeling of relief that I do not have to start another one of these projects from scratch. There's no place like home, except for one thing. I finally understood how an expert is defined--a guy 100 miles from home. I found it amazing how receptive these Michiganites were to all my suggestions and ideas, as opposed to my own crew who are decidedly less receptive to a lot of my schemes.

We timed the trip to coincide with Ron's trip east for the Albany DESA Convention. Ron likes to take the high road through Canada, passport now required. The man is an animal when it comes to driving. Except for two brief stops, he went 12 hours without a break, even though I offered to take a turn. Might be an issue of trust there. I trust



The honeymoon ended at Niagara Falls.

you with my ship, but not my car. Now, Michigan Field Day participants take note here. As we got close to the border Ron asked if I'd ever been to Niagara Falls. Since the falls aren't haze gray and don't carry any masts, stacks or ordnance, of course the answer was "no." So Ron felt obliged to broaden my horizons and take me to see Niagara Falls. I mean, this was a special gesture since my own wife has never taken me to Niagara Falls. The reason this becomes significant for all the members

of the Michigan Chapter of DESA is that you regular readers of SIGNALS know that each spring there is intense competition as to who will be "Tim's Favorite" at the end of the work week. As Ron has never received the award, most of his shipmates might view his taking me to see the falls as an attempt to seal the deal in 2014. However, the marriage was short lived and Ron filed for divorce shortly after the obligatory picture was taken.



Part of the crew at the DESA Convention.

Arriving in Albany, we crashed into the 38th Annual Destroyer Escort Sailors Association Convention. 221 shipmates, wives and families were in attendance for this four day event. Saturday was the local crew's last big clean up day before the DESA group arrived. **Erik Collin** and crew had the ship as clean and well-painted as she has ever been, and we thank all the volunteers who were involved in the clean up. On Monday September 9th we welcomed the advance contingent of the DESA Convention group aboard in the form of the crew of the USS COOLBAUGH DE217. The shipmates,

wives and families enjoyed a morning aboard the ship before adjourning to the Riverfront restaurant barge for lunch. That evening the Trustees of the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum held our quarterly board meeting in conjunction with the DESA convention since many of our out-of-town Trustees, **John Cosgrove**, **Earl Johnson**, and **Ron Zarem** were in town for DESA and could participate in person. Of note is the addition to the Board of **Sheridan Biggs**, a long time SLATER supporter and former officer who served on the destroyer LEWIS HANCOCK DD675. Following the meeting we all adjourned to a lively speech given by Chairman **BJ Costello's** brother, VADM **Barry Costello**, on the current state of our Navy and then to a wine and cheese reception.



A last chance for a whaleboat ride for the old salts.



Gary Sheedy's walk-in cooler is a display masterpiece.

Tuesday was the day aboard SLATER for the DESA men. They arrived by bus at 1100 with box lunches in hand and were soon scattered through the SLATER reminiscing about their days aboard their particular DE. The local volunteers had prepared a special treat for these veterans, a last chance for a whaleboat ride. In groups of six, **Gus Negus, Boats Haggart, Erik Collin** and **Bill Wettreau** took them on a thirty-minute trip upriver and around the SLATER so they had a chance to get some great photos. The whaleboat performed flawlessly that day, a testament to all the work **Rocky** and the engineers have put into her. The activity of the boat coming and going captured everyone's attention and made the day special for all of us. And our tour route has a new highlight. Tuesday was also the unofficial opening of **Gary Sheedy's** restored reefer deck. Only when one goes down that ladder can one appreciate the thought, planning, time and effort that has gone into this painstaking restoration. The space is complete with replica fruits and vegetables, a produce scale, period food crates, and stenciled burlap sacks. The guy has been collecting display items for years. We've just started taking small groups of visitors down on a limited basis and they are all as awestruck by Gary's effort as we are. Of course, we should acknowledge the contributions of **Dave Jeffries, Wiley Johnson**, and all the other volunteers who helped Gary along the way.

Wednesday was the quiet day as we prepped for the Thursday Memorial Service, setting up a tent, 200 chairs and benches, and putting the finishing touches on the ship to make sure everything was perfect. The buses arrived at 0830 as over 200 DESA members and family arrived to honor their lost shipmates. An early morning shower sent us scrambling as we improvised a tarp over the quarterdeck so the ceremony could proceed on schedule. DESA President **Steve Hoback** was master of ceremonies and New Jersey Chapter President **Tim Slisky** read a tribute to each of the destroyer escorts lost in action prior to the tolling of the ships bell and laying of a carnation on the

waters that flow to the sea. DEHM Trustee **Steve Long** read a passage from Arnold Lott's classic "Brave Ship Brave Men" about how a father whose son was killed aboard USS AARON WARD saved one of the ship's anchors. Steve concluded by observing that we did a whole lot better than an anchor. We saved a whole ship. Following the Memorial Service families were invited to tour the ship. That evening was the gala banquet, and **Phyllis Gruber** and **Dori Glaser** presented SLATER with a \$1,000 check from the DESA Ladies Auxiliary. The high point for me was the presentation of a framed **Len Tantillo** print so Senior Chief Gunner's Mate **Sam Saylor** for his work in making the SLATER Museum a reality. He couldn't be with us, but the picture was sent to him in Oklahoma to let him to that we still think of him as our favorite Chief.



"Boats" Haggart and SLATER former crew-member Virgil Vonder Haar at morning colors. The USS COOLBAUGH Crew.

We hosted a shipload of events this month, in addition to our continuing program of youth group overnight encampments. For the second year in a row the crew of the aircraft carrier USS TARAWA CV40 included a visit to USS SLATER as a part of their reunion on September 11th. Over sixty members of the crew of USS HOLLISTER DD788 came aboard Thursday September 26th. And **Carl Slack** brought the crew of the USS RICHARD L PAGE DEG5/FFG5 aboard on Saturday September 28th. Carl even talked six of his shipmates into working aboard for a day. We promptly sent them down into B-3 to scale and sand some of the fire pumps in preparation for painting. Their memorial service was particularly poignant as one of their shipmates, **Martin Bodrog** who was going to be at the reunion, was a victim of the Washington Navy Yard shooting.



On September 25th you would have thought for sure that SLATER was an APD as our decks were covered in Marine camouflage as we were visited by over 100 cadets of the Amsterdam High School Marine Corps Junior ROTC detachment. As would be expected, they were a well-disciplined group, full of questions and excited about the ship. We also hosted two groups of travel writers. In the first, **Bob Dawson** received rave reviews from Ashley when she wrote "Mr. Dawson was stationed on a destroyer during

We looked like an APD with the Amsterdam JROTC Marines aboard.

Korea and is a wealth of knowledge and trivia. Save at least two hours for your tour of the USS Slater. The Slater is the only warship I've visited where you can actually access the majority of the ship. Many ships turned museums are not fully restored, but the Slater offers a great overview of what ship life was really like." The second was a group of Australian tourism folks from Albany, in the State of Western Australia. Down under it is pronounced the same way it is in Minnesota, They spent the afternoon with Coastie **Dick Walker** and said they had a great time exchanging stories about the land down under. And finally, we welcomed Smithsonian Magazine subscribers aboard for free on September 28th as we participated in Smithsonian Magazine Museum Day. Participation was well above last years with almost 100 subscribers taking advantage of the program.

I attended the annual Historic Naval Ships Conference on September 18-21 with my old friend Ed Zajkowski. The host ships this year were the Battleship New Jersey Museum and the Independence Seaport Museum, operators of the cruiser OLYMPIA and the submarine BECUNA. I attended seminars on how the recent flooding aboard the Battleship Texas was handled, how the carrier INTREPID prepared for and dealt with the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, an update on the material and political state of the Cruiser OLYMPIA, how the multitude of smaller museum ships in New York Harbor fared during Hurricane Sandy, a session on developing continuity and resiliency plans, and End Of Life Issues For Historic Ships: Reefing, scrapping are the most dignified and economically preferable way to dispose of ships which can no longer be repaired, and Display Techniques, Some that work and others that don't.



The rescue of Louise Farrell's rowing shell.

Through all this the maintenance crew continued to work their magic around the ship. Early one morning eagle-eyed "**Boats**" Haggart spotted a capsized single rowing shell floating against the seawall. Always the optimist, "**Boats**" speculated that there might be a body under it. He, Super **Dave Mardon, Nelson Potter** and **Erik Collin** duly managed to grab it with a grappling hook and pull it down to the paint float. Fortunately there was no body attached. Nevertheless the police were notified and two cruisers arrived

shortly thereafter. It turned out the boat had been stolen from the Albany Rowing Club boathouse up by the boat launch. The boat's grateful owner, **Louise Farrell**, arrived shortly afterward to retrieve her boat, and the incident ended happily for all involved.



Earl Herchenroder painting the amidship's 20mm guns.



Followed by Bill Wetterau painting the gun tub decks.

The paint crew did great getting the ship ready for the DESA Convention. Bill Wetterau, Earl Herchenroder, Erik Collin, Don Miller, Walt Stuart and Ron Mazure all did their part to make sure SLATER put her best foot forward for the convention. Ron has continued scaling waterways, now working his way up the starboard side. We got all the amidships 20mm gun tubs repainted, as well as the boat deck forward of the stack.. They are now working on the 20mm ready service lockers.



Gene Jackey, Chris Fedden and Don Miller cleaning up ready service locker dogs.



Marlinspike seamanship in the Bosun's Locker.

Doug Tanner's continuing out-of-town consulting trips and road trips to Kansas have left the ship fitters going in multiple directions. When we last left off they had three projects going. The first

was the replacement of the fuel tank vent screens, one of the few projects that moved forward without Doug's participation. **Clark Farnsworth, Chris Fedden, Earl Herchenroder** and **Gene Jackey** had that project moving nicely and it is now complete. Then there is the continuing chock replacement project. Number four on the starboard side forward had just been completed, and the next chock was on the bench for trimming. Of course the project can't move forward without Doug's expertise. Then there is the leak under the hedgehog projector into the CPO Mess. After welding on several pounds of rod and failing to stop the leak, Doug concluded that the only fix was the removal of the doubler and replacement of the wasted deck. Much to Erik's chagrin, about two weeks before the DESA Convention Doug chopped away at the hedgehog projector base to access the wasted area, and then left town leaving burned paint and a rusty jagged cut in his wake. That project can't proceed without Doug's expertise.



"It's all on you Dave. I'm outta here."

On a whim one Monday when Gene Jackey had nothing better to do, I suggested that he might want to open up the aft whaleboat davit pedestal, scale and Corrosealed inside the pedestal to arrest the corrosion. This Gene willingly did, and when Doug returned to town, he determined that the davit pedestal was so badly deteriorated that it was a more immediate crisis than the leak under the hedgehog projector. The hold-down bolts all needed replacement and the lower section of the pedestal needed replacement. He cut a large opening into the pedestal to do a thorough inspection, burned more paint just before the DESA Convention,

devised a plan to replace the deteriorated section of the pedestal in two parts without lifting the davit, ordered the replacement pieces, braced the davit head from the 01 level with a pipe jack, welded braces to the davit on the main deck, and then left town on a consulting job. The project cannot continue without Doug's expertise. Seeing the writing on the wall, Rocky has made arrangements to have the whaleboat stored ashore at Scarano's boatyard this winter. Of course this project is near and dear to my heart since I'm usually the one in the whaleboat when it is being raised and lowered.



Dave would rather work on the deck patch.

Then there is that wasted section of deck on the 01 level portside just forward of the stack. I figured the boys could handle this in Doug's absence. I instructed **Super Dave** where to cut, and he, **Gene Jackey, Boat's Haggart** and **Earl Herchenroder** rerigged the lifelines, a stanchion and removed the wasted section of deck. When Doug returned his comment was "I thought we were going to cut that a foot further back. Then he went back to working on the davit pedestal. We'll save that job for the fall work week crew while Doug is out of town. Regarding our two most pressing issues, the drydocking and where we are going to be this winter, we have movement on both fronts. Tony Esposito has been in continuing phone contact with Caddell's shipyard, and

their estimators are working on the information we sent them, and we anticipate setting up a conference call shortly. Regarding winter berthing, we met with **Rich Hendrick** and **Bill Ring** from the Port, and learned they can accommodate us on an emergency basis. We are preparing a report for NYS Department of Transportation detailing our mooring plan and proposing that we remain at the Snow Dock as we monitor the potential ice build up to the north. If it's a heavy ice season, the Port will provide temporary berthing and we will plan as necessary. We are indebted to **Charlie Poltenson** of the Coast Guard Auxiliary for his assistance and providing ice data that for the past several years.

We've had a lot of guys on the binnacle list. **John "The Marine" Thompson** went in for heart surgery and had six bypasses done. Likewise for **Ken Kaskoun**, and **Chuck Boone** who underwent emergency bypass surgery. We understand all are recovering well. Radioman **Joe Breyer** had an encounter with a table saw that resulted in the reattachment of a couple of fingers at Albany Med. Gives new meaning to the word "fist" as relating to a radio operator's transmitting hand. We've been missing the guide services of our veteran PT Boater **Jack Madden** who was out for several weeks but has returned to his duties on Friday. And **Clark Farnsworth** took a fall at the Schenectady Yacht Club that resulted in six stitches, but did not cause him to cancel his trip to Florida for the USS LEYTE Reunion. All this had us debating whether we need to put an annual limit on the number of "Get Well" cards an individual is entitled to. We lost former Coast Guard Chief **Larry Stiles**. Larry used to come up all the way from Alabama. The long-time messcook during our spring and fall work weeks passed

away this month. He was signed up for the fall work week beginning October 6th. Our condolences go out to the Stiles family.



None of this would be happening without our volunteers.

Finally thanks to the efforts of Chief Bernie Smith, the crew treated themselves to our 16th annual volunteer appreciation dinner aboard the ship on September 21st. This year featured warm weather and Smitty's traditional lasagna dinner, served on the messdeck and in the Briefing Room for those who are having difficulty with ladders. Many volunteers brought their spouses, families, and significant others to show them our efforts this past year. We're trying to get ahead of the game, so we've already scheduled next year's dinner. Mark your calendars now for Saturday, September 13, 2014.

See you next month.