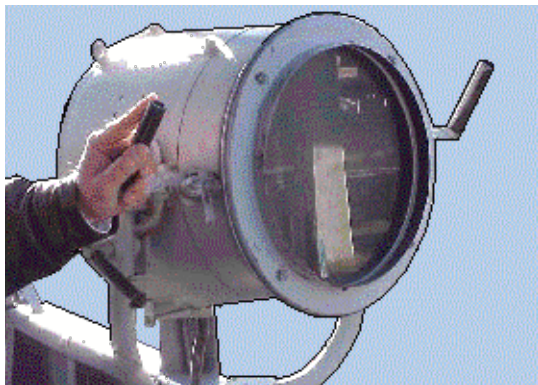


SLATER SIGNALS



The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123 Vol.
17 No. 6, June 2014

We opened Season 17 on Friday the 4th of July, 2014.

Collectively, we did it! Since 2010 we raised \$1.3 million, laid out a work plan, got USS SLATER towed to the shipyard, blasted and painted the hull, surveyed her, reinforced the waterline and several other suspect areas, did about 500 other odd jobs around the ship, painted her up in camouflage and brought her back looking unique and better than ever.



USS SLATER in Drydock Number 6 ready for launch.

A great deal of credit has to go to President Steve Kalil and VP of Engineering Joe Eckhardt of Caddell Drydock and Repair Company for operating a shipyard with the highest level of integrity. There was no contract, only a priced-out work list, payment schedule and a handshake.

And, there were no surprises. The price he quoted was the price we paid. I can't imagine a better shipyard experience. It turns out that repair work with no contract is a common practice at Caddell's, a testament to their integrity. Yard management worked closely with us arranging for us to live aboard for the entire time. It was as good as it could be in the shipyard.



Vice President in charge of Engineering Joe Eckhardt on launch day.



Shipyard President Steve Kalil personally overseeing SLATER's fleeting.

Another interesting aspect of being in the yard was a feeling of safety in the middle of New York City. Here at home in the suburbs we all lock our doors every night. Now, I don't want to imply that the west end of Richmond Terrace isn't the garden spot of Staten Island, but it wasn't the kind of street you'd take an evening stroll after dark. Yet somehow, within the shipyard, there was a complete feeling of safety. Security cameras monitored the yard, but at night the gates were unlocked and our ship wide open for ventilation. Nobody seemed to bother anything. And the yard workers themselves were as honest as any group of workers I've ever met. When they borrowed a tool it was always returned. Unlike the stories of Navy yards, theft was never an issue.

The month of June began with our ninth week in the drydock. We had Ed Zajkowski, Wayne White, Ron Prest, Thomas Scian, Bill Haggart, and Gary Dieckman aboard that week. By this point the steel work was pretty much complete and the ship was turned over to the subcontractor Union Maintenance for final sandblasting and painting. The yard crew began

cleaning out the drydock and working on the rudders. Union Maintenance blasted and primed all the new weld work on the doublers and they painted out the chain locker and primed ballast water tank C-10W. The yard also removed the capstan for blasting and painting. The volunteers worked on using Epoxy on the snaking tie down bar to keep rainwater from streaking the hull, as a stopgap, until permanent repairs can be made. That week it rained all Thursday morning so the yard worked under the hull out of the rain bolting on the magnesium anodes and they painted out the white in the depth charge magazine. The volunteers cleaned in compartment C-201L, and then trashed the place as we worked to fix a split drain line we discovered. That same afternoon the volunteers raised both anchors and chain with our windlass.



Harry Rodriguez lifts SLATER's capstan off for blasting.



The depth charge magazine bilge after scaling and painting.

That weekend the only SLATER guy getting a paycheck, me, and Eddie Z both took the weekend off. Brandon Easley and Joe Delfoe joined the crew for the weekend. Boats Haggart had a new person to tell his sea stories to in Joe Delfoe, a DE Vet off MAURICE J MANUEL. Ron Prest and Wayne White got the 2 seats primed/bolted in on the flying bridge. We tightened the chain stoppers to snug up the anchors. Joe and Brandon did chipping along the port side main deck. They spotted the three restored watertight doors and 2 scuttles on the 01 level. Harry Rodriguez, the crane operator lifted them aboard without us knowing it.

They got the 3 doors re-hung on the galley, hedgehog locker and gear

locker. Boats got the absentee pennant flying and made breakfast and lunch. Down below the yard crew got the entire boot top roughed on and started the cutting in on the bottom edge on port side. They got up to the start of the port roll chock with the cutting in. We gave them bottles of water as Brandon and Joe brought more food including five 32-pack cases of water. They came back Sunday to finish the rest of the cutting in on the bottom side of the boot top.



The dock slowly sinking on launch day.

On week ten Steve Klauck and Bill Wetterau stepped in for Ron Prest and Wayne White. The big event of the week was fleeing SLATER on Wednesday the 9th.

Fleeting is the process of sinking the drydock so the ship floats, moving it forward four feet and setting it back down on the blocks so the areas of the ship that were obstructed by the blocks can now be sandblasted and painted. We were scheduled for 0800 but intense rain all

morning set it back to noon. Our water and sewage were secured for most of the day. The ship was floated for leak checks by us. We checked every space, tank and void three times and Thomas Scian checked all the engine sump tanks. No problems except issues with the stern tubes and the problem of a pinhole leak in a water tank. By 1500 we were back on the blocks ready for work the next day. Ed commented that fleeing a ship is as boring as watching grass grow.

The leaky stern tubes were a result of an attempt to seal them with Splash Zone Epoxy. Following the fleeing, the decision was made to seal the stern tubes with a steel enclosure welded to the hull and shafts. The yard crew came with new devices to seal the stern tubes from letting water enter. These were pre-formed 3/8" metal pieces that, once welded, will be a solid barrier to protect the ship. A solid weld around the outside of the tube, a solid weld around the shaft and all pieces welded. We placed a pipe nipple on the flat piece for testing. The entire tube was pressure tested to 1.5 pounds. Not to worry though. The whole process is reversible if we ever find a benefactor with deep enough pockets to get the ship underway. The volunteer crew worked on doing multiple tasks inside the ship including insulation repairs and preservation in storerooms.



John Thomas, Gustafo and Oscar of Union Maintenance...



... laid out and painted the hull camouflage according to Ed Zajkowski's plans.

At the same time, yard workers Oscar, Gustafo and John Thomas began laying out the camouflage pattern on the port side hull. The camouflage effort is primarily a result of Ed's dedication and Oscar's skill. Ed spent a month working from SLATER's original photographs as he painstakingly laid out the plans in two large 13' drawings. Shipyard painter Oscar used magnets to hold the drawing on the drydock wall and, working off the basket of a JLG man lift, transferred the lines to the ship. We didn't understand how he could be so accurate without the drawings for reference while he was suspended in the air until he showed us that he had photographed the drawings with his smart phone and thus had a ready reference in the basket. We old guys would have never thought of that. The resulting hull camouflage is a tribute to their combined creative skills and dedication.

Another dramatic moment occurred when I was standing outside the galley and I heard John Thomas screaming profanities from the dock floor. Now John Thomas is not the kind to use profanity unless seriously called for. A look down revealed that Ed's precious one of kind 13' portside drawing had blown off the dock wall into a pool of water. Ed retired to his stateroom, presumably to console himself in a bottle of whatever was available. I raced down to the dock floor and helped John lay out the drawing over a grating and weigh it down with scrap metal to dry it out and keep it from being blown apart. It survived the experience as a battered artifact testifying to our shipyard struggle.

Meanwhile back in Albany, there was no ship but several dedicated volunteers; Doug Tanner, Gary Sheedy, Tim Benner, Dave Mardon and Earl Herchenroder spent the yard period working to reinforce the aft gangway to get everything ready before the ship returns. **Erik Collin** repainted the bollards, gangway and seawall, and **Kevin Sage** was called in to repaint the Visitor Center.



Ed Zajkowski camouflages the stack.



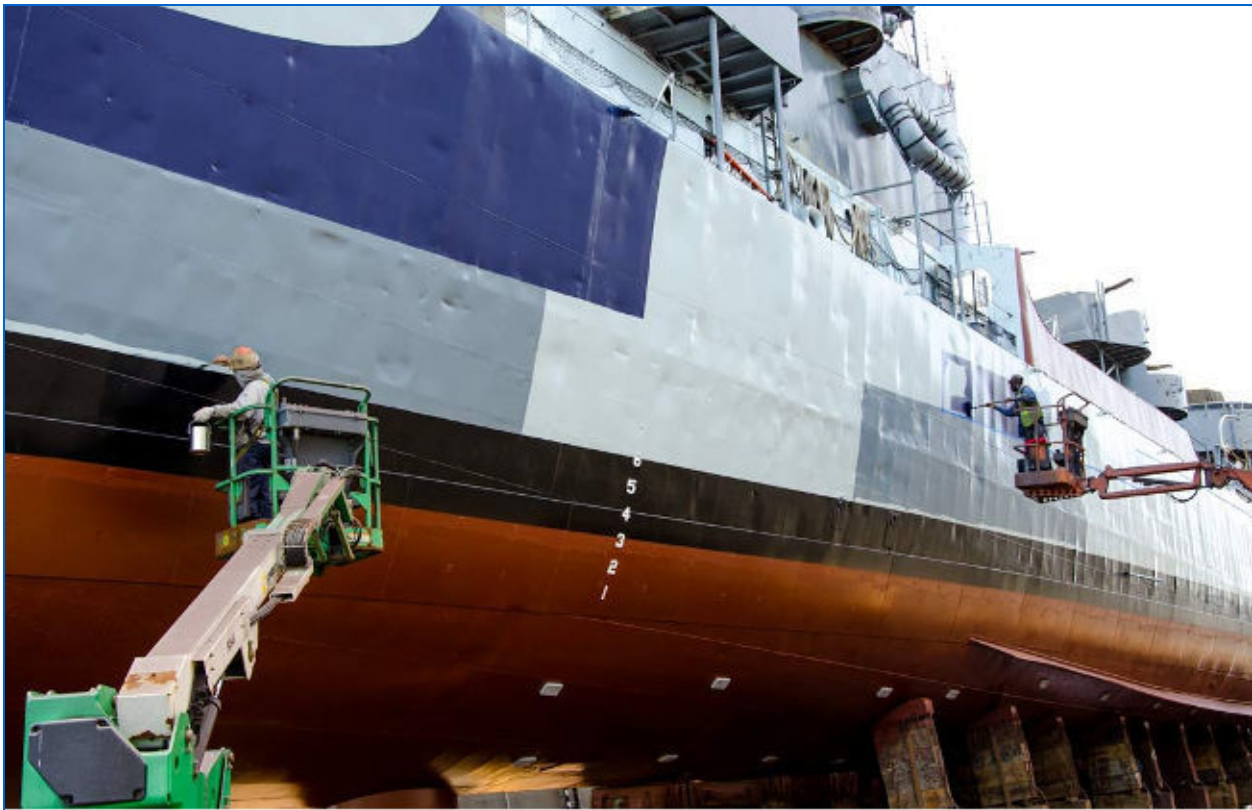
Ron Prest works on the after deckhouse.

The end of the week marked the conclusion of all below-waterline work. Nothing was left now but camo and deck painting. The camo pattern was fully laid out on the port side, ready for colors 5-H and 5-N. Painting was held up due to high humidity. **Ron Frankosky** worked aboard cleaning up in C-203L. Ed fixed a huge “Last Supper“ as **Boats Haggart, Steve Klauck, Wayne White** and **Bill Wetterau** left that Friday.

Week eleven began with a surprise visit by Mary Habstritt and one of her volunteers from the Coast Guard buoy tender USCGC LILAC. They appeared on the drydock wall and we invited them for dinner in the middle of a torrential rainstorm and gave them the traditional SLATER tour. Monday it was all about painting as the contractors completed the pale gray and haze gray on the portside and laid out the pattern on the starboard side. We made the decision to do the superstructure painting ourselves to save time and money and the volunteers painted out all the pale gray on the foc's'cle and the portside forward deckhouse.



Out of the Dry Dock.



Oscar and John Thomas at work. Nobody cuts a straighter line than Oscar.

That Monday we were still in drydock as the yard workers finished the portside painting, including the hull and draft numbers, and we got our name back on the stern. Eddie Z, Ron Prest, John Burroughs, Bob and Thomas Scian worked on painting the main deck house. They finished the pale gray on Monday and haze gray on Tuesday. The camouflage design was completed on the port side, and it was beautiful, a work of art. The old girl looks like a kid again with her new makeup. The hull was so new and good-looking, it seemed a shame to put her in water.





Afloat again, USS SLATER leaves the drydock.

On Wednesday June 18th, around noon the yard flooded the drydock and we were floated out. We made a last check of all the tanks, bilges and voids as she floated off, but no problems were found. After 11 weeks we were starting to feel like we had grown roots to the drydock. The Caddell yard tug and two assist tugs provided by Henry towing moved us west one slip to floating pier “B” where we moored portside to. It didn’t take the yard long to get us our electrical and water back. With 90% humidity and 60% chance of rain in the morning, it was a less than perfect day for painting but **Bill Wetterau, Ron Prest, Gary Dieckman, Thomas Scian and John Burroughs** continued cutting in the superstructure camouflage under overhangs. By that Friday the volunteers had finished camouflage on the main deck house and moved up to the 01 Level. That Saturday **Barry Witte** brought aboard volunteers **ENS William Gregory, Steve Bologna-Jill, Jesse Futia and George Gollas.** Working with the week 11 crew, they provided the youth and muscle to finish the superstructure painting. We used a modified 32/3d pattern, leaving some areas haze gray that were just painted last year including the stack and pilothouse exterior.



Bernarda Thomas and her cleaning crew did an amazing job.



Ed Zajkowski after SLATER's hull had been primed with black Epoxy. She got three coats.

The week wrapped up with Bernarda "Bernice" Thomas and her diligent crew of ladies doing an outstanding job of cleaning three months of shipyard dirt and grime from all our living and display spaces. Meanwhile, fire hose and applicators went back in the racks, display gear came out and decks were being cleaned for painting. The high point of the week was when **Barry Witte** presented Ed with the "Meals on Keels" award for keeping us alive for the past 11 weeks. The end was in sight.



Visitors from Spokane, Charles Stone and Joe Scott, and volunteer guide John Burroughs.

Week 12 was spent preparing for departure. The yard continued deck painting and we did camouflage touch up. Had some out-of-town guests, **Charles Stone** and **Joe Scott**. Charles' father and Joe's great-grandfather served as an MM on USS MELVIN R. NAWMAN in WWII. Charles and Joe made the pilgrimage all the way from Spokane, Washington to see SLATER, and booked their flight months ago when we were sure SLATER would be home by now. **Rosehn Gipe**

brought them down from Albany and it was only fitting that **John Burroughs** should be their guide. John had served aboard the NAWMAN as an officer in the fifties. Talk about customer service and 'what are the odds' of them finding a guide off their ship. Thursday **Wayne White** reported back aboard. **Ed Zajkowski**, **Thomas Scian** and **John Burroughs** spent the day

touching up the camouflage, and Thomas completed restoration of the aft head porthole.



The riding crew that brought USS SLATER home.

The entire plan for the trip home began to gel late in the week. **Rob Goldman** of NYS Marine Highway planned to use the tugs **MARGOT** and **FRANCES** to move **SLATER** north. Departure was set for 0500 Monday morning, June 30th, with arrival in Albany scheduled for late that evening. The pilots were

lined up. The yard completed deck painting that Saturday afternoon. We celebrated our last quiet evening in the yard with a small nucleus crew. Around noon on Sunday **Tony Esposito** arrived with a small bus with the riding crew that brought our total to 24 for the trip home. Everybody settled in that evening for 0400 reveille. As we prepared to get underway, the only people on the dock were two yard electricians tasked with cutting the shore tie and making sure we didn't try to steal the shore power cable. The engineers cranked up the emergency diesel generator, we shifted the load, cut loose the shore tie, water line and gangway, let go all lines, and pilot **Tim Newman** of the Sandy Hook Pilots Assn. eased us away from the pier and into the Kill Van Kull.



We lost a dedicated shipmate when Gus Negus passed away.

At sunrise the colors were hoisted at half-mast in honor of Merrill "Gus" Negus, our longtime engineer who had passed away the day before. It was like a scene from a movie when engineers **Gary Lubrano**, **Mike Dingmon** and **Ken Myrick** came into the ship's office to relay the sad news. Gus was one of the most competent engineers ever to report aboard, back in 1999. Gus was chiefly responsible for getting the emergency diesel generator running, and his attention to detail in the engine room

restoration earned him the nickname “Rembrandt.” His death came as a real blow to us because he should have been with us in B-4, standing his watch. Now his watch is over.

As we sailed past Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty towards the Battery, New York City was just waking up to a sight that hadn’t been seen since 1945, the sight of a destroyer escort in camouflage paint making her way up the Hudson. We drew some attention as all the major news networks had their helicopters flying over us and we made the national news. At Yonkers we changed pilots and our old friend **Paul Capel** arrived to bring the ship into Albany. **Ed Zajkowski**, our technical consultant turned cook, continued to keep the expanded crew fed all day. The voyage was without incident, which is the way all voyages should be. We exchanged cannon salutes with West Point and fired a few other times to the delight of crowds ashore. A check of our Facebook page shows how popular we were with hundreds of people posting photos and many chasing the ship for miles. We are particularly indebted to volunteer **Bill Maloney** who, in addition to chasing this ship that Monday, provided weekly documentation of the entire drydock process, giving us a complete photo record of the work in progress and the faces of so many of the yard workers we came to know.



George Christophersen ready to fire the West Point salute.



Crowds gather ashore to watch our passing.

For the trip home RM 1 Joe Breyer handled our radio traffic.

Unfortunately, the trip occurred on a Monday following amateur radio “field day” weekend. This is by far the ham radio event with the highest participation. Hams across the country go to vacant fields to erect various antennas and communication centers powered by portable generators and simulate emergency communications for 24 hours. After a grueling weekend of radio, few hams are motivated to get back on the air for a while. The result was a disappointing 36 contacts. We had expected to be inundated with a pileup, which did not materialize.



Carol Venezia shared this overhead shot from the Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park, one of many that appeared on Facebook.

he evening grew hot and humid as we approached Albany. We reached the Port around 2300. Paul looked over the situation and elected to tie up on the Rensselaer side, just south of our traditional winter berth. This last minute change caused some hurried shifting of fenders, but Paul did an excellent job of mooring SLATER to the wharf using the tug MARGOT as a fender so there wasn't a mark in our new camouflage paint. The FRANCES slipped away

into the night, and her place was taken by BENJAMIN ELLIOT in the morning. The only problem with that was a barge was scheduled to tie up at our location at 0600 which meant getting underway for the home berth an hour before we were expected. I probably should have notified Rosehn.

We secured the generator and nobody got much sleep that night in the humidity. I slept on deck for the first time since the overhaul began. We were up at 0500 and Ed made his last breakfast. I called Rosehn just before 0600 and she was already in the office. She made some hurried media calls and Paul got us underway at 0550. As we eased upriver the port seemed to explode with activity as three large barges and ships all got underway at the same time. The volunteers we had left behind were all waiting for us. **Doug Tanner** had arranged for **Flach Crane Service** to have a rig waiting in the wharf to lift the gangways. It took Doug about an hour to have the gangways, water and sewer hooked up. **Barry Witte, Gary Sheedy, Larry Williams** and **Ken Kaskoun** got the electrical service and communications cable hooked up. The media attention we received was wonderful. We set about resetting the displays and emptying out the shore PODs in anticipation of a July 4th opening. We've got a lot of lost time to make up for, but with this momentum, we think we can do it.

Again, we can't thank you enough for the support and encouragement you have given us through this evolution. We are now in a position most historic ships will envy. The drydocking project is complete, paid for and we still have \$1.5 million in our endowment fund. There's something special about the spirit of this ship that enabled this to happen. It's an intangible combination of patriotism, humor, toughness and a stretch back to the youth of our supporters. I think John Burroughs summed it up best in the shipyard when he observed, "Navy makes men out of boys, SLATER makes boys out of men." We'll keep doing that for everyone who comes across our gangway.

See you next month.



The homeward riding crew.



This picture says it all. It was amazing.