

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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The big news for this month was the arrival of the motor whaleboat, the return of the Michigan crew, Mike Stenzel's HNSA award and our annual volunteer party. I also made a side trip to the annual Historic Naval Ship's Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia. And no, it wasn't another vacation!

First, a word of thanks to all of you in the crew. We had a great month in September with the DESA Convention and over twenty-five individual ship reunions. It was hard work for all of you who got the ship ready, staffed the gift shop, handled the tours and parked the cars. But the comments, smiles and dollars say the effort was well worth it. Ticket, gift shop and contributions totaled \$22,930 for September. That doesn't count the contributions received in the mail, or the endowment fund, which is just gathering up steam. We had a couple weeks when the contribution box made over a thousand dollars.

We hope all of you got to experience the positive feedback about the condition of the ship. These men and their families were amazed and touched to be able to step back in time aboard a real DE. Your efforts made many a man happy and turned a lot of skeptics into believers. Thanks to all.

On Thursday, September 28th, our whaleboat went back into the water. We are indebted to the folks at *Scaranos' boatyard* who got the job done and within budget. However the real hero of the job was **Larry "Rocky" Rockwood**, ex-sonarman off *USS COONER DE-172*. He put in as many or more man-hours than the Scarano folks did, caulking, sanding and painting. The boat would never be in the shape it's in without him. He did most of the tedious time-consuming stuff, leaving the Scarano crew to utilize their time on the finish carpentry. As a veteran of many years working in boatyards in Maine, Rocky provided the technical expertise we needed on the project. Even Rick Scarano, who was at first a little reluctant to let our volunteers into the yard said, "We couldn't have done it within budget without Rocky." They even gave him a "Scarano Brothers" tee shirt when they finished the project. We only hope that they don't try to "hire" him away from us.

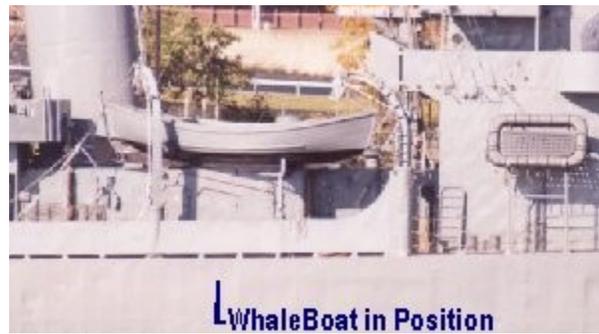
Seaworthy Again - 28 Sep 2000



Towing Her Back



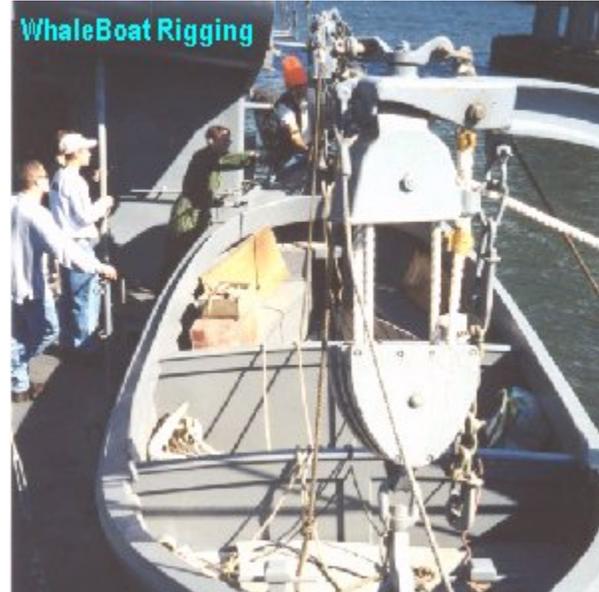
On launch day **Clark, Raf, Gene Cellini, Chuck Ray and Tom Moore** headed down to Scaranos' in Clark's famous yacht "*Edith*", or more affectionately known to us as the "*Minnow*". The whaleboat was relaunched without ceremony at about 1100. The crew took her in tow with Clark at the helm of the "*Minnow*" and Raf and Gene in the whaleboat. Raf used her rudder and tiller to keep a straight course behind Clark and the trip took about 45 minutes. They tied her to between the **SLATER** and the seawall adjacent to the aft camel. There she sat under watchful eyes until Saturday.



That morning the crew began to gather to hoist the boat aboard. We had done a lot of research as to how to do this. All the ex-DE boatswains we asked said "We just used to put 25 seamen on each fall and let them run down the deck with it". We didn't have fifty young able-bodied seamen. We had twenty old codgers, each of whom had a different idea on how to go about the job, and none of who remembered exactly how it had been done on their ship. Key men on the job were **Roy Gunther** who rode the boat up, and **Hack Charbonneau** and **Larry LaChance**, who ended up being our rigging experts. We fairleaded both falls up to the foc's'cle and took four turns around the windlass with each fall. The deck controller didn't work, so they needed a good man to operate the winch from below in the bosun's locker. I volunteered for the job. We started taking up slowly, and it took a couple of tries to get the wraps wound where they didn't bind together in the windlass drum.



Positioning the WhaleBoat



Once that problem was solved, we hoisted the boat about a foot over the water. Roy did a dynamic stress test by jumping up and down in the boat. Everything looked good so we hoisted away. That was the dull part. Once rigged right, everything went fine. In slow speed with a fourfold purchase, everything goes so slow that not much can go wrong. The only snafu was that when it came time to swing her in, the aft davit guy didn't clear the top of the rudderpost. We had to drop her down a little, and picked her up with muscle power. She then swung in and we set her on the blocks. The welders went to work putting in chocks, and about an hour and a half after we started, she was secure. I just can't imagine going through that evolution in the middle of the Atlantic with a sea running.



Everyone who has seen the boat agrees that all hands involved did a great job. The tour guides are especially grateful to have it back as it's presence fills a real void in the tour (Now imagine there's a boat hanging in these davits ♦) We are now in the process of having a deck blue canvas cover made for the boat. **Roy** is cleaning out the boats bilges so we can paint them in the spring. It probably won't warm up enough here to do it this fall. We have purchased a 30hp Westerbeke engine that will arrive this winter. We'll get a crane to install it pierside in Rensselaer. We

hope to move the loading machine back to its original position forward of the stack at the same time.

The arrival of the Michigan Crew was much anticipated by all. Thirteen men showed up on Sunday, October 1, and went to work the next morning. The welding crew of **Tom Schriener** and **Jim Ray** spent most of the week working with Russ Ferrer to complete the heating system aft. By the end of the week the system was tight, full of antifreeze, and pressure tested. While the controls still need to be installed, it looks like the system is ready for a road test. By the way, the zone forward has already been put into use and works great. **John Truhe** and **Ron Zarem** had the dirty job. They scaled and painted two main deck fan rooms that were a real mess. **Harry Brown** and **Ray Ward** did the final scaling and painted the engineer's logroom amidships. Regular Erik Collin is finishing up in there painting the desk, file cabinets, and the deck. **Rusty Nichols** tackled the miserable job of cleaning the cosmoline off the trough, and greasing and cleaning the 40mm gun mounts.

On the flying bridge, Dick Walker and Dave Marsh worked on the main battery director and the firecontrol radar room. They did a lot of necessary preservation to the deck underneath the director, and began scaling and repairing insulation inside the compartment. Locals **Bob Donlon** and **Ron Mazure** began working in the sonar stack, cleaning and scaling. They were followed by **Kent Chase** and the **Glens Falls Naval Reservists** who cut away shelving to make room for the DRT and the stack. They also mounted the tactical range recorder. We plan to go with the early war layout of a DE sonar stack that includes a Dead Reckoning Tracer mounted on the forward bulkhead. Unfortunately the only sonar stack we could obtain is a 1950 era SQS-4 stack from an ASR. Hopefully one of you guys can turn up an authentic WWII set. We know there are several in Mexico and one just south of St. Louis, MO, on the capsized minesweeper *INAUGURAL*.



The following week **Tom Moore** moved the DRT aboard, and **Tom, Gene, Eric, Dan,** and tour guides **Chief Floyd, Bill Scharoun, Eric Weidmann** and **Les Beauchaine** block and tackled it from the main deck to the flying bridge. Going with the early war layout and installing the DRT really makes people understand the basic layout of the long narrow compartment.



Finally, with regards to the Michigan crew, we can't forget **Bill Kramer**, who kept the crew fed and happy, and his assistant **Steve "the honeymoon's over" Borovich**. Steve was a little lost without his usual running mate John Bartko, so he consoled himself by putting himself at Bill's mercy and working in the galley the whole week.

Meanwhile, the old regulars are still at it. The deck force is finishing up the fantail twenties, the aft repair locker, emergency radio room and the 40mm magazine. They have also started down below in the aft crew's quarters when the rain chases them off the deck. The gunner gang is researching getting power on the aft three-inch mount, and have turned over the motor generator set. **Doug's** finished welding the **SLATER** name on the fantail, **Gene** pressure washed the grease off the forties, **Don** and **Jerry** have the TCS chirping, **Dan Wing** is still painting the compartment labels and all the guys whose names I haven't mentioned keep carrying on.



Dan Wing painting compartment labels



Doug Tanner finishing stern letters



The Historic Naval Ship's Association annual conference was held in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Canadian Corvette HMCS SACKVILLE was the host ship. Having been so tied up with prepping for the DESA Convention, I failed to get off my butt to book a cheap flight, so the trip up was a real adventure. I bussed from Albany to Portland, Maine. (All DESLANT WWII guys remember Casco Bay!) From there I took an eleven-hour ferry ride on the MV Scotia Prince to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Aboard, I ran into Jim Fahey, archivist and curator at the Cruiser *USS SALEM*. A former USCG Chief Boatswain, Jim should write a book about his adventures, but as usual, nobody would believe his stories, unless they were in service. I don't want to categorize a particular rate, but Jim has to be the most intellectual boatswain's mate I've ever met. The ferry ride was a foul weather experience. It rained all night.

We stayed out of the casino, a little amenity that DE's didn't have, though we've heard some ran a gaming operation in aft steering. It was little less posh and the cocktail waitresses weren't quite as cute. Jim let me bum a ride with him for the four-hour trip from Yarmouth to Halifax. I served as navigator and only lost the bubble once, but I don't think he knew it.

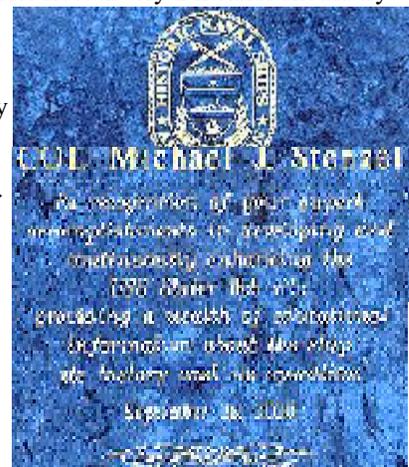
The actual Conference was well attended by delegates from about forty different historic naval ships including representatives from Australia, Greece and the Netherlands. This is getting to be a worldwide operation. Some of the most informative seminars included how to negotiate with Hollywood film production companies, cash accounting and controls, shipboard audio presentations, cathodic protection and dry-docking. The highlight was a dynamic lecture by Celeste Bernado of National Park Service on what makes a good tour presentation. As you can see the range of topics over the three days was varied and informative.

The highlight of the conference was the visit to *HMCS SACKVILLE* and the reception aboard her. If you DE sailors think you had it tough, you need to visit this little ship. The Corvette sailors fought in conditions only a step away from Columbus' ships. The open bridge was only about as high as the 01 level on *SLATER*, and all the captain had was a compass, some voice tubes and a bearing transmitter, next to the asdic hut. And they are quick to let you know the ugly truth we all try to hide; that the corvettes



and the old WWI destroyers had the U-boat menace under control by the time the DE's arrived on the scene, *SACKVILLE* is a wonderful, beautiful little ship, and one of the most significant saves on the historic fleet. Every DE sailor should try to visit her, but only after you have seen *SLATER*, of course.

For me, the best part was being able to do the ten-minute slide presentation, "Before and After on the USS SLATER". Most of the HNSA delegates had seen *SLATER* at the New York conference when she first came over five years ago. They couldn't believe the changes that you've made happen. As a postscript to the conference, two weeks after I got home, a package arrived from Jim Fahey on the *SALEM*. It contained a boat compass for the whaleboat, and a coffee server, creamer and sugar bowl for the wardroom. Jim was true to his world, as are most of our Coast Guard friends!



I also had the honor of accepting HNSA's EDUCATOR of the YEAR Award on behalf of our volunteer and Webmaster, COL. Mike Stenzel at NYS DMNA. This was presented in recognition of his outstanding work in presenting information about "the Destroyer Escort, about Historic Ship preservation and about the Navy". It was a pleasure to bring back this Citation and Plaque that recognizes what we at SLATER have been well aware of during Mike's amazing transformation from ARMOR specialist to Naval DE Historian. (I guess this also gives DE-766 "the edge" in the E-war with DD-661). *(I wish to thank Pat and Tim for nominating me to HNSA for this award, it is equally my pleasure to be associated with such dedicated volunteers. Mike)*

Meanwhile back on SLATER, Claire Oesterreich and Frank Perrella were hosting the Annual Volunteer Party. They reported over 80 persons attended highlighted by the NYC Delegation of "Original" SLATER volunteers. This was also the first post-Manhattan visit by **Lou Yacullo**, who added his bosun's tips on hauling the whaleboard aboard. Claire & Frank extended a "special thanks" to shipmates, **Rafe Suarez, Gordon Lattey, & Chuck Teator** for all their assistance in the Galley & bringing the chow down to serve on the Mess Decks.



Chow Line - Frank Perrella & Gordon Lattey - servers



Wardroom gathering - Original NYC Volunteers back together

You may have noticed something weird last month. Your September SLATER SIGNALS was very late, but you got two copies of the August edition. Our normally very efficient printer downloaded the August edition twice, so that's the reason for the SNAFU. He redid the mailing at no charge. Which reminds me. Our mailing list is now over 900. So, for those of you who have computers and ISP's you can download and print each issue directly from the website. You will help us trim our mailing expense and also have the added bonus of **COLOR PHOTOS** that we can't afford to include in the printed, mailed edition. **PLEASE LET US KNOW WHO YOU ARE** so we can edit our mailing list.

Sunday, November 26th, will be our last tour day of the season. We'll pull up the gangway, cut the power line, shift berths over to Rensselaer, and pull up the camels some time after that. That means the end of our regular ticket income for the year. And you know what that means. It's time for my annual warning. Next month, you'll get that little return envelope with your SLATER SIGNALS to contribute to the winter fund. I don't want to lie to you and tell you that we're down to our last penny. **Frank Lasch** is too astute a businessman for that. But you do know what is happening to the price of fuel oil, and we sure don't want to spend your hard earned dry-dock savings and the restoration fund just to keep these poor guys warm this winter. So please be generous. When it comes to fundraising, sometimes I can hardly stand myself.

See you next month.

