

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Ship's Superintendent

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum
USS Slater DE-766
PO Box 1926
Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123
Vol.4 no.11, November 2001

November is the month when people start to get a little more irritated than usual at the Ship's Superintendent. This is the month when most good normal tourist attractions in the Northeast have the good sense to close down for the season. Halloween is the normal "Last Call" for most attractions. Not so aboard the good old USS SLATER.

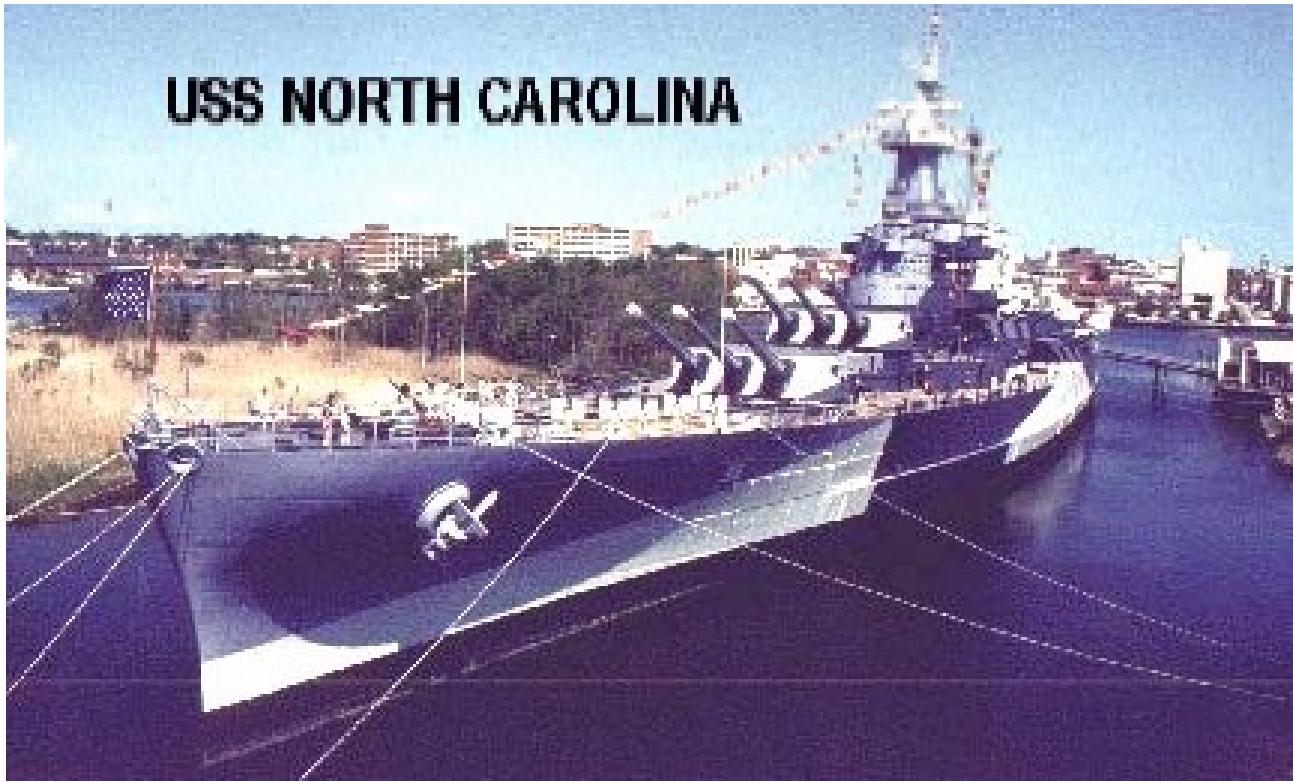
In an effort to capture every last dollar out of a tourist season that ended a month ago, we stay open, on the full summer schedule, right through Thanksgiving weekend. Most days, it's too cold to operate from under the tent, so we have to pull back operations to the eight-foot by ten-foot ticket shack, where the guides and cashier huddle around the little fifteen-watt space heater. Obviously, during the fifteen years the Ship's Sup spent in Louisiana the heat must have gone to his brain, and he doesn't know this isn't Louisiana. In Louisiana, November is a beautiful month. Thanksgiving weekend can be one of the busiest weekends of the year for museums. So what's the problem? The problem is this is upstate New York, and not Baton Rouge. This is the onset of winter, besides hunting season! So what if some days we only make fifteen dollars. Doesn't our mission statement say that we are to restore and maintain the USS SLATER for public display?



Final Tour Days

The smart tour guides have already packed up their camps and headed south. The burden is on those that are left. The Ship's Sup has been seen with his arms latched around the ankles of tour guides, crawling behind them, begging them to brave the cold for one more tour. It is into this atmosphere that several newcomers have joined us to help us complete the season. **Lawrence Corbett**, a former Marine and now college history student has joined us on a three-credit internship. He has been a staple of our Saturday crew. He reluctantly admitted that his MOS was diesel mechanic, but that he desperately wanted to get into weapons. He is afraid that we'll shanghai him into the engine rooms, but we're so grateful for another tour guide that we've left him alone on deck. **Tom McLaughlin** served on the carrier USS RANGER and the cruiser SALEM. He is now one of our regulars, always one of the last ones to leave. Another one we've really come to count on is **Dennis Morrissey**. Dennis has no naval background, but is anxious to learn and help out, and has been an invaluable helper to us in these last months of the season. They join the regulars **Dennis Nagi, Al Vanderzee, Jack Madden, Gorden Lattey, Bill Scharum, Larry Williams, Art Dott, Chuck Teator, Les and Annette Beauchaine, Dave Floyd, Rafael Saurez, Bob Dawson, Paul Czesak, Joanne Farrell, Alan Fox, Chris Soulia, Dick and Maralyn Walker, Eric and Julie Weidman, Ed Weidman, Chuck Marshall, Russ Ferrer, Dick Cromer, Soug Schultz, Bob Whitney, Mike Milian, Chuck Teal** and faithful **Kira Zaikowski** who have hung in for the last weeks with the coming of cold weather. We thank you all. Now we're closed and it's up to **Les and Annette** to sell dog tags at the mall and keep us going through the winter.

USS NORTH CAROLINA



One relief for the crew was packing me off for five days to the Historic Naval Ships Conference hosted by the folks at the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA in Wilmington. During that period I ceased to be their problem, and became the personal problem of Roger Miller.

For those of you who don't know Roger, he's the number two man on the North Carolina, right under Captain Dave Scheu. Roger is a former Tin Can EM who served in EDSON. We go way back together trying to out do each other in the scrounging business. It was **Roger** who called me from the deck of the old LSD USS DONNER on his cell phone several years ago. He had to brag that after my three trips to that ship I had failed to find a locker full of forty-millimeter gun seats that any novice curator should have been able to find on the first shot. For those of you who don't know, these old tractor seats have a tendency to collect water and thus rust through. They are like gold to those of us restoring old ships. Anyway, it was welcome to Wilmington. It's not like I wasn't trusted. It's not like I don't have a reputation. It's like **Captain Dave** gave **Roger** strict instructions to keep me in his sight during all waking hours. The president doesn't have the kind of security I had during my visit to Wilmington. When I arrived, **Roger** was waiting for me at the hotel. When I ate, **Roger** was eating next to me. Whatever seminar I decided to attend, **Roger** was attending with me. At night he waved at me as I got on the hotel elevator and went up to my room. In the morning when I came down, he was waiting for me in the lobby. If **Roger** had to go somewhere, it seemed **Captain Dave** was never more than a few feet away. And to top it off, **Roger** invited me on a bilge to bridge tour of his Battleship. He showed me piles of spare parts, bunk frames, ordnance parts, hundreds of helmets, life jackets, tech manuals and vacuum tubes. He completed this wonderfully thorough tour simply by asking, "How does it feel to want."

The conference itself was a great event with over two hundred participants from all areas of naval and maritime preservation including wooden boat, lighthouse and merchant ship enthusiasts. I attended seminars including fundraising, museum accreditation, setting up special events, and a really good seminar on the dry-docking and survey of the British destroyer HMS CAVALIER. Wilmington is a wonderful city, and I would urge anyone who hasn't seen the NORTH CAROLINA to plan a visit to her. **Dave and Roger and their crew** have done a wonderful restoration job, and seeing a battleship in wartime camouflage is awe-inspiring. My only complaint was, besides not being able to cumshaw anything, was that a cold front came through and I think it was colder in Wilmington than Albany.

When I got back the crew was maintaining as before. Work continues in the aft crew compartment C-203L as **Dick Smith, Chris Fedden, Ed Whitbeck, Pat Cancilla** and **Earl Gillette** continue chipping away. **Tom Moore** has started repairing the insulation back there, but now the plan is to wait until spring to paint it. We have decided to move the DE artifacts and glass locker tops back to that space for two reasons. First, it is larger and gives close access to artifact storage areas in the laundry and chemical warfare lockers, as well as its close proximity to the supply office. The supply office will serve as our archives and library for historic documents and books. Second, and more important, it gets us out from under the aft head. This logic harks back to an experience I had on KIDD several years ago when a pipe broke in the aft head and flooded several lockers of artifacts. Besides that we have the septic holding tank directly below C-201L. Wastewater coming from either direction could spell disaster for our small but (in our opinion) priceless collection of artifacts. To that end, **Pat Perrella** and **Kira** have boxed up and stored the whole collection for the winter, and will relocate the exhibit in the spring. The electrical gang is working on relocating the locker lights to C-203L.



Ed Whitbeck Chipping Paint



Museum Artifacts

Barry Witte asked me about starting on a project that I was sure would keep the engineers occupied for at least six months. He had two RPI engineering students, **Michael Stewart** and **Scott Reynolds**, and they wanted to see if they could get the hydraulic steering gear going. I gave them a nod and they went to work, removing the steel and concrete that had been installed over the ram in Souda Bay to lock the rudders. SLATER engineer **Cliff Woltz** had sent us an original copy of the tech manual for the steering gear on a BUCKLEY class DE. It turned out to be the same gear, so Barry made a Xerox copy to have in the space with their grubby fingers. Then he disappeared for a couple weeks on reserve duty. In his absence everyone soon got involved except me. **Larry Williams**, **Don Shattuck**, **Bob Calender** and **Tom Cintula** began checking out electrical circuits. They picked **Doug Tanner's** brain. **Gary Sheedy** and **Bill Coyle** got involved. **Bill Siebert** took the manual home for a couple nights to study. **Dick Walker** got **Walter Pratt, Inc.** to donate five gallons of gear oil. I wasn't paying them much attention. They seemed happy and they weren't bugging me. So I was a bit surprised on Saturday, the 17th when Larry came up to me and said, "Wanna see the rudders move?" I didn't quite believe it, but I followed him down. There was a crowd in the space, and a big electric motor was running. They were taking turns moving the trick wheel, and sure enough, the ram was moving the rudders side-to-side, smooth as silk. It was something to see the brass rudder angle indicators move, first the order pointer, and then the follow up pointer as the rudders actually responded.



Steering Gear



Bill Coyle working on Aft Steering

Kind of made you a little teary eyed to see them move again. Now all we need is an engine. We have the anchor windlass going, and the steering engine going, so their plan must be to start at the ends and work towards the center. One note about the obvious question; the rudder packing. Did it leak? The answer is that this baby is riding so high right now, both sternposts are out of the water. No problem. **Doug got the fresh water system forward of frame 110 all drained down and secured for the winter.** We will try and maintain water in the aft head for the ladies until we move to Rensselaer. Then they'll have to tough it out in the Portajohn like the rest of us. The move is scheduled for the second week of December. As it stands right now, we will hold our annual **Pearl Harbor**

Memorial service at 1030 on Friday, December 7th. We will have the **Water Department Crane** pull the steel gangway that afternoon so we can be ready to go. We hope to move the ship that Saturday or as soon as Bart's tugs are available and the weather is calm. As always we owe a great debt of gratitude to the Albany Port Commission, **Frank Keene** and **Mark Bruno**. Once again they are providing us with a free berth for the winter. Hopefully one of our grants will come through and well get our mooring dolphins built, and this will be the last year we will have to go through this exercise.

Looking Towards our Winter Berth



We had our most recent DEHF board of Directors meeting in Frank Lasch's office on Friday, November 16th. New Board Member **Don Norris** attended. Don's a former radioman who served on SLATER in 1945-46 and is now an architect who now resides in Pennsylvania. **Frank, Hal Hatfield, Charlie Stern, Gordon Lattey, Kevin Lynch, Marty Davis, Dick Walker, Roy Gunther, Al Vanderzee and Bob Cross** were present. **Sam Saylor, Ray Windle, Earl Johnson** and **Cliff Woltz** attended through the miracle of telephone conferencing. It was our last meeting as the **Destroyer Escort Historic Foundation**. When we hold our next meeting in May, we will be the **Destroyer Escort Historical Museum**. Our endowment fund is now reported at \$270,000. The most important piece of business was that the board authorized entering into an agreement with the engineering firm of Ingalls and Smart of Schenectady to complete the final drawings and handle the permitting for the permanent-mooring dolphins. The feeling is that if and when we get a grant, we want to be ready to move on the project right away. The year has been as average, with income for the year down about \$20,000. This is in part due to the late start we got getting across the river in April and the reaction to the WTC disaster in the fall.



The following morning after the board meeting Chuck Teator cooked up his annual volunteer breakfast for the crew of scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon and toast. About forty of the volunteers got up for the event. It's kind of become an end of the season party. Special thanks to **Erik Collin** and **Jack Madden** who stayed in the galley with **Chuck** to get the food out and more importantly, help get the place cleaned up and secured. It should be made public that **Jack**, who takes great pride in his WWII service as a Squadron Twenty-two PT boater gunner's mate in the Med, actually spent a couple weeks on the HUSE DE145. **Jack** is one of those proud WWII vets who just thrilled to leave his new family and career when he was called back to duty for Korea. Imagine that. He spent a year on the PICKING DD685, a year it seems

he would rather forget. As for his service on the HUSE, I think the only reason he spilled the beans about that was he thought being an actual DE vet might win him points with **Kira**.

Finally everybody's favorite Bosun's Mate (Sorry Mike, it's not you) Beth Spain went off to boot camp at **Great Lakes**. There was some question as to whether we would be able to keep the ship open without her, but we managed. As a member of the naval reserve NPSAC program, these experienced but non-prior service reservists are required to do a two-week boot camp, a compressed version of the eight-week regular program for the "Baby Recruits".

When she returned she had a standing room only crowd in the Chief's mess as she told them about her experiences. All of you old hands will be glad to know it sounds as miserable as ever. As ex-Marine **Lawrence Corbett** said, it's like she's now a member of that secret society that you can only understand if you've been through it. The fear the DI can create is incomprehensible to an outsider. The crew was proud of her for it, and they all wanted to know how she handled it.

First, they make sure everybody gets a good case of the "Recruit Crud", the same virus that ran through the base when it first opened, and still infects every company. Second, they make sure you don't bring in any cold medication. Third, they make sure you're too scared to ask to go to sickbay. Then there are the signs that say, "Profanity is not good leadership!" Then there are the instructors who encouraged **Beth** with phrases like, "Keep that guide on straight or so help me god I'll shove it so far up your" You get the idea. Then there is the marching, the jumping jacks, the running, and least of all the push-ups. **"One Chief! two Chief! three Chief!"** Then there is the motivational training. When you screw up, you get to stand in the middle of your shipmates with the instructors while your shipmates pay for your mistake. They had firefighting drills, tear gas, and a simulation of the damage to the USS COLE in which they had to search for survivors. All designed to teach unquestioned obedience to orders. The old salts hung on to **Beth's** every word, laughing and joking, as they reflected on and recalled their own boot camp experiences. But, as she told her story, nothing she said could prepare them for the one ultimate horror and most humiliating experience she endured. You could hear a pin drop as she described the indecency of having to shower communal style with sixty other females, with ten shower heads, only eight of which worked. While it was obvious that the crew struggled to visualize the scene, somehow the indignity of this one event was beyond the grasp of their own boot camp experience.

See you next month.



Tours continue through November.