

# SLATER SIGNALS

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

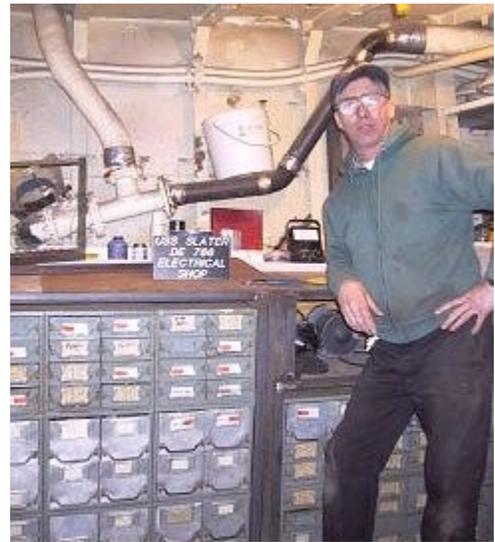
**Destroyer Escort Historical Museum  
USS Slater DE-766  
PO Box 1926  
Albany, NY 12201-1926**

**Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123  
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**Another February with half the crew waiting for spring.** The other half; those cowards, gallivanting around the south in motels and motor homes. Those left behind get a little envious of those in the sun. Also, a little grumpy about being left behind. And you know it will only get worse in March and April. It's about this time of the year that people start dreaming big dreams to help pass the time until spring.

**One of our most dedicated volunteers, Gary Sheedy had such a dream.** But he was having a bad month. A former refrigeration tech with Grand Union, he was laid off with all the GU maintenance people this month. But as a refrigeration tech, he felt a natural kinship with the rusty, cold dead reefer flat aboard the SLATER. He had a dream for that space. He would restore the space to its former glory and convert the portside storeroom into an electrical storeroom and the three reefer spaces could be storerooms for all the electrical parts. In short, in a place that nobody cared about he would have a place to call his own. The reefer machinery would be immaculately restored, and he would show it off and explain it to visitors.

**The first step in restoring any area is to have a plan.** He would build a workbench. He would get a couple of the deck guys to needle gun the space out for him. He would bring in drawers for storage. He would clean out the reefers for his electrical supplies. Gary designed a beautiful workbench and set about to find material to build it. He found and brought in from home three beautiful pieces of ten-foot angle iron to build the frame for the workbench. He brought his stereo system so he would have music while he was working. It was a home away from home.



Gary Sheedy - Workbench built under extreme circumstances on reefer deck



**Gary took a vacation day to start work on the project.** All excited, he approached the Ship's Superintendent with a question. "You think I could have a couple of the chippers to scale out the reefer deck for me? The Ship's Sup replied, "No way man. Those guys are booked solid until 2005. Aft crew's quarters, then aft steering and the laundry, the aft motor room and then the aft diesel room". "How about the Michigan guys during the field day helping me out?" "Sorry, They'll be painting decks and scaling C-203L" Dejected at the apparent lack of support, Gary got out the grinder and began cutting away the old Greek shelving so he could build his workbench. Thirty minutes later the Sup was back down in the reefer space. "Gary! What are you doing? All that dust is getting on the bunks up here in the berthing space. Cut that out." "That's what I was trying to do", Gary responded. He spent the next two hours rigging flexible ducting into the exhaust vent system. He turned on the exhaust and went back to work. Just as he finished cutting out the shelving the Sup reappeared. "Gary! Why are you running the exhaust system! You're sucking out all the heat!" Gary put down the grinder. It was okay. He was now ready to build his workbench. He went out on deck to get his steel. It was gone. He tracked down the Sup. "You see my steel?" "Why, you need it? You didn't have plans for it, did you? I gave it to



the radio guys. They're building shelving in the coding room." Gary raced up to the radio room. "You guys got my steel angle iron?" **Jerry and Don** laughed. "Was that yours? There it is." Gary looked sadly at the pile of steel

in the deck. The longest piece was now fourteen inches. He found the Sup again. "I need some steel." "Go to Albany Steel. We have an account there."

**Gary got into his truck and drove to Albany Steel.** Of course, they made him pay cash. He brought his steel back and took it immediately down to the reefer deck so no one would steal it. There he found the ship's Sup and the curatorial team in his reefer spaces. "What are you guys doing in here?" The Sup replied, "We got to move all this electrical crap out of here. We're going to use the reefers for artifact storage." "But I was gonna set these up for display when I restore this place so the people can see the reefers" "We need the reefers for artifact storage. They're insulated and they don't sweat. That's as close to climate controlled stowage as we have. Besides, you can't let the public down here on tours. There's only one access. And besides, the tours are already running over an hour. That's way too long. The people don't need to come down" "What am I supposed to do with all these electrical parts?" The Sup replied, "Put them right down below here in the engineers storeroom." "Can't do that. That's where I'm gonna put the hot tub and the Jacuzzi." Now it was time for the Sup to throw up his hands. What else you got planned down here? Wide screen TV and a wet bar?"



Shelving built by Gary for Electrical Supplies



**Over the next couple weeks, despite constant harassment,** Gary actually managed to finish his workbench, install his parts drawers and get the electrical parts reasonably organized. As he pulled his stuff out of the old electrical shop, **Ken Kaskoun** and the IC gang began to move their stuff in to fill the void. The interior communications boys have never had a shop of their own, and they are thrilled. And as of this writing, Gary has yet to install the hot tub, Jacuzzi and wet bar, and he is still looking for someone to chip out the reefer space. Not like those radio guys. Not only do they build shelves with stolen material that are straighter and neater than Gary's, but also they do their own chipping. When Don and Jerry wanted to paint the coding room, they didn't go whining to the Sup about getting a chipper. They got the needle guns and did it themselves. Now the coding room is all painted and looks like a million dollars. So what if it took them three months to do a space smaller than a closet. It'll probably be years before the reefer space looks that good, particularly if Gary does install that wet bar.

**Speaking of Chippers, if any group of people on the SLATER have an assured place in heaven it is the chippers.** You couldn't pay people to do what they do. Work in a compartment six or seven hours holding a needle gun overhead. Without them, the restoration would be nowhere. They are the first and most critical people in the restoration process. Like the pioneer farmers clearing away the forest. However, their group has been decimated

by the effects of old age and injury. **Pat Cancilla** is out for three months having a hip replacement. **Raf** has a bone spur on his back that has him incapacitated. He can't walk without a cane. Sailors come up with the lamest excuses to try and get out of work but Raf says as long as he can get someone to bring him to the ship, he can still chip, sitting down. **Chris Fedden** scared the hell out of us one day when he went home feeling nauseous. We were all relieved when tests showed everything was normal. His doctor decided he had a virus. That leaves him with **Smitty, Ed, Beth, Tom Moore** and lately **Chris Soulia** holding the line to get the job done by spring.

**Back in October 1997,** on the day after SLATER's arrival in Albany; **Sam, Marty and Ray** drove away from the pier waving goodbye and left me by myself wondering what I had gotten myself into; I had a visitor. One of the first people to come aboard was **Bill Siebert**, then skipper of the cruise boat DUTCH APPLE. A navy engine man and licensed marine engineer, Bill helped me fold the signal flags that were draped all over the foc's'cle and lectured me that I needed to take immediate steps to preserve the insides of our irreplaceable main engines. I gave him my promise as a former deck officer cadet that I would get on it as soon as I could. Now, over three years later, tired of waiting for me to act, Bill has come

aboard to take matters into his own hands. His plan is to try to circulate used lube oil through the mains using the original lube oil pump. To that end, working with former enginemen **Bill Coyle** and **Bob Callendar, Beth** and **Gary**, he cleaned out a lube oil tank in B-3, freed up the fill plug, overhauled the lube oil purifier, and got the lube oil pump running. Now he is just waiting for me to find him three hundred gallons of relatively clean used lube oil.



**Barry Witte reinstalling 450v outlet in B2**



**Jason Wilanson & Barry Witte work in B2**

**That's not all the engineers are up to.** Back in B-4 Larry LaChance is working to improve our dewatering capability by activating a fire and bilge pump. Without any piping diagrams he has to trace the whole system hand over hand; a slow process. **Barry Witte** also got a second 440-volt submersible pump going. We are desperately short on the big brass old style plugs for these pumps. Several years ago, I bought a couple when I was working for the KIDD for under a hundred bucks apiece. I went back to the dealer, who referred me to the manufacturer who referred me to a couple surplus dealers. Meanwhile, I called around the historic fleet to some of my old buddies to try and cumshaw a couple of the plugs. Most of my old friends just laughed me out of the water, particularly one former electrician's mate who works on a battleship that will remain unnamed, in North Carolina. By the way, the Navy specifically requested Barry do his two weeks active duty as part of the precomm detail on the attack carrier USS RONALD REAGAN. Gee, maybe the commander really does know what he's doing.

**Finally, the dealers started to call back.** One dealer said he would get back to me. The second guy asked how many I needed. I said three. He said he had one and he was honest enough to say that the plug listed at seventy dollars back in 1980; the last time the Navy listed it. He said he'd try to locate two more for me and get back with a price. Then the other guy called. He said he found one but he wanted \$350.00 for it. I politely said keep it. I waited for the second guy to call back from Virginia, and after a week called him back. Yes, he had found two more, used, but that guy wanted \$550.00 a piece for them. He politely told him to keep them. So after some haggling I agreed to purchase the one plug he had for the bargain price of \$175.00. He is continuing to look for two more. Speaking of trying to save money, the electric bill jumped from \$880 to \$1,700 in January. A memo went out to the crew about the possibility of rolling blackouts if they don't start to conserve.

**The Archival Team continues their sorting, photographing, labeling and cataloguing of the Slater Museum collection items.** Eric & Julie Weidman, Chief Dave Floyd, Al Van Derzee, Dennis Nagi and Pat Perrella have put in several days a week toward this effort of tackling the enormous amount of cartons and bags of donated items. All related to Destroyer Escorts have been identified and separated from the general naval related articles. A computer database will identify each article by donor and ship and also contains a digital color image of the article. This database will also track the location of the item on the ship and will add a lot of credibility to our mission as a Museum Ship. One member of the team has temporarily deserted our ranks to head south for ARMY training with the NYS Guard. Good luck Eric and we hope you enjoy all of that warm weather while you learn to be a soldier.



**Galley work showing tile removal and re-installation of steam kettle**



**Ship builder's marks uncovered during work.**

**Had a hell of a problem in the galley. Clark Farnsworth** was lying on the cold steel deck scarfing off old weld where we had cut away modern gear as part of the restoration. I took pity on Clark. At seventy-eight, I cut him some slack and got him an old mattress to lie on. After all, he is our senior chief. As soon as the rest of the crew saw it, everybody wanted a mattress! Now Clark's mattress is the most valuable tool on the ship. You'll never know where it'll turn up next.



**Russ Ferrer & Tim Brenner - WHOSE GOT CLARK'S MATTRESS ???**



**Russ Ferrer - cabinets he restored in Aft-Crew**

Let's see, who else deserves to be mentioned this month. First, I'd like to thank **Doug Tanner's wife Carol Ann** for letting Doug continue to play with us on Saturdays. While some people are accusing our former Coast Guard damage control man of destroying our watertight integrity aft, more knowledgeable people know he is in the process of installing a watertight door that will eventually allow public access into the aft engine room. And then there's **Russ Ferrer's wife Dolores** who is letting Russ fix all the holes in the deck in the aft crew's quarters and fix up all the lockers. And **Rocky's wife** for letting Rocky keep the snow of the whaleboat and help **Ray Lammers** with all the electrical box restoration. We also want to thank **Tim Benner's wife Carol** for letting him come down to assist Doug.



On second thought, the way Benner acts, Carol should thank us for getting him out of her hair on Saturdays. We don't have to thank **Maralyn Walker** or **Arlene Dawson** for letting Dick and Bob volunteer, because they both help out

too. However, we must thank canines Penny and Scotty for letting their owners Claire and Clark spend time down here. **Erik Collin** who doesn't have to answer to anybody did a beautiful job repainting the armory on the main deck, and is now working on the bread locker, which we use for a cleaning gear locker. We heard a rumor that he has been promised two homemade pies for his efforts in there.



**Claire receiving cleaning assignment from Sup in Sick Bay**



**Chippers work under double ladders, Aft-Crew**

**Notes From Nancy:** Calling all guides and visitor support volunteers, its almost time to report for duty. Funny thing about the winter in December it seems to stretch out endlessly before me, and then I glance at the calendar and realize opening day is about six weeks away. Yikes! We will officially begin our season on 10 March 2001, which is the date for our Annual Tour Guide Meeting. The meeting will start at 1400 with business and will continue with a speaker at 1500.

**Celeste Bernardo**, who works on the USS CASSIN YOUNG DD-793, will get us started on a positive note Tim says she's a great motivational speaker, just what we need to get our engines revved up. Now, if someone could just do the same for the ship's engines.

**Finally, we lost two great shipmates and supporters this month.** It was with deep sadness that we bid farewell to **Martin Smith** and **Louis Nagi**. Martin, a survivor off the USS FECHTELER DE-157, had been ill a long time and lost his battle this month. Tragically, thirty-year-old Louis was killed in an auto accident. A dedicated tour guide, Louis worked aboard as a team with his father Dennis. Just as this issue was going to press we learned that **Don & Mary Alice Kruse** had lost their son to cancer. Our deepest sympathies go out to all the families. Our colors are at half-mast in tribute.

**See you next month.**