



SLATER SIGNALS

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

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

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123
Vol. 9 no. 3, March 2006



Waiting peacefully but eagerly for the move back to Albany.

I know every March I say it. Where did the winter go? We're past the midpoint in March. Opening day is rapidly descending on us. The cleanup is progressing well as we prepare for our ninth season in Albany. There just isn't enough time. Thanks to **Bruce Salls** and the crew from **Quick Response Restoration**, the SLATER will be cleaner than she's ever been on opening day. They have had a crew aboard scrubbing and washing down all month. They even took down all the bunks and scrubbed them.

The CPO messroom, forward passageway on the maindeck, wardroom, wardroom passageway and the radioroom passageway on the 01 level have all been freshly sprayed out with fresh light green paint by Kevin Sage and Jason Sherlock.



Stan Murawski prepares a sheet of cloth insulation.

All these spaces will be fully restored by opening day. The only area in doubt right now is the passageway right outside the CPO quarters, which we don't expect to have completed by April 1st. In restoring these spaces, we have made many improvements including stands for lockers that were sitting on the deck, refurbishing electrical boxes to like-new condition, and reinsulating bulkheads and overheads so they look better than they did before. Some of the crew who deserve special mention here includes **Stan Murawski**, who has become an artist with insulation wrap and Childers CP-11 Mastic. **Barry Witte** and his electrical gang spent many days and nights rerunning wiring, and restoring electrical boxes. His helpers included **Gary Sheedy, Paul Czesak, Gordon Lattey, Gus Negus, and Karl Herchenroder**, while **Ken Kaskoun** and **Bob**

Callender sandblasted the electrical boxes, removed and cleaned up light fixtures, and rewired the sound powered phone circuits. Special thanks to **Jim Hewitt** and **Bill Haggart** who spent a couple of miserable Saturdays up in the cableways taking clamps and straps off the old wires and fighting decades of paint buildup on the nuts and bolts. **Gordon Lattey** has handled a mound of dry cleaning associated with the fire, and has a whole bunch of bunks to make up in the next couple of weeks.

And from heavy chocks to delicate clock springs, the restoration moves in all directions. The welders, **Doug Tanner, Chuck Teal, Clark Farnsworth, Tim Benner, and Joe Breyer**, have been busy.

The second floater net basket for the portside aft is ready to be lifted in position. They are welding down another repaired chock on the portside amidships that needs to be in position for the move to handle a spring wire. They built new frames for all the standing lockers in the CPO mess and passageway, did a bunch of welding repairs in the same area, and have continued repairs in the CPO head as we try and make progress on our original winter project. Machinist Mates-turned-Gunners, **Gus Negus** and **Karl Herchenroder**, completed the reassembly of

the upper manual train gear drive on gun two. They had to replace every bearing in the unit.

Now when we receive the new helical gear from **Jack Bertsch** for the lower unit, the gun will be at last ready to go back together. And **Don Shattuck** keeps the clocks wound every week while **Geoffrey Bullard** continues to repair them. He just received a shipment of Chelsea ship's clock mainsprings he had been waiting for for months. He reports that he cleaned one of the clocks, put in a new mainspring and



Painters Jason Sherlock and Kevin Sage.

will be bringing it aboard this week. The other two broken clocks will also be fixed shortly.

In the "be careful what you ask for, you might get it category," a couple years ago I remember saying that the only two things we really needed to complete the restoration, that we'd probably never find, were a WWII-era sonar stack for the upper sound room and the SL surface search radar for CIC. Never say never and let's proceed slowly from here. Several months ago our friend **Rich Pekelney** who volunteers with the submarine PAMPANITO in San Francisco called to say he knew of a surplus dealer who had a WWII destroyer escort sonar stack and wanted to know if we were interested in buying it. Yes, we certainly were, but "Buying" is usually out of the question for us. Well, for me at least. But we began negotiations, and in the process, I contacted **Bob Donlon**, the Yeoman of our CAPDESA Chapter who also happens to be an ex-ping jockey off the ROBERT F. KELLER. Well Bob is a member of the **National Association of Sonar Veterans**, and he contacted their president **Robert St. John**. Through email, they began soliciting donations to purchase the stack for the SLATER, and within a month, they had raised the money and mailed the check. It turned out that the stack was a QJB unit that had been removed from the USS LOESER in 1945. We have the tags to prove it. That gave the stack special meaning for us, because one of our most faithful volunteers, the late Cdr. **Roger Oesterreich**, had served on the LOESER, and his wife **Claire** has remained one of our most faithful supporters ever since. In a sense, we hope to become a museum for the National Association of Sonarmen where the gear they used and maintained can be collected for future generations to see.

The dealer turned out to be one Will Donzelli, who lives downstate, and offered to bring the unit up the Thruway for us. He delivered the unit to Albany a couple of weeks ago, along with the tech manual and the underwater transducer. Will's grasp and appreciation of old military electronics and technology made us realize this is a guy we need to suck into the SLATER, so we helped him load up some computer gear he was picking up at state surplus, bought a cheeseburger, and Erik gave him the bilge to flying bridge tour of the ship. In researching the original configuration of the sound shack, I now realize I need a 1944 piece of gear called a "MK 1 Attack Plotter" and a "Bearing Deviation Indicator" or "BDI". I didn't know what an attack plotter was, and **Robert St. John** was kind enough to send us pictures and a description. Fortunately we have the "Chemical Recorder" or "Tactical Range Recorder" (TRR).



Lifting a pallet of sonar parts up to the flying bridge.

Getting the sonar stack into the upper sound room was no small feat. The unit was about a third larger than the SQS-4 Unit that we put in there in 1998. We knew it was going to be a tight fit. The door is on the portside, and the unit goes against the bulkhead on the starboard side. We removed all the light switch boxes and sound powered phone jack boxes that were around the door, removed the chemical recorder, and made a clear path to the far side. We cut off a brass voice tube on the deck just in front of the sonar room door that blocked the path. If you're reading behind the lines here, you understand that we pretty well trashed the sonar shack getting the unit in. The Albany Water Department lifted the unit aboard on Tuesday March 21st. Ricky and the guys were waiting for me when I got to the gate at 0602. It didn't take them long to set up. We rigged the

lift according to a sketch Doug Tanner had provided. The lift went fine and we muscled it into the door. It was like an IOWA class battleship going through the Panama Canal, if you know what I mean. It was going well until the unit butted up against a group of stuffing tubes on the deck that probably weren't there in 1945. We still needed an inch to turn the unit inboard to push it to starboard. **Tommy Moore** showed up with a steel bar. We still weren't getting it. We finally got Ricky to lift the unit about three inches off the deck, there was then just enough flex in that stuffing tube that when pried, it gave us that little bit we needed and the sonar slid past it. We muscled the 550-pound unit into position on the starboard side, where there would barely be room for the operator to sit behind it. We then went back on deck. There are eight modules that go into the QJB cabinet that had to be hoisted aboard. Remember, up to this point we're just dealing with an empty cabinet. We put them on a pallet, four units to a lift, and hoisted them up to the flying bridge. The plan will be to reassemble the sonar unit during the Michigan field day.

We're sure that Dick Walker and the fire control gang will help Bob Donlon and the sonar guys. That's because the fire control guys aren't going to be able to do anything as long as all those sonar modules are cluttering up the fire control shack.



Gus Negus and his engineroom gang take over the controls of a freighter docked across the river in Albany.

I attended the Spring Board of Directors meeting of the Historic Naval Ships Association in Annapolis.

Here we had the formal presentation of the Tin Can Sailors Grant checks by Bob Sumrall. Our heartfelt thanks to TCS. Master Chief **John McMichael**, in charge of the restoration of the STEWART, gave us the tech manual for the Ingersoll-Rand LP and starting air compressors, a great gift. John is doing an amazing job with the restoration of STEWART and CAVALLA. The only thing that goes up his butt is when he hears SLATER is "The Last DE." We always

have to qualify that. Remember, we're "The last DE afloat in America." We've got STEWART in Galveston, McANN in Brazil, and we hear that HURST and ATHERTON are still steaming around overseas.

One of the major topics of discussion is now how do we relate our World War II-era ships to a new generation whose only connection with this conflict is what they see on the History Channel, if they bother to watch it at all. No one has the answer yet, but it is a question that needs to be answered if our ships are to remain relevant to education. On a personal note, two years ago my wife Nancy got a job teaching second grade at the Bet Shraga Hebrew Academy here in Albany. In the Hebrew school, the teaching about the Holocaust is considered a vital and important topic, and is heavily emphasized in their curriculum. Thus we know that down the road there will be one group of people who will have an appreciation of the roots of the Second World War, why the Battle of the Atlantic was fought, and thus

why ships like the SLATER were built and young men trained and sent to sea to man them. I wish our public schools had a similar appreciation of that history.



Paul Czesak helps clean the messdeck.

The same issue showed itself at the WMHT telethon this March. We had ten SLATER volunteers aboard to man the phones for public broadcasting including **Bob Donlon, Dave Hamilton, Paul Czesak, Fred Sirois, Nelson Potter, Jim Kuba, Chuck Teal, Rosehn Gipe, Eric Rivet, Gene Jackey, and Ray Lammers.** Of this group, **Ray Lammers** of the USS TATUM was the only WWII vet, and the only combat veteran in the group. Last year the World War II generation was represented by **Andy Desorbo**, who was a gunner's mate on the new HORNET in WWII. This year, health problems kept him away. We also recently lost our **Ed Elze**, a WWII SLATER veteran. Ed was from Schenectady and was one of our tour guides the first couple years we were open and a faithful attendee at SLATER reunions. His presence really helped give us a good grounding in the SLATER's history because he was there. Our condolences go out to Ed's family as we continue on working to preserve his and your legacy.

Speaking of legacies, several years ago at the USS CURRIER reunion, a radar man who was on oxygen wanted to get up to CIC. We volunteered to carry his oxygen bottle so he could climb the two levels to sit in CIC at the SA console for a few minutes and reminisce. That man was **Walter Moore.** He and his wife **Ramona** were so appreciative that he sent me pictures of the event. Walter passed away, and Ramona remembered the SLATER writing "My husband loved the SLATER and would never forget how the crew helped him up to the radar shack when we were in Albany a few years ago." To express her appreciation Ramona donated 100 shares of 3M stock to the SLATER Endowment Fund. Our best wishes and gratitude go to the Moore family for their thoughtfulness. We're glad we could be here for Walter and all the other DE veterans who come to visit. If you want to see something special, just ask.



Karl Herchenroder and Gus Negus do an engine test.

Finally, if you're interested in lending a hand aboard the SLATER this coming spring, Field Day season is fast approaching. The Michigan Chapter of DESA is holding their Field Day the first week of May, arriving on Sunday April 30th. If you're interested in joining them and reliving DE life, or want to experience it for the first time sans seasickness, contact their coordinator Ron Zarem at 989-345-0237. The USS HUSE Crew will be arriving on the third week of May to be aboard May 14th through May 20th. If you'd like to work and bunk in with them, their coordinator is George Amandola and can be reached by phone at 610-789-5105, or email at gamand@aol.com. We're hoping some of the sons and grandsons can join their dads for these events

The major projects will be repainting the superstructure forward with epoxy paint. So if you live too far away from the SLATER to help us on a regular basis, this is your chance to bear a hand. The guide training sessions have started for the 2006 season. They were well-attended with the crew that included **Bob Bull, Joe Burke, Erik Collin, Mike Collins, Paul Czesak, John D'Anieri, Bob Donlon, Alan Fox, Grant Hack, Glenn Harrison, Floyd Hunt, Jerry Jones, Jim Kuba, Jack Madden, Chuck Marshall, Amanda McLaughlin, Tom McLaughlin, Mike Milian, Nelson Potter, Chuck Teal, Al Van Derzee, and Dick Walker.** With the renewed emphasis on safety, we had a lecture from **Paul Czesak** on how insurance works and how the recent fire affected the ship's insurance, as well as how our preparations and actions affect our insurance. He also listed updated safety rules and procedures as a result of the fire, and briefed us on what other changes are in the works, including a safety tour of the ship and fire extinguisher training from **Chuck Teal.** Paul then gave a brief overview of the Battle of the Atlantic, citing its causes and the general timeline and events of the battle. **Eric Rivet** then gave a more detailed history of the battle, focusing on the British and Allied phases of the battle as well as the teamwork and technology it took to win it. He also introduced them to the new additions to the education program and went over the existing rules and policies. The restoration is nice, but it is the guided tour program that really sets the SLATER apart from the other historic naval ships. The best part was **Jerry Jones** provided pizza for the whole group, and if his wife is reading this, I'm told that all Jerry had himself was a rice cake and a piece of lettuce.



Gene Jackey and Don Shattuck replacing restored light fixtures in the freshly painted midship passageway.

See you next month.