

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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Phone & Fax (518) 431-1943
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We're back home in Albany! The morning of May 19 dawned cloudy and misty with our old friends, the NYS Canal Corps Tugs GOVERNOR CLEVELAND and GRAND ERIE tied up to our portside. The crew was supposed to begin arriving at 0730, but Tom Moore got there at six AM. The 35 volunteers went to work removing all the gear that had held us so snugly in place all winter. Wires and chafing gear were taken off the mooring lines. The mooring wires were unclamped and taken in. Dave's safety netting was removed from the gangway and hauled aboard. The water hose was disconnected and coiled up. The pusher ERIE was cabled to the stern. The CLEVELAND made up a towing bridle and snuggled up to the bow at 0845. We were finally following Captain Ralph's advice, and waited for slack water at high tide. At 0845 all hands came up with their last cup of coffee. The generator was shut down, the shore power cable disconnected, and hauled aboard. Lines were singled up. At 0905, the last line came off, and colors were shifted. The ERIE backed down, the CLEVELAND began to take a strain on the towline, and we were underway.

With calm winds and an occasional sprinkle, the ship moved slowly up river. While underway, lines were faked down for running and heaving lines were readied. The arrival was just about an hour later. A crowd was waiting for us on the pier that included the crew's of USS SWEARER DE-186 and USS SWENNING DE-394 (both in town for reunions) and Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings. The only two little hang ups were that the cruise boat DUTCH APPLE was just preparing to get underway with a load of school children, and that the forward camels had twisted out of position.

The gang from NYS DOT Bridge Maintenance, assisted by some of the SWEARER crew slacked, sweated, and heaved on the wire ropes to get the float back into position and resecured it. Then the tugs gently eased SLATER into position. The SWEARER men caught the first line forward and Mayor Jennings caught the first line aft. The GRAND ERIE eased us back and forth until the gangway was in perfect alignment. Our old friend Jimmy on the Water Department crane set the gangway into position, and the volunteers went into action. Lines were doubled and secured. Wires, clamps, safety netting and chafing gear were rigged. The electrical gang had shore power rigged in less than thirty minutes. When the phone truck rolled up, we already had a working phone and dial tone. The ticket booth was powered up and restocked. The water line was rigged and the infamous Portajohn in place. When we left Rensselaer, we waved goodbye to our Dumpster, but somehow it was waiting for us on the pier in Albany, so BFI beat the ship across. By 1200 Nancy was back in business as we welcomed the SWEARER and SWENNING crews aboard. At 1300, the serious rain began, but it was okay. We were home.

Much work had been accomplished at the Snow Dock by Roy Gunther DD-711, Tom Moore, and Gene Krott's gang from DOT to prepare for the move. The camels were filled with liquid Styrofoam for buoyancy. We are indebted to **Taylor Made Products of Gloversville** and Jim DeRuscio's assistance in supplying the Styrofoam and to Frank Perrella DE-326 for this donation and all the trips he made hauling the stuff. The camels were hoisted into the water, shackled together and cabled into position over a two-day period. They floated. Nobody even got their feet wet. Bob Callender DE-744, George Erwin AP-151, and Ray Lammers APD-81 repainted the steel gangway.

On the second of May another big event began. The crew from the Michigan Chapter of DESA arrived for their second USS SLATER workweek. This year the group grew from six to eighteen and included a cook. The crew lived in the newly refurbished CPO quarters and forward crew compartment. The crew split up into four gangs. The first division tackled the port side of the main deck house, sanding with orbital sanders, priming and painting. The second division tackled 20mm gun tub 25 and scaled and corrosealed the aft head portside. The welding crew mounted 50 cable support brackets around the forward deckhouse to support the cables for the weatherdeck lights, and repaired two rotted stuffing tubes. Then they moved up to the flying bridge, hoisted up all the steel for the booby hatch, the watertight door and frame, and began assembly of the weatherproof hatch cover. This will give us interior access to the flying bridge when completed. Finally, the engineers went below, and spent a day in each machinery space vacuuming and cleaning. The competition between the crews got pretty intense, especially between spray painter Ron Zarem DE-148 and welder Steve Borovich DE-532. Ron accused Steve of conspiring against him with the weather (it showered several days) and trying to attract unfair attention with that cute head jerk move welders use to flip their helmets up and down. But it was of no avail to both...our hands down favorite was John Bartko DE-330. More on that later. Money can buy love, especially on the SLATER.

All week long cook Bill Kramer DE-366, served up three squares a day out of the galley and kept the crew happy. The ship seemed to come alive again with the smell of chow coming out of the galley vent. Nobody could resist walking by the galley door without stepping inside to see how Bill was doing. It was just like a real ship. Of course the hit of the week was SOS on Thursday morning. Talk about memories. When they left they were as happy as when they arrived. They're anxious to come back, and were as anxious to have them back.

A somber but beautiful event was the memorial service for our departed volunteer Roger Oesterreich DE-680, on Saturday May 15. It was a beautiful evening as family, friends, and shipmates gathered aboard SLATER to celebrate Roger's life. Claire extends her thanks to all those who attended and it was another one of those events in the life of the SLATER to bond the crew even closer together.

An unexpected positive outcome for restoration was that in the need to clear the fantail for the memorial service, the four life rafts were moved forward and placed on display. The two forward have been temporarily displayed port and starboard against the breakwater until racks can be fabricated. The two aft are now mounted in their proper racks. They are an important addition to our display. All have been scraped and painted with the deck blue tones of WWII covering the international orange. "Parking Lot" resident Don Martin, DE-186 accomplished most of this work. Don & wife Ruthie drove from Oxnard, CA to attend the SWEARER Reunion and have taken up residence in their mobile home portside. They moved right along with us to the Albany side and are still going strong after 3 weeks! Much other work has been going on. The engineers completed the reassembly of the Emergency Diesel Generator. The first attempt to start it found the engine rolling too easily; probably due to low compression. They are working on the problem. The second and third attempts have yet to yield results, but they are getting closer to hearing the roar of a Diesel coming from B-4.

The Naval Reservists from Albany and the Glens Falls Reserve Centers have increased their tempo of activity. They worked repairing two wasted sections of the starboard breakwater, mounted several lockers in the berthing spaces, repaired several scuppers, mounted stowage racks for the welding gas bottles, began work mounting the flagbag fingers and made repairs to the aft life raft racks. They did several heavy lift projects for us without the use of a crane. They moved the four life rafts on the fantail forward, and mounted them on the aft racks, and hefted the sonar stack into the sonar hut on the flying bridge.

Speaking of the flying bridge, Rafael Suarez DD-944 has taken that on as his latest project. He is working on scaling the whole area. Hal Hatfield had the pieces for the companionway booby hatch cover fabricated and the Michigan crew hoisted them into place and began welding them up.

The deck force has just about completed repainting the 02 level forward, bridge exterior. When that is completed we will repaint the forward gun tubs and then move the crew back to the fantail. We'll start with the depth charge rack and paint our way up the portside. Our goal is to get her all one shade of gray by the end of August. Work is also progressing on the side-painting grant. We are having specifications written up, and hope to repaint the hull above the water line in July and August.

Several new volunteers have come forth to augment our ranks. Gerry Jones AO-144 is a former ET who is getting involved with the restoration of the CIC and radio central. Rich Durant is a friend of Gus Negus SS-347 and was a rigger for GE. He is trying to sort out the deck gear locker and getting the rest of us to stow the deck gear back where it belongs. Chuck Ray came in with Clark Farnsworth CV-32 and is working to get the lathe operational. By the way, Clark has recovered enough from his broken ribs to pull on mooring lines. Bill Scharoun DE-701 has joined the deck force as a chipper and painter on Tuesdays and a tour guide on Thursdays. Chuck Teator USMC has been a welcome addition to the Tour Guide staff and Ben Stowell has been helping out the electrical gang on Saturdays. Ben works for an environmental firm and is young and energetic, but we won't go there again.

We wish Don Kruse DE-682, a speedy recovery following his knee-replacement surgery. Work hard on that therapy Don, that parking lot will be a nightmare without you!

Financially, it's been a tough six weeks. Our revenue over in Rensselaer was only half of what we needed, about \$1,500 a week. Annette's dogtag sales help us reach that. What has saved our financial butt and allowed the restoration to keep going were two incredible donations, Five thousand dollars donated in April by Mr. and Mrs. Daniel & Sally Nolan. Just when May was starting to look grim as the move was delayed, Michigan DESA member, and work week attendee John Bartko came out of the aft head, put down his paint scraper and said, "I want to take out a life membership in the foundation." He pulled out his wallet, and on the bench in the machine shop, wrote out a check for five thousand dollars. The SLATER experience will make a religious man out of me yet. If I had known John was going to do that I would have given him a better job than chipping paint in the head.

Things are steadily looking up. The SLATER Alumni Association sent a check for seven thousand dollars to the foundation to be used for ship restoration. Frank Lasch's endowment fund is up to sixteen thousand dollars. The foundation account is up to fifty thousand between Albany and the national account in North Carolina. Nancy Buxton received a thirty-five hundred-dollar grant from **Ronald McDonald House Charities** to print our Educational Manual. Special Thanks here to Jerry Greene DE-6, who sponsored us for this Grant. Joanne McFadden is making steady progress with publicity for SLATER events. The trip back to Albany made the front page of the *Times Union* in Albany with a photo of SLATER underway. The ship along with a small photo has also been added to the Current Events Calendar. And, our first week back at the Snow Dock was our best week with tours since last November.

Again, our thanks go out to all our contributors, big and small, to the folks at the NYS Canal Corps for the free tow, the Albany Water Department for the free crane, the DOT Bridge Maintenance guys for all their help, The Port of Albany Commission for free moorage all winter, the Navy Reservists and the gang from Michigan for all their help. Finally to all the local volunteers who chip away at paint, who chip away on word processors, who chip away on telephones, or who chip away at boring meetings. This couldn't happen without you.

Timothy C. Rizzuto
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**AN IMPORTANT NOTICE AND OPEN INVITATION TO ALL SLATER SIGNALS
RECIPIENTS.**

The Destroyer Escort Day Memorial Observance will be held at SLATER, Saturday June 19th – starting at 11 AM. This will be the 2nd annual event to be held in Albany and special events are planned for the occasion. **Mr. Ralph F. Freese, DE-749** and Executive Director of DESA will attend as our guest speaker. Musical selections will be provided by the **Uncle Sam Chorus** who hail from “upstream” Troy. **Bob Whitney DE-147, DER-317** who serves as a tour guide aboard Slater will sing with his group & **Rev. Henry Palmieri**, another member as well as contributor will offer the Invocation. **CPO Norm Wason** and the **Regional Sea Cadets** will present the colors and the **CAPDESA** members led by **Bob Donlon DE-419** and **Don Justus DE-105, 763 & 766** will present the Memorial Tribute to their fallen comrades as the ships’ bell is tolled and a red or white carnation is tossed off Slater’s stern. Also assisting will be **Art Dott and the Naval Reservists**. Another Slater Volunteer **Charles J. Lossi** will present TAPS at the close of the ceremony. At 1 PM, **Mr. Bruce Hampton Franklin**, ancestor of Benjamin, will present his new book, *“The Buckley Class Destroyer Escorts”* in Slater’s Officers Wardroom and will sign copies that will be available for purchase.

(JUST A LITTLE HINT – This book would make a wonderful Father’s Day gift as well as any other selections that will be available in the Ships’ Store!)

**PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND & SHARE THE DIGNITY OF DESTROYER ESCORT DAY
AND THE HERITAGE OF THE USS SLATER**