



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

USS Slater DE-766

PO Box 1926

Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943

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Sometimes we get so caught up in the present that we forget about those who were essential in getting us to where we are today. This is how it was with the passing of our last original Trustee, **Earl Johnson**, who passed away from natural causes last October at the age of 93.

One of the best natured and cheerful people I have ever known, Earl was born in St. Louis, in 1929. He enlisted in the Naval Reserve in 1947. In 1953, he was called up on active duty and assigned to USS ALVIN C. COCKRELL (DE-366) as a shipfitter. According to Earl, the ship had a notorious problem with clogged drains and overboard discharges, and he spent his first four months aboard getting the plumbing straightened out. During his time, he

made WestPac deployments that included three months as a station ship in Hong Kong.



Our founding DESA Board members: Marty Davis, Sam Saylor, Ray Windle, John Cosgrove, and Earl Johnson.

Upon discharge, Earl completed a degree in finance at California State University, and spent his career in securities and investments. In the eighties, he became active with the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association. He and his wife, Ann, were regulars at every DESA Reunion. He became president of the Los Angeles Chapter of DESA, and joined

the SLATER Board when DESA acquired the ship from Greece. There is still some debate as to whether his most significant contribution to USS SLATER's restoration was with the plumbing work he did in the restoration of the aft crew's head or the fact that he raised over \$100,000 for the project. Back in the days when we didn't have two nickles to rub together, he ran several raffles through the LA Chapter.

Earl's death, and the fact that we will be hosting the final DESA Reunion, brings to light that we are witnessing the end of an era, the passing of the greatest generation. Dori Glaser, DESA's

Administrator for so many years, reminded me that she has possession of the "Last Man Bottle" and will be bringing it to the final DESA Reunion. However, the "Last Man" will not be drinking the bottle. The bottle will reside aboard USS SLATER, as the ship will be the "Last Man," the legacy of the **Destroyer Escort Sailors Association.**



A final salute at the 2013 DESA Memorial Service.



Earl Johnson installing the sickbay sink in 1999.

Plans for the final convention of the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association are coming along nicely. The registration form and program are attached to this newsletter. We hope to have a strong turnout and to give a great sendoff to an organization that has accomplished so much.

In other news, progress towards getting our new shoreside Ship's Store

installed means that change is in the air. There is an odd, but hopeful echo inside the old trailer. It's a good sign, because **Shanna, Gary,** and their crew have filled the storage pod with the items that will be moved into the new building when it arrives next month. The current Ship's Store is empty of all merchandise, shelves, art, and trim. Gary removed all the trim, just in case we'll need it in the future. Getting the POD here and filled means that the dismantling of the old trailer and the delivery of the new building is near! We can't wait to keep you posted as the project gets underway.



Shanna has adopted an optimistic attitude for getting everything done before opening day. "It's fine. I'm fine. We're fine."

We were awarded funds from three different grants for the new building. One from the **City of Albany**, one from the **State of New York** via our friend, State Assembly member, **Pat Fahy**, and one from **Berkshire Bank**. These funds, as well as your



Sure, we can have this cleaned up for opening day.

generous donations from the Fort Orange fundraiser last October, are enabling us to make this vital upgrade to our facilities. **Shanna**, however, is waist deep in paperwork to make sure that all these funds are spent responsibly.

As winter drags on, Shanna continues to prepare for our upcoming season. We've got some exciting things coming down the pipe! Our new and improved building will be installed early this spring. We've got a couple of reunions scheduled for this summer, including the **Farewell DESA Reunion** that Shanna and Tim have been working hard to plan. See the

attached registration form for more on that. Shanna is also planning the **Historic Naval Ships Association's** annual conference for September. These two events are shaping up to be quite the shindigs. We're looking forward to hosting our friends from the around the country in Albany this season!

Gio has been busy researching USS VANCE for the "DE Classified" podcast episode this month. As one of the few DEs to serve through World War II and into the Vietnam War, USS VANCE (DE-387) has a story like no other. She braced the Atlantic to defend convoys against U-boats, spent months in chilly Antarctic waters as part of Operation Deep Freeze, and endured 99 days of command under one the most cantankerous



Tom Jaras, center, was interviewed by Gio for his podcast episode on USS VANCE.



Ed and Dennis have just about completed the storeroom .

commanding officers the US Navy has ever seen. Follow along and listen to some extraordinary and occasionally ludicrous stories on this episode of DE Classified. You can listen to this episode for free on our website, or download it from wherever you get your podcasts.

Meanwhile life goes on. Shanna is still filling online store sales while the merchandise is packed in boxes inside the pod. Don't let all her planning go to waste, order from the store! It's like a mini-scavenger hunt for her to find all your items!

We are booking tours, overnights, and events for 2023! If you plan on visiting SLATER this season, let **Shanna** know, and we'll get you on the calendar. It's looking like we are going to have a great season filled with many visitors. We'd love to see you too! Speaking of visitors, we hosted a commissioning ceremony on the fantail early this month. Marine Corps 2nd Lt. **Colton Repsher** was commissioned on the fantail on the 6th. It was a great ceremony with over 20 people in attendance.



Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Colton Repsher was commissioned aboard USS SLATER.

Donations from our Winter Fund solicitation have slowed down this month, so if you haven't contributed, please consider doing so.

Your donations mean so much. Help us keep the volunteers warm for one more month before we open to the public and get our main revenue source up and running again. Inside your Winter Fund solicitation was an order form for our 2-year calendar! **Shanna** was blown away by the 200 calendar orders that came back through this mailing! There are still 2023-2024 calendars available! Give us a call, or order through our website to get yours today.



Your Winter Fund donations kept James in the bilge all winter, so keep the support coming in!

In Collections, John has been continuing work on a few projects. A new display will showcase our USS STAFFORD (DE-411) collection of artifacts and documents. Nearly all of it

was donated by a single donor a few years ago. They include photographs, notebooks, blueprints, deck logs, and fragments from the kamikaze that crashed into her starboard side near frame 96, on 5 January 1945. The doner's father, Lt. (j.g) **Carl H. Williams, Jr.**, was the antisubmarine warfare officer at the time. Captain Craig refused to lose the ship, and ordered most of his crew transferred to USS ULVERT M. MOORE (DE-442), under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., the President's son. Lt. (j.g.) Williams remained aboard and helped keep the ship afloat.

The months long organization project of our ship files is complete, well, at least part one. Volunteers **Alan** and **Tom**, along with interns **Gio** and **Tyler**, went through hundreds of files, removing copies of copies...of copies and other



John has been getting archival support from several volunteers including Tom.



Gene Jackey has been restoring the crypto-machine safe.

irrelevant pages. This also allowed us to identify files that are missing information and can be added to later. The next step is to scan each page for digital storage, allowing for families and researchers easier access to our materials.

Directly below Collections, Dennis and Ed have been hard at work, restoring a former storeroom on the starboard side. The mild winter meant temperatures, while cold, weren't unbearable. Unfortunately, the

low overhead has taken a toll on their backs. After they removed all the shelving, some of which turned out to be former storage crates repurposed, they primed the entire compartment. **Kevin Sage** then came in and spray painted everything in a matter of hours. The light at the end of the tunnel is visible and they have begun reinstalling the shelving. Both **Dennis** and **Ed** are new volunteers, having been here for only a year. They have become **Gary's** new right-hand men, helping him in any project.



A sure sign of spring coming is Walt varnishing the nameboard.

Other maintenance projects are wrapping up around the ship. The shipfitters have completed all the steel replacement along the port bulkhead in the wardroom. This is a timely matter because we plan move the office into the

wardroom, while the trailer is being demolished and the new building installed. **Chuck Tanner** completed restoration of all the portholes. **Gary Sheedy** took care of reinsulating and painting the port bulkhead, and the area around the messdecks hatch outside the wardroom.



Out of my way Benner, some of us have work to do.

Super Dave Mardon was rebuilding the port breakwater watertight door. **Chuck Teal** and **Danny** completed the work on the port B-3 supply fan room and restarted work on the foc's'cle hatch. **Barry**, and his crew of reservists and midshipmen, are wrapping up the messdecks pipe

insulation project. **Barry** and **Alex** successfully opened up an overboard discharge valve on the upper-level port side of B-3 for any future dewatering that may be needed. The valve was also refurbished but not yet leak checked.

In early February the temperature dropped to minus thirteen degrees. The extreme cold weather caused paint to pop off the steel on many places around the superstructure. As a result of all the peeling paint during the extreme cold weather, **Walt, Bill, Thomas, and Ron** have been scaling paint and feathering edges, so the bare spots will be ready for repainting come warmer weather. We want the ship looking as good as possible for the upcoming DESA Reunion and the HNSA Convention.

There are very few of the original World War II DESA members left. Their places have been taken by Sailors who served the postwar Navy. They served in the DER radar pickets and the “1000-class” ships, such as the DEALY, CLAUDE JONES, GARCIA, and KNOX class ships. For any of you who were DESA members who are not on our mailing list, please contact us, and we will keep the spirit of DESA alive. We hope that all you DESA members can come to Albany for our final reunion. See the registration info attached to this edition of Signals. We hope to see you there.

See you next month.

Tim



Walt Stuart, Bill Wetterau, and the deck gang have already started topside scaling and sanding to be ready for opening day.