

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

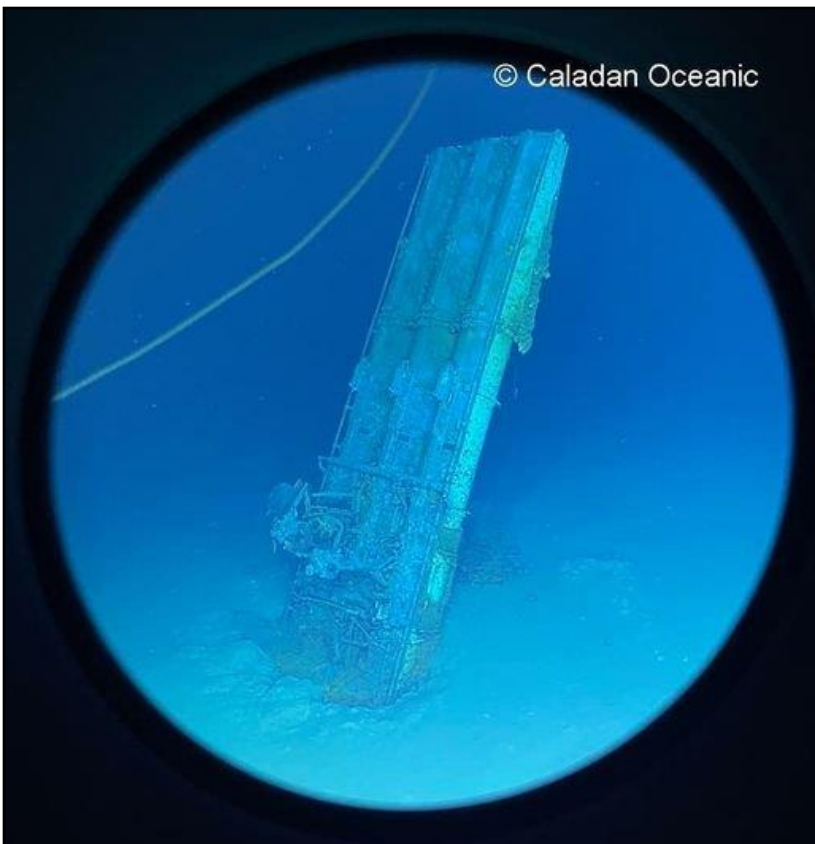
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Every third Saturday in June aboard USS SLATER, we remember the destroyer escorts and sailors that were lost in the Second World War. As part of our tribute to the destroyer escorts lost in action, **Marianne Donovan** dropped a carnation into the Hudson River to remember USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS (DE-413), lost during the Battle of Leyte Gulf with 89 of her crew, including Marianne's father, **Robert P Cummings** MM 3/c.

USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS is arguably the most famous destroyer escort in history, thanks to the courage of her skipper LCDR Robert Copeland and his crew.

Fearing that his ship would be lost before she could fire her torpedoes, Copeland followed three destroyers into action against a much larger force of Japanese battleships, cruisers, and destroyers in the epic battle. Scoring a hit on a cruiser, "SAMMY B." continued to engage the Japanese with gunfire for two hours, until her shattered hull finally sank beneath the waves. The ship carried 224 crewmembers, 89 of whom were killed. Copeland was one of the survivors.



Torpedo tubes from USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS were found on Destroyer Escort Day.
Photo by Caladan Oceanic.

At the same time as Marianne was remembering her father aboard SLATER, halfway around the world, the third of a series of six dives was taking place off of the Samar coast, in



Gun 41 aboard USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS.

the Philippine Islands. The crew of the Deep Submergence Vehicle, **LIMITING FACTOR**, found a triple-tube torpedo launcher speared into the ocean bottom. The pilot of the Limiting Factor was **Tim Macdonald**, and his observer was **Jeremie Morizet**. Jeremie was brought onto the expedition to operate a new deep-ocean sidescan Sonar, developed specifically to be carried aboard the **LIMITING FACTOR**. The torpedo mount was picked up toward the end of their planned dive, and Tim extended the dive to visually identify the artifact. There were isolated artifacts around the launcher, but there was not enough time remaining in the dive to pursue further.

Being a triple-tube launcher, it was immediately identified as having come from USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, the only ship sunk off Samar with that configuration. The following day, **LIMITING FACTOR** owner/pilot **Victor Vescovo** and Jeremie dove onto the position and resumed the search. The full wreck of “Sammy B” lay just a few hundred meters to the northwest of the torpedo launcher. Victor was able to use his entire dive to survey the wreck for later analysis. The wreck is 6,895 meters deep (over 4 miles) making it the world’s deepest known shipwreck, taking that title from the wreck of **USS JOHNSTON (DD-557)**, which had been found in March 2021 at 6,469 meters.

How appropriate that the heroic ship should have been discovered on Destroyer Escort Day. At one time, thirty chapters of the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association

commemorated DE day on the third Saturday in June. On this date, the day was celebrated here in Albany and in Michigan, where the Michigan Chapter of DESA held their final meeting. As long as the USS SLATER exists in Albany, we will remember the sacrifices of the DE ships and sailors.

Our event was well attended with over 50 people filling our observation deck. Chairman of the Board **BJ Costello** was our emcee, **Steve Long** gave us the history of the day and read the list of the 15 DEs lost during WWII, and **Mark Stella** performed TAPS. The **Pitch Hitters Quartet** from Racing City Chorus performed the National Anthem and the Armed Services Melody, and the **Boy Scouts from St. Pius X Troop 1078** served as our color guard,



Boy Scout Troop 1078 and Ken Kaskoun served as our color guard for DE Day.

under the direction of volunteer **Ken Kaskoun**. We also had dignitaries aboard to say a few words; Albany County Executive **Dan McCoy**, Assemblyman **John McDonald**, and Albany Mayor's Chief of Staff **David Gallin** in attendance.



Pitch Hitters Quartet from Racing City Chorus.

During the memorial tribute portion of the ceremony as Steve read the lost ships, intern Tyler Warman rang the bell for each ship, just as a carnation was laid in the Hudson River. The carnations were handled by: **Mike Marko**, a SLATER Volunteer and USS BROUGH & USS PETERSON sailor; **Alan Fox**, a SLATER Volunteer, son of a USS HAYTER sailor, and cousin of USS STERN's namesake; **Ray Smith**, son of a USS FECHTELER sailor; and of

course **Marianne Donovan**, daughter of a USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS sailor. You can watch the entire ceremony on our YouTube channel!

In collections, John has been busy gathering research materials for family members interested in learning about their loved one's service aboard a WWII destroyer escort. He has also been cataloguing a large donation of documents, photographs, and uniforms from Helen Greene. Her husband, Albert G. Greene Jr., served aboard the CANNON-class destroyer escort, USS COONER (DE-172), as an Electronic Technician, until his discharge in May 1946. This addition to the museum will more than double our current collection on the COONER, and will go a long way towards telling the story of destroyer escorts and their crews.



Gary is back to work in Aft Steering.



Don't let anybody touch this door until I get back on Tuesday.

Other projects this month included finally getting around to finishing the inventory of our signal flags. If you have ever visited the SLATER, you would have noticed the signal flags we have raised, as well as the flag bags on the tour route full of WWII and contemporary signals. We have even more in storage, and it was finally time to get a count of each letter, number, and phrase.

If you don't follow us on Facebook or Youtube, head on over there and give us a like and subscribe. Each week we are releasing videos on the maintenance work of our dedicated volunteers, as well as a series of videos following SLATER in real time through her deck logs.

Saturday morning June 4th dawned clear and bright for the Historic Naval Ships Annual Radio event. Chuck Chandler and Steve Syrotynski were joined in the radio shack by Samuel, a US Navy sailor attending communications school down in Groton, CT. He had family in the area and wanted to come observe our “old-school” operation. As they got ready to operate, they were interrupted by the incredibly loud rattle of a needle-gun scaling off old paint just aft of Radio Central, that lasted until 1000.

The first evolution was changing the frequency of our TBL transmitter. This will be understandable only to the radio geeks. Changing frequency in a 1940's transmitter is a bit more complicated than in modern gear. After tuning the master oscillator section and bringing it to resonance, you then tune, in turn, the first IF amplifier, the second IF amplifier, the power amplifier, and the antenna matching section. They settled on 1600 volts and 300 milliamps of final input and about 2 amps of antenna current. Out of sight of visitors, we have a digital frequency counter that samples the master oscillator, so they knew they were right on 7062 kHz.

While Steve had been using an RBB Superheterodyne receiver for 75 meter AM, Chuck went further old-school with an RAL-7 regenerative receiver for 40 meter Morse code. That meant no volume control and near-constant adjustments of the sensitivity, regeneration, and frequency vernier controls. However, when properly adjusted, the regen is just as sensitive as any gear of the time.



The radio gang making contacts during the Museum Ships Radio Weekend.

Chuck's first contact was a bit after 1400Z: **Dave (K1VUT)** in eastern Massachusetts. He was followed a short time later by **Stan Levandowski (WB2LQF)**, a long-time Slater Radio Gang member.

After that it was a steady stream of transmitting, listening, tour groups stopping by the doorway, and tracing the 1945 Radio Central workflow for our Navy visitor. There weren't dozens of callers at once, but I found the RAL-7 could do a pretty good job of separating close-in signals with its two audio filters. Chuck listened through a large bulkhead-mounted amplified speaker, so the tour groups could hear the Morse code. He also had that turned up all the way, to overcome the noise of the motor generator and the exhaust fan pushing the warm air to the outside.



Doug Tanner solved the mystery of the trunion springs.

By the time they shut down at 1700, they had worked stations in MA, NY, OH, PA, CT, MI, NH,



We exercise the whaleboat on Mondays.

NJ, and ME. Chuck worked one other museum ship, the submarine, USS REQUIN, in Pittsburgh. Our best distance was with **Dan (KB6NU)** in Michigan. Our final logs will be submitted to Battleship New Jersey for the Museum Ships Weekend event. Kudos to **Steve** and **Chuck** for getting so much of our original equipment operational.

Doug Tanner's shipfitters, **Tim Benner, Danny Statile, Warren Brozio, Earl Herchenroder, Chuck Teal, Chuck Tanner, Super Dave Mardon, and Gene Jackey** replaced the gangway rollers after **Walt Stuart** discovered a bunch of little ball bearings on the deck. They also

replaced a broken trunnion spring on 20mm gun mount number 27, starboard side amidships. Doug showed his welding skills by detempering, welding, and retempering the broken spring to repair it. Trunnion springs for Oerlikon guns are getting pretty scarce, so if you've got a hook up, let us know.

The starboard side watertight door on the bridge was deemed complete for the fourth month in a row, and got a final coat of camouflage paint by Thomas Scian. Danny Statile continued his efforts at converting a quick acting door to a manual door, for the portside of the pilothouse. Everything useable has been salvaged from the original door. Most of the month went into installing the portlight from the original door. The foc's'cle's hatch had been leaking, so the shipfitters made a temporary cover for the opening and moved the hatch back to the shop area for restoration.



Ron Prest and Bill Wetterau are back to scaling under the roller loaders.

The deck gang, Walt Stuart, Ron Prest, Thomas Scian, Bill Wetterau, and Bill Holt continued the endless cycle of topside maintenance. They kept the decks clean, and completed scaling and painted the area on the 01 level, forward of the stack. They have moved aft to working under the depth charge projector roller loaders, and inside the gun 33 tub. Thomas also painted out the 20mm gun 27. **Richard and Henry Bourgeois** continued the MK-14 gunsight restoration and have taken on the maintenance of our replica 40mm shells, gluing them back together when they come apart from rough handling.

The engineers, Mike Dingmon, James Miles, Jim Skewes, and Jim Niemynski have been joined by Charles Desrosiers and John Jerome. The month of June was a busy one for the engineering department. After bringing the whaleboat back alongside, all eyes were pointed back down into the bilge in B-3.



Our engineering team continued working on bilge preservation.

James crammed himself into what he believes is the tightest space on the ship, right between the V-16 engine and the bulkhead in B-3. This allowed us to clean about 95% of the bilge in B-3 by hand, with no tools required. Additional coats of linseed oil have been applied to previously degreased sections, which means some of the bilge is ready for a primer and top coat.

While degreasing, they discovered that the oil filter, which serves the 8 cylinder generator, was leaking from failed gaskets, and a slight leak was spotted on the lines that came off of it. They pumped out the oil from the filter, removed the lines, and had them brazed shut and air tested. They are ready to go back on for service again.

Last, but not least, they decided to dewater the inboard V-16 engine in B-3. This was done by attaching a valve to the drain port on the lowest portion of the thermostat, on the heat exchanger, and then using a sump pump to remove the water. This water was added several years ago when engineers were evaluating the engine for future use. While not an issue for most of the system, some fittings were made of steel, and were showing signs of rot. Rather than wait for the hundreds of gallons to find a way out while we weren't aboard, we decided to drain it out on our terms.

After 3 work days of draining out, the cooling system on this engine is back to being empty. In July they will focus on degreasing and coating the bilge in preparation for priming and a top coat. By the end of the year, we expect to have the bilge in B-3 painted and conserved.

Barry Witte, Alex Titcomb, Jack Myers, and Thomas Horsington have been replicating missing piping systems on the second deck forward. Many of the steam heat and condensate drain lines are missing. They were probably deemed as unnecessary in the forty years that SLATER spent as AETOS, in the warm Mediterranean climate.



Jo Ann and Doug teamed up to serve chili dogs for the crew.

Our tour guides have had quite the busy month once again. June was filled with school groups, 100 overnight campers, and three speaking engagements, where our volunteers traveled to area libraries to teach about the importance of Destroyer Escorts. Our attendance numbers are up from last season and now that schools are out, we are enjoying the frenzy that summer brings!

Shanna has been busy bringing new opportunities to our organization. She applied and received a grant from the City of Albany to update our shoreside facilities. You all know the hard work our volunteers put in each week to keep SLATER looking world-class. Well, the trailer that houses our Ship's Store, offices, restrooms, and classroom does not look as great. This grant money will assist necessary improvements to replace the building, repave the parking lot, install lighting in the lot, and upgrade our internet service.

John wrote, researched, and recorded our "DE Classified" podcast episode this month, featuring the heroics of USS ENGLAND. This story is especially fascinating because the record-holding ENGLAND sank 6 submarines in 12 days. You can listen to this story on our website, usslater.org/de-classified, or anywhere you get your podcasts.

We were saddened to learn of the passing of one of the last USS SLATER original crew members. Daniel H. Drummond Sr. passed away on May 20th in Ft. Myers,

Florida. He served as a quartermaster third class aboard, and got to visit the ship several times with his family. He was waiting for us in the parking lot when we returned from the shipyard in 2020. As one of the few crew members remaining, we send our condolences to the whole Drummond family.

Finally, we lost Barbara Jones Higbee on June tenth. Barbara was the vice president of Development at Mercer Companies, when USS SLATER arrived in Albany. She was tasked by her boss, **Bill Bantz**, with getting me acquainted with Albany and paving the way for the initial arrangements and permitting for USS SLATER. She served as our functional Chairman of the steering committee for about six months, before **Frank Lasch** volunteered to relieve her. As such, she played a critical role in getting us established and making SLATER a success. These three will be deeply missed.

See you next month,

Tim



A large contingent of our crew showed up for DE Day, in matching jackets to boot!