

# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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**Tim Benner has been doing a pretty impressive job of welding on the 20mm ready service locker.** The reason I lead off with Tim, is that, in the words of comedian Red Buttons, “Tim never got a dinner.” The poor guy has been driving down from Glens Falls almost every Saturday for 22 years, with hardly a mention in this newsletter. This is kind of hard to understand, because no one would argue that, among our volunteers, Benner has one of the most outstanding personalities in the crew. Perhaps, outstanding isn’t quite the word I’m looking for. Maybe “unique” is a better fit. The conversation is always a lot louder and more boisterous when Benner is in the Chief’s Quarters.



*Benner can eat.*

**Benner is always easy to find.** Just listen for the loudest voice in any group. Or look for the glint of the sun reflecting off his head, or follow the smell of the nasty pipe. Those yellow stains on the side of the ship aren’t rust streaks. That’s where Benner knocks his pipe against the bulwark. But, more often than not, you can find him on his cell phone.

**But perhaps the reason Benner has been so overlooked is that it’s difficult to describe him in a family friendly publication.** He once enjoyed special



*Benner can weld.*

status as **Doug Tanner's** right-hand man. As Benner himself would say, they were "Tighter than two coats of paint." That was until **Dave Mardon** reported aboard, sized up the situation, and wedged himself to Doug so closely that Benner couldn't get near his old pal. But Benner's proudest moments include inviting Tanner to stop in for coffee when Doug is driving up to Ogdensburg, and then sticking Doug with the check.

**Benner attributes his attachment to my "Crummy ship" to the fact that his father was in the Canadian Navy, and worked in Canadian shipyards during World War II. This is Benner's way of paying tribute to his Dad. Did I say, "Canadian shipyards?" Why yes, and this brings us to another important fact about Benner. He is Canadian born.**

Normally, no one would consider this an issue, but the fact that we are in an immigration crisis, with foreign nationals flooding across our borders, why this foreigner is here, taking a job away from some poor American volunteer? Can't he find a Canadian ship to work on? Is it possible he is a foreign agent, documenting our military technology for the

Canadian government? He certainly has the credentials to be a master spy. Who would suspect him?

**A true renaissance man, Benner is arguably the most highly educated member of the crew.** He possesses a master's degree in education. He is a member of several bands and orchestras, and some regard him as the best tuba player in Glens Falls. He was a hockey referee for many years. He was well on his way to a career in public school education, when he decided he'd rather deal with lawnmowers and snow blowers than a classroom full of kids. So he started his own small engine repair business. Yet, at the same time, he continued to work part time at a daycare center, because he relates so well to



***Super Dave, taking his place as Doug's Right Hand Man!***



***Benner and Boats having a ball!***



***Earl and Benner are tackling the 20mm service ready locker.***

small children, and vice versa. His presence there does call into question New York State Standards for educators, when you realize, he is officially certified to work with small children. Which is probably why he fits in so well at the SLATER. All kidding aside, this guy deserves some special credit for making the weekly round trip to and from Glens Falls. That's quite a distance.

**Thanks to Benner's welding skill, and the support of Earl Herchenroder, Chuck Teal, and Warren Brozio, the port 20mm ready service magazine is nearing completion.** It been an arduous process, cutting the entire lower section of the box and replacing it. When complete, the shipfitters will move on to the starboard 20mm ready service locker, which isn't in nearly as bad condition.

**The other big project the shipfitters have undertaken is rebuilding four badly deteriorated watertight doors in the forward superstructure.** In all cases, the bottom of the door has rotted out, and what's left of the watertight door gasket is just hanging unsupported. **Dave Mardon and Danny Statile** have been working on this project. They completed the first door, located on the 01 level, just outside the radioroom. I use the word completed loosely, because as shipfitters, they don't believe repainting falls under the scope of their contract.

**Next, they fabricated a lightweight temporary sheet metal door, and used it to replace the door at the head of the ladderwell, adjacent to CIC.** The heavy door was carefully



***Mike and Doug move the watertight door to the workbench for repairs.***

lowered from the 02 level to the main deck, and carted back to the work bench, with nobody being killed or maimed in the process. That door was examined and determined to be the same size as a door that we removed from USS GAGE (APA-168) many years ago. The only problem was that the GAGE door is quick acting, and the door we're placing has manual dogs. However, **Doug Tanner** decided that it would be easier to cut off the quick acting mechanism and convert the GAGE door to a manual door, than to try and repair the original door. You follow all that. Anyway, the process has started.

**Gary Sheedy and Thomas Scian** have nearly completed their restoration of the anchor windlass space. True to form, Gary emptied out the Bosun's Storeroom forward of the Anchor Windlass Compartment, and



**Gary's Anchor Windless Compartment is looking fit for a museum.**



**Walt's washdowns don't miss a nook or cranny.**

had Thomas repaint that too. With all the coils of rope stored, the hardware sorted, and block and tackle hanging in place, the area is a work of art. Gary has followed through with his vision of creating a space that is truly functional, and museum quality.

**Elsewhere around the ship, Thomas and Bill Wetterau** have been needle scaling decks and touching up paintwork to keep **USS SLATER** looking as good as we can make her. **Walt Stuart, Paul Guarneri, and Boat Haggart** completed rigging the whaleboat davits and monkey ropes. Paul has a new job with the NYS Canal Corp, so he will be moving to Wednesdays and do more tour

guiding. **Walt Stuart** has taken on the thankless task of doing topside wash downs and trying to keep the decks clean. I say thankless, because with all the repairs to the concrete bridge piers that rise above and surround the ship, and the pneumatic chipping that work entails, the ship and everything else around is continually being coated with a layer of concrete dust.

**Up in the radio room, Steve Syrotynski and Chuck Chandler manhandled the old National NC-120X from Radio Central down to the electronics storeroom belowdecks.** This heavy beast had been in CIC, but we were able to

replace it with a better example of this RBL Low Frequency beacon receiver. They were able to carry the old receiver down the ladders, until we got to the vertical hatch outside the Chief's quarters. The block and tackle there, installed by Sheedy, made lowering it the rest of the way the easiest part of the job.



***Paul and Walt work on preparing the davits for the whaleboat.***



***Intern John tells his tour group about the Bosun's Chair.***

**They both started to run new copper tubing, to allow the TCS set to share the ship's transmitting antennas.** Their temporary patch wire isn't quite correct for the period. Steve also completed repairs to the RCK receiver, and has that back online. Steve also repaired a balky switch in the working TCS receiver, and replaced the re-built speaker in the five-channel amplifier in Radio Central. Chuck made Morse Code contacts all around the country, and is using the HAM station to recruit new members He

also created a message form for our QRZ.com page, inviting amateur radio operators to contact us on Museum Ship Weekend.

**However, the most amazing radio room work is happening offsite.** One of the most unique and beautiful pieces of equipment in the radio room are the big brass antennae disconnect switches. They look like something right out of a Frankenstein movie. We were missing one in Radio Central, and needed another for the emergency radio room. Our volunteer machinist, **George Christophersen**, was tasked with making replicas. The switches he produced are truly a work of art. In addition, George is rebuilding the elevation handwheel on the aft 40mm gun. George is another example of how fortunate we are to have such talent in our crew.



***George and Chuck check out the disconnects George made.***

**Tommy Moore, Mike Dingmon, and Larry Williams made final preparations to get the whaleboat ready for her return to the mothership.** The whaleboat was hoisted into the lift slings on Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup> At **Scarano's Boatyard**. After letting it set in the slings with a hose running for several days to swell up, the boat is expected to return to SLATER sometime in early in June. I believe this is the earliest we've ever had it in the water and running.



***We're ready for our whaleboat to make her way upriver to us.***

**Barry Witte's crew has shifted to Saturdays. Richard and Henry Burgeois** continue to work on the B-4 auxiliary steam pipe restoration. Most of the RPI Midshipmen have left for their summer training. We bid farewell to **Ensign Brendan Lutz** who heads south to Nuclear Training School in Charleston. We still have the services of his running mate **Ensign Jack Carbone** who will be with us until August. They went to work on restoration of the three-inch practice

loading machine. Brendan finally found the correct spring for the ship's whistle, so he was able to celebrate his departure with a final "Mission Accomplished" toot. **Gabe Tambellini** completed his rebuild of the two scuttles in the C-202L double wide hatch, with help from **George Christophersen**. George made two new handwheel spindles from scratch.

On Monday, 17 May 2021 we hosted four former crewmembers of USS STARK (FFG-31), aboard for a Memorial Service. **Mark Wasnock, Mike Deaner, Darrel Foster, and Tom Marshall** came aboard to mark the 34th anniversary of the Iraqi missile attack that killed 37 of their shipmates. They saved their ship, and sailed her home. **Steve Stella** was aboard to perform taps, as the ship's bell was tolled for each of the 37. The Sailors who died will not be forgotten.



*We're going to miss our mast climbing midshipmen.*



*Memorial Service for USS STARK (FFG-31) on our fantail.*

**On the education side, Shanna and the Interns are producing a series of podcasts for our website, called "DE Classified."** We released our first episode featuring USS SLATER, and the reason Destroyer Escorts were built for WWII. It is meant to set up a good knowledge base, before we dive into other DEs starting in June, with USS MITCHELL DE-43. You can download the podcast from wherever you find your podcasts, or listen on our website, all free of charge. We are also taking requests for upcoming episodes. You can find the request form on our website as well.

**Tours are continuing, and we are getting more visitors as the summer season approaches and the weather cooperates. We are**

now booking school tours, overnights, oral presentations, and our all-new virtual tours. People are enjoying their chance to view our Special Collections Compartment and the artifacts of DE sailors on display.

**Twice this month, new volunteer, Ted Urbanski, a Signalman who served aboard USS VAN VOORHIS DE-1028, has been driving from Connecticut to hold demonstrations on signaling for our visitors. They include semaphore with the flags, and Morse code with a signal light. Each week his presentation keeps getting better, and our visitors are enjoying learning the dying arts!**



*Tom is in Pilot House with a tour group.*

**We are starting to plan our DE Day Ceremony, for Saturday 19 June at 0900, aboard SLATER.** Everyone is welcome to join, as we pay tribute to the 1,316 Destroyer Escort Sailors who lost their lives serving their country. This will be the first ceremony we have held since Covid-19 hit. We hope to see you there.

See you next month, Tim



*The brain trust, Mike, Super Dave, Larry, and Doug.*