



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

Vol. 25 No. 10, October 2022

The month of October might be described as the month that seemed to never end, because we've had so many special events back-to-back. The first of October started with the arrival of the NPTU Chief Petty Officers and CPO Selects for their annual volunteer day. As is our standard procedure, they concentrated on cleaning in the aft machinery spaces, so they were out of the way of our visitors. They worked all day Saturday, cooked lunch in the galley, and left the spaces much cleaner than they found them.

The next day, Sunday 2 October, the crew began to arrive for the fall work week. Ship's cook, **Blair Sandri**, arrived the day before, to shop and prepare the galley. He and **Tony Esposito** went shopping and bought the necessities to keep the crew fed for the week.

Over the course of the week, George Gollas, Bob Barth, Bill Abbott, Brendan Lindahl, Ed Wakeman, Gary Dieckman, Ron Frankosky, John Cruise, and John Meeker all arrived to lend a hand. John Meeker came the furthest distance from Seattle to participate, and Tony picked him up at the airport.



The fall work week crew.

Bill Abbott is the maintenance supervisor at the Buffalo Naval Park. He came with **Brendan Lindahl**, the Lead Caretaker, and **Mario Roy**, a Coast Guard Chief and volunteer. They wanted to see how we operate our work weeks. They presently have their hands full with the restoration of **USS THE SULLIVANS**. **Barry Witte** spent time with them, giving pointers on shipboard electrical systems. With the two Chiefs from Buffalo and **Ed Wakeman**, I had three Chiefs aboard, all looking for somebody to supervise. I somehow convinced them to help us paint our depth charge roller loaders.

George Gollas, Bob Barth, and John Meeker spent the week working on the restoration of interior communications systems. George's goal is to get the buzzer call system 100% operational. Trustee **Gary Dieckman** spent the week down on the lower level of the aft engine room, cleaning and painting the long neglected wireways down on the port side.



Bill Abbot and the crew from Buffalo.



Depth charge painting in process.

New volunteer, John Cruise, who volunteers on the Coast Guard Cutter LILAC, joined us for the first time. He helped with the biggest project, repainting the eight roller loader racks on the quarterdeck aft. Chief **Ed Wakeman** organized the effort that involved unloading the 32 - 300-pound depth charges from the racks, repainting, and reloading them. Everyone got involved with that project, but nobody more so than John, who proved quite adept at crawling under the rack and painting the hard-to-get places.

Our favorite chipper, Ron Frankosky, also managed to finish scaling, priming, and painting the deck around the aft 40mm gun mount. He also worked on scaling and priming the deck around the aft three-inch gun and the portside searchlight platform.

In addition to all the work, we celebrated two birthdays that week. Both Gary Sheedy and cook Blair Sandri were remembered by the crew. If that weren't enough, we had an overnight visit by former employees, Eric and Katie Rivet. Eric served as our education coordinator from 2005-2010, before accepting a position with the WWII Museum in New Orleans. Katie was our collections manager from 2005-2011. Both now live in Ohio, where Eric volunteers aboard the submarine USS COD. It was great to have them back aboard. Overall, the crew had a very productive week.

Volunteer, George Gollas, posted this to his Facebook page, following his return home from the work week.

"While traveling home yesterday I had time to reflect on my past 10 days aboard the USS Slater in Albany NY.

This past week was our annual Fall Workweek, and it



George Gollas got his exercise while checking out IC circuits.



We celebrated Blair's birthday during the work week.

was nice spending time aboard with old friends while making some new ones. I am already looking forward to our 2023 Spring Workweek. As it turned out, this past Saturday was movie night. Our ship's curator, **John Epp**, had some videos from the Slater's arrival in NYC in 1993, as well as some from Albany in 1997, along with a few other pieces depicting the restoration process over the years. Seeing the progress made, along with clips of many of the dedicated volunteers, brought back memories of my Slater shipmates. Many depicted in the various productions are no longer with us, while some of those still working aboard looked so young.

I realized I have been involved with this restoration for almost 15 years. Many of my earlier efforts had been focused on the Aft Motor Room B3 and the Aft Engine Room B4 engineering spaces.

Over the past several years, I have been involved in restoring, repairing, and maintaining our electrical power distribution equipment, Interior Communications systems.

I feel honored to be involved with the restoration process and look forward to helping the volunteer crew carry the torch forward for many years." I couldn't have said it better myself.

On Thursday, 13 October, we celebrated the 247th Navy Birthday aboard USS SLATER. The event

was sponsored by the Capital Area Chief Petty Officers Association. This is always a great event filled with lunch, cake, camaraderie in the Mess Decks, and of course honoring our USS SLATER Volunteer of the Year, **Mary Beth Mulligan.** **Mary Beth** has been providing the Monday crew

with lunch for over the past year. Her selflessness and generosity has breathed new life into the Monday crew. You know the adage "If you feed them, they will come." Thanks to **Art Dott**

and **Sean Robbins** of the CPO Association and **Shanna** for planning this event. You can watch the brief ceremony here: <https://youtu.be/Cv5EKkxxZTw>



Mary Beth Mulligan was honored as the 2022 USS SLATER Volunteer of the Year!



Intern Gio read the history of the Navy to celebrate their 247th birthday.

The local maintenance crew has continued to make progress all over the ship. The shipfitters completed the drain on the starboard 40mm junction box, and got it bolted up and draining properly. The rebuild of the port pilothouse door is now almost completed, with the last step being the installation of the portlight. The restoration of the fo's'cle hatch is nearing completion. **Gary Sheedy**, now joined by his helpers **Thomas Scian, Dennis Murray, and Ed Nowik**, continue to make progress in the steering gear compartment. Under the direction of **Barry Witte, Liz**

Flynn and her team of **NROTC Midshipmen** are continuing to free up the tank cover inspection ports.

On Tuesday, 18 October, Doug Tanner hosted the local chapter of the American Welding Society aboard. The Albany Chapter of the American Welding Society (AWS) met to honor the Ship Fitters Crew of USS SLATER (DE-766). SLATER was recognized in 2000 as a Historical Welded Structure. This year, AWS members were present aboard SLATER for the awarding of Certificates of Appreciation by **Erich Haun** and **Doug Tanner**. Receiving Certificates of Appreciation were SLATER volunteers **Andy Sheffer, Danny Statile, Dave Mardon, Tim Benner, Chuck Teal, Joe Breyer, Gene Jackey, Earl Herchenroder, Warren Brozio, Chuck Tanner, Jacob Lounsbury, and Doug Tanner**. **Ed Zajkowski** and the Limerick Retiree Volunteers also received Certificates of Appreciation, including **Rick Espenshade, Bob Lally, Steve Wulko, Joe Arra, and Joe Zygmunt**. We are grateful to all of them for their contributions to USS SLATER's preservation.



Ed is back helping Gary in the steering gear compartment.



USS SLATER volunteer welders were honored by the American Welding Society this month.

In preparation for our annual USS SLATER Night at the Fort Orange Club, we welcomed back our guest speakers, Parks Stephenson, and Admiral Samuel Cox. Parks has recently taken the position as Executive Director of USS KIDD Museum in Baton Rouge. KIDD, as some of you know, is a ship I have some familiarity with, 15 years of familiarity. Parks always prefers to stay on the ship, as it offers more opulent berthing than that which **BJ Costello** offers at the Fort Orange Club. **Blair Sandri** and **Ed Zajkowski** were back on board to cater to Parks' needs.

There were also many conversations about his new position and the future dry docking of USS KIDD, another subject that we have some experience with. Parks was part of the team that discovered the wreck of USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS this summer. He gave a presentation at our annual fundraiser at the Fort Orange Club, showing us his photos and findings about the *DE* that fought like a Battleship.

In addition to Parks, we had another speaker at the event, Rear Admiral Samuel Cox, Director of Naval History and Heritage Command, who spoke on the significance of the Battle off Samar. We were honored to have tour guide, Carl Camurati, give the Admiral a tour of the ship prior to the evening event.



Hosting Parks for dinner in the wardroom.



Marianne Donovan pictured as she remembered her late father, who died aboard SAMMY B.

The fundraiser was an enormous success. Thanks to the planning and challenging work by our program manager, **Shanna Schuster**, we had one of our best attended events ever. Our major sponsors included, **Bob & Marie Dolfi, Doris Fischer Malesardi, the Port of Albany, John Pecoroni, Gary Dieckman/ Executive Printing & Direct Mail, Inc., and Stephen and Jean Cleary.**

We had several distinguished guests. We honored two women whose fathers were killed serving the Navy during WWII. **Marianne Donovan's** father, Engineman **Robert Cummings**, was lost during the final moments of USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS. In addition, **Phyllis Hayter Townsend** and her daughter **Maurine Fitzpatrick** came all the way from Colorado by train to be part of the event. Phyllis witnessed the attack on Pearl Harbor, as her father, LCDR **Hubert Hayter**, was

serving on USS NEW ORLEANS (CA). He died in the Battle of Tassaforanga Island, receiving the Navy Cross for his heroic actions when NEW ORLEANS lost her bow. USS HAYTER (DE-212) honored him and was christened by Phyllis's mother. Marianne read a moving poem dedicated to the memory of the SAMUEL B. ROBERTS crew. And Phyllis proved that her recollections of the attack on Pearl Harbor were as sharp and clear as the day it happened.

As part of the program, Admiral Cox presented the USS SLATER crew with the Naval Heritage and History Commands Curatorial Award for 2022. This award was originally presented at the HNSA Conference aboard USS MISSOURI last month. But we took the opportunity of having Admiral Cox in attendance to re-present the award in front of our supporters. And since we are giving out one of the awards we took home from Hawaii, let's make sure our supporters know that Gary and Shanna were honored too. I was privileged to re-present **Shanna Schuster** with the Historic Naval Ships Association's Educator Award for



Admiral Cox presented the SALTER crew with NHHC Curatorial Award.

2022 and Shanna presented **Gary Sheedy** with the HNSA Ship Maintenance Award.



Gary Sheedy was given the Trustees Award for his 25 years of service to SLATER.

The most prestigious award of the night was presented by Board Chairman, BJ Costello to Gary Sheedy. The 2022 USS SLATER Trustees Award was presented to Gary for his 25 years of dedicated service to the ship. There is not another volunteer who has put in as many hours as Gary, and he continues to serve with a smile and a never-ending sense of humor. The real miracle is that he didn't know this was coming and Shanna and Jo Ann didn't spill the beans. The event raised over \$70,000 to go towards the construction of our new visitor center. It was a fitting tribute

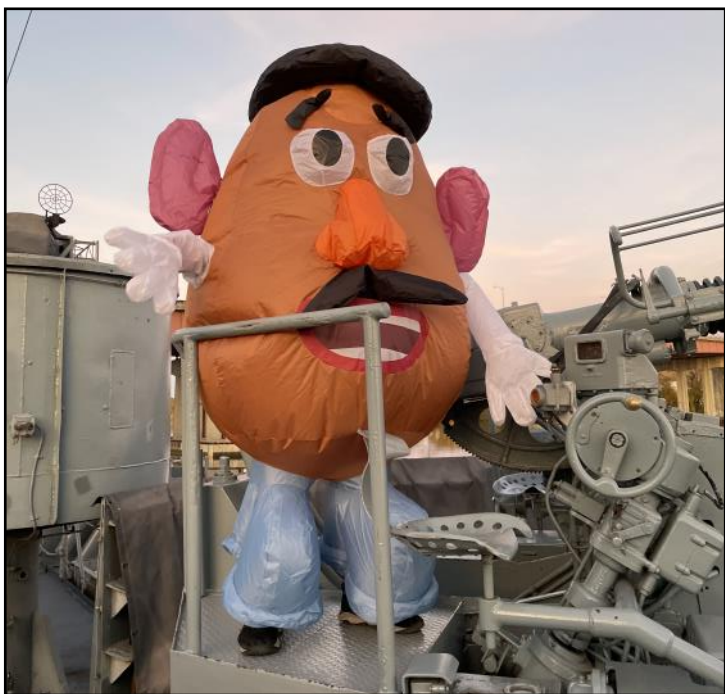
to USS SLATER's 25th Anniversary in Albany.

A week after the fundraiser event, we celebrated Oxi Day, an annual event we host to honor SLATER/AETOS and her forty years of Greek Service. On 28 October 1940, the Prime Minister of Greece denied the Italian ambassador's request for Italian troops to occupy strategic areas of Greece, so they could control the Mediterranean. **Father Patrick Legato** recalled that, with their request denied, Italy invaded Greece. But the outnumbered and outgunned Greeks pushed the Italian forces out of their country and into Albania. It was an embarrassing defeat for Italy. Germany was forced to send their own troops, which delayed their invasion of Russia. Though Germany conquered Greece quickly, Greeks continued to fight as underground forces, until German forces were forced out years later.



The Greek flag flew from the stack on Oxi Day.

In 1942, Oxi Day began as a rallying cry by the public. Each year Greeks around the globe remember the day they refused to be stepped upon. The Greek flag is raised on the stack, and AETOS related artifacts are brought topside for visitors to see. The ceremony aboard SLATER is a fitting tribute to the heroic Greeks showed in 1940 as well as through AETOS' service 1951-1991.



John was a big hit as Mr. Potato Head.

The following day, 29 October, the education crew hosted a Trick or Treating event aboard the ship. Visitors were encouraged to come aboard in costume and earn candy while learning the history of the ship, after hours. Let me tell you, **John** was the star of the show, Mr. Potato Head on a 40 mm is a sight to see!

In his time, not dressed as Mr. Potato Head, this month John created a special podcast episode dedicated to the work



Our education crew who helped out during our Trick or Treat night aboard SLATER.

undertaken by our volunteers over these past 25 years. It traces the restoration work of SLATER from her arrival in Albany through her most recent dry dock in 2020. Be warned, it is rather long so maybe listen to it in a couple sittings!

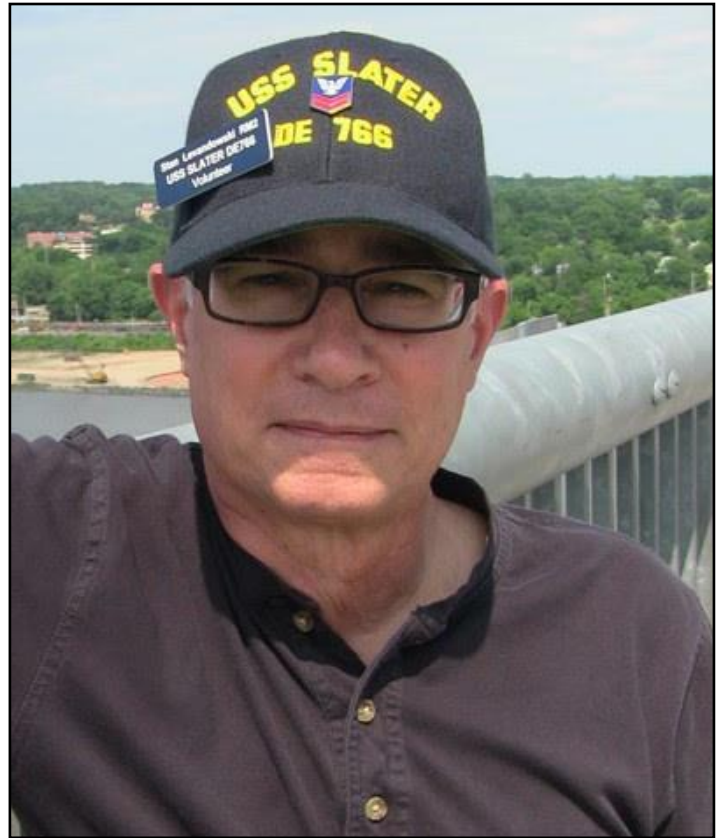
We have been fortunate to work with so many talented and lovely people over the past two decades. Seeing the names and pictures of so many volunteers who are no longer with us puts the mission of the museum in a new light. Not only must we continue preserving and teaching the history of destroyer escorts, but the history of SLATER's restoration as well.

In the Collections part of the museum, a few donations made their way to us. A few uniforms and a hammock have been added to our various ship collections. A large donation of documents from the USS FINCH (DE/DER-328) Association was received, as well as a very significant donation. Unfortunately, as the number of DE vets continues to decline, so do their respective groups. Fortunately, SLATER is here to continue their stories. As the hectic month of October moves past us, I hope to return to my project of re-cataloguing and re-housing our expansive collection to make it easier to access both in person and online.

Finally, we had a few losses and a gain this month. Stan Levandowski passed away at age 73 on Wednesday, October 19, 2022, after a prolonged illness. Stan had served in USS BOXER (LPH-4) and was one of our most knowledgeable radio technicians. He served as both a radio volunteer and tour guide. During the summer of 2012, we were approached by Stan about volunteering in the radio room. He trained to be a tour guide, and had been guiding tours every Thursday for the 2012 season. He drove over an hour each way to get here.

While he's also a lover of the old radio gear, Stan lamented that there was no fast and easy way for him to get quickly on the air between tours and promote the SLATER. Stan felt strongly that the mission of the radio gang wasn't just preservation, but also promotion of the "SLATER project" on the air. Stan donated his Elecraft K2/10 low power QRP transceiver and added a 100-watt linear amplifier.

Sadly, Stan was diagnosed with non-fatal leukemia late in the summer of 2013, but was still giving tours even while undergoing chemo treatments in the fall. All was going well until he contracted pneumonia, and things took a turn for the worse. Stan continued to volunteer from home, and his legacy is the equipment that he left us, enabling the radio gang to stay on the air, spreading the word about SLATER. Our sincere condolences go out to Stan's family.



Stan Levandowski was instrumental in the restoration of the radio room.



George Christopherson did so much machining for us in workshop.

We also learned of the passing of George Christopherson. We learned that George slipped the hook after a battle with cancer. George served as a machinery repairman second aboard USS BEATTY (DD-756) and later trained in the DE's DELONG and COATES. An extraordinarily talented machinist, George fabricated hundreds of intricate parts for SLATER in his machine shop in Connecticut. His Facebook page is full of images of the parts he created for us. Our condolences go out to his wife Joan and George's family. His legacy lives on in the parts he created.

And sadly, we learned of a loss of a different nature. One of the world's last destroyer escorts, the Philippine Navy's BRP RAJAH HUMABON,

the former **USS ATHERTON (DE-169)** capsized and sank in floods at the Naval Station Pascual Ledesma, Cavite City. This occurred during the onslaught of Severe Tropical Storm Paeng on 30 October 2022. The Navy said these decommissioned vessels are currently undergoing a disposal process in accordance with existing policies and procedures and are likely to be sold as scrap. There had been talk of turning the ship into a museum, but this is unlikely with her present loss. In a strange twist of fate, another DE that was transferred to the Philippines, **USS BOOTH (DE-183)** capsized during a typhoon. She was lost during Typhoon Clara in September 1981. Seventy-nine of her 97 man crew were lost.



***A sad fate for former
USS ATHERTON DE-169.***

**In happier news, our man in the bilge,
James Miles just welcomed his daughter**

Iris Mae to the world on Halloween night. Our deepest congratulations go out to James, Shannon, and Iris! James, as you know, has been vital to our engineering crew for the last year. He spends Mondays climbing in the bilge, cleaning, painting, and helping to get that 8 cylinder engine running. He's also been instrumental in growing our YouTube channel and filming the volunteers at work. Welcome to the crew Iris!



Iris Mae Miles is new to the crew!

We are into our last month open to the public in our 25th season. If you are in the area make sure you stop by to see us! Our last day for tours is the Sunday after Thanksgiving, 27 November. Shanna has got all kinds of store deals cooked up for the last week. Make sure you remember to support SLATER (in person & online) as you get your holiday shopping started.

See you next month,

Tim