

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

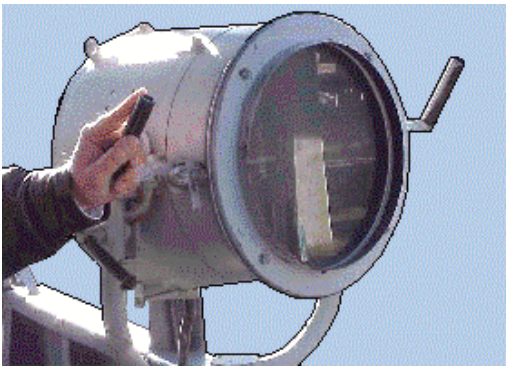
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It's been colder in Albany than in Moscow, Russia.

The Saturday morning drill is always the same in the winter. I get aboard ship a little before 0700, and **Gary Sheedy** arrives shortly thereafter, usually followed by **Thomas Scian**. Putting the coffee on in the CPO mess and making breakfast in the galley are the first two items on the agenda. This is quite the challenge in an unheated galley when the temperatures are below zero. With the ranges and the ovens cranked up, it's habitable in about 15 minutes. My most recent discovery is that the galley refrigerator makes an excellent food warmer. When the temperatures drop below zero, the reefer keeps the eggs from freezing and the bottled water in a liquid state.

In Doug Tanner's absence, I'm a one trick pony. Doug can always be counted on to vary the menu, alternating between French toast, pancakes, sausage, bacon, and fried eggs made to order. With me, it's always scrambled eggs with diced sausage mixed in. While I'm cracking and beating the eggs, Sheedy's job is to get the sausage out of the CPO freezer, microwave them until thawed, and then dice them up, along with an onion and green pepper. The mix goes into a frying pan on the range, and when brown, the eggs are poured over the top, and some cheese is mixed in.

Super Dave doesn't care much for it, but everybody else seems okay with it, and there's rarely any left over. Cleaning up without any running water is also a challenge, but one we've adapted to and overcome.

The next step is getting the crew out of the Chiefs' quarters. Nobody moves too fast in this kind of weather, but by 0830 they are usually up and moving. Most of the work continues to be centered on the flying bridge, aft berthing space C-201-L, and the special collections space C-203-L.

Two spaces forward, in berthing space C-201-L, we called a contract insulating crew. Two men worked for a week, ripping out the torn up fiberglass insulation, and installing new panels in the overhead. **Andy Sheffer** and **Gary** have been doing a lot of clean up grinding, welding in brackets for light fixtures and missing pipe supports. **Barry Witte** and his crew have been doing a lot of work cleaning up cable ways, and running new armored cable. **Ron Prest** and **Rich Mouzakes**, have been doing the chipping.

Up on the flying bridge, Doug's crew, including Danny Statile, Tim Benner, Dave Mardon, Chuck Teal, and Gene Jackey got the CIC supply vent duct cut off, and hauled down to the main deck workbench for repair. That left a gaping hole in the deck but, fortunately, the shrink wrap covered the flying bridge, and it's January, and everything is frozen in Albany anyway.

In the process of needle scaling, they found several good-sized holes by the voice tubes, and when they scarfed off a doubler they found two more. That's another bad area that



U.S. Coast Guard Cutter WIRE underway at 0700. They weren't getting paid during the government shutdown.

in

was under the depth charge release levers. Cropping and renewing the deck was out of the question, because it's right over CIC and the chartroom, and the process would trash those compartments. We prepared the bad areas for doubling.

It has been a month of extreme weather changes. The temperature on Wednesday the 23rd got up to almost 50, with torrential rain. Everything started melting. That Thursday, when I opened the door to the messdecks ladder well, there was water on the deck. When I went up to the ship's office, there was water on the passageway deck. When I went up to CIC, there was a lot of water on the deck. When I went up to the flying bridge, there was more water on the deck. It seems one corner of the shrink wrap had come loose. As I was alone, with no help, I went down to the CPO mess, put the coffee on, and sat down to think about it.

After coffee, I found a couple deep backing pans in the galley, and them on top of the plotting table under the leak. Then I went up to the flying bridge, and fixed the shrink wrap. Next, I started on the flying bridge with the shop vac, emptying the vac into a five-gallon bucket and dumping it over the side. I moved from the flying bridge to CIC and the passageway. All the equipment in CIC was covered with plastic. Then it was down to the 01 level passageway, and then down to the wardroom passage way. All in all, I vacuumed up about fifty gallons of water. The good news was that no paperwork got damaged, and there was no water in the radio room, captain's cabin, ship's office, or the chartroom. Friday's my day off, and I was certainly ready for it.

So, it was about 0800 when I got a call from Barry Witte, asking if I'd heard that the CAPTAIN JP III cruise boat and a couple of barges had broken loose up river in Troy. They were headed our way. I turned on the news, and it was really happening. The rain and warm weather had broken up the ice in one shot, and the ice was moving down river, taking everything in its path. I got dressed and headed toward the ship. Traffic was all backed up, because the Hudson River bridges were all closed, and what is normally a six-minute trip took 35 minutes. What I found when I got there was that all of the ice had jammed up north of the Dunn Bridge. The Rusty Anchor restaurant barge and an open barge were stuck in the ice north of us, with two Moran tugs standing by. The CAPTAIN JP III was broadside to the Livingston Avenue railroad bridge, about a mile north of us.

Gary Sheedy and Rosehn Gipe soon arrived on scene, and the situation stayed pretty static until about 0930. All of a sudden there was a rumble, and all the ice started move down river as the jam broke loose. I had never experienced anything like this, with chunks four-foot high going by. The beauty of it was that our mooring worked perfectly. The ice backed up behind the west bridge pier, which blocked any ice from hitting the ship. There wasn't even any strain on the mooring lines. If we were anywhere else, we probably would have been in trouble, but in our location, we were perfectly protected.

The current carried the two barges to the east side of the river, so they never posed a danger to us. Once past us, the tugs got the barges in hand, and tied them up at the port. By 1030 the situation had stabilized, and I headed back home to continue my day off. The shipfitters were back the following Saturday and Monday, and **Dave Wasson** did a beautiful job welding a doubler on the wasted deck on the port side of the flying bridge. They also caulked in a piece of plywood over the CIC vent opening. By that time the temperature had nosedived to below zero again, so water in its liquid state wasn't a problem. But, we are ready for the next thaw.



Chuck and Dave removing the CIC vent duct.



Tim Benner has been welding for Barry Witte in C-201-L.

Elsewhere around the ship, the engineers are preparing for the restoration of the forward engine room, B-1. Mike Dingmon, Gary Lubrano, and Karl Herchenroder hauled nearly every plank we have on the ship down there. Then they decked over the upper level, so they can scale the overhead. They plan to start from the top and work down. **Guy Huse** has two projects going.



Boats Haggart and Gary Sheedy moved all the racks out of berthing space C-201-L to prep it for restoration.

He's working on the gun 33 sight assembly, and is also trying to get a MK -14 gunsight operational. The first step is to get a working compressor. He has several likely candidates in pieces on the work bench. **Tommy Moore** is working on the insulation repairs in forward berthing. **Steve Klauck** has been working on IC wiring on the flying bridge. Elsewhere, **Smitty** and **Danny** have been cooking, **Cathy Wheat** cleans, and **Jim Gelston** keeps the clocks wound.

Ed Zajkowski and Chris Wright continue to provide us with valuable information from the National Archives. Ed has been scanning all the blueprints and information and **Barry Witte** has been putting all the scans on Google Drive, so everyone who needs the information can access it. **Vince Montuori** was using the shop at RPI, fabricating the parts for the smoke generator throttle valve remote operator. He had the prints, right there on his phone, thanks to the efforts of **Chris, Ed and Barry.**

Ed Zajkowski, Steve Klauck, Barry Witte, and Grant Eastman spent two

days at the inactive ship maintenance facility in Philadelphia, scrounging parts for ongoing restoration and maintenance. Among the material they retrieved was a drinking fountain for the aft berthing that matches the one we have on the messdeck, two inline oil filters for **Vince Montuori's** replica smoke generator back in steering, and replacement motors for bulkhead fans to use when the original ones we have wear out.

They also got a unique "U" firemain fitting for Gary Sheedy's steering restoration, seven WW2-era style fan motor controllers that will allow us to replace the Greek-added ones in B1, B2 and the aft main deck passageway. We also got a few spares for years to come, and a couple of weather deck light brackets that will help **Ken Powers** repair the ones we have that leak in the rain. Late on the second day, the team found a DRT in CIC that was the same style as SLATER's - so **Steve** heroically volunteered to stay one more day, and recover as much of that as was possible.



This has always been my worst case scenario, but we were fine.

As always, these volunteers covered their own expenses, and their effort is what allows the entire SLATER organization to be as authentic as possible in our restoration.

Back aft in Special Collections, Shanna has placed the gratings in all the footlockers, laid down the archival acid-free lining, and placed artifacts inside the footlockers. Interns **Austin and Evan** came in to assist **Shanna** in setting up the displays, and getting mattress covers on all the mattresses. **Gary Sheedy** lent his hand, and inserted plywood sheets into all the mattress covers, so the artifacts have a hard surface to sit upon, while still having the clean uniformed look of the mattress cover on all the racks. **Gary** also went through the chains holding the racks in place, and made sure they were all the correct length, sitting level, and uniform in style. With **Rosehn's** help, we finally found the correct lightbulbs for inside the footlockers, as well.

Shanna has also been conducting research on each DE. She's been recording the significant events that happened in 1944, so we can recognize them this year for the 75th Anniversary. She's also been busy accessioning the new artifacts that have been donated already this year. **Dorothy J. Wiebel Agar** donated items belonging to her father, **Julius Wiebel**, who served on USS GILLETTE DE-681, and **Peg Svihovec**, donated some great SLATER artifacts from her husband, **Bill Svihovec**, including a



Earl Herchenroder needle scaling under the pelorus stand on the flying bridge.

detailed diary that **Jo Ann** is transcribing.

Inventory of all the merchandise in the Ship's Store was completed this month, and new ideas for this season's merchandise are prominent on Shanna's to-do list. So is hiring new guides! So, if you know a college student who could use a few bucks and a great opportunity to learn and teach the public about the history of DEs, have them fill out an application on our website. As always, we are looking for volunteers, too. We train all of our guides extensively, so don't worry if you don't know the facts. We'll teach you!

We recently learned that we lost another of our WWII SLATER veterans. Morton Lee Reed Jr., 95, died on December 18, 2018, in Savannah. Mort was born on November 19, 1923, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He graduated from Ottawa High School, and attended Grand Rapids Junior College, before enlisting in the United States Navy in 1943. In the Navy, he served as sonarman first class aboard SLATER, and participated in many convoys in the North Atlantic and Pacific during World War II. While still attached to SLATER, Mort married the love of his life, **Marylyn Susanne Vollette. Mort and Marylyn** were married for 69 years, until her passing in 2013. After completing his Navy service, **Mort** worked for Consumers Power Company, and later Cutler-Hammer. To the best of our knowledge, that leaves seven SLATER WWII survivors.

The crew gathered at the Schenectady County Rehabilitation Center on January 10th to honor our senior volunteer, Chief Clark Farnsworth, on his 97th birthday. He's been with us ever since SLATER's arrival in Albany. In his words, "I came to work."



Chief Clark Farnsworth has been with us since the ship arrived in Albany.

In the early days, he seemed to spend a lot of time laying on the deck welding, and he had a special mattress that he used. It was common among the shipfitters to hear them asking, "Who has Clark's mattress?" Board President **Tony Esposito** put the whole party together, that included a catered lunch. Clark started his Naval career during WWII as an aviation metalsmith, at Norfolk Naval Air Station. He later put the carrier LEYTE in commission, and served as president of her veterans' association for years. Clark later cross-rated to shipfitter, and was in charge of the damage control trainer at the Albany Naval Reserve Center for many years. We salute you for all your years of service, Chief!

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't thank you all for your generous support of our Winter Fund Drive. From October 1, 2018 to January 31, 2019, we are about \$6,000 ahead of the same period last year. There were those who predicted that support for this endeavor would dry up with the passing of the World War II generation, but you all are proving this is not the case. Support for the project continues to increase thanks to your generosity. We will continue to use your donations as judiciously as possible as we continue to make your USS SLATER the best ship she can be.

We still have 2019 USS SLATER Calendars!

Check the order form accompanying this issue.

Don't forget the donate button on our homepage www.ussslater.org and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.

See you next month!



Tommy Moore teaching Rich Mouzakes the fine art of fiberglass insulation repair.



Danny Statile and Chief Smith continued to keep the crew fed through the month of January.



Paul Guarnieri and Bill Holt repairing circulators damaged by the ice.