

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

330 Broadway, Albany, NY 12207

(518) 434-1311

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June has arrived to find us still behind shed one at the Port of Albany. As many of the visitors who have sought us out will tell you, you couldn't do a better job of hiding the ship if you tried. The only part of the ship that is visible above Shed 1 is the top of the mast. However, behind that shed, minor miracles continue to take place.

The engineering gang made the biggest splash this month. Under Tony Dudes leadership, our own crew, Terry Amrhein, Mike Dawdy, Tony Demitraszek, Rich Kriz and Jim Quigley are the unsung heroes spend their Saturdays in the dark holes that sunlight and fresh air never penetrate. They are easily recognized by the coveralls spotted with rust, grease and oil, a flashlight in the back pocket and a wrench in hand. On occasion they can be spotted on the messdecks drinking coffee, or on the maindeck in the fresh air and sunlight helping the deck force before disappearing into their natural habitat.

Following two months of preparation, the emergency diesel generator was started on Saturday, May 30th on the third try. This engine was selected because of its independent fuel supply and its battery starting. According to plan, the engine was run for four minutes and then shut down for inspection. They plan to bring the generator up to full 100KW power in gradual steps. Components such as pumps and coolers are being disassembled and repaired. Our current challenge is to fix a freshwater lube oil leak. We are also looking for an expert on Marquett governors to brighten our lives.

The effort would not be progressing without support from a wide variety of unanticipated sources. Barry Witte and his crack electrical team overhauled the controller on the 150 pound air compressor, established lighting and ventilation in the aft motor room, and even swept the space out for us. Cliff Woltz donated his W.W.II SLATER training manuals, which have been invaluable to our effort. Tony has also been in phone contact with Jim Moore, leaning on Jim's compressor and diesel expertise. We're hoping he can get us some spare parts we're seeking. Jim left a note on his tool locker that said "Nothing of value in here. I'll be back." Sounds like a line I heard in a movie, but we can't wait for Jim to come up here. We also found his metal folding chair and have it ready for use! The Albany and Glen's Falls Naval Reserve Units have help repair the diesel and firemain, which will be used for diesel cooling. Dave Selsky and Rich Gisorty of Trojan Energy Systems fabricated and installed a missing six foot section of firemain in record time and at no cost. Rob Goldman of Troy Town Dock donated spare parts and loans us special diesel tools when needed.

Two Battleship MASSACHUSETTS volunteers came over from Fall River to help us with the restoration of our radio room. Chris Nardi and Brown Beezer drove three and a half hours to rip postwar equipment out of the space in preparation for the installation of the World War II gear. Chris is also helping us with the activation of the 1MC public address system. That

work is being funded by a grant from Ray Windle. As Chris said after spending a day on the SLATER, "We're hooked." They must be getting tired of that "Battleship shore duty." We also had a large contingent of volunteers from the Earle Ammunition Depot Naval Reserve Unit. Their MM's helped Tony Dudes overhaul the pumps on the emergency diesel generator. Their EM's worked with the electrician's removing wire, and the SK's ended up prepping the flag clip holders for installation on the flagbags as well as cleaning the messdecks and scrubbing bulkheads. They did a great job.

The Albany Water Department came through again for us. They sent down their crane and welder to hoist the flagbags back into position and weld them in place. Tom Beeler supervised that job. At the same time we lifted the secondary conning station binnacle back into position, and lifted a spare engine order telegraph from the bridge level to the pier.

The electrical gang continues to keep busy pulling odd cables that were not part of the SLATER's original installation. They're starting on the flying bridge and mast and working their way down. We took advantage of Larry William's metalworking skills and had him doing repair work on the flagbags with Angelo Bracco and Beeler. Larry took a lot of grief from his fellow electricians for turning into a "Tin knocker" on them. Gary Sheedy even gave Larry a piece of armored cable to keep in his pocket, so that if he fell overboard, the people who recovered his body would know he was supposed to be an electrician.

The deck force has made some amazing progress. We rented scaffolding from Albany Ladder and scaffolded the portside of the forward superstructure. They then scaled the whole bulkhead down to bare metal, treated it with Coroseal, primed and painted it. The area under the searchlight platform was especially fun to do. But, except for the hull and decks, this was our biggest eyesore. We then moved the scaffold over to the starboard side to do some touch up work there before we return it. Tom Beeler uttered a few pleasant words about that job when the pieces didn't fit quite right. The Manhattan crew already needled gunned that side, saving us a whole lot of work.

The volunteer of the month would have to be Rafael Suarez. An old hand with the New York crew, he comes up a couple of times a month to help guide tours and run a needle gun. He usually stays at the Ramada while he's in town. This month he came up on a Sunday to guide tours. He stayed over until Monday to help scale the portside of the superstructure. He was just getting into it when it was time to shut down, so he asked if he could come back on Tuesday and work. Who are we to stop a good man. He worked all day. Of course, Wednesday is our regular volunteer day, so he stayed over an extra night for that. He finally left on Wednesday night. In his wake he left the side of the bridge completely scaled, Corosealed, and ready for paint. It's not like he did it alone, but the rest of us sure wouldn't have wanted to do it without him. Somewhere along the way Raf earned the nickname "Skyhook" for his ability to work in high places. Working on scaffolding is no fun for a bunch of old guys. We're trying to convince Raf he could save a lot of money just renting an efficiency apartment up here. We're also setting up to scale the aft bulkhead of the signal bridge and the firecontrol radar room. Raf and Rich Smith also finished the aft bulkhead of the signal bridge and the firecontrol radar room on the 03 level.

We've had a couple other familiar faces from the old Manhattan crew aboard. Leo Bailer has been back with us giving tours on Sunday. He's spending the summer in the mountains, and reports aboard dressed in full dungarees. He's one of the best dressed sailors aboard. Paul Albers and his friend came up to visit just before Memorial Day, and Marty Newman has been in touch with a manual for the emergency diesel generator he has to donate. We put Tony Dudes on to that one.

The Snow Dock Move continues on track, but a little behind schedule. The first load of ten camels arrived from Elizabeth, NJ. We again owe Mark Bruno of the Port of Albany for getting the camels off the trucks. They turned out to be a little heavier than we estimated. What else is new. We will raft these together to hold the ship out into deep water until a suitable barge becomes available. Bill Harbour and Tom O'Brien at Clough Harbour Engineering have volunteered their expertise to help with the mooring. Kevin Haggerty of Flex Electric and Steve Dean of Niagara Mohawk have the electrical installation well in hand.

DE Day was observed aboard on Saturday, June 20. DEHF National Representative John Cosgrove and DESA Executive Administrator Ralph Freese arranged for us to become a satellite of the Navy Memorial in Washington DC. This privilege will give us future access to the Memorial's Data base of thousands of sailors. To celebrate DE day Bell Atlantic donated a telephone line and a computer so we could complete the data link with the Navy Memorial in Washington. Marty Davis also arranged a special program honoring the USS HOLDER that included the family of her skipper W. Porter Buck and tolling the HOLDER's bell to honor our lost DE sailors. DEHF President Sam Saylor was also on hand to inspect our progress and help solve problems.

Note from Nancy: Good News! Effective immediately, volunteers will receive a 20% discount on SLATER merchandise. And that's not all! Volunteers can bring immediate family members on board the SLATER free of charge. I realize that "immediate" family is a vague term, but it definitely includes grandchildren. It probably doesn't include your fifth cousin, once removed, but we can talk about it.

I continue to navigate my way through the Blue Jackets Manual. The only part I've skipped so far was, "Personal hygiene for the sailor." No doubt it was full of useful information, but I choose to remain uninformed on that subject.

Open Days: We are continuing our open Sundays thanks to the Port of Albany, and our loyal volunteers who staff the tour guide positions and the parking lot. The tour now includes the wardroom, pilothouse and galley, so we are getting some interior spaces open. Tickets are \$4.00 for adults, \$3.00 for senior citizens and \$2.00 for children 6-12.

Work Days: We continue to have our work days aboard the ship to Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. The work hours are from 9-4. Sunday is our open day to the public. When we move to the Snow Dock we anticipate doing our loud heavy maintenance on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. We will be open to the public Thursdays through Sundays, but we will still be quietly painting and cleaning on those days. If you're getting this newsletter and you're not an active volunteer or a Foundation member, think about joining up. We have an ample supply of applications in both categories. Just drop us a note.

Finally, the SLATER's officer compliment is a hard working lot. Retired Lieutenant Commander Roger Oesterreich, in particular has been spending his days on his hands and knees scrubbing the messdecks. It's almost embarrassing to watch. When we commented on his humility, all Roger had to say was, "The other guys do a lot of things I can't do." Such is the spirit of the SLATER.

