

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

On December 1st at 1130 Slater cast off the lines, shifted colors, and was towed across the river to her winter berth at 40 Riverside Avenue in Rensselaer.

The Department of Transportation is concerned that ice might put too much lateral stress on the *Slater's* Snow Dock mooring and damage the pier. Despite unusually high winds the NYS Canal Corps towboats *Governor Cleveland* and *Grand Erie* skillfully maneuvered *Slater* to her new dock. A crew of thirty volunteers assisted by NYS DOT Bridge Maintenance Unit secured the ship to the pier, and made the electrical hookups. Over the following two days, with the assistance of the Albany Water Department's crane, we lifted the 16 camels ashore at the Snow Dock.

We will remain open, through the winter Friday through Sunday, 11-4 for regular visiting; weather permitting. We will continue interior work Monday through Thursday. If you stop by and don't see us on deck, just throw a snowball at the deckhouse to get our attention. The joe pot will always be on. We will be returning to the Snow Dock in the spring when the ice breaks up on the rivers.

This makes it a fine time to kick back and reflect on all we have accomplished this past year. We begin on a cold sunny Sunday afternoon in December; our first official volunteer day. Eight strangers showed up on a cold dark dead ship, ready to work. One of the scariest moments of my life was figuring out where to start. We attacked a 40 mm gun-tub with chipping hammers, shattering the Sunday quiet. The deck force continued using chipping hammers until we got the generator from the NYS Office of Emergency Management in March. During that time they had chipped the exteriors of all the portside of tubs. Once we got the air compressor on line, work sped up as we worked to continue all the good work started by the **SOLDESA and other Volunteers in Manhattan.**

With the volunteers and contract grants we scaled and repainted all the 40 mm Guns, 20 Guns 23 and 27, all the MK 51 Gun directors and tubs, the forward superstructure deckhouse port and starboard, the boat davits, the mast, all the "K" guns and roller loaders, the battery locker, the interior and exterior of the gun three-tub, nonskid on the whole main deck, the 3" loading machine, the flagbags, the 20 mm ready service lockers, and the hardest and most time consuming of all; the overheads under the 40mm and 20mm gun tubs. New winter sheet metal covers were made for all ventilation openings. All lifelines were reworked and all cable less than 7/8" diameter was replaced.

Structurally we repaired leaks in the decks, the machine shop, replaced the deck in Gun tub 27, repaired and capped many stanchions, burned off and welded the Greek torpedo deck extensions, repaired the flag bags, added several scuppers, rebuilt three wasted watertight doors, and installed an inclined ladder to provide public access to the 01 level aft. Tony Dudes arranged for a 50 spot ultrasonic hull survey and the thinnest plate we found was .23" which was an excellent report on the hull's condition. Major alterations were made on the Mast. These included adding a ladder to the truck, cutting away three platforms and several non-authentic antennas, installing the SA air search radar antenna, and rerigging all the halyards, shrouds, stays and yardarm foot ropes and the long wire antennas.

Electrically, all the switchboards and circuit breakers were cleaned and tested. Lighting was mapped out and restored to all spaces. All main ventilation fans were reactivated. The IMC public address system was restored, all new World War II speakers were installed topside. Weatherdeck lighting was installed and wired in topside. Hundreds of feet of postwar cable was removed. The fire alarm system, flood alarm and intrusion alarm systems were all completed; work was also begun on our emergency lighting system.

Finally, the dedicated snipes, toiling down below in B-4 have overcome one obstacle after another in their effort to bring the aft emergency generator back on line and keep the air compressors driving the needle guns. The crew from the GE Silicone Plant also got running water to the aft head and opened up a discharge.

Two truckloads of material; one from Portsmouth and one from California were received and unloaded. Our own crew made three trips to Portsmouth, Virginia to acquire parts. Donated crane service was used to lift all the WW II gear into CIC, the radio gear to the 01 level and the sonar stack to the flying bridge. We now have almost everything needed for *Slater's* restoration including life-rafts, bunk frames, mattresses, canvases and chains, life jackets, 40 mm ammunition cans, gas masks, troughs for the heads, all kinds of electrical spare parts and a WW II Jeep to top it off! All we lack are bunk locker tops, washroom sinks, four roller loader racks, a depth charge rack, depth charges, an optical rangefinder and pedestal, and a SL radar antenna.

We shifted berths five times; three times at the Port of Albany, then to the Snow Dock and recently to Rensselaer. We're getting to be pretty good line handlers. The first move cost \$1,800 -since then all services have been donated!

Our artifacts are being sorted, inventoried and catalogued. A Curatorial Plan, Educational Manual, Restoration Plan, Safety Procedures and Operational Procedures have all been written and implemented. Guides were trained, the Gift Shop stocked and operated and 10,000 visitors toured the ship.

These 10,000 visitors have meant that the *Slater* has been able to support herself since July. Open only four days a week; admissions, gift shop sales, contributions and the "Coffee Fund" have grossed an average of \$10,000 a month, and we have learned to operate within this budget. During this time the national DEHF treasury, at the end of November, was back up to \$42,000 in memberships and donations, thanks to many of you! That is the money that will help pull us through the winter.

We don't want to completely drain the DEHF treasury; however, we need about \$10,000 more to get us through the next four months and ensure that we have some start-up cash in the bank to gear up for operations in the spring. *SLATER SIGNALS* goes out to about 500 of the most hardcore *DESA/Slater* supporters; it was intended to be strictly an informational newsletter, never a fundraising tool, because you who receive it have already given so much to the Ship. However; after twenty years in this business of saving old ships, I have no pride and dignity left. How can I ask more of you who have given so much? Because I will stoop to any level to keep OUR SHIP afloat; even asking you for more.

If you take the J.P. Morgan view that boats are a wasteful hole in the water that one pours money into skip the next paragraph. However; if you believe that keeping the last floating DE alive and well is a worthwhile cause, please read on. . .

The Big Request: The *Slater* needs \$10,000 to get through the winter. We are her crew and I am asking each one of you who can afford it and those of you who believe in her to donate One hundred dollars. If you represent a company or corporation we would ask you to donate \$500 to \$1,000. To show my personal commitment to *Slater*, I, Timothy Rizzuto, do pledge \$100 from my next pay check; back to the ship for the "Lets pull the *Slater* through the winter fund." Not only does this represent commitment but it is an act of great courage as I have not asked my Wife's permission to do this, but I'm sure she won't mind!

If we are successful we can turn the heat up a notch on the messdecks for the crew. Think of the crew this winter; think of **Dick Smith** struggling across the wind whipped foc's'le to raise the jack, only to find the snap hook frozen. Think of **Nancy and Annette** sitting behind their folding table on deck trying to sell one more watch cap and ticket late in the day. Think of **Dutch** trying to pry the chipping hammer out off **Lester's** frozen fingers, of **Raphael** trying to thaw the hose so he can do a topside washdown, and of **Bob** looking apprehensively at the Portajohn on a ten degree morning asking himself why he had to drink that second cup of coffee. It's going to be a long winter so show them you care. If you wish your donation to be your DEHF membership renewal, please indicate so and remember your donations are tax-deductible as the *Slater* is a **non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization.**

Had enough? I know I have. I wish I could promise that I'll never write this kind of appeal again, but I won't. I've been taking care of ships too long to make promises I can't keep. Remember why ships are called "she." But, to an old sailor, they're worth it!

We have made some very significant progress this last year. We have addressed most of the toughest and time consuming topside areas. Right now, topside the ship is a patchwork of various shades of gray. But when you walk her weather decks there are no real eyesores except for the hull sides and flying bridge. This winter we'll concentrate on the forward superstructure and second deck; come spring, we'll tackle the hull. The superstructure will be repainted in a uniform coat of gray, and then we'll do the flying bridge. By next Fall, she should shine like a new penny.

To all of you who have worked on Slater I want to offer you my personal thanks for all we have achieved. You are an extraordinary mix of people! From the Albany Fire and Police Departments, The Water Department, General Services, The Naval Reservists, The National Guard and NYS Militia, Tin Can Sailors, Sampson Vets, Slater Alumni Assoc., SOLDESA, Manhattan Volunteer Group, CAPDESA, Michigan DESA, NORPAC DESA, DEHF, NYS American Legion, Coast Guard, Canal Corps, NYS DOT Bridge Maintenance, GE, Longshoremen, The Port Commission, NYS Parks and Recreation, all you "civilians", and everyone else I may have inadvertently forgotten to mention who has contributed to helping keep this piece of history alive; I want to extend my thanks for making this a great year!