

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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The Michigan Chapter of DESA back aboard with a large contingent of Kids and Grandkids.

The month of May started with the Michigan Chapter of DESA reporting aboard for their annual field week. They began arriving on Saturday May 1st, and by Sunday night had a full crew aboard. **Ron Zarem** led the organization meeting on the Observation Deck and watches and work details were assigned. The crew was broken into several teams. Up on the fo'c's'le, **Ron Mazure** took youngsters **Zack Parker** and **Jared Maurer** and continued where the HUSE crew left off, chipping down the deck and the hedgehog projector.

One deck above, **John Adriani** worked with youngsters **Josh Maurer** and **Tim Ososki** and spent the week scaling the 01 level around gun two. They got the whole area scaled, primed, and painted deck navy blue by the end of the week. I should be cautious about using the term "youngsters" because these kids are now just about the age most of you were when you first enlisted.

Firecontrolman **Mike Marko** supervised **Charlie Vesterman**, **Bill Wasco** and **Scott McFadden** repainting the three MK-51 gun directors and tubs on the 01 level aft. Each took a different tub and by Thursday, they had them all scaled, primed, and painted. They made such good progress that Mike and Charlie had time to go down and help the crew on the waterways.



Restoration of the hedgehog projector by Zack and Jared Maurer.

Laird Confer, Roy Brandon and Emmett Landrum tackled a project that made a whole lot of people very happy. Anyone who has sat at our messdeck tables has experienced that the close spacing of the benches to the tables makes it very difficult for volunteers of girth to get in and out of the benches. The crew began to saw off the benches and fabricate new legs so that they were free standing and moveable, adjustable to the size of the occupants. By the end of the week, all six benches had been converted, much to the comfort of all who will sit on our messdecks in the future.



Butch Warrender, Scott McFadden and Laird Confer put the elevation gear back together on gun 42.

One of the most critical projects was the reassembly of 40mm gun mount 42. The HUSE crew disassembled the elevation drive to replace the bearing. **Karl Herchenroder** ordered the bearings before the HUSE crew left, but they didn't arrive in time for the HUSE crew to do the reassembly. Any mechanic will tell you that having one gang disassemble a piece of equipment and then charging a different crew with the reassembly is always a recipe for disaster. But we planned to put our best men on the job, led by **Butch Warrender** and **Jim Parker**. As the week wore on and the bearings didn't show up the crew had to find other diversions. When the reefer deck supply fan burned up, Butch and Jim disassembled it over the course of two days, welded and balanced a broken fan blade, replaced the bearings and

reinstalled it. In the meantime, mechanic **Mike Zarem** was sent down into the B-3 bilge to keep an eye on **Dow Clark** and **Tom Burrows**. When I went down to check on them, Mike was the one in the bilge filling buckets of rust. Over the course of the week Dow cleaned the entire portside bilge in B-3 from the forward to aft bulkhead and Corrosealed all the areas that were free of oil. Then he went into the port shaft alley and added a couple rows of packing to the stern gland before he left on Wednesday. **Jim Parker** busied himself repairing sinks in the aft head.

By the time the bearings came in midday on Thursday, some of the key players had already gone home. But **Scott McFadden** joined Butch and, with a great deal of effort, they had all the bench work done by Thursday night, and the bearing and shaft ready for reinstallation. They hit it early that Friday morning and by noon had the gun back together and operational in manual elevation, something all our young visitors will be grateful for. That had to be some kind of SLATER record.



Gary Dieckman working on the davit base.



When it came to putting someone over the side, Jim Ray drew the short straw. Since Jim was the second oldest guy in the crew, Gary and Roy figured he had the least to lose.

Gary Dieckman and Jim Ray went to work on the starboard side waterways. We had initially put **Dow Clark** and **Tom Burrows** on that job, figuring they deserved something easy after so many years in the bilge. They lasted until noon Monday and then Dow decided that he had enough of the easy life and begged to go back to the bilges. That's how he ended up back in the B-3 bilge. The waterway painting continued without Dow and, with an assist from **Ron Zarem, Mike Marko** and **Charlie Vesterman**, by the end of the week they had the waterway 70% complete. It should be noted that Jim Ray received a reprimand for working outside the lifelines without a life jacket. Keep in mind he's another WWII vet and the second oldest man in the group.



Fresh paint always helps.



Jim Parker and Laird Confer doing something appreciated by all hands, making the messdecks benches moveable again.



Dow Clark in his preferred habitat, the bilge.

Tim Markham brought his friend welder Jim Maisano who brought his plasma cutter. Together they tackled the rot on the main deckhouse starboard side over B-3. They cut out a 4'x8" strip of wasted bulkhead and renewed it, and also managed to do some work on the portside, too.

Down in B-4, Guy Huse, who survived the week with the USS HUSE crew, stayed over for a second week to continue his work on the reassembly of the fire and flushing pump. He finally got the whole thing back together after we found some long lost images of the piping before disassembly buried on my computer. He also got the controller box mounted on the bulkhead. It's a long way from functional, but at least most all of the parts have been accounted for.

It's said that an army marches on its stomach, and the same must be said of the Michigan Chapter. To keep the troops fed and happy, welder-turned-chef Tom Schrinier spent the week in the galley. It wasn't all bad because his assistant was Bernard Wright, who had been to boot camp with Tom, and ended up on the WALTON with Tom. Tom was in the fireroom and Bernie was in the engineroom, and they hadn't seen each other in sixty years. So it was quite a reunion, and it was nice Tom finally found someone who he could get along with in the galley.

Coast Guard Chief Quartermaster Larry Stiles and Ron Orszag took care of the messdecks all week. SLATER former motormac Bill Svihovec took care of custodial duties for the crew and fire watched for the welders in his old home, B-3.

As always, the battle to be Tim's favorite had a lot of contenders. Number one was cook Tom Schrinier. Tom seems to be the only one who still wants it. Every time I got in the chow line he would ask "Am I still in the running?" He should get the award for having the best sense of humor. Nobody



Cooks Tom Schriener and shipmate Bernard Wright.

else even cared, but **Ron Zarem** killed Tom's chances by reminding me he'd already gotten the award one year. Ron even went so far as to reread SIGNALS for the past ten years to make sure I'd pick somebody new. **Dow Clark** is always in the running. Nobody works harder or gets dirtier. **Tom Burrows** was in the running because he brought Dow. **Laird Confer** was in the running because he brought all those grandkids, who do more than half the work. The gun crew was in the running for the amazing feat of doing that reassembly in a day. And first-timer **Bernard Wright** was in the running for spending a week in the galley with Tom and not pulling the meat cleaver off the bulkhead.

But sometimes you just have to go

with the quiet, dependable guy. In this case it was **Emmett Landrum**, former Airedale who always comes the furthest, all the way from California. In addition, he is almost always the oldest, another WWII vet off the USS BEBAS DE10. And I don't think he's ever missed a field week. So, our hats off to you Emmett. Just keep doing what you're doing. You're everybody's favorite.

In another major accomplishment this month, we managed to get the entire starboard side and the transom painted. Over the past year we have let Chief **John Gagne's** Coast Guard buoy tender tie up alongside when they are working navigation aids on this part of the river. It makes us feel good to be of service, and they like being tied up to something that goes up and down with the seven-foot tide, so they don't have to worry about tending lines at night. Chief Gagne was so grateful for the temporary berth, that he made the mistake of saying, "If there's anything we can do for you guys, let us know." All of you who know me and how this project lives on charity know that's the kiss of death. I did give him an out, "Don't offer unless you really mean it." He did and I always have needs. In this case it was a platform for painting the starboard side. The last time the starboard side was done in its entirety was off the fireboat JOHN J. HARVEY back in 2004. Despite the use of durable epoxy paint at that time, the side was starting to look pretty ratty. It was long overdue for painting.



A little help from the Coast Guard.



The starboard side received a fresh coat of paint.

The original plan had been to tie the side painting with the Michigan Field Week, when all of Laird Confer's young grandsons were available. It turned out that the Coast Guard had other commitments that week, and we rescheduled to Thursday, May 20th. It turned out I had a dentist appointment that afternoon, and when I left the ship at 1300, the Coast Guard had not arrived. I went out, had a lost filling replaced, and when I got back aboard at 1600, they were making her fast to the starboard quarter. I asked the Coastie if they were just getting in, and he looked like he wanted to smack me. It seems they had arrived shortly after 1300. **Erik Collin** had taken charge, rounded up the only volunteers who were aboard, the two **Herchenroder brothers** and **Mike Dingmon**, and they worked all afternoon scaling and priming the entire starboard side in the heat. They had put forth an incredible effort while I was ashore. I paid them back the only way I could, meeting them at their favorite pub and buying them a round. When thanks don't seem adequate, beer usually is.



We couldn't have done it without Chief Gagne and his crew.

The following day was Friday, and it was as hot as Thursday. The Coasties arrived at 0800 and were ready to get underway by 0830. Unfortunately, none of our volunteers were aboard and Erik was forced to dip deep into the bench to get the job done; I got drafted. Super **Dave Mardon** and **Earl Herchenroder** arrived at 0900 and by that time we were nestled under the SLATER's anchor and there was no way for them to safely get aboard. We had about half the side done by noon when we took a

break for lunch. Dave had already hit the road, but Earl joined us and by 1530 we had the side about 80% complete. We called it a day because of the heat.

The following morning was Saturday and we had a full crew. Erik turned to with "Battleship" **Mike McEntegart** and **Bill Siebert** down with him and finished out the starboard side. While that was going on, "Boats" Haggart had the crew moving the stern lines temporarily forward so the tender could snug up against the transom. With the tender in place, they finished out the stern and touched up the lettering. They were all done by 1030, and all that remained was offloading the gear and putting the stern lines back. **Chief Smith** invited the Coasties for lunch and they headed out at noon, leaving the SLATER looking much better than when they arrived. All you Coast Guard DE vets can be proud of your youngsters. They are still taking good care of us.



The volunteer crew from Key Bank.

That would have been a good month right there, but the following Tuesday, May 25th was Key Bank's "Neighbors Make a Difference Day." This is an annual event in which Key Bank shuts down and their employees go out and help not-for-profits in the community. This year the weather was perfect for painting, so we set them up staining the wood Observation Deck and railing on the shoreside visitor center with wood preservative. They arrived, ten strong, at 11:30 and by 1500 and ten gallons of wood preservative later, they had finished the job. I offered them a tour of the ship, figuring they'd decline, but they enthusiastically accepted and their enthusiasm was infectious. It was a great afternoon and we look forward to having them back aboard

next year.

Meanwhile the rest of the crew hasn't been idle. Rocky has the whaleboat ready to go in, and is just waiting for me to get off my duff and rig the accommodation ladder. In the meantime, he is back busying himself with the engineers cleaning the main engines in B-3. The engineers completed repainting all the deck plates on the upper and lower level in B-4, and the place looks brand new. The main propulsion motors are painted and **Chris Fedden** has started chipping on the generators. Erik completed repainting the hedgehog projector and is working on painting the deck around gun #1, and on rainy days has been working on the deck in the forward crew's head. **Will Donzelli** made his annual trip to the West Coast and came back with the first load of parts for the TBL, two boxes of spare parts, and the beautifully restored speech amplifier. Radioman **Joe Breyer** is back with us and helping to make plans to receive the TBL transmitter.

Many scheduled tours have kept the Education Department busy and hopping. Every one of the experienced tour guides have been terrific in assisting the new interns to feel at home and get the swing of things on the tour route. To help with all of the ongoing work that keeps the educational role of the ship moving forward, we have two new interns. **Rob Nielsen** and **Kipp Campbell** have lately joined **Julianne Madsen**, **Gary Gustin, Jr.**, and **Jessica Munsch**. Memorial Day weekend was Rob's first time doing an overnight. He had the benefit of guidance from **Glenn Harrison**, **Grant Hack**, **Tom McLaughlin**, and **Jerry Jones**. In the near future, Kipp will also join the ranks of the overnights. Three of our interns moved on; **Heather Maron** took a summer internship on Nantucket Island (poor thing!), **Joe Delberta** moved to South Dakota to further his studies in mining geology, and **Greg Fox**

is doing all he can to be available for his girlfriend who is about to take the bar exam. We will miss each of you.



The crew mustered on Stan Murawski's birthday, May 19th, for a memorial service for our departed shipmate.

Ashore on the Observation Deck, you can see the dual-level stand constructed by Smitty for the new knot-tying and splicing activity. The portable stand has two sets of deck cleats positioned at an adult and a child work level. Visitors will learn about the construction of rope, how to tie important knots, create hitches, and splice line. **Nelson Potter** has been working with Linda on the technical aspects of working with line so she can translate it into a public activity. Super **Dave Mardon, Tim Benner, and Chuck Teal** came to Linda's rescue as they translated the World War II Activity Map of German Submarine U-66, in which we can see the course of the U-boat up to its sinking by the USS BUCKLEY DE51. Because of the help of Mardon, Benner, and Teal, Linda can

proceed with turning the one-dimensional map into a 3-D interactive feature in the Briefing Room. The education link on our website is in the process of beefing up. Lesson plans and classroom activities, downloadable worksheets for educators, a Youth Volunteer Program package, traveling history trunks, and an education collection are in development.

The Victory Garden vegetables are flourishing along with the surrounding grounds of the garden. One morning of Memorial Day weekend, **Julianne Madsen** and **Linda Wruck** noticed that old Jack Frost did not, in fact, get to the honeysuckle vines. Some very small sprouts are coming along nicely on the vines. They live! Now we can look forward to a vine-covered fence. **Rosehn Gipe** and Linda discussed the fun in naming the garden, and so it was decided. Rosehn suggested "Nora's Garden" in honor of Frank Slater's mom. Nora's Garden, it is! Next....will someone help Linda with the construction of the garden sign? Someone with power tools.

Care of the garden morsels is a real team effort. **Dolores Ferrer** continues to lead and marvel us with her Master Gardener talents while **Russ Ferrer** arrived with ash poles with which he constructed, and tied, a tepee for the pole beans. Dolores and Russ had the wonderful idea of camouflaging our very green septic stump with the tepee. As the tendrils grow upward, we will have an aesthetically pleasing septic. And right next to the compost pile. **Dick Stankus** from the Men's Garden Club of Albany continues to visit the Victory Garden regularly, even in the middle of the 94 degree weather. With hoe in hand, and an eye for weeds, he formulated a very effective plan for dealing with our midnight mystery critter that has been raiding the garden. **Chris Fedden, Chuck Teal, and Smitty** have been on active compost duty. Not only have they delivered the goods, they offer sage advice on how to compost. The wonderfully smelling rotting heap consists of all organic material such as coffee grounds, lettuce, egg shells, grass clippings, manure, and worms.

The ship now rests securely against the two new mooring dolphins, and now that the dust has settled and the concrete cured, it's time to thank some of the people who made this project possible. First among them was **Bob Cross**. I'll never know exactly what Bob's role was, but I suspect we would never have gotten our largest grant without his support.

Then comes SLATER trustee Tony Esposito. Tony ultimately made it happen because Tony made me do my job. There is nothing that intimidates me more than bureaucracy. It is something I am just not equipped to deal with. I'll normally walk ten miles out of my way rather than deal with the hoops that the bureaucracy makes you jump through. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. As a historian I know that's the philosophy that made this nation great, but that's not the world I live in now. Any one who has ever dealt with government contracts knows that the hoops abound from bid laws to affirmative action. When the governor shakes your hand and tells you you've got the grant, you're about five percent of the way through the project. I probably would have postponed this project forever, because the hoops seemed insurmountable. But Tony would not let me take the easy way out. With a perfect combination of pressure, abuse and humor, he guided me through the steps by breaking the process down into bite-sized chunks and staying on my butt until I worked through each bit. He helped draft the letters, and set up the meetings with the permitting agencies. For all the volunteers who have wondered who that Tony guy was who was hanging out eating lunch with us on the messdecks, and what he was doing for the project, he was forcing me to become the administrator and yes, I'm ashamed to say, bureaucrat, I have worked so hard to avoid becoming. He is the perfect trustee, providing just the right kind of support and guidance every executive director could wish for.

Then there was Doug Tanner and Spec Consulting. When it came to construction supervision, I didn't have a clue. For those of you who have followed the SLATER saga and think Doug is just a talented welder, I've got news for you. Doug is also the guy who reads the 300-page bid spec cover to cover and remembers all the clauses. He was there every step of the way making sure the project was done according to the spec. He caught several problems before they became problems and saved us a lot of time and money as a result. He continually consulted with his bosses at **Spec Consulting, Joe Burke** (Not to be confused with our own **Joe Burke** the tour guide) and **Aaron Westphal**. And when it was all over, based on Doug's commitment to the SLATER, they donated all their services to help us match the state grant.

Ultimately the project has cost us \$350,000 in cash, not counting in kind service matching. The grant was 300 K. The original bid was \$307,000 for construction, and then about \$10K in necessary modifications. We expended about \$35,000 in engineering fees. The Board authorized the temporary transfer of funds from the Hull fund and the Endowment to pay the contractor until we are reimbursed by the state. It was the largest single project we've done, and worth every penny, because **Tommy Moore** and I don't have to go down in the cold Hudson and haul camels any more.

The month ended with our annual Memorial Day Ceremony organized by Paul Czesak. The ceremony featured the debut of **Katie Kuhl**, our collections manager, as our bugler. Katie believes TAPS should be played live, and not a recording over the IMC. Talk about multitasking. Featured speakers were retired Commander **Merl Smith** who give a stirring tribute to the Merchant Marine, relating his experiences aboard the S.S. MEREDITH VICTORY during the Korean War, a ship that moved 14,000 refugees out of Hung Nam without the loss of a single life. Trustee **Bob Cross** delivered a tribute to the destroyer escorts and the sailors who manned them prior to doing a book signing for purchasers of his new book "Shepherds of the Sea" published by the U.S. Naval Institute Press. Bob interviewed 94 destroyer escort veterans for his book. The weather was perfect on this last day of May, as we honored our veterans past and present.

Finally, I'll let the secret out of the bag. This will only be relevant to you geeks, but if you're reading this online, you must be a geek. The SLATER has a Facebook page. **Kelly Lassonde** created the page over a year ago, but it lay dormant for a long time. Recently **Katie Kuhl** has been very active about adding recent photos to the page. We encourage you to "friend" the SLATER and join the discussion.

See you in Facebook

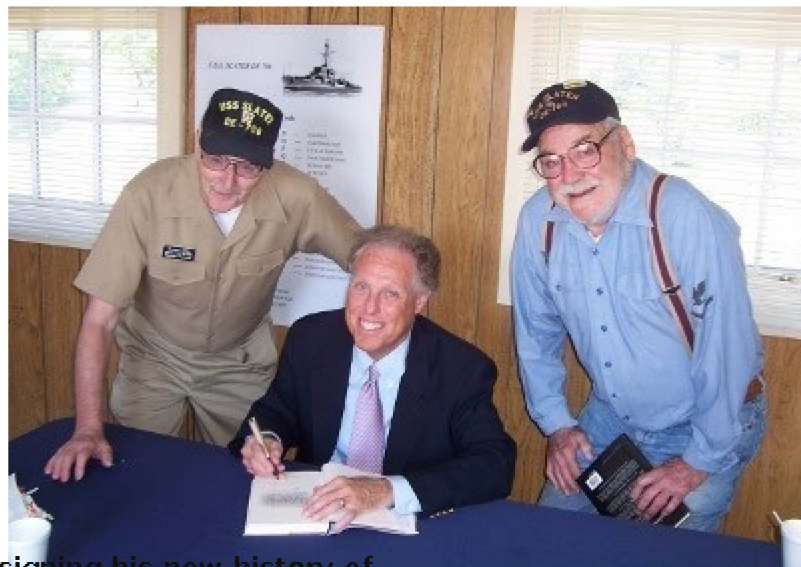




The final stage of building the mooring dolphins...



setting the fenders in place.



Trustee Bob Cross signing his new history of destroyer escorts, "Shepherds of the Sea" for Gordon Lattey and Chris Fedden during our Memorial Day commemoration.