



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Where was I last month? Oh, I remember, begging for money again. Over the course of the launch of the Hull Fund Drive, I've patiently heeded the advice of multiple experts who have much more experience and are much more successful at fund raising than I am. In many cases they seem to take exception to my writing style. This may be the month I revert back to my old persona. I remember writing several years ago that this was not what I came here to Albany to do. Much as I hate to repeat myself, my expertise was ship restoration, and I just came up here to restore a ship. I always figured there would be somebody much more well-connected, influential and articulate to take care of the fund raising. I'm still looking for that person.



As always, your response to the Hull Preservation Fund Drive has been outstanding. By now, I believe that all of you must feel like SLATER and I are like a child you adopted. Or that wayward child who won't leave home. You always figure that after you raise the kids, at some point, they'll grow up, get out of the house, get a job, strike out on their own and stop mooching off you. But after almost twenty years, we're still here with our hand out, looking for you to take care of us. And you can certainly tell that no professional fund raiser would write a paragraph like this, and I still can't find anyone to take the job away from me.

If SLATER can survive a hurricane, YOU can contribute to the Hull Restoration Fund!

That three million dollar goal is the dream number that included a lot of work such as pulling the propeller shafts for preservation, overhauling the sea valves and painting the interior voids and water tanks, things that can be postponed if we don't reach our goal. Unless there is one or more of you out there who turns out to be a closet philanthropist, it is very doubtful that we'll reach that goal. What I anticipate is that when I have a half million dollars in the bank, I will go to the shipyards with an open-ended work package and ask, "Here's how much money we've got. How much of this work can you do for that amount?" Then we'll build on that.

The most common comment I've gotten on the drive is, "Boy, you couldn't have picked a worse economic time to do this." I couldn't agree more, and trust me; I am kicking myself for not getting this going about ten years ago. But again, at the risk of repeating myself, I always thought that the big grant or the big benefactor would come forward. I didn't want to have to put this on you, our veterans and members. And the second most common comment deserves an apology. As many times as the Hull Fund letter was reviewed, we never mentioned the Coast Guard. I would not want you Coasties to feel left out. My humble apologies.



Why we do it? For the kids. Herb Marlow finishes up a tour.



Intern Julianne Madsen finishes up a tour.



Frank McClatchie's HuffDuff simulator.

For our part here on the ship, 15,000 people cross our gangway every year to tour SLATER. Every one of those people is a prospective member or donor. If we do our job and are half aggressive in soliciting these people to join the Museum, maintaining our 3,000 member base despite the aging DE population should be a do-able proposition. We just have to keep promoting this ship and what she means to all the kids and grand kids of the WWII vets, as well as former Navy and Coast Guard personnel from all ages and the enthusiastic visitors who come aboard, and local community members who feel the ship is an asset to Albany. So far, our membership is not decreasing.

While you World War II folks have been our strongest supports, I believe that we can keep up our numbers. And the number of DER sailors and Thousand-class DE sailors continues to increase. Remember, that the last DER didn't go out of commission in the US Navy until 1973, so DE sailors will be with us for a while. And I really get excited every time we get a new member who wasn't a DE sailor because it means we're reaching a new and younger audience.

When you are here on a Saturday or Monday with the work crew, you can't help but get caught up in the humor and optimism. There is still an amazement within the crew about how far we have brought this ship and about the compliments we get on the restoration. To watch this crew in action you have to believe we'll keep her afloat forever. And then on the tour days, to watch how visitors react to the condition of the ship, and their awe at the conditions that the World War II sailors lived under, we know we have to preserve that memory.

Last May, Clark Farnsworth invited Linda to present SLATER's Traveling Classroom program with the Museum in a Bag series to his G.E. retirees' monthly luncheon group. After the luncheon, a gentleman named **Frank Travers** asked Linda if she would be interested in speaking to a group that he is associated with. You bet! After further conversation, one thing lead to another and Linda mentioned that the SLATER is interested in attending the Boy Scout Camporee in the fall. As it turns out, Frank is involved at the leadership level with the Scouts as well as the coordination and facilitation of the Camporee. Back at the ship and several e-mails later in August, Linda was invited and attended the Boy Scout's Twin Rivers Council planning session for the development of the Camporee.

Jerry Jones, and Mike Kibby at the table where scouts will learn about earning badges for Morse code, knot tying, orienteering, agriculture as it was through the World War II Victory Garden, Pioneering, Citizenship in the Nation, and American Heritage. If you are going to be one of the 2,500 attendees at the Camporee, be sure to stop by and see us! And if you'd like the Traveling Classroom to visit your school or organization, please contact **Linda Wruck** for more information at 518-431-1943.

Another important aspect of SLATER's history has come to life. USS SLATER's "huff/duff" simulator/trainer is finally finished and on display in our briefing/classroom. The Museum is indebted to **Frank McClatchie** who served with one of these hunter/killer groups as a radioman on board USS NEAL H. SCOTT DE769 in 1945. Frank designed, built, and donated the electronics in the simulator, and, as an original radio operator of the huff/duff, attests to the authenticity of the display. He also researched German documents, and made the large chart used in the display. This high frequency direction finder re-creation has an authentic cathode ray tube display which demonstrates the operation of the World War II model DAQ/DAU Radio Direction Finder equipment. The actual DAU equipment is on display in SLATER's aft emergency radio room. This type of equipment was installed on approximately half of the U.S. Navy's Destroyer Escorts in 1943 to 1945. The equipment enabled DEs to take a bearing on the daily radio transmissions sent by German U-boats as ordered by their commander, Admiral Karl Doenitz. The secret equipment was used even more extensively by the Royal Navy and they claimed it was used in 25% of all U-boat sinkings plus the sinking of the BISMARCK.



Forward corner of the classroom with Huff/Duff simulator and Atlantic Ocean U-Boat sinking map.

SLATER's dockside classroom has numerous display maps showing the progress of the "Battle of the Atlantic" from 1940 through 1945. SLATER's history shows she escorted five convoys across the Atlantic during these years. The maps show convoy routes, the sinking locations of convoy ships and, most importantly, the statistics of tonnage lost by the Allies to U-boats year by year. An important new part of this display is a large map of the Atlantic with red pins showing the exact location of the sinkings of German U-boats. It is a Gnomonic Projection (as opposed to a Mercator Projection) on which great circle lines are straight instead of curved. This is an important distinction because radio direction finder bearings are straight lines. This chart is used with our new "huff/duff trainer" to show how a bearing in degrees taken by a shore station in Nova Scotia is combined with a bearing taken by a ship near Bermuda. These two bearings are represented by two strings on the chart, and where the strings cross, is where the U-boat is located. In our demonstration, the U-boat is just off the Grand Banks of Nova Scotia. Armed with this information, convoy escort DEs and DDs could attack and/or change the route of a convoy. Much successful use of this new secret technology was made by "Hunter/Killer" task groups in the later years of the Battle of the Atlantic. These groups consisted of Destroyers, Destroyer Escorts and one small Aircraft Carrier. The whole display shows how the fortunes of the German U-boats changed from the "hunters" to the "hunted" as the battle progressed. Well done, Frank!



Larry Williams at the helm of the weekly whaleboat checkout.

As we work to make sure those events are not forgotten, the crew continues in their effort to make SLATER a better ship every day. The whaleboat was launched without ceremony on August 6th. **"Boats" Haggart** got to call the shots and do it his way. As usual, I am considered the most expendable person aboard, so I was the one in the boat when it went down. In the past we've always fairleaded the boat falls to the anchor windlass and lowered the boat on the capstan. This time Haggart wanted to try just lowering the boats with the davit bitts. It took him about an hour to figure it out, while the crew sat around and made fun of him. But he persevered and doing it that way worked fine and was a whole lot easier and quicker, as well as being more historically correct. We think it will go a whole lot quicker next year. They gave the boat a week to swell up hanging moored next to the paint float, at the foot of the relocated accommodation ladder for much easier access.

Nelson Potter and Paul Guarnieri have continued the art of fancy rope work. They work on the maindeck port side so all the visitors can watch them work as they weave fenders and rope mats out of old manila line. This is the way sailors have done it for a thousand years. Now we've heard a rumor that they don't even teach basic knots at boot camp. How far we have come.



Gene Jackey, Chris Fedden and Super Dave removed the wasted chock.



Rob Haley, SLATER volunteer and sometimes airline pilot, applies primer to an aft 20mm gun tub deck.

With the accommodation ladder complete, the shipfitters have moved on to the leak in the CPO mess. For years there has been an annoying stream of water coming down the port bulkhead every time it rains or we washdown. We traced the leak to a rotted hole in the deck under a rotted chock under a wasted doubler plate. As I write we are in the process of removing the chock and the doubler. The wasted deck will be cropped out and renewed and the chock will be rebuilt. Once again Super **Dave Mardon** stepped up to the plate and allowed “**Boats**” **Haggart** and **Tim Benner** to hang him over the side off a davit to do the outboard burning, cutting and grinding. **Erik Collin** will be on hand to make sure they don't trash the CPO Mess in the process.

The Chippers are finishing up the last section of deck on the fantail, inside the 20mm gun tubs. Once complete they will be done chipping over Heather Maron's head, and she will be able to work without hearing protection and be able to clean and put her special collections exhibit space back together. Down in the machinery spaces, the engineers are tearing down number four main engine for a cosmetic restoration. They have all the exhaust manifold elbows up on the main deck for cleaning and painting.

Work also continues on the restoration of the searchlight transformer and the painting. Of course they have been sidetracked a bit working on the whaleboat engine, payback for all the hours Rocky has put in down there helping in the machinery spaces.

We got another big boost this month from the Navy Nuclear Power Training Center at Ballston Spa. The Chiefs up there once again chose to use the SLATER for their annual CPO Selectees initiation, and the initiation was a day's work on SLATER doing things the old way. Among the projects that were accomplished were bilge cleaning in B-3 and B-4, more deck chipping, cleaning and scaling in the shaft alleys, scaling and cleaning in the forward Magazine, helping our crew remove the chock over the CPO mess, removal, cleaning, lubricating and reinstallation of the breech block on gun 3, and working off the paint float to begin work on the portside boottop aft. The extra duty guys ended up cleaning and polishing the trough and urinals in the aft head.



The parking lot flood creeps ever onward as the Hudson river continues to rise.

In the middle of the CPO weekend we had a little unanticipated event known as Hurricane Irene. We knew it was coming and prepared for the expected high winds. The Saturday before the hurricane “Boats” Haggart tightened all the mooring lines, and rearranged the whaleboat and the paint float so they wouldn’t be banging against each other. We had the NPTU Chief’s staying aboard that night, so they turned to for us. They took down all the awnings, stowed all the loose gear on the Observation Deck in the Visitor Center, moved all the battle helmets and life rings inside, and went around topside and tied down anything that might become a projectile. The following morning when I needed a wringer bucket to swab out the pilothouse, it took me ten minutes in the rain to untie it. Sunday morning I came in to button her up after the Chiefs left.

We made the decision to close the ship that Sunday, because there weren’t many tourists about. The CPOs left at 0900 and I buttoned up the ship as tight as I could and left for the day. It was in God’s hands now. The expected winds never seemed to materialize, but the rain was something else. Monday morning at 0430 I got a call that some of the yachts from the Albany Yacht Club might need to tie up alongside. I headed down to the ship, but the yachts found shelter elsewhere, which I didn’t mind since I wasn’t doing anything anyway that time in the morning. I saw the constellation Orion, bright and beautiful, something I haven’t seen since we did the all night filming with Sho Kotaki back in 2008 when filming “Battle Under the Orion.”



Suggestions were made that with a bit more water we could move SLATER into the parking lot and perform the needed hull preservation there.

I also saw a beautiful sunrise, something else I don't see very often. Monday was surreal. Most of the usual volunteers showed up. It was an absolutely gorgeous day. The only problem was that the river continued to rise all day. Doug Tanner had to cut the shoreside handrails off the gangway as they were destroying the gangway as they came in contact with the shore. Other than that, the ship rode beautifully. About 1300 Barry Witte to the complex, which we did, which caused the loss of all Smitty's delicious SOS that was left over from the CPO breakfast the day before. Heartbreaking. Once we secured power most of the crew left, as the water slowly crept across the parking lot. I came back at 1700 and the water was over the seawall and the parking lot was completely covered, thigh deep. The adjacent roads were all completely flooded, and the only way to get to the ship was to remove barricades and go backwards on the highway entrance ramps. Barry Witte and Gary Sheedy joined me and we watched transfixed as the water rose until 2030 when we saw it receding. At that point we packed it in for the night.



Time to break out the hose. At the end of it all we had mud an inch deep in the parking lot.

The following morning, Tuesday, we arrived to a parking lot that was a sea of mud. The water had fallen to three feet below the seawall. As Erik Collin began valiantly washing our end of the parking lot, Barry Witte began checking out the power issues. The power to the ship meggered out fine and he had the ship back on line by 0930. However, water had gotten into the feeder to the trailer, so he spent the morning sucking out the conduit and blowing air through the line. By noon the trailer was back on line.

About this time Mayor Jennings sent City crews down in force. We had help from the Water Department, Department of General Services, the Port and the Fire Department removing the mud and hosing off the wharf and the adjacent roads. By Wednesday morning we were ready for business and back open for tours. In short, the ship, whaleboat and paint float came through fine. The mooring worked just as we would have hoped. However, for those of you who were familiar with the old mooring arrangement and the 15 waterlogged camels that used to hold us off the wall, I can't imagine how we would have fared if we still had to rely on them, and had not had the new mooring dolphins installed. Someone was definitely looking out for our SLATER.

Again, remember that the Fall Work week is coming up Sunday September 25 to Friday September 30th. The event is for working sailors, male and female, who want to participate in SLATER's restoration. This fall we anticipate scaling and repainting the portside boottop of the paint float, continuing to scale the starboard side main deck, and working in the bilges in the aft machinery spaces. Relive the memories. If you're interested in participating, contact me here at the ship at 518-431-1943. Also, for our volunteers the Ship's Store has new SLATER patches with special Volunteer rockers. Stop by to get your own combo for the special price of \$5.

Finally, without ceremony one of our most dedicated volunteers retired this month. Ever since SLATER first arrived in Albany, **Les and Annette Beauchaine** have been there for us filling in wherever needed. Their major contribution to the project was the twelve years they spent selling dogtags at Crossgates Mall, adding considerably to the Museum's treasury. We pulled back from that operation when it ceased to be profitable, but Les continued to give tours on Sundays and as needed. This past month, Les finally decided that while he wanted to keep going, his knees were telling him otherwise, and it was time to stop climbing up and down the shipboard ladders. He is part of that special group of World War II DE sailors who were here to share their experiences with the public. As their numbers diminish, it is the visiting public who will feel their loss the most as they will miss the first hand accounts from those who were actually there. See the bottom of our homepage for a link to the Hull Preservation Fund.

See you next month.