



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum
USS Slater DE-766
PO Box 1926
Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123
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The month of May is traditionally Field Week month in which the local “Regulars” take a back seat and let the out of town “Reservists” carry the load for a couple of weeks. The first group was the Michigan Chapter of DESA. I use the term “Michigan” loosely because they had volunteers from nine different states including California and Washington State.



The 2013 Michigan Chapter Crew gather around the stack project.

First to arrive a few days early was **Jim Ray** and his son **Stan**. We kept Jim busy with compartment cleaning until the rest of the gang started to arrive on the weekend of May 5th. **Ron Zarem** and his son **Mark** prepared the traditional turkey dinner on Sunday night. After dinner we split the crew up so they were ready to go to work Monday morning.

Chief Smith once again volunteered to handle chow for the group putting out three meals a day for 32 guys all week. He was assisted in the galley by **Jim Ray**, with **Larry Stiles** and **Ron Orsag**

taking care of the messdecks. We had former SLATER crew member **Bill Svihovec** aboard as compartment cleaner with another WWII DE vet **Tom Borrows** off USS BRISTER DE327.



Laird and Brandon welding down chocks.

The welding crew consisted of **Laird Confer** and his grandson **Brandon Reese**. They completed welding up two replacement chocks on the portside forward. **“Boats” Haggart** was in his glory when he got to hang Brandon over the side to weld the outboard side of the chock.

One of the biggest eyesores was the faded paint on the stack and **Dow Clark, Dave Zarem, Bill Wasco** and **Pat Zarem** tackled that job. They rigged staging and spent Monday scaling, corrosealing and priming. By Tuesday they rolled out the whole stack with fresh Imron Epoxy. But that wasn't all. Dow and Pat actually got inside the stack cap, scaled the whole area, and

gave it two coats of Corroseal and a top coat of flat black. Dow, the oldest man in the crew, was described by Bill as an “Animal.” He never stopped, but don't forget that this is the same guy who in past years has continually volunteered for the bilge detail.



All kinds of work going on around the stack.

The second paint project we started was on the amidships 20mm gun tubs. **Emmett Landrum, Gary Link,** and **Marty Cole** worked on scaling and prepping the guns and tubs and got 26 and 28 done before they ran out of time.

A third paint project was the **shoreside light tower**. One of the things we inherited on the wharf was an old Coast Guard steel day marker with a large locker at the base that we have used for years to store steel in. No maintenance had been done on it since long before the SLATER had arrived in Albany, so it had become a rusty eyesore. **Mike Zarem** and **Scott McFadden** took on that project and spent three days scaling, corrosealing and finally painting it with a nice bright finish coat of gloss white. It is an eyesore no more



Repainting the day marker...



...and the flagbag.

Ron Zarem, John Meeker, DESA President Steve Hoback and Dean Pyers were charged with painting the number two 3" gun shield on the 01 level forward; a task they completed by the end of the week. Finally, taking a cue from the HUSE group we decided that it would be a good idea to assign one man to the paint locker to issue paint and **John Adriani** volunteered for that detail. He kept the brushes clean, the paint properly mixed and issued all week long.

The mechanical challenge was gun three, which was starting to give us problems in elevation. Butch Warrender, Guy Huse, Gary Dieckman, Jim Parker and Mark Zarem worked that problem and not only corrected the problem, but began the disassembly of the elevation drive on gun 2 before they ran out of days. In between Guy and Gary continued work on the fire and bilge pump piping in B-4.



Tours continued throughout the work week.



The flying bridge crew.

Michigan Dick Walker, Gary Headworth and Ron Mazure spent the week up on the flying bridge. They got the firecontrol shack and the sound hut cleaned out and organized, detailed all the lookout chairs, and continued scaling and priming in the director tub. And, one small detail, for years the pit log has said we're making five knots. Dick finally set it back to zero for me. **And, it's a lonely job but somebody has to do it, retired Chief Engineman Ed Wakeman, the lone engineer** spent the week in B-4 scaling piping and cleaning valve covers. But he was lucky enough to be on hand Monday

when our engineers rolled number 4 main on compressed air, and she fired on all 16 cylinders. The "cosmetic restoration" of main engines three and four continues.

As always, the competition to be "Tim's Favorite" was very stiff, but the selection is getting easier. After 15 years most of the likely candidates have been rewarded, and **Ron Zarem's** rule of not allowing repeat awards eliminates most of the crew. **Brandon Reese** would have had it for his welding work hanging over the side, but he was part of a group award in 2009 to "Laird's Grandkids." Dow was an obvious choice for his work on the stack, but he already got the award in 2007 for working in the bilges. **Jim Ray** got it in 2001 for getting dirtier than anyone else, **Emmett Landrum** it in 2010 for being the oldest and traveling the farthest and **Scott McFadden** got it last year for keeping the Zarem clan under control. But, looking back it seems no Zarem has ever won the award. And, since they collectively played such an essential role in making the field week a success, the award is another group award to Mike, Pat, Mark and Dave Zarem. Ron says he's bringing them all back next year with some grandkids. No nepotism here.

I had a week off before the arrival of George Amandola and the USS HUSE veterans, so I rested up, bought more paint and got ready. George Amandola came in a day early to get things ready and fill in as commissary man and cook until his regular cooks arrived, **John Nicorta** and **John Malvasio**. They were supported by **Wally Bringslid** who continues to have an argument for everyone.



The galley kept everyone well fed.



Morning muster for the HUSE crew.

The big project for the HUSE crew was the portside boottop. After we pumped some ballast water out of a port tank in B-3, we've been carrying a list of about two degrees to starboard. As there was about four more inches of bottom out of the water on the port side, we figured we'd Corrodeal and paint on it before we take the list off. **Brandon Easley** volunteered to go down on the float, and I wasn't sure who was agile enough to go down with him until our own **Bill Wetterau** marched across the gangway. By default he was selected. As **Gene Hermanson, Lew Shelton, Joe Delfoe Bill Meehan,** and **Wally Bringslid** handled lines, they worked Brandon and Bill around the forward dolphin and all the way up to the bow, scraping and corrodealing on Monday.



Brandon Easley and Joe Delfoe repainting the port boottop.

Tuesday, I wasn't sure who I could put down on the float with Brandon, but when I got back up on deck, the situation has resolved itself when Joe Delfoe joined Brandon on the float. Keep in mind that Joe is a guy who arrived on board Sunday and said, "Don't expect much out of me. I just had a hip replacement and have all kinds of health issues." He sure fooled us. Another ringer turned out to be Wally. For ten years he had us convinced all he knew how to do was swab the messdecks and dump the trash. Up on deck he handled lines with the skill of a ten-year bosun's mate. Once he was found out, he started telling

everyone that this was his last year, but I doubt that. We've got big plans for Wally if he comes next year. We'll put him in a bosun's chair and hang him over the side.



Jan Sweiger and Robin Larner getting ready to apply Corro Seal.

The other paint crew was Ernie Aeschilman, Robin Larner and Jan Sweiger. They were tasked with scaling and repainting the deck around gun 2 on the 01 level forward. Ernie was also detailed as our compartment cleaner, so he started every day working through the ship cleaning bulkheads, sweeping and swabbing decks, and he left the ship a whole lot better looking for his efforts. He repainted the deck inside number 27 20mm gun tub on the starboard side, and then turned to with the ladies up forward. For three days they worked around intermittent showers, but they still managed to get the whole deck around gun two

chipped, two coats of Corro Seal and primed. Early in the week the forecast called for a beautiful day Friday, so I was sure we'd get a finish coat on the deck, but the forecast went south and it rained all day Friday (and Saturday and Sunday) so that's another loose end to be dealt with. But the ladies wouldn't stop. George finally said he had to turn the air compressor off on them; otherwise the crew wouldn't have gotten any sleep. Kudos to Robin, first for bringing Jan back, and second for coming for the first time without her Dad Jim. Once the fathers get to old to come, we often lose the kids, but it looks like Robin is going to be a keeper in her own right. And as for Jan, a former RN, her secret talent is that she knows how to make up a bunk with hospital corners, so next year we'll let her remake all the officer's bunks!



Stan Dickstein and Anthony Amandola working on the gun 2 elevation.

Finally the mechanical crew went back to work on gun two. Butch Warrender had identified the bad bearing, so **Anthony Amandola, Guy Huse and Stan Dickstein** were tasked with disassembly and replacing the bearing. Electrician Anthony proved himself an able mechanic and got the whole thing apart with Guy's assistance. Guy would have rather spent his week on the B-4 fire and bilge pump, but has become one of our most experienced ordnance mechanics by default. They got the bearing out, and we called upon our "Bearing master" **Karl**

Herchenroder to find a replacement.

That he managed to do in a couple of hours. It was a tense Thursday after the whole thing went back together and it turned harder than when they started. Anthony would probably still be having sleepless nights, until by examining gun 1 they

found an adjusting screw that was turned down too tight. By slacking it a couple turns the elevation started working smoothly.

This would have been the end of it, except Guy ran a test on the train side and found that was no longer working. An examination found that it had been reassembled without the locking key and the gear was just slipping on the shaft. Guy machined two new keys, reassembled it, and now, once again, the manual drives on Gun 2 are working in train and elevations.



Key Bank volunteers repainting the cap rail...



...and cleaning engine exhaust elbows.

At the same time as the HUSE crew was at work, on Wednesday May 22nd we hosted 12 Key Bank volunteers for their annual “Neighbors make the Difference” day. Key Bank Coordinator Erik Peretta organized the event. Again, the weather was threatening but the rain held off allowing them to complete painting flat black on the guard rail along the seawall; the first time this has been done since SLATER came to Albany. Another group cleaned main engine valve covers for the snipes. At the completion of their work day, **George Amandola** took them all on a tour of the ship, so Heather now has one more experienced tour guide.

All of these out-of-town volunteers appreciate the work of the local regulars, but no one received more praise in absentia than John Thompson. His work over the past year, sorting all the tools and hardware, labeling all the drawers and then making an index telling people where to find everything, probably made both groups more efficient by a factor of ten. He spent a lot of his own money fabricating drawers for all the power tools and repainted the whole compartment. Several people came up to me saying they’d never seen a shop so organized, a vast improvement over years past. Now if we can just encourage everyone to keep it that way!

Over in Connecticut Steve Dull has completed building the replacement rudder for the whaleboat and, judging from the pictures, it looks beautiful. David Jalbert is working with his local newspaper is going to do a story on the project, so we’ll be getting some press in Connecticut before we get our rudder back. Another volunteer working for us in Connecticut is machinist **George Christophersen**. After almost 70 years of abuse the engine order telegraph in the pilot house is in sad shape. The telegraph handles tend to slip out of position if not held in place by the operator. We recently acquired a mostly intact spare telegraph to be used for parts when repairing ours. Unfortunately, the large notched bronze ring that holds the handles in position was in no better shape than our originals. George, ace machinist and current Best Friend (Next to Steve) was called on to fill in the worn notches and then cut new ones. As the telegraph handle levers were worn beyond repair

George fabricated two new ones along with two spares. With assistance from Austin Tryon, Erik Collin installed the new rings and handle levers. The handles now lock firmly in position awaiting their next 70 years of abuse.

The rest of the crew has continued working as before. Rocky has the whaleboat almost ready to launch. He's just waiting for the right combination of a sunny Saturday and enough people so he can turn the boat and paint the outboard side. The shipfitters have been busy with the chock project and replacing wasted stanchions. The engineers continue their effort to restore main engines number three and four. The deck gang has been working up on the foc's'cle scaling and priming. The radio gang is continuing their effort to bring the TBL online and preparing for the Historic Ships Radio Weekend.



Mayor Jennings, Volunteer Jack Madden, and Rensselaer County Executive Kathy Jimino with us on Memorial Day.

light to bringing SLATER to Albany back in the day when some people weren't sure if she was worth saving.

Our tour guides meet many interesting visitors, and share unique experiences. From my perspective we had a very interesting visitor on Memorial Day. **Michael O'Brien**, a retired Senior Chief Sonar Technician came aboard with his family and was on Rod Doty's tour. I turns out that Mike was second generation Navy, and it just happened that his father was an engineman on the old USS KIDD DD661, and was aboard on April 12, 1945 when KIDD was hit by a Kamikaze that killed 38 of her crew. As I spent 15 years of my life, 1983 to 1997, restoring KIDD in Baton Rouge and knew many of her former crewmembers, this was very significant to me personally. Mike's father was only aboard KIDD for three months, transferring to a minesweeper when she came back to the States for repairs. He's never been back to the ship as he wasn't aboard long enough to make close friends and the experience was one he'd rather forget. As for Mike, since he lives close by in Selkirk, we did our damndest to try and recruit him for our guide volunteers.

So to all our local volunteers who worked so hard this month and didn't get mentioned, tough luck, but thanks as always. Dave and Benner, we'll try and fit your pictures in next month. Until then, thank you all for your continued help and support.

The month ended with our 16th annual Memorial Day

Commemoration. Miraculously, a week of almost solid rain ended the Monday of Memorial Day, and the morning dawned bright and crisp. The crew mustered aboard with **Steve Long** serving as master of ceremonies, **Jerry Jones** handling the sound system, **Ken Kaskoun** turned out about twice as many volunteers as he needed for the color guard, **Erik Collin** organized the gun crew and **Steve Stella** was on hand to play taps. We were honored to have Albany Mayor **Jerry Jennings** and Rensselaer County Executive **Kathy Jimino** in attendance and we got great media coverage.

Following Dick Walker's invocation, I had the privilege of being able to introduce Mayor Jennings and thank him personally for giving the green

See you next month