



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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It's been a busy month for tours. The weather went from beastly tropical at the beginning of the month to perfect cooler ship touring weather towards the end of the month. We had so many great days and the tour guides have really had their hands full. Kudos to **Heather Maron** and all the guides for the way they handle the crowds. If you don't believe me, check the comments about the guides on Tripadvisor.com. We've had a lot of summer camp tours, and one Tuesday we hosted almost 200 Civil Air Patrol cadets who descended on us on a day we're normally closed. Our volunteer guides responded with their usual enthusiasm and we handled the CAP visitors in two sessions. We've been holding steady as Tripadvisor's number 2 out of 29 tourist attractions in Albany, beaten only by the State Capitol. In their ranking of all the attractions in the Hudson River Valley, we rank number 15 out of 175. Not bad for a ship that was once called a "rust bucket with a snowball's chance in hell." Our guides bring a personal touch to the SLATER experience that few other ships can match. One of the reasons our local weekly newspaper, "Metroland," once again named us the "Best Floating Museum."



World War II vet Leo Baehler in action.

One of our most unique tour guides has to be Leo Baehler of Mendham, New Jersey. Leo served as an electrician's mate aboard USS GUSTAFSON DE182 in World War II. GUSTAFSON was another CANNON-class DE so Leo is right at home aboard. He is our longest continuously serving tour guide, having started when SLATER was in Manhattan back in 1995. He summers on Lake George, so he continued to volunteer when the ship moved to Albany in 1997. One of the few remaining tour guides who can actually claim to have seen WWII DE service, Leo brings a vanishing perspective to his tours and to his visitors. He can speak first-hand of the fear all his shipmates had that maybe in the middle of the night a torpedo would come crashing through the quarter-inch of steel that separated the sailors from the sea. Leo was quite conscious of the fact that his bunk was one of the outboard bunks closest to the hull.

Having spent most of the war in the Atlantic, the move to the Pacific in 1945 was met with little enthusiasm. GUSTAFSON arrived in the Pacific in July of 1945 when the atomic bombs were dropped, hastening the Japanese surrender. Leo recalls how on the day the war ended, there were radio reports, but many of the sailors believed they were only more rumors of the Japanese demise. When the ship's captain, **Ambrose Chambers**, went on the IMC (PA system) to announce the Japanese surrender, there was still little excitement on board among the weary crew. As Leo puts it, there was no big hullabaloo. After the war, Baehler returned to college and earned a degree in electrical engineering, and had a long career with Western Electric and eventually AT&T. His ship, like SLATER, decommissioned in Green Cove Springs, Florida in 1946. And like SLATER, GUSTAFSON was transferred to a foreign Navy under the Military Defense Assistance Program, in this case, to the Netherlands where she served until scrapped in February 1968. But, she lives on in the heart of **Leo Baehler**.



Preparing to get underway.

Another World War II DE veteran who continues to amaze us is Larry “Rocky” Rockwood. Rocky was a sonarman aboard USS COONER DE172, and as you regular readers know, is the meticulous keeper of our wooden whaleboat. From my desk in the ship’s office I have a view out onto the boat deck on the 01 level. I watched one day as Rocky climbed in and out of the whaleboat twenty times, using the lifelines as a ladder. As many times as I’ve gone out and asked if he wanted me to bring him a step ladder to make his life a little easier, he always say, “No, this is fine, I don’t need a ladder.”

Rocky’s had a very good month. The whaleboat went into the water on Saturday, July 6. The post I put on Facebook said, “When planning a

strenuous activity involving a lot of senior citizens, always plan it for the hottest day of the summer.” It was hot. The first step was to mount the magnificent rudder that **Steve Dull** fabricated for us over in Connecticut. It fit like a glove. Again, we tried it “**Boats” Haggart’s** way and didn’t use the windlass. We just lowered it using the cleats on the davits with two round turns and three figure eights. As always, we learned from the experience. This time the lesson was using wooden wedges under the keel to keep the keel from scraping along the edge of the deckhouse when swinging her out. Once swung out, lowering went easily. The Coasties from the Cutter KATHERINE WALKER who helped us out in the spring by sanding the bottom did a great job, because the boat seams were tighter than they had ever been. The pump hardly ran at all.



Heaving away together on the whaleboat.

We let her hang in the falls until Monday. It was still hot as hell when the crew used lines to pull the boat around to the port side and tied her to the paint float alongside the accommodation ladder. Rocky touched up the paint that had been scuffed up in the lowering process, and the engineers went to work getting the four-cylinder Westerbeke running. This entailed bringing a battery up from B-4 that was used over the winter to start the emergency diesel generator. We don't have enough batteries to go around because the executive director is so cheap with the engineers. They have exercised the boat twice so far. The first evolution was totally successful. The second exercise a week later resulted in the engine stopping when they were down at the Port with an outgoing tide. A rescue mission was mounted with the help of **Lou** and **Anthony Renna** to return the boat before it ended up off Sandy Hook. A diagnosis revealed that

the problem is the fuel pump, so the engineers are working on a replacement.



Volunteer Bill Wetterau rolling out nonskid on the fantail.

On deck, Bill Wetterau, Don Miller, Ron Mazure and Walt Stuart have finished touching up the deck paint on the fantail and are now working on waterways and lifeline stanchions as well as some deckhouse touch up. Bill Wetterau, Justin Lesser, Walt Stuart and Earl Herchenroder all spent time working on the two 20mm guns on the 01 level forward. Those two guns in particular never got the loving treatment that Coastie **Rich Pavlovic** gave all the other ones, so they are in tough shape. The process has involved sanding them down, applying Corroseal to the bare metal and then spraying out the guns flat black and the stands, shields and cradles haze gray.

Clark Farnsworth and Chris Fedden have been working on fabricating new parts. They completed one project, building a new ladder that will go into a void under C-202L. I can't give you a void number because it's a Greek modification. While in Greek Service, the Greeks converted fuel oil tanks C-10F and C-11F into water tanks. This necessitated creating a void along the forward bulkhead of the tanks to keep water from leaking into oil tanks C-6F and C-7F, or having diesel oil in the fresh water. The condition of the two voids is deplorable and the ladder crumbled under my weight, so time

for some new ladders. Fortunately, the rest of the water tanks are in much better condition. Their other project has been fabricating screens for the fuel oil tank vents on the main deck. The old screening was pretty well rotted away, so they are fabricating new steel caps with flameproof screening. Another dedicated crew member who did some steel fabrication was **Tim Benner**, who fabricated a beer can holder for his riding mower. We're glad we can be here for you, Tim.



Shipfitters "Super Dave" Mardon and Tim Benner enjoy their work.



Gary Sheedy improvising with a 10' applicator to take cathodic protection readings.

The shipfitters moved forward to the 01 level above the hedgehog projector. For years there's been a continuous rust streak down the forward bulkhead of the deckhouse. **Doug Tanner** took a look at it and immediately spotted a Bondo repair job on the deck above that was leaking through. The boys chipped out the rust and Bondo, cut away a lot of wasted metal and spent most of their Saturdays fitting in new steel. They also mounted cable supports to the forward IMC speaker and capped the weld on a doubler under the hedgehog project that was leaking into the CPO mess. Since all this is happening right on the tour route, we made the decision not to crop it out at this time. That project should be finished by the end of the month. Then it's back to the never-ending chock replacement project. Another ongoing project by **Barry, Gary Sheedy and Doug** has been checking for any electrolysis issues that may be affecting the condition of the hull and determine if the zinc cathodic protection system is still functioning properly in fresh water. We recently purchased a reference electrode to carry out these tests and will begin checking shortly.

Up on the bridge, Erik Collin repeated the restoration of the engine order telegraph, the VD radar repeater and the steering order annunciator. His latest project was the speed light controller and, though every WWII era ship had one, nobody remembered it. That led to a lively discussion on Facebook. For those of you who have a 1940 Bluejacket's Manual, the speed lights are described on pages 412 and 413. How quickly we forget. He's since moved on to 20mm magazine drums and doing a complete overhaul of the drums for the forward twenties on the 01 level. The Donzelli express also arrived this month. Each spring our friend **Will Donzelli** makes an annual pilgrimage to the west coast to hunt for surplus electronics. On the trip east he usually hauls some gear back for us from our west coast friends. This year he brought back an RBC radio receiver donated by **Stan Byrn** and beautifully restored by **Tom Horsfall** in Alameda. He also brought back the original crypto machine safe from the old USS CLAMP, and some beautiful WWII vintage sound powered phones and a TCY lifeboat transmitter. We have friends all over taking care of us.



The restored speed light controller in the pilothouse.



Our new RBC radio receiver donated by Stan Byrn and beautifully restored by Tom Horsfall.

Down below, Larry Williams continued the organization of the ET shop and has done a great job restoring the parts drawers. That is, until he fell off a ladder while working at his camp and fractured five ribs. Down in engineering, Karl Herchenroder is finally a happy camper. The snipes needed some gaskets to reassembly main engine number 4, and I broke down and ordered them from Hatch and Kirk, the supplier of old engine parts out in Seattle. The gaskets arrived and the reassemble is proceeding rapidly. Gus Negus is working right behind them painting the engine as fast as they can get it together. The snipes all got some air one Monday when they hauled all of the cylinder covers out of the hole so they could be spray painted on the main deck. Barry Witte has been working in B-4 with student Eric Altman on the reassembly of number three main motor lubricating pump, and an exercise for Eric to gain experience putting machinery together. We also had a group of Sailors from Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs spend another Tuesday in the B-3 bilges, so that cleaning continues to progress.



The engineers, Don Miller, Gus Negus, Ken Myrick and Gary Lubrano get some air while painting the cylinder covers.



Thomas Scian with some newly discovered parts.

Thomas Scian went back to the void space under gun 3 to continue his work scaling and vacuuming as part of our effort to preserve the space. A lot of the rust he pulled out was still damp, never a good sign. In the process he found two long neglected 20mm drum loading racks, stamped metal triangles to hold the drums while the magazine spring was tensioned and the 60 individual rounds inserted. They will be restored and go on display in the near future. About the ship, the routine continues. The wheel gets polished daily, **Jim Gelston** winds the clocks every Monday. **John Thompson** reorganizes the shop every Saturday morning and **Smitty** keeps the crew fed Mondays and Saturdays. There was a major point of contention on a recent Saturday when **John Thompson** volunteered to fill in for **Doug Tanner** and make breakfast. **Heather Maron** holds a special place in the hearts of the crew, and never eats breakfast aboard. The morning John cooked and offered Heather breakfast, she said "Sure" and ate with the rest of us. Of course, Doug took this as a deep personal affront and threatened to give up cooking altogether.

A reminder that the 38th annual DESA Convention is scheduled for Albany this September 8-12, 2013. There will be two Events aboard SLATER, a general visit on Tuesday morning September 10th, and the Memorial Service on the morning of September 14th. The focus of the Convention will be honoring the service of the Greatest Generation. For more information contact **Dori Glaser** at desadori@hotmail.com

Finally, it is with great sadness that I report the loss of one of our dedicated Michigan volunteers, Mike Zarem. One of the four sons of Trustee and Michigan volunteer coordinator Ron Zarem, Mike died suddenly of natural causes on July 15th. It was a shock to everyone since he was way too young to go. Mike's specialty was insulation repair, working with fiberglass and mastic, and painting. A tireless worker, he had made ten work weeks with his Dad, and we used to save up jobs for Mike all year long. This past May was the first time Ron was able to get all four boys, Pat, Dave, Mark and Mike, together aboard at the same time, so the picture you see is especially poignant. We flew the flag at half-mast during Mike's Memorial in Michigan, something we are getting used to, but never expected to do for someone so young. Rest in Peace, Mike.



The Zarem Family together aboard USS SLATER. Mike is on the right.