



## SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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Snow falls on USS SLATER, moored serenely in the Hudson with our flag at half staff for our departed shipmates.

**You folks are amazing.** The response to our Winter Fund solicitation has been outstanding. Since the drive began in October, your outpouring of support has added up to over \$70,000, making it look like it's going to be one of our best years ever. We've already beat the amount we made in the full 12 months of last year's drive. The most encouraging thing for us is the number of first-time donors who have started to support us.

So many of the donations come with appreciative notes that we post in the Chief's quarters for the volunteers. We're honored to be taking care of your ship.

**For all of you who have come aboard relatively recently, I should give you a little background on how our Winter Fund Drive originated.** The Winter Fund Drive was conceived back in 1998. After the first season of public visitation, we realized that we did not have enough cash to get us through the winter. When we closed for the season, our income stream ceased, but our expenses continued. Governmental support just wasn't in the cards. It was a case of making lemonade out of lemons. We reached out to our members and asked them to donate \$100 each to help get us through the winter. The response was overwhelming. Their donations got us through that first winter and then some. We've continued the drive every year since.



**Bob and Thomas Scian and Boats Haggart adjusting mooring lines on a cold afternoon.**

**The appeal enables the volunteers to keep working on USS SLATER's restoration throughout the winter months.** It has become an important part of the Museum's operating fund. USS SLATER is supported by a network of 3,000 members in all 50 states, including Navy veterans, their families, and history-minded friends.

As I stated last month, in case you missed it, in 2013 the only government financial support the Museum received was a \$1000 City of Albany Arts Grant to support public programming. Private donations provide half of the Museum's operating budget.

**For those of you who have never donated or joined as members, Museum memberships begin at \$25.** Members receive the Museum's quarterly printed newsletter "Trim But Deadly," which features historical articles, photos and updates on the volunteer's progress, free admission to the ship, as well as invitations to special events. . Winter Fund donors are welcome at any level. Visit the website at [www.ussslater.org](http://www.ussslater.org) for more information.

**Our preparations for going into drydock mid-February have been going well with one exception; Mother Nature sure is not cooperating.** After five years of mild winters and global warming, this has been as cold a winter as I have experienced in my 16 years here. I wish they'd called it drastic climate change instead of global warming. That might have better prepared me for what we are going through. The first cold snap hit in early January. Sub-zero temps caused the river to freeze over, but a week of warmer weather cleared the ice and it looked like we were home free. Then round two swept in about two weeks ago, way more intense than the first. Jones told me it hit 32°F this morning, but it's headed down to 4°F tonight. Then it's not expected to get above freezing until Friday. I'm starting to feel like Ernest Shackleton, my ship surrounded by ice from which there is no escape, save the concentric circles around the Kasko de-icers.

With our quarter-inch waterline, original build thank you, no one will want to tow us through the ice. We'll just have to sit tight and see. With the shipyard work expected to take nine weeks, it is starting to look like our return may be delayed into May. I would imagine that if we don't make our anticipated arrival date the shipyard might put another vessel in the drydock ahead of us, further setting us back. This is where the old AA serenity prayer really is helpful, as well as all your encouraging letters. **Though brutal would be the best way to describe the cold, it has not stopped the crew.** Having spent 15 years in Louisiana, I'm amazed at how the natives adapt to this climate. **"Boats" Haggart, Thomas and Bob Scian, Walt Stuart** and anybody else who falls into "Boats" clutches have been out on deck on the worst days tending to the circulators and adjusting mooring lines, making sure we're riding properly.



Chris Stein, Boats Haggart and Thomas Scian after a rough day cleaning out B-2.



Ron Mazure and Mike Marko after a day in the aft magazines with vacuum cleaner.

**All the material that has to come off the ship has pretty much come off.** All the insulation within a six-foot band at the waterline has been removed. That was probably the most miserable part of the shipyard prep, short of bilge cleaning, and **Ron Mazure, Mike Marko and Mark Gardner** tackled it with enthusiasm. These three are now in the process of lifting deck plates in all the magazines and storerooms and vacuuming them out. CWO **Rick Croft** has continued to bring Sailors down from **Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs**, and they've provided the muscle to re-stow heavy gear and haul trash to the dumpster. They've also been sorting boxes of tubes and electronics spares and putting them in the parts drawers in the ET shop, a project that's been crying out for 16 years for someone to tackle it. In addition, they made all the battle lanterns in the unrestored machinery spaces B-1 and B-2 operational again.

**Speaking of the regular Navy, our RPI Midshipmen are back following their semester break and assisting with our dewatering project.** Under the direction of retired Commander **Barry Witte**, our summer intern **Griffin Keegan** and the Mids are getting a real lesson in the overhaul and operation of shipboard valves, controllers and pumps as they work to make the bilge drain system functional again. The finished valves shine like they just came out of a SIMA workshop, complete with new packing, nuts, bolts and gaskets.

It's gonna be hard for the enlisted MMs to snowball these kids. Guy Huse has also been heavily involved in this project, coming up from Dover Plains twice a week to work on the bilge drain system forward and the aft fire and flushing pump.

**There is a lot of planning going on for when we move all the gear back aboard the ship. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get ourselves organized.** To that end, we are looking at what types of items we need easy access to, and what items we rarely need. **Tommy Moore** and **Bob Kibbey** have completed new shelving in three magazines to make much better use of our space. We're looking forward to consolidating and organizing items to make the stuff we need to get to more accessible, like the chambray work shirts **Jim Decota** has been donating to us.

**The most amazing transformation has been in the forward motor room, B-2.** For years, if we didn't know what to do with it, it went into B-2. Several years ago as part of the NPTU Chiefs initiation, the Selects decked over the gaping hole where the donkey boilers and evaporator had been. Over the years a mountain of "Ship Junk" was piled onto this space. Tires we used for fenders, lumber, diesel spares, surplus fire extinguishers, vent motor controllers, life jackets, the SL antenna wave guide sections, even an old patent log ended up in B-2. **Tommy Moore** took on the task of clearing the platform and building heavy duty shelving out of scrap material. We then proceeded to throw away three dumpsters full of trash, and sorted and organized everything else. There's a box for valves, a box for valve wheels, three boxes of water tight door parts and gaskets, a shelf of motor controllers, and an area for plumbing fittings with no more clutter on the deck. You can walk everywhere.



**Dan Daigneault and his ballast discovery in B-2.**

**The process has taught us a lot about the ship. There was a small skin tank in B-2 under where the evaporator used to be that was full of water.** That will be pumped out. I was unaware that the Greeks built a large steel pan under the deck plates where the evaporator used to be and filled it with iron ingots to compensate for the weight of the missing donkey boilers and the evaporator that they removed when they decommissioned AETOS.

I guess our 1° list would be a lot worse if they hadn't done that. And, special thanks to Justen Lesser and Bill Wetterau for moving a lot of pig iron. When our bilge cleaning crew found 30 more ingots in an impossible location under the inport generator in B-2, Justin crawled under the deck plates and passed them up to Bill and moved them over with the rest of the ballast on the port side where they are doing us some good. And, while vacuuming out C-308M, **Ron Mazure** and **Mike Marko** lifted the deck plates to find 20mm recoil springs still in Cosmoline.



It was about ten degrees in the magazine when Bill Wetterau was working on one of the last manhole covers.



And, it wasn't much warmer when Super Dave and Sheedy were making gasket templates.



The bilge crew wrapping up in B-4--Dan Daigneault, John 'Hollywood' Guthan, Dana Camley and Scott Jubic.

**Gary Sheedy, Super Dave, Bill Wetterau** and the engineers have been working opening the last of the manhole covers and those nuts are so rusted on it's been tough going. Sheedy had the patience to go through and make exact templates of all the manhole gaskets. Our plan is to buy rubber and make new gaskets for every one the 45 manholes while we are in the yard. And **Karl Herchenroder** has spent a lot of time tackling the issue of power for the ship when we head downriver. He has been searching for a small, deck-mounted 10-30KW diesel generator to keep the lights on and the heat running for the duration of the 16-hour trip. The catch is it needs to generate three-phase 480 to tie right into our electrical system. We're looking for a rental or a purchase if the price is right. Problem is we won't know what we can afford until it's all over.

**The shipfitters have had several projects going.** When weather permits they have been working on reconstructing the hedgehog supports that have to be cut away to repair the leak in the deck. They have been working through the ship welding down desks and file cabinets that were set in place years ago, but have never been properly secured. They are also making retaining bars for book shelves and equipment shelves to keep everything in place while we are being towed. I'm going on the assumption that if I take all the precautions the Upper Bay will be a millpond when we cross it. If I don't, a gale will probably be blowing in from the Narrows.

**The bilge cleaning is complete and it took our friends at West Central Environmental a month to go through the four machinery spaces.** Lifting all the deck plates and crawling under the bilge piping, they scraped, hoed and vacuumed to get the bilges as clean as humanly possible. They'd start every morning in clean white Tyveks and by lunch they were covered with rust, grease and oil. The former location of the evaporator and dripping brine, B-2 was the worst, where they took out four drums of rust. They also supplied **John Thompson** with several cans of nuts and bolts to survey and sort, and well as a pile of rusty wrenches and scrapers. The word was, "Don't use anything heavier than a putty knife on the shell plating." The issue of cleaning the fuel tanks is still up in the air. We need it to get above freezing, and who's to say when that will happen.

**Continuing to be oblivious to the pending move, the radio gang continues working on electronics.** Having completed the installation of the Elecraft K2/10 low power QRP transceiver donated by **Stan Levandowski, Jerry Jones** and **Joe Breyer** have turned their attention back to the TBS installation. They have spent the month running armored power, audio and coaxial cable between the transmitter and the antenna patch panels and power supply.

**The other guy whose work continues unaffected by the pending overhaul is Rocky Rockwood, working in the unheated boat shed down at Scarano's Boatyard.** He reports that good coffee and friendly faces aside, so far this season he has spent some 40 hours working on the whaleboat; a good part of that time working under the boat, scraping black paint, loose caulking, and pulling out some rotten wood. The big job has been cutting out a section of the engine bed backing and cutting out a section of rot on the engine bed. Needing wood to replace all the bad stuff, he asked Eric if he had any scrap cedar he could use. Later in the morning, Rocky stepped away from the boat to get a drift to drive the bolt out, on returning there was the wood waiting for him. Hopefully, the engine bed rot will be the only big problem. We are so lucky we got the boat under cover at Scarano's as it would be next to impossible to do this work on the ship. Rocky has since taken the seats, battery boxes and decking home for repainting so he can work in the warmth.



**Chris Stein's life raft is progressing thanks to the generosity of Adirondack Studios.**

**Another off-ship project is continuing over in Argyle.** Work is moving forward over at Adirondack Studios on the mold for our new life rafts. **Chris Stein sent pictures of the way the project is progressing.** Chris now follows us on Facebook, and was aboard to help out on the Saturday of the big B-2 clean out.

**We're squatters no more.** We received the official NYS Department of Transportation Permit to remain in Albany year-round. The permit is now in our name, where it used to be in the City's name. It will be great not to have to move the ship every winter. Much less disruptive to operations. Our thanks to everyone at DOT and especially to our Board President **Tony Esposito** for his perseverance in working this through the bureaucracy.

**Our flag flew at half staff this month for two of our SLATER friends.** First to go was **Dick Pedro** who served during World War II, spending 22 months sea duty aboard the USS WEISS APD-135. For 65 years Dick served as a leader in the New York State American Legion and was National Commander of the American Legion, Commander, New York State American Legion and 29 years as the Adjutant of the New York State American Legion. And SOLDESA member and SLATER volunteer **Paul Albers** who served in USS NEAL A SCOTT DE-769 passed away this month. A former Navy shipfitter and a switchman with New York telephone company, Paul was one of the first volunteers to report aboard SLATER in Manhattan, doing critical electrical work to get the systems operating again. Both these men will be missed by us and their shipmates.

**See you next month, hopefully from Staten Island. Check Facebook for daily updates.**

