



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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NPTU Sailors are gaining experience that will serve them well in the fleet.

Gordon Lattey recently shared a story with me that I've heard several times over the years. It seems he was attending a Navy football game, wearing his USS SLATER hat. He was approached by an old Navy vet, who congratulated him on the organization's newsletter SLATER SIGNALS. He said it made him feel like he was a part of the project. For the past nineteen years, I have managed to get this monthly gossip sheet into the

mail, and later online, without missing an issue. In addition to that, initially with the help of Victor Buck, and now our staff and **Richard Andrian**, we have managed to get our print quarterly TRIM BUT DEADLY into the mail, again, for twenty consecutive years, without missing a deadline issue.

As a result of this consistency for so long, I have acquired a reputation as being a great communicator. One of the comments I often get is, through SIGNALS and TRIM BUT DEADLY, I have a way of making people feel that they know the characters, follow the progress, and are part of the project. That creates a feeling of belonging that helps make the Winter Fund drive such a success. But maybe I should phrase it, "I've created the illusion of being a great communicator." Though this reputation for great communication is widely shared among the SLATER's supporters, there are a few

exceptions; most notably one small group of individuals, my two-person staff and the key volunteers who are so critical to the project's success. They consider me a "black hole" for information. Stuff goes in, but nothing comes out.



Hurry up and finish that painting. Soon it will be too cold.



Nate Shakerley prepping the aft steering gyro repeater for restoration.

I've said often, planning isn't my strength. If I have a strength, it's improvisation. I walk into a situation, assess the resources available, and create a plan on the spot. Years ago, **Hal Hatfield** observed that, with volunteers, I probably never knew for sure who was going to show up on any given day. I responded that was often the case. Hal, who runs a steel fabrication plant responded with, "It's a lot like that with paid employees." Anyway, hold on to that thought about "improvisation." It will come back to haunt me.

Collections managers tend to be organized, detail-oriented people. They like to plan ahead. Aboard USS SLATER, compartment C-203L, back aft, is the domain of collections manager, Shanna Hopson. The fact is that Shanna has never seen much of the collection until recently. All the displays were either moved or covered over while we were in the shipyard. When we returned from the shipyard, Gary Sheedy commenced restoration of the adjacent steering engine room, laundry, shipfitter shop, and after officers' country. The dust raised by that process continually drifted into C-203L, so the collection of artifacts remained covered. And, as long as we were going to repaint, let's do a complete rehab and bring in a contractor to renew the fiberglass board insulation, too.

A great believer in energy conservation, as well as being our comptroller, Rosehn Gipe was totally on board with the project, as replacing the old 1" insulation board with 2" and doing the sides and the overhead would go a long way to stabilizing the temperature for the preservation of the artifacts on display there.

Of course, the first step was that the compartment had to be completely emptied out before restoration work could begin. As any conscientious collections manager would do, Shanna began working up a plan for moving and storing the collection.



We continued to receive volunteer Sailors from Ballston Spa through the month of December.

Much of our Special Collections had been packed up and put into shoreside storage when we went to drydock in 2014. When we came back, the storage was emptied back into C-203L. Some displays were set up, but most were not. The set-up displays were dismantled again when work was set to begin in after steering. Artifacts were stored, but their locations were not updated in PastPerfect, our cataloging system, either time. There are quite a few items whose locations were unknown when the last inventory was done in 2010.

Shanna was planning to locate these items, as well as to ensure that every artifact was properly cataloged. Three Collection Managers and several collection moves since the 2010 inventory was done, Shanna really wanted to get control of the collection.

Her plan was to carefully, and deliberately, pack up each artifact into numbered boxes. As each artifact went into a box, she would record that she accounted for the artifact, and which box it went into, making it easy to find when the time for unpacking comes. Not only would she have seen every artifact that we have, she would know where it came from, and which box it is in now.

The boxes would be stored away from areas needing maintenance attention, keeping them in the condition she packed them. Artifacts would be safe from dust and debris, excessive moving of the boxes, and curious hands. Anyone caring for valuable objects can sense the stress just thinking about those scenarios. When the time came to set up, Shanna would have taken inventory of the entire collection, know exactly where every artifact was, and have an idea of the new displays she wanted to set up, with the most interesting artifacts prominently displayed.



I present Shanna's plan here, in the hope that it may assist future curators who find themselves facing similar circumstances, not as an accounting of what actually happened aboard USS SLATER. Remember that part about improvisation? Our big volunteer days are always Mondays and Saturdays. If we have big projects, those are the days to get things done. Thus, on or about December 12th, I

Good work, Boats. Shanna is going to be so surprised!

wandered into the CPO Mess on a snowy Monday. Everything had been shoveled, and now **Boats Haggart, Walt** and the crew were waiting for their next assignment. We also had extra manpower aboard in the form of ten Sailors from NPTU. I knew that C-203L had to be emptied out, and now I had the manpower to do it. I took Boats aft and instructed him to stack all the bunks and mattresses in C-202L, adjacent. I figured that would take them all day. It took an hour. Boats came back to me and said, "You want us to start moving all that loose gear?" I replied, "Sure, as long as we have all this manpower, stack it on the bunks in C-202L."

Did I mention Shanna had that day off? Maybe I should have asked her if she had a plan. Compartment C-203L is now empty and work has begun.

All the artifacts are stowed on the bunks in C-202L. But unfortunately Shanna's plan to get a handle on the collection is toast. She has no idea where half of the artifacts are, including all the artifacts that were on display in the bunk lockers, presumably the most interesting items. The items stacked on racks in C-202L will need to be moved before we can host our work weeks in the spring. This puts a deadline on Shanna to decide what to display and how, and which artifacts to store. There is not enough space to display all of our collection. So, when the crew finishes the work on C-203L in March, she will need to get all the artifacts out of C-202L, and either stored or on display by April 23rd. All this, while simultaneously recruiting new tour guides, mailing out information and booking tour groups. At that time, Shanna would also be training and refreshing tour guides, planning and staffing overnights, scheduling, ordering, stocking the ship's store merchandise, and prepping the tour route aboard the ship for our 20th season.



It's not Halloween. It's Cathy Wheat cleaning out the shipfitter shop in preparation for painting.

Did I mention our annual Christmas party? That would be another example. Each year, Board President **Tony Esposito** takes it upon himself to enlist Smitty, and bankroll the purchase of steaks for all the volunteers. Tony and I put our heads together and figured the 19th of December was the best day to do this. The date spread by word of mouth, but somehow I forgot to get an email out about the event. Now the weather wasn't great the morning

of the 19th, and few people were showing up. Smitty and Tony scaled back, canceled the steaks, and went for submarine sandwiches. Enough people showed up to make it a party, but it certainly would have been better attended if I'd done a better job of getting the word out.



Doug Tanner has had some NPTU Sailors help in his efforts to rebuild the trailer.

problem with the fact that I only read the first two lines of each email. Not one to mince words, Ed called the ship's office aboard USS SLATER a "Supermassive black hole. Volunteers submit data, ideas, questions, progress reports, etc. only to realize it all collapses at the speed of light into nothingness! As one approaches the ship's office, an ominous noise is usually present. All think it's the vent fan running just outside the door. NO! It's Tim's black hole sucking in all our data questions." He then resubmitted all the emails I've failed to answer over the past year.



Meals on wheels. Smitty continues to keep us well-fed with hot food during these cold winter months.

Perhaps seeking reassurance that my communications skills weren't slipping completely, I went to my toughest critics to find out if they felt I withheld critical information. That was a mistake. **Doug Tanner's** response "That's every damn day." Not one to hold grudges, **Barry Witte** noted, "How long was it before you let us know you had the complete set of microfilm? At least 7 years?" My friend **Ed Zajkowski** seems to have a

Was I supposed to do that? Did I forget to give you an answer? It's in the back of my mind. I'll send it as soon as I get to the computer. I don't have to take notes, I remember everything. I'm quite sure I sent you that info, are you sure you didn't miss it? I guess we could have meetings, but when you consider the amount of time we spend sitting in the CPO mess drinking coffee, you'd think all the questions would get answered. You just have to ask the

right questions. Rosehn suggested that I might consider having staff meetings more frequently than every five years, but I already discuss almost everything with them. Considering there are only three of us, that the other two sit five feet apart from each other, my impulsiveness would probably mitigate any potential value in holding staff meetings.



Preparation for the fleet. It takes an agile Sailor to fit under the fire and flushing pump.

Despite my being "the black hole," the crew accomplished several big projects in 2016.

Among the impressive accomplishments was the completion of the restoration of the landing force equipment locker under gun number three. This crawl space was one of the dampest, most corroded spaces on the ship. Getting it scaled and cleaned was a major accomplishment. It again demonstrates our commitment to long-term preservation, by addressing an area the public will never see.



Jim Lenden and Barry Witte closing up the B-3 vent ducts for the winter.

Another huge accomplishment was the replacement of the aft expansion joint rubber. Led by **Doug Tanner**, that was a major achievement. That, and tackling the replacement of the wasted metal in the adjacent plenum chamber, was another major accomplishment. **Barry Witte's** restoration of the emergency distribution board, as well as his activation of the B-3 firepump, a section of firemain, and the seawater cooling of the B-3 ship's

service generator were all unique accomplishments, too. He continues to make great use of the ship as a training aid for the RPI Midshipmen.



Les Beauchainne was one of our most dedicated tour guides.

Ongoing projects will be the continued painting in the aft machinery spaces. Tommy Moore continues to expand the shelving in B-2, so we can get our spare parts organized. We hope to have the steering gear room, laundry, shipfitter shop, and aft passage primed out in the spring. We are planning an upgrade to the radar simulation in CIC. And, as I wrote earlier, we are doing a total rehab of berthing space C-203L, including re-insulating the space. Doug will also be shepherding the reconstruction of the east side of the trailer.



Our USS SLATER Color Guard at the Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration.

In conjunction with the Albany County Veterans Bureau and the Joseph E. Zaloga American Legion Post, we held our commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack on Wednesday, December 7, 2016. Our own Board Chairman **BJ Costello** was the master of ceremonies for a touching event that remembered the date that will live in infamy. Our USS SLATER Color Guard was on hand to parade the colors in conjunction with the **Albany**

High School AJROTC cadets. Speakers who reflected on the events 75 years ago included Albany County Executive **Dan McCoy**, Rensselaer County Executive **Kathy Jimino**, Albany Mayor **Kathy Sheehan**, Assembly members **John McDonald** and **Pat**

Fahy, and Colonie Town Supervisor **Paula Mahan**. It is a sad reminder of the passing of time that we no longer have any Pearl Harbor survivors among the group. Our special thanks to **Harvey Martel** and the crew of the Zaloga Post for hosting the event and the wonderful breakfast they provided.



It humbles me everytime I sign another batch of Winter Fund thank-you letters.

haven't contributed, and appreciate what our volunteers and staff are doing here.

I don't know if communication has anything to do with this or not, but once again, your response to our annual Winter Fund Appeal has been overwhelming. It is your support that enables us to continue to make the progress throughout the winter, when we have no ticket income. **Claire Burgon** and I are having a tough time keeping up with the thank-you letters, but it's a nice problem to have, and we're doing our best to keep up. If you



Les Beauchaine and his grandson Mike Long shared the intergenerational experience in 2005.

same time, he and Annette sold dog tags at Crossgates Mall. They made over \$50,000

I have the sad duty to report that Les Beauchaine passed away New Year's Eve. For those of you who didn't know Les, he and his wife, **Annette**, were two of our most dedicated volunteers. They were on the wharf selling souvenirs when the ship arrived in Albany. Les had served as a signalman aboard USS FORMOE DE-509 in the Pacific during WWII. A retired postman, Les started with a needle gun and graduated to tour guiding. At the

for the project in the early days, when the project was in desperate need of cash. Health issues forced Les to give up tour guiding about four years ago, but he and Annette made invaluable contributions to the project when we needed it most. RIP, shipmate. Honoring men like Les, and all of his shipmates that have gone on before, is the motivator that keeps us moving forward.

Don't forget the donate button on our homepage www.ussslater.org and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.

See you next month.



Walt Stuart and Larry Williams hooking up power for circulators that protect the hull from ice.