

## SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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A view of USS SLATER from the whaleboat.

**I made a terrible mistake this month.** I misplaced a packing slip, from an order that came in from Metal Supermarkets.

**Rosehn Gipe** has a job-related obsession about those packing slips. I tried to blame the mistake on **Doug Tanner**, but he swore up and down that he gave it to me. Thus, there is an invoice filed without a packing slip, and no paper trail on our end that the order was ever received. When our auditor does the 2016 audit, it

is almost certain that the Metal Supermarkets invoice will be one that they request at random.

**There's a lot of obsessive behavior around here, and USS SLATER is much better for it.** Rosehn's obsession with packing slips is just one small example. No matter what the auditors look for, she always manages to find it, and that's why our audits go so well.

**My own obsessions are numerous.** The first question I ask the guides every morning is, "Did the wheel get polished?" Run she may, shine she must. My compulsion against things that didn't exist in 1945 is well known. I get quite distressed about visible plastic buckets, spray bottles, water jugs, and Styrofoam cups. And rust. I hate rust. And metal

dust, left behind after fitting and welding, waiting for the rain to turn it to rust. And when they forget to turn on the 1940s music that plays in the wardroom and the messdecks. And, make sure the ensign is properly folded, the coffee pot unplugged, and the breech of gun one covered at the end of the day.

**As electrical officer, Barry Witte exhibits many obsessive traits, most centered on the concepts of authenticity and conservation.** No light bulbs over sixty watts are permitted aboard, out of his concern that excessive heat will damage the Bakelite in our antique light fixtures. His obsession with checking for grounds, and dealing with them as soon as they appear, plays a major role in protecting us against electrolytic corrosion. His efforts to keep lights out and the doors closed in the winter to conserve heat is legendary.



Barry Witte pursuing his passion for authenticity.

**Barry has spent the month completing the restoration and reassembly of the emergency diesel switchboard. He has enlisted the help of his students, NPTU electricians, and even Colonie High School auto shop instructor Chris Hanley, to make the board look like it just came out of the Westinghouse factory. And, it's just as functional as it is beautiful.**

**Jim Gelston is obsessed with clocks.** A seaman off the minesweeper USS PIVOT, Jim retired from the State, and started chipping paint with us in 2004. In 2005, a battle with bone marrow cancer forced him to curtail his deck work and find a less strenuous form of volunteer activity. He decided to strike for quartermaster, and has been winding and keeping all the clocks on time ever since. There are 14 clocks on his route. The doctors can't explain what has kept him going, but Jim says it's his responsibility to keep the SLATER clocks on time. He is now backed up by **Geoffrey Bullard** and **Werner Paul** of the **Clock Service Center in Gloversville**. Geoffrey had donated several clocks back

when we first got to Albany, and recently has been putting a lot of effort into getting some of our non-working clocks back in operating condition.



With help like this, no wonder Tanner lays awake at night.

**Some people are so obsessed with this ship that they complain that it keeps them awake at night. Doug Tanner** has often told of laying in bed, thinking about the gangway bearings, or the marine growth covering the anodes, or most recently, the deck drain in the B-3 plenum chamber. Doug has another obsession. It's coffee. Not that his obsession is of any particular benefit to the ship, but it certainly keeps the rest of the

crew cranked up. When Doug crosses the brow, putting on the coffee is his top priority. Doug has no tolerance for my recycled, day-old coffee, weak coffee, or anything that has the slightest hint of flavor besides coffee. Black coffee. And woe betide the volunteer who takes the last cup and doesn't put on a new pot.

**Doug has kept his crew busy in the B-3 starboard vent space. Tim Benner, Super Dave, Earl Herchenroder, and Gene Jackey** have all had a hand in removing the wasted metal. The bottom four inches of the bulkhead, along the inboard passageway had rotten away. The old metal has been cut out, and new pieces are in the process of being welded into place. Again, it's complete reconstruction of a space no one will ever see.



The dynamic duo, Dave Mardon and Tim Benner.



Cathy Wheat and Walt Stuart learning Boats Haggart's skills.

**Boats Haggart has the same problem, laying awake, but his obsession is rigging.** He lays awake at night, thinking of a better way to lower the accommodation ladder, improve the davit guy, rigging the rat guards, or worrying about the chaffing gear. More recently, he's worried that there is no one aboard he can pass his bosun's mate knowledge on to. He and **Walt Stuart** are presently in the process of rerigging the davit

guys and monkey ropes with new manila. Walt has teamed with **Angelo Bracco**, going through the flagbags, and making sure all the flags and pennants are there. And, making repairs as necessary. **Rocky Rockwood** has a similar concern to Boats about someone to carry on following his retirement. His concern is the whaleboat. Having obsessed over the boat for almost 20 years, he worries that no one in the crew will give it the same loving care that he has given it. However, it looks like carpenter **Tommy Moore** will be stepping up to the plate to give the whaleboat the same care that Rocky has.



Thomas Scian and Bill Wetterau installing the #3 main engine gauge board.

**Anyone who has seen the reefer deck knows that Gary Sheedy's obsession is attention to detail and perfection, no matter how long it takes.** He put fourteen years on that project. Now immersed in the steering engine room and adjacent spaces, Gary puts in more hours than any other volunteer. We're hoping that since he is now retired and can devote more time to this project, perhaps he can cut the completion time in half of his previous

project. August has seen him making repairs to the port depth charge hydraulic lines, the installation of the sump pump and the shipfitter shop cabinets. **Thomas Scian** seems to be following in Gary's footsteps. Over the course of the past couple months, tutored by **Barry Witte**, our resident photographer has carried out a painstaking restoration of the gauge board for number three main engine.



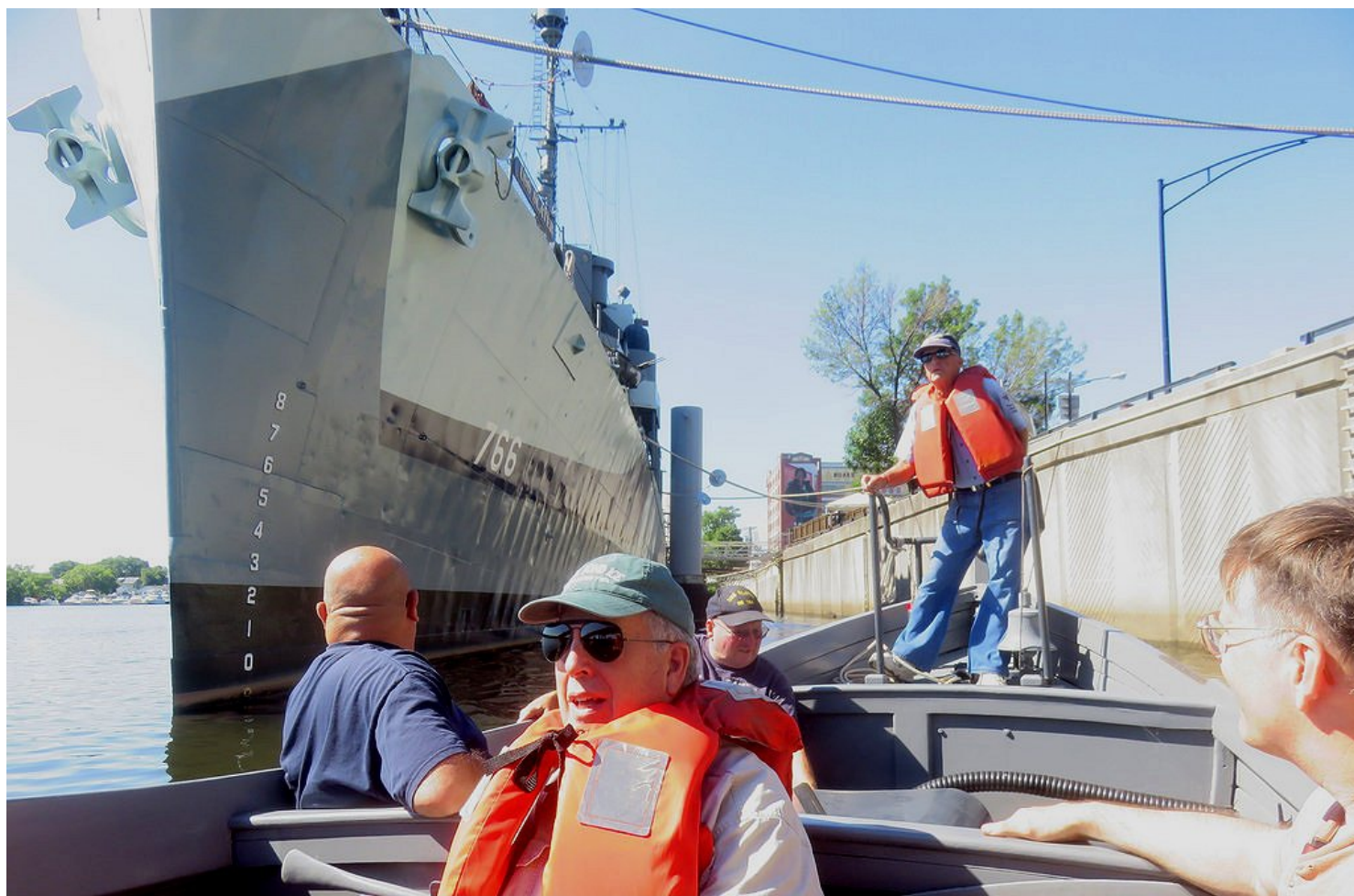
**Engineers are obsessed with making things work.** At the end of the month, they teamed up with electricians **Barry Witte** and **Larry Williams** to do a quarterly test run of the 200KW generator in the aft diesel space. It was very satisfying to see that smoke plume come out of the stack. The event marked the first successful use of the new starting air compressor that they installed in B-1. Having been dissuaded from trying to get a main engine running for the

Engineers are happiest when things are rotating.

time being, **Karl Herchenroder**, **Gary Lubrano**, **Mike Dingmon**, and **Ken Myrick** have turned their attention to cosmetic restoration of the mains, with a big assist from Sailors from NPTU in Ballston Spa. The result has been a thing of beauty.

**Any one who follows us on Facebook knows Cathy Wheat is obsessed with cleaning, which is of great benefit to all of us.** She has brought in all her own cleaning supplies, so when she opens the cleaning gear locker on Saturday morning, all her stuff better be there, or I will hear about it. As many people are in and out of the cleaning locker over the course of the week, and things don't always get put back, Cathy's taken to the old trick of hiding certain critical items in secret locations, so she can find them when she needs them.

**Radioman Jerry Jones seems to have succumbed to his obsession with restoring and showing Chrysler muscle cars, another fixation that is of no use to us.** The operation of the radio shack has fallen to **Joe Breyer**, **Mike Wyles**, and new volunteer **Paul Hintz**. We'll have to wait and see what Paul's obsessions are.



It took nineteen years, but tour guide Alan Fox finally got his boat ride.

**Two unrelated items seem to be objects of endless controversy, the whaleboat and the galley grill.** Several people have different ideas about how the whaleboat should be secured to the paint float, including me. For a while, every time I looked at the whaleboat there seemed to be another new line on it. I had my opinion, but stayed out of it. Some compromise seems to have been reached, because the current arrangement of lines has not changed over the past month. Likewise, there seem to be several different opinions on how Smitty's galley grill top should be cleaned and maintained. However, I have no opinion on that, because I know better than to have an opinion that might be different from our Chief Cook. **Tim Benner is obsessed with texting on his smart phone.** That doesn't do the ship any good. He also shares another obsession with **Super Dave Mardon**--making sure that they get their pictures on Facebook and in SIGNALS. They may not always accomplish a lot, but they are very photogenic when they are doing it. More often than not, they end up on the cutting room floor.



The New York State Police dive team checking out the hull.

**Tour guides are not immune to this line of thinking. Alan Fox** is obsessed with sound effects, namely the Morse code emanating from the radio shack and the sonar pinging coming out of CIC. He wants his visitors to have the full SLATER experience. He's been known to use his cell phone to call the office and get the sound effects turned on, should they have been forgotten. Like Tanner, **Tom Cline** is obsessed with fresh coffee on Sundays, and tuna sandwiches. **Bob Herbst** is obsessed with Magic Emu Cream. We hope he won't need it anymore after his impending knee surgery. British Expat **Will Trevor** is still recovering from Brexit. Chief **Art Dott** is obsessed with fresh fruit. "A banana a day keeps the badTripAdvisor comments away." And then there's **Bob Dawson** who has been obsessing about the location of the CIC status board for so long, I can't even remember what his problem is.

**Then there are those who aren't mentioned here, who appear to be so well-adjusted that they have no obsessions, or haven't been diagnosed yet.** People like **Shanna Hopson, Chuck Boone, Larry Williams, Don Cushman and Paul Guarnieri** fall into this category. We'll be watching closely to see how they develop.

**Sundays are under new leadership, after Vince Knuth had to forfeit his position of Sunday Duty Officer.** Albany Law School has rules about how much a student can



When not fretting about Brexit, Will Trevor is one of our most professional guides.

work outside of class, and an internship with a local law firm was just too good to pass up for our favorite aspiring lawyer. He leaves his post in the capable hands of **Claire Burgon**. Based on the Facebook reviews, Claire is inheriting one of our best teams of tour guides in the form of Chief **Art Dott, Grant Hack, Tom Cline, Bill Goralski, and Aidan.**

We will miss Vince's quick wit and endless supply of knowledge, but he assures us he will be back as a volunteer. Thanks for all your hard work over the years, Vince!



The Sunday team--Vince Knuth, Tom Cline, Grant Hack, Aidan, Art Dott, Andrew Smith and Bill Goralski.

around the ship without coming under attack. The Trail to Eagle Boy Scouts came for their annual visit on the 19th, after they solved the old "getting the buses stuck in a parking garage" dilemma. On the 28th we had Girl Scout Troop 2238 come in for a tour, and Grant Hack taught them how to fold an American Flag properly.

**Trooper Tim Hard and the New York State Police Dive Team were back aboard this month, and provided us with our first video of the underwater hull since our shipyard overhaul.** Thanks to the efforts of **Dick Walker, Charlie Poltensen,** and the local Coast Guard Auxiliary, we commemorated the 226th anniversary of the United States Coast Guard. And, **Bill Wetterau** was back from Denver for a visit and joined **Ron Mazure and Ron Prest** to give us three days of quality chipping.

**This month we have had many scheduled tour groups.** The 4th of the month we had 20 youngsters from Pai's Tae Kwon Do visit. Their tour guide, Dan, led them safely





Cathy Wheat obsessively keeps the ship clean. This picture would be perfect if it weren't for the plastic pail.

**And we have received several calls regarding a recent letter sent out by Tin Can Sailors indicating the we have relocated to Corpus Christi.** Though the idea of escaping another Albany winter has a certain appeal, we remain firmly moored at the "Snow Dock" in New York's capital.

**We have two special upcoming events.** We're looking for working volunteers for our fall work week. It is scheduled for Sunday, October 2 through Friday, October 7. You'll sleep aft in the old ship's bunks, eat on the messdecks, with chow prepared in the ship's galley. We divide up the food costs at the end of your stay. We make the work assignments on Monday morning, depending on your skills and what fits you best. If you have a special skill such as welding, electrical or mechanical talent, please let us know. The age limit is 14 years old (with parent or guardian) and everybody should expect to bear a hand. This can be a great intergenerational experience, and you don't have to be a DE Sailor to participate. You just have to want to help the SLATER. Pre-registration is required.

**Bring a sleeping bag, towels, toilet kit, medications and clothes for a week.** It's Albany so plan for cool weather. Bring work clothes that you don't mind getting paint on.



Benner in his traditional Saturday pose.

**Also, bring a bucket, sponge, rags, paintbrush, paint roller and any special tools you think you may need.** Showers are available aboard, but laundry is not. Bunks are rigged with mattresses and vinyl covers. For some reason, the lower bunks are preferred these days. Plan to arrive on Sunday between 1000 and 1700. Departure is Friday at 1600. You don't have to stay for the whole week.

**The other event is our annual USS SLATER Night at the Fort Orange Club that will be held on Saturday, November 12 in Albany from 1700 to 2000.** Museum members will be getting an invitation to this event, which raised \$20,000 last year. The event includes the food and drink that the Club is famous for, as well as a special program and update on our progress. Mark your calendars and we hope to have a great turnout for this event.

Can't believe the summer is over already. Maybe I stuffed that missing packing slip into my wallet.

**Don't forget the donate button on our homepage [www.ussslater.org](http://www.ussslater.org) and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.**

**See you next month.**