



## SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

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It doesn't get better than this.

**Nothing ever happens on Tuesday, so Tuesday is "My Day."** There are no visitors and very few volunteers to supervise, so Tuesday is my day to do what I want. And, what I usually want to do is needle scale decks. My personal goal for this year is to have the whole main deck scaled and repainted by the time winter closes in. The fo'c's'le and the maindeck portside is done. We're now working on the fantail. I find working a needle scaler in those

pitted decks, and trying to get all the rust out of those pits, very satisfying. Not that I enjoy all needle scaling. Working overheads against gravity, with the paint chips flying down my neck and cuffs, not so much. But sitting on a bucket doing decks, when gravity is on your side, is something I really enjoy. I just like to get away from the computer and do physical work.

**Most probably there will be two different reactions to that statement.** The maintenance volunteers will read that line and say that there is a colorful noun that describes that last statement, usually prefaced by the adjectives "absolute, total, and complete." On the other hand, my Board members will read that statement and react with, "We're paying our Executive Director to do what!?" But let's face it, administration is really overrated.



As part of the new riverfront bike trail, we got a nice new fence.

**The old adage that "Administration will grow to fill all the space and time you allow it" has been conveniently buried.** It's a growth industry. Our obliging government continues to facilitate this growth by writing more complex regulations and legislation, to further justify spending more time on administration. There was a time, before Leadership became Management, that administration was a considered an unproductive,

but necessary, part of obtaining an objective, and that it was to be marginalized as it contributed little to the bottom line or the mission. Then came the belief that to determine success, everything had to be measured, compared, and monitored. And people found out that recordkeeping was a lot easier and more lucrative than actually doing the work. The reality is that no amount of paper, more frequent performance reviews, closer supervision, and tighter procedure sheets, will ever create the enthusiasm, commitment, and dedication that form the core of a successful organization.

**Don't ask me why our culture has chosen this path.** Hey, it's Tuesday, and I'm not here to philosophize. I'm here to chip paint. When you're all caught up, and you've checked your email for the fifth time in an hour, and the "likes" on your latest Facebook post for the tenth time in an hour, and you've made sure you haven't received any negative reviews on TripAdvisor, you can look for some new metric to measure, or you can think about doing some real work.

**Looking forward to a pleasant Tuesday of uninterrupted needle scaling, I arrive on board.** I turn off the alarm, and even before I make the coffee and open the windows to air out the store, I go down to B-4, turn on the lights, check the oil, close the drain valves, and start the air compressor.



The NPTU Chief Petty Officer Selects did a volunteer workday aboard USS SLATER. Here they are getting down and dirty in the bilge.

expressing concern that the chain pipe covers don't fit tight, and rainwater blowing in could cause corrosion on the chain locker deck. Down in Pennsylvania, Ed loses a lot of sleep over this ship. My response was that the small amount of water that could blow in would evaporate by the time it dripped through all the chain down to the deck, but I'll put checking it out on my list.

When all the aforementioned tasks are done, and air pressure has built up, I run an air hose back to the fantail, pick out a needle gun, put a couple of drops of air tool oil in it, and I'm set for the day.

**Before starting to scale, I like to make a quick check of my email to make sure that no crisis has developed needing my attention.** The only thing to worry about this morning is an email from **Ed Zajkowski**,



The Tuesday dependables Ron Prest and Dick Walker.

**As I arrive out on deck to start chipping, Ron Prest, someone who loves chipping as much as I do, has arrived from Massachusetts.** He has hooked up to my air hose and started scaling on deck. I go forward to rig a second air hose aft, and pick out another needle gun and oil it. **Gary Sheedy** is here by now, fabricating a bracket for the reserve lube oil tank in aft steering, at the outside workbench. Gary's not really a welder, but in a pinch will do whatever it takes to get the job done. He likes quiet Tuesdays, too, because he doesn't have to fight for bench space. I put on my glasses, respirator, and headphones, turn my bucket upside down, sit my butt down and finally start scaling. It doesn't get better than this.

**By 0900, Rosehn, Shanna, and Claire have arrived.** I check in to see if there is anything I need to worry about, and there is. Rosehn told me to check my email, because Barry had sent me a specific request to

check the armature cover on the aft exciter in B-3. In his email, my instructions are: **"I sent in with Rosehn this morning two acrylic plates.** They are brush inspection covers for the propulsion excitation motor generator sets. At some point today, please do the following: 1. See if the new cover fits. It goes on the forward inboard side of the MG set on upper level, port side of B3. The mounting screws are there in their original location. If the new cover fits, just attach it with the four screws and leave it there, and let me know and I will make more for that machine and the other one in B4. If the mounting holes are misaligned, please use a marker and draw right on the new cover where the holes should be. The protective brown paper can be peeled off to make it easy to see through it for hole alignment. In this case of not fitting, mark up the proper hole locations and give it back to Rosehn so that she can get it to me and I will correct and make more. The goal is to have eight new covers ready to install by Saturday."



Rigging the boat falls with the new line donated by Les Catharine.

**It fit. As soon as I finish that task, I take time with Claire to dictate a thank-you letter to Les Catharine.** Les's father was the commissioning wartime skipper of USS ROBERTS DE-749 and Les, working in the marine supply business for Fuji Trading (America) , wanted to help us out. I emailed him, and asked if he could provide us with new line for the whaleboat falls, davit guys, and monkey ropes. Based in Baltimore, he just happened to be in New York for a conference when he got my email. He took time off to buy the line from one of his suppliers, drive it up to Albany in his pickup, and give it to us as his donation. A King's Point grad, we had a pleasant cup of coffee discussing how overregulation is killing the maritime industry.

The USS ROBERTS will be featured on the back cover of the next TRIM BUT DEADLY.

**I got about an hour of scaling in before Claire had the latest batch of thank-you letters ready.** Early on in my career, I watched an executive hand a batch of thank-you letters to his secretary and say, "Sign these for me." That never sat right with me, because it seems to me that when people are donating their hard-earned cash to you, the

least they deserve is my personal signature and a note. I spent the next hour signing letters, double-checking to make sure everyone was on the mailing list, and sealing envelopes. Yes, if you've donated money, I've personally sealed your "thank-you" envelope. I noted that the ink was light on the letters and there was some streaking, indicating Claire's printer needed cleaning. I went in to bring it to Claire's attention and Rosehn was already in the code room working on it with her.



RPI NROTC Midshipmen installing the inspection covers on the B-3 motor generator.

**Before I could get back to needle scaling, I had a call from Tony Esposito.** He's working on getting a speaker for our November Fort Orange Club Fundraiser. The Navy recently launched the USS Elmo Zumwalt, the latest stealth destroyer. The Command Master Chief Petty Officer, **Leonard Greene**, is from Scotia, and went to Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School. Tony thinks he would be wonderful to get as the principal speaker at our

November 12 event. Tony wants to know if I have any ideas on how to reach him. I suggest checking their website for the contact info for the PAO, or contact our Chairman **BJ Costello**, whose brother Barry retired as a vice admiral, and knows everybody who is anybody in the Navy.



Werner Paul in his "machine shop."

**I had a 10:30 appointment scheduled with Geoffrey Bullard and Werner Paul regarding ship's clocks.** I got to thinking that they'd probably want to see our Hamilton chronometers, which brought up the question, "Do I have the correct chronometers aboard?" I emailed my friend **Ed Zajkowski** to see if he has an allowance book or plan, detailing what model chronometer SLATER would have carried.

He comes back with "Chronometers are under S-24-1. Your ship had 2, no data, stock number G18-C-815-50, BUSHIPS PLAN # JAN-C-1196." So I still don't know what kind that is, but he also informs me that the ship should have two sinuous course clocks, leading to three emails about the function of the sinuous course clock. We had one on USS KIDD, none here. Ed advises me to contact **Frank Thompson** immediately, and demand that Naval Historical send me one.



The Amsterdam High School Marine Corps JROTC Unit was among several large groups to visit this month.

**I'm responding to Ed's suggestion with a "snowball's chance in hell" email, when Geoffrey and Werner arrive aboard for our meeting. We adjourn to the CPO mess for coffee, and Geoffrey introduces Werner as one of the finest watch and clock repairmen in the business. Werner explains that his formal background is chemistry and that he worked for paint manufacturers for many years. I tell him about all the marine**

growth that the State Police diver recorded, and he quickly agrees that we made a mistake when we didn't put on a coat of antifouling paint while we were in drydock. He has photographs of his shop and all kinds of unique lathes, milling machines and drill presses for manufacturing the tiniest watch parts you can imagine.

**Rosehn announces on the 1MC, "Now hear this, Tim, you have a phone call." I interrupt my meeting to take a phone call from a lady named **Karen Attreed**. She had sent me an email that I hadn't gotten around to responding. She had a large bronze plaque from USS JOYCE DER-317 that had been presented to LTJG **William J. Reidy**, the engineering officer, upon the ship's decommissioning. She was planning to bring it to the DESA Convention, and wanted to know if I knew of someone who could receive it and bring it back for the Museum. Unfortunately, I wasn't attending the DESA convention myself due to scheduling conflicts, but I said I would try to locate someone who could receive the plaque and get it to us. That will turn out to be DESA Treasurer **John Adriani** from the USS BROUGH.**

**Back to Geoffrey and Werner, we conclude a wonderful meeting, and he and Geoffrey leave with two clocks for repair.** We're ever so grateful to Geoffrey for bringing Werner onto the team. But, they are pressed for time and don't get a chance to look at our Hamilton Chronometers. My needle gun is calling my name. But first, our Coastie Storekeeper, **Dick Walker**, has arrived looking for what errands need to be run. I give him an argon bottle that **Doug Tanner** needs filled for the mig welder, and a request for two gallons of white primer for the engineers in B-3.

**Before I can get to chipping, Ed's next email generates a frenzy of activity.** It seems **Tom Hanks** is developing a movie called "Greyhound" about a WWII destroyer captain. The initial link to an article Ed references, says that the story is about HMS GREYHOUND, an actual WWII British destroyer. I immediately get excited, because the best ships to use would be the British WWII destroyer HMS ZENITH, presently languishing in Egypt, awaiting her fate along with the famous WWII sloop HMS WHIMBREL. Efforts have been made to save her as a museum, but have failed due to lack of cash. This might be their salvation. I check with Rosehn, and can't believe that Ed actually scooped her on an Internet story. She digs right into it, to find out as much information as she can.



Rocky had the opportunity to take his daughter for a whaleboat ride and share some of his experiences as a sonarman aboard USS COONER.

**When I get back to my desk, Glenn Raymo has shared a link on my Facebook page, describing the movie with an image of my old USS KIDD in the article.** This description of the movie makes no British references. Looking at it more closely, as Greyhound is a generic nickname for destroyers, I think that whoever thought this referred specifically to HMS GREYHOUND may be taking the title too literally. I can't imagine Hanks doing a British destroyer movie.



The third man in the Tuesday Trio is Gary Sheedy, with the shift handle he made as part of the steering gear restoration.

By now it's lunchtime. I go to the CPO mess to get my lunch. The trash is full, and we're out of trash bags. So I heat my chicken and string beans in the microwave, and I take the trash out with my lunch to let Rosehn know we need more liners. I join **Ron Prest** on the "lanai" for chow. We both decide to say the hell with Sheedy, and let him work through lunch. He never eats anyway. The meal is interrupted

**Dick Walker.** It seems that the argon bottle I wanted him to get is full from originally a low-pressure bottle that somebody converted to high pressure and they won't fill it. However, for \$80 they will sell me a new filled bottle. The bottle was loaned to us by **Matt Clifford**, so reluctantly I tell him to purchase a new bottle on the assumption we'll give the old one back to Matt. Maybe now I can get back to chipping paint.



Tommy Moore has taken over maintenance of the whaleboat.

**Walker returns with the paint and the argon bottle, but without the old argon bottle to return to Matt.** I call our gas supplier to find out why they kept the old argon bottle, and apparently it's their policy to take "dangerous" bottles out of circulation. I guess if Matt wants his bottle back, he'll get a legal bottle. I tell Walker that he may as well take over the needle gun I thought I was going to be using. Before I forget, I run to my office

to add Karen Atreed to the SIGNALS and TRIM BUT DEADLY mailing lists. Growing our mailing lists, to replace the DE Sailors we are losing, is my number one priority.



I also notice that I never finished checking and sealing all the thank you letters I signed that morning.

**Walker leaves at 1400, so I finally get back to needle scaling.** I look up to find Rosehn standing over me. Notwithstanding the fact that we're not a fleet destroyer, she has located the address of Tom Hank's production company and she is preparing a portfolio of photos, and a letter for my signature explaining why USS SLATER is absolutely the best location in the world for filming a WWII movie about destroyers. She gives me a list of images that she needs for her presentation. Fortunately, I have all my work files on my home computer, so I won't have to stop chipping to complete this assignment. I can do it at home tonight.



Volunteer Mitch Lucas starts the tour for another group of visitors.

**I maybe get another 20 minutes in, and then it's time to clean up so we can get all the bare steel primed.** The last step is feathering all the edges with the electric wire wheel. Ron and I wrap up the air lines, pick up and put the tools away, bring out the brooms and shop vac, and get the area all cleaned up. I leave one airline rigged in the hope that I can get a couple hours of chipping done Wednesday morning before tours start.

We give everything a final wipe down, and then apply Corroseal rust converter to the huge area Ron has scaled, and the relatively small areas Dick and I managed to scale.

**While Ron completes the priming, I make one last check on the email.** I've got a message from Ed Zajkowski, about a message he received from a sport diver who was looking for three porthole dogs to restore a porthole he recovered off the wreck of the old fourpiper, USS JACOB JONES DD-130. She was torpedoed off Cape May, on 28 February 1942. Split in three sections, the explosions and detonating depth charges killed all but eleven of the crew. My mind flashes to an image of eleven bleeding survivors, shivering aboard the wreckage on that winter night. The guy is offering Ed \$23.00 plus shipping, if he can't sell them on Ebay. This leads to an email exchange

about the ethics of removing artifacts from a war grave. Seems a sailor who dies and went down with his ship has none of the same respect or dignity as those buried in Arlington.



We held our annual volunteer appreciation night this month. Wine on the observation deck with Smitty's lasagna.

**As Ron departs, the last phone call of the day is from Les Beauchaine.** He and Annette were two of our stalwart volunteers from Day One. They were waiting on the wharf when the ship arrived in Albany, selling souvenirs to raise money for the project. Over the years, their dogtag sales at the mall raised about \$50,000 for the project. Health issues forced them to back off from the project. Now Les is letting me know that, after 70

years in their house on Delaware Avenue, Craig and Leslie have moved them to a senior-friendly apartment complex, and he wanted to make sure I have their new address. His phone number remains the same.



Interns Andrew and Dan closing the ship for the day.

**The last step of the day is to go forward, unplug the coffee pot, secure all the lights and doors forward, and secure the fresh water.** Time to pack my bag, dog down the porthole, and turn off the compartment fan and the computer. All the outside doors are locked, and the alarm set on the way out. As she has been doing for forty years, Nancy's waiting for me in the parking lot. Maybe next Tuesday I can get a little more of the deck done.

**Nothing ever happens on Tuesday.** 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.**