



**Destroyer Escort Historical Museum
USS Slater DE-766
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This October 26th, we celebrated 20 years since USS SLATER first arrived in Albany. There were references to "rustbucket," when it first arrived at the Port of Albany. Though there were skeptics among them, there was a willing volunteer contingent ready to take on the challenge. Volunteer **Barry Witte** figured she'd be on the bottom in six months, but went to work cleaning the electrical switchboards.

The following April, we opened to the public at the Port of Albany. We were so embarrassed by the condition of the ship and the limited areas that could be visited that we offered a "Bounce Back Ticket." That ticket was good for a second future admission, so visitors could "Come back and see our progress." That July we moved to the Snow Dock, and opened to the public four days a week. At the end of the season, we shifted colors, cast off lines, and moved to Rensselaer for the winter, a pattern we would follow for the next twelve years.



Let's all pull together.

It was in November of 1998, after our first season that we were open to the public, when we faced the realization that we had to close for the winter. And, with that closure, our operating revenue ended. Laying off the staff and shutting down for the winter wasn't an option. There were still bills to pay, such as insurance and utilities. And, there was so much work to do, to bring the ship up to minimal standards for safe public display. There were willing volunteers, ready to do the work, but supporting their efforts required funding. There were no grants or public money available. Where would the money come from to get us through that first winter?

In an act of desperation, we reached out to our volunteers and members, and asked each of them to donate \$100 to help pay the bills, and keep the ship operating through the winter. Our only other source of income was **Nancy Buxton, Les and Annette Beauchaine**, and other volunteer guides, selling dogtags at Crossgates Mall. Using the tagline "Help keep a volunteer warm this winter," the initial Winter Fund Appeal raised about \$5,000. Not much by today's standards, but it was enough to get us through the winter.

We were back in Albany for the following spring. The second Winter Fund Appeal raised \$12,000. Coupled with **Roberta Goodwin's** Jeep Raffle, **Frank Lasch's** fundraising efforts, and **Sam Saylor's** efforts to grow the membership, our bank balance was finally beginning to grow. Going into 2000, our amazing volunteer crew had chipped and repainted everything above the main deck, and restored and opened the second deck forward, and the entire superstructure. The only eyesore was the hull. It was in 2000 that we received a \$90,000 grant to scale and paint the hull. We bid it as a turn-key project, and the low bid came in at \$300,000. We took all the marine equipment out of the contractor's scope of responsibility, and begged it all from **Bart Brake**. We rebid the project on time and material, and ended up doing it for \$70,000. With the completion of the hull, the ship finally looked totally respectable.



It's Winter Fund Drive.
Please do your part to help keep a
volunteer warm this winter

The Winter Fund Appeal turned out to be one of those real cases of turning lemons into lemonade. All not-for-profits have an annual fund drive, but it's doubly important to have a reason to ask donors for money. We were asking to keep our volunteers warm in the winter. Due to you, our supporters, the Winter Fund now raises about \$70,000 a year. It takes about a thousand dollars a day to operate USS SLATER. Thanks to you, we are able to get through the Albany winters without having to dip into our savings.



The crew will be working all winter long.



Stowing the Jacob's ladder.



The new seawall safety rail was a big accomplishment of the 2017 Season.

This past year, the maintenance crew continued to accomplish amazing things. I find one of the most impressive things about their efforts is that it isn't just the areas that the public sees that get restored. Fan rooms, void spaces, tanks, bilges, and shaft alleys are all areas of concern to the volunteers, and are getting the same level of restoration as the spaces that are open to the public.

Gary Sheedy remains a one-man shipyard as he continues the restoration in the aft end of the ship. The laundry is complete, and now sparkles the way the reefer deck does. The steering compartment has been sprayed out white and, once the smoke generator is complete, Gary will restore the actual steering gear and repaint the deck. The shipfitter shop and chemical warfare stowage areas are complete. We extended the scope of the project to include reinsulating and repainting of our special collections and archives space, as well as berthing compartment C-203L. Again, it was your donations that enabled us to bring Eastern Regional Contracting and Sage Brothers aboard, to do contract insulation work and spray painting of all these spaces.



Bringing the whaleboat aboard is a team effort, just like the Winter Fund.

Thanks to your donations, the whaleboat went through a \$9,000 overhaul at Scarano's Boatyard. Rotted wood was replaced and the boat was completely sanded and repainted. We had it back aboard in time to take the DESA members, who attended the convention, out for whaleboat rides. The boat has been hoisted back aboard and is now safely stowed in her cradle.



Swinging her in.

Doug Tanner and his shipfitters modified and installed new doors on the galley and deck gear locker. In addition, they replaced a lot of wasted metal in the deck gear locker. That got sanded and repainted. Then, they continued with our program of replacing the stays and shrouds on the mast. Next, they replaced a large section of wasted deck on the 01 level forward. They also replaced all the stuffing tubes at the secondary conning station, rebuilt the galley sink drains, and

are replacing the belaying pin rails on the signal bridge. Their biggest accomplishment was the installation of the safety rail along the seawall. In the winter, they all turn into carpenters and will continue replacing the rotted wood and siding on the river side of the trailer.

The engineers worked very hard to have the aft machinery spaces shining for the DESA Convention, and they now look pristine. The engineers installed a backup air compressor in B-1. Thanks to a major donation by the NORPAC Chapter of DESA,

They also replaced the heat exchanger on the B-3 ship's service generator. The machinery has run on a regular basis since, and is now been winterized for the oncoming cold.

Barry Witte continues to utilize the ship as a training vehicle for his students, RPI Midshipmen, and the Sailors from Ballston Spa. He started the year off by making a trip to Galveston, to document the smoke generator in the steering gear room of USS STEWART. He has spent the rest of the time since that trip working with his students to replicate that equipment aboard USS SLATER. He has been fabricating and installing missing firehose racks around SLATER's superstructure. He's also had his crew working in the aft motor room, sorting through spare parts boxes that haven't been opened since the ship came back from Greece.

The gun gang has made significant progress. Mike Marko got all of the gun directors freed up in train and elevation, and keeps them well-lubricated. **Guy Huse** completed the restoration of the sightsetter on gun 32, and it is now the only operational sightsetter on the ship. And, we did a lot of sanding, chipping, and painting. We repainted gun 32, the face of the port bridge wing, and put non-skid down on the main deck on the starboard side, as well as the entire 01 level forward and aft. All of this work was supported by **Ron Zarem, George Amandola, Ed Zajkowski,** and their three out-of-town workweek crews. And, there are all of our unsung heroes doing the routine shipboard tasks such as polishing the helm, raising and lowering flags, cleaning, sweeping, swabbing, hauling trash, winding clocks, washing pots, and checking the draft marks.



Our tour guides are the most dedicated people, entertaining visitors who eventually become donors and members of the Museum. They are out in the rain, sun, or snow, making sure the public hears the history of these ships and how they contributed to America's story.

Grant Hack with the last two visitors of the 2017 Season.

Starting off the week on Wednesdays, our steady crew of volunteers, Alan Fox, Bob Wheelock, and Mike Marko, keep the tours moving. This is a popular day for school and day camp groups to come so they get a wide variety of visitors. In addition to being a weekly volunteer tour guide, Alan is the treasurer of our Board of Trustees, so no one gets off Alan's tour without expansive knowledge of how the Museum is funded – donations only! You'll hear him make the "joke," "There is a mandatory purchase before you can exit," when his tour concludes inside the Ship's Store. **Bob Wheelock** is new to the crew this year, but he fits in just fine. Being a destroyer man, he has great stories that are closely related to life on a DE. We're lucky to have him! **Mike Marko** is a great asset to us, also. He served aboard a DE (USS BROUGH) and a submarine, and his tour is filled with first-hand knowledge. Mike participates in our workweeks as well; he is very diligent in working out the gun directors so they don't get stuck.

Thursdays have taken a big hit this year. Bob Dawson started the season with us, but the ladders proved to be too much for him. He stops by to check in, and we miss his sense of humor! We also lost **Chuck Boone** this year. Chuck passed away in October, after suffering a massive brain aneurysm. We miss his eternally positive outlook and his smiling face. **Don "Long Tour" Cushman** has been a steady Thursday guide for many years now. You can find him in Chief's quarters, until Shanna interrupts his coffee by calling him up for a tour. **Bob Herbst** joined the Thursday crew this season, in addition to serving as a Friday guide for the last couple of years. He also keeps busy with our Speaker's Bureau. He gives a presentation called "Heroes All Around Us," featuring the stories of three heroes who had DEs named in their honor.



Shanna Hopson manages the tour guides, store, and collections.

Fridays are a hit or miss kind of day. We can be really busy or really slow, you just never know; and as I am off on Fridays, there's no coffee made. I don't know how they survive! Ken Kaskoun, the fearless leader of our color guard, is another volunteer who has been with us since the beginning.

His technical knowledge of the ship is rivaled by very few, and we are lucky to have an asset like him aboard. Herb Marlow, a returning volunteer, recently retired and rejoined SLATER as a Friday tour guide. He consistently shows up early, and sweeps the Observation Deck in preparation for the visitors to arrive! **Charles Starks** is always up for anything; he comes in regularly two days a week, and can often be coerced into another day if he is needed for a large group. **Charles is also in on Saturdays.** He is joined by **Paul Guarnieri**, who lives in both worlds, maintenance and tour guiding. **Tom McLaughlin** can't get around the ship anymore, but he sits on the deck with visitors waiting for tours, tells them stories, and shows pictures of his ships.



Chief Dotts explains how depth charges work.

Andrew runs the show as the Duty Officer on Sundays, and his supporting cast is top notch; Tom Cline, Grant Hack, Bill Goralski, and Art Dott, or as they're known on our Wall of Fame, "the All-Stars." Sunday tour guides receive the most reviews from Facebook and TripAdvisor, and people send Shanna e-mails boasting about how great these guys are! She has been told many times "What happens on Sundays, stays on

Sundays" and as long as visitors are happy she's fine with that! And, we have a few irregulars who show up when needed, including **Dan Healey, Mitch Lucas, Fred Sirois, and Will Trevor.** We appreciate the time they make for us, and the valuable lessons they bring to our visitors.

Our college interns are great hard workers, skilled multitaskers, and excellent at following directions and taking criticisms. They juggle schoolwork, SLATER tours, long overnights, constant pop quizzes when they walk past my office, and scrubbing bird poop off the deck. We appreciate their work ethic, flexibility, and sense of humor. This season we've had veteran guides take on full-time jobs. The two Andrews, Jon, Austin, Evan, Paul, Merissa, and Alex, all stepped up as able replacements. We also have Jo Ann taking care of all the donations we get, processing them, and preparing the deposits for Rosehn to take to the bank. She also posts Signals and updates our website.



Just a small part of our 2017 Tour Guide Crew.

Troop 33 From Pleasant Valley, New York experienced near Arctic conditions during their November overnight stay. The temperature dove to seventeen that night and keeping the water and sewer lines from freezing required some creative preparation, but we got through it with no broken pipes. They planned to spend the following night in tents, so they thought they were living in the lap of luxury. But isn't that why most people join the Navy?



Bob Donlon priming on the flying bridge.

The following morning, they stayed aboard, and attended our Veterans Day commemoration. We had an impressive and well-attended ceremony, despite the cold. Emcee **Steve Long** hosted the event. Board President **Tony Esposito** delivered the invocation and paid tribute to the SLATER volunteers who crossed the bar this past year. They included **Les Beauchaine**, Tour Guide, Signalman USS FORMOE DE-

509, **Frank Beeler**, Maintenance, Gunner's Mate USS SAVANNAH CL-42, **Don Shattuck**, Maintenance, Electronics Technician, USS HAROLD C. THOMAS DE-21,

Sherry Biggs, Trustee, USS LEWIS HANCOCK DD-675, **Bob Bull**, Tour Guide, Gunner's Mate, USS GANDY DE-764, **Jim Moore**, Maintenance, USS KIRKPATRICK DER-318, **Maebelle "Mike" Milian**, Tour Guide, WAVES Air Traffic Controller, **Larry Sowinski**, Director Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum, who gave SLATER a home, **Chuck Boone**, Tour Guide, Gunner's Mate USS NANTAHALA AO-60, and **Bob Donlon**, Tour Guide, Sonarman USS ROBERT F. KELLER DE-419.

Congressman Paul Tonko, Assembly members Phil Steck and John MacDonald, and Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan all gave their thoughts on the significance of the day. That was followed by **Steve Stella** playing live taps, and then by the Navy Hymn. It is also important to remember that it was seventy-five years ago that young **Frank Slater** gave his life for his country aboard the cruiser USS SAN FRANCISCO at Guadalcanal.



Russ Ferrer at the lathe.

The last note of Taps had hardly died when we learned that we had lost another former volunteer, Russ Ferrer. Russ passed away peacefully on November 20, 2017. He had been a maintenance volunteer and tour guide from 2000-2011, when he had to leave us for health reasons. Russ was born February 19, 1928, and grew up in Center Moriches, Long Island. He proudly claimed having served in the United States Army in 1946 and served in Japan

on occupation duty. Russ was happiest tinkering with machinery and spent a lot of time working on the SLATER's heating system, welding, and making all kinds of mechanical repairs. He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Dolores, who also used to help out with gardening on our shore side facility. He joins **Bob Donlon** who passed away earlier in the month. Bob was a former sonarman off ROBERT F. KELLER, who did both maintenance and tour guiding. Bob was a co-founder of the Capital District Chapter of the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association, and it's president for many years. SLATER's ensign flew at half-staff for both these dedicated volunteers.

It is hard for us to give people like Russ, Dolores, Bob and our current crew of volunteers enough credit. But, every week they show up, put on a happy face for our visitors, and continue the restoration and maintenance work that is so essential to our program. How do we grow our membership base? How do we recruit new volunteers? How do we get more donations? The answer is visitors on the ship with our amazing volunteers. If you have had a great experience with one of our guides, or were impressed with our restoration, please send us an email, leave us reviews on TripAdvisor, Facebook, Yelp, or Google or mail us a letter. These guys deserve all the positive notes we can give them for all of their hard work.

All this dedication would be for naught if it were not for your support. While most enterprises such as ours rely heavily on government support, USS SLATER gets none. You fill that gap and keep us afloat. Fifty-percent of our income comes from your donations and memberships. As I have every November for the past twenty years, I have set the example by donating \$100 back to the ship. I now ask all of you to do the same. If you can give more, please don't hold back. If you can't give at all, we are still happy to keep the newsletters coming to you.



You can see that, in terms of accomplishments, we've had another great year. You can participate by donating through our homepage at www.ussslater.org and hitting the donate button. There is also a donate button on our Facebook page. Or you can download our donation form from our website and simply mark it Winter Fund. Place it in an envelope addressed to USS SLATER, PO Box 1926, Albany, NY 12201-1926. Unless otherwise specified, all online donations received through the end of February will be designated "Winter Fund."

Today's children are the last generation that will know the WWII Veterans personally. Let us all work to keep their legacy alive by supporting our ship, USS SLATER. Please give as generously as you can to the USS SLATER Winter Fund Appeal. 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!