



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's
Volunteers

By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director
Destroyer Escort Historical Museum
USS Slater DE-766
PO Box 1926
Albany, NY 12201-1926
Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123
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On June 1, we celebrated Dutch history and Albany's long connection to it. Specifically, the USS STERN, a Cannon-class DE. She was named after an Albany native, **Charles Stern, Jr.**, who was killed at Pearl Harbor. After the ship's service in WWII, it was transferred to the Royal Netherlands Navy. There it served for almost 20 years as a training ship for midshipmen. We flew a Dutch flag from the battle gaff, and informed our visitors of the rich history that Albany and the Netherlands share.



Albany County Executive Dan McCoy takes the podium during the County's June Honor-a-Vet ceremony.

Veterans Service Bureau.

It was a cold wet morning when we hosted the monthly Albany County Honor-a-Vet program. The event was held on June 4, coinciding with the 76th anniversary of the Battle of Midway. The rain stopped just long enough for Albany County Executive, **Dan McCoy**, to honor the late **Ed Hurley**. Ed served during the Korean War as a machinist in the Navy, and later was Director of the Albany County



State Police Divers help each other out during their annual USS SLATER drill.

The following day, Tuesday, June 5, we hosted the New York State Police Dive Team, aboard for their annual exercise. It's great that USS SLATER can still serve the community. They gave us some excellent video of the hull below the waterline. And, **Ron Prest** chipped paint all day under the MK-51 director tubs, and never got his picture taken.

Stan Levandowski, Jerry Jones, and Joe Breyer manned the radio shack for the annual **Historic Ships Radio Event**. As is usually the case, they had a lot of problems. They only made contact with two other ships, **USS HORNET** in Alameda and **USS WISCONSIN** in Norfolk. The problems included very poor propagation, a broken connector in the antenna patch panel, a bad connector in a radio, and a problem in the ship's amateur radio antenna tuner. The noise



Jerry Jones and Joe Breyer battling bad atmospherics during the Historic Ships Radio Event.

levels were high, and they made very few contacts with other ships. The frequencies were scattered all over. Apparently, there were 108 other ships all in the same boat! But, ever optimistic, they are looking forward to next year.



Engineers Mike Dingmon and Larry Williams proudly look at their new tool storage.

For you radio geeks, Stan explained that our sun significantly influences radio communications on the high frequency bands where the USS SLATER operated during WWII, and where our amateur radio station operates today. We are approaching the bottom of the 11-year sunspot cycle called a "solar minimum." There are very few sunspots during this time.

Sunspots generate electric and magnetic pulses that affect the earth's ionosphere. This is the region that either absorbs or propagates our radio signals. Propagation is what allows long-range communication or shuts it down entirely. When the ionosphere doesn't have just the right level of ionization, our radio signals are either absorbed and go nowhere or, they pass right through it into outer space, and travel forever at the speed of light until they happen to hit another planet or star, run into an asteroid, or get sucked in by a black hole. Somewhere out there, perhaps, an alien civilization may one day hear WW2DEM long after we are all gone, and maybe the Earth, too! In fact, USS SLATER's radio signals from 1945 are still traveling somewhere in space and time!



Cathy Wheat helping in the Galley.



We were honored to have such a fine turnout of dignitaries on DE-Day.

On the third Saturday in June, as we do each year, we commemorated **Destroyer Escort Day**. We were quite honored to have Congressman **Paul Tonko**, Albany County Executive **Dan McCoy**, Albany Mayor **Kathy Sheehan**, and Assemblymember **Pat Fahy** all in attendance. The first Destroyer Escort Day was held at the Intrepid Sea, Air, & Space

Museum, in New York City, on June 16, 1990. During World War II, the US Navy built 563 small, scaled-down destroyers to escort convoys, hunt down submarines, and protect the Navy's refueling and resupply groups. They enabled the carrier task forces to remain at sea for extended periods of time. These ships were designated "Destroyer Escorts," and were manned largely by Reservists, who felt they were looked down upon by the officers and men of the professional regular Navy.

After the war, the civilian Sailors put the war behind them, and went back to their civilian lives. As these citizen Sailors reached retirement, they began to look back on their years of Naval service with a sense of nostalgia, and a feeling that the contribution of the destroyer escort was being lost to history. This sense of lost history resulted in two events. First, the veterans of the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association banded together to save USS SLATER as a monument to their service. Second, they instituted one day each year to commemorate their service. The third Saturday in June was designated Destroyer Escort Day, and was celebrated by the DESA Chapters around the country. On this day, we pay homage to the more than 1,300 DE sailors killed in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War years. DE Day also remembers the fifteen Destroyer Escort ships lost in action, or damaged beyond repair.

Over 150,000 men served in destroyer escorts during World War II and through the Vietnam War. Once celebrated by thirty Chapters around the country, in the not too distant future, it will only be remembered in Albany. We continue the tradition today,

and will continue to commemorate this day as long as USS SLATER exists to remind us of their sacrifices.



That's our resident Brit, Will Trevor, escorting a group down from the signal bridge. Be sure to ask his opinion on Brexit.

Ellen Coughlan, John Plaskett, and Bradley Webb of Globetrotter Television from the UK visited us on Sunday, June 17. They were wrapping up a 10-day tour of New York for a series called, "Ellen's American Adventure." We wanted them to feel at home, so we conned our resident Brit, **Will Trevor**, into coming in for the tour. Together they chose the three most interesting spots on the ship for

interactive shots. The show will air sometime next spring. On the 20th, **Art Dott** answered questions and showcased SLATER at the Veterans Summit, held by the New York State Industries for the Disabled (NYSID). He informed his audience about touring the ship, as well as the informational programming we offer.



Austin preps everyone for the radio room.

July at 7pm, at the Ballston Community Library.

Our tour guides stay busy with large groups scheduled every week. We get school groups, scouts, and an assortment of organizations and, now that summer has officially started, summer camps will be touring SLATER, as well! If your Capital Region library or club is interested in hosting a presentation from USS SLATER, please call or email us. We'd love to be involved. We have an upcoming presentation on 9



Evan starts another tour on the quarterdeck.

Several of our interns have received degrees. Evan just graduated from SUNY Oneonta, with a history education degree. So, for any of those schools out there looking, stay away! We don't want to lose him just yet! Also graduating this spring from U-Albany was **Paul**. He's planning to continue his education at Cornell Law School this fall. **Jo Ann**, our clerical assistant, who is processing all of your generous

donations, graduated from Hudson Valley Community College this semester, as well! Congratulations to all of you, and keep up the good work!

Remember our Wall of Fame? It is still going strong and is full! Joe Ricci wrote on our Facebook page "Best ship museum in the country! And I've been to many. **Lorna** is an excellent and highly knowledgeable guide!"



Before you can paint, you need to prime.

"We stopped by the USS SLATER on a whim and loved every minute of our quick decision. Our tour guide was **Art**, who definitely made this experience. He was full of knowledge, quick wit, and information. Whether you have all day in Albany, or just a few hours, the USS SLATER is worth the stop. Thank you for bringing history to life!"

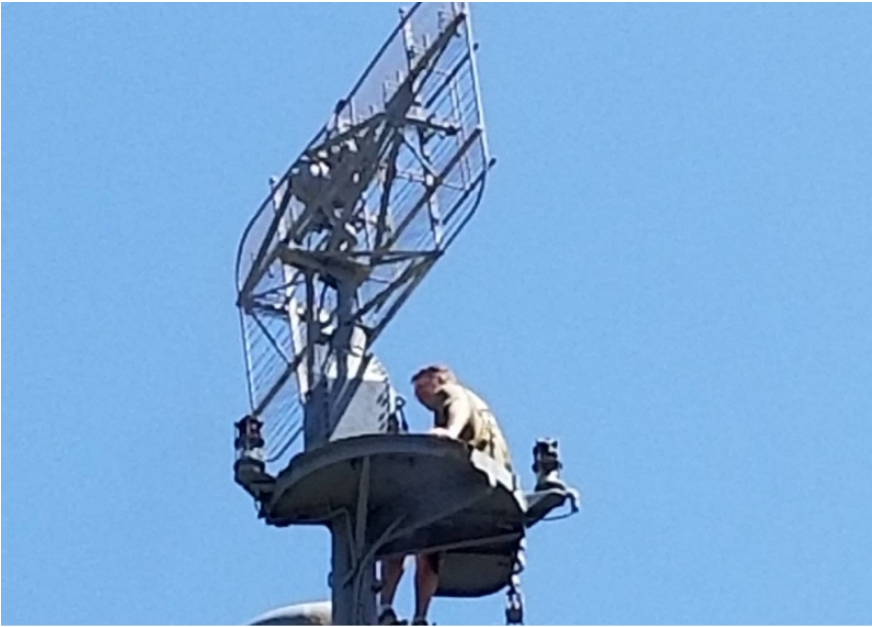


Doug and Earl turned into gunner's mates to get mount 31 training again.

Some of the volunteers served on similar vessels and can share with you everything you need to know about life aboard ship. It's a real eye opening experience to see how 200+ sailors ate, slept, and fought during war and high seas. We had all ages on our tour and all were engaged and interested. We did the ship tour. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to do the separate engine room tour. Overall, probably the best value tour and most interesting of our two weeks in New York State. Here's a tip- get the guided tour with **Austin** if you can. He's a professional and a very knowledgeable guide--friendly and very likeable too."

We had our initial meeting with State officials about the Maritime Preservation grant. Merrill Hesch, the Grants Officer, from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation out of New York City, paid us a visit and took the tour. She was joined by the State Historic Preservation Officer, **Michael Lynch**, and **Allison Lattin** from the Albany Office, who also came by to take the tour. This is the first step in the granting process. To that end, **Ed Zajkowski** and **Barry Witte** continue to do extensive research into the configuration of the mast during World War II, in preparation for our upcoming restoration. This month, their focus has been on the WWII fighting lights, or recognition lights that Navy ships used to identify each other at night. These were removed immediately after the war, and it is very difficult to get information about them.

We are very proud to be Albany's #1 attraction on TripAdvisor! It's because of comments like this one that we stay there: "I can see why this unlikely attraction is so popular, you don't have to be interested in or know anything about ships to enjoy a visit. The boat is maintained by a team of volunteer enthusiasts who have so much knowledge to share and they work hard maintaining and renovating.



Barry Witte diagnosing the SA air search antenna as to why it won't turn. The bad news is that it will have to come down.

Barry and Devon climbed the mast to check out the SA antenna, which has ceased to rotate. Apparently, the gasket sealing the maintenance cover has leaked a little bit, but with nowhere for water to go, the leakage built up inside. Most of the structure is cast aluminum, and the drive gearing is brass, so none of that was corroded. However, the bearings had some steel elements in them, and even though the

mechanism was lubricated, there is enough corrosion in the bearings to cause the motor to be overloaded. The good news is that the motor windings are intact. It is a good thing that we recently received a grant to work on mast items such as this. However, it is a matching grant so, when you receive our plea for matching funds, please consider donating to help us continue maintaining this ship as best we can. With your support, we will see the antenna rotating again soon.



Ensign Nick Grocki, on the left, has been a stalwart volunteer for the past three years.

Barry has done an amazing job of keeping a cadre of younger volunteers involved. He has invited a mix of his current and former technology students, RPI engineering students, and RPI Midshipmen, and patiently teaches the skills they need to contribute to USS SLATER restoration. They are presently engaged in replicating the smoke generator in aft steering, fabricating missing engineroom handrails, and

assisting with electrical maintenance as needed. In particular, **Vince Montouri** has been

doing excellent work on the smoke generator. We were saddened by the departure of **Nick Grocki**, who has been one of the RPI NROTC stalwarts for the past three years. However, he graduated and received his commission, so he belongs to the US Navy now.



The whaleboat is back in the water.

The consensus is that in the future we'll stick with using the windlass.

We tried something new with the whaleboat this year. Aware that the Navy used to lower the boat without the windlass, we thought we'd give it a try. Actually, lowering it without the windlass, by slipping the falls on the cleats, was relatively easy. However, lifting the boat and getting it swung out without the windlass was a bear. We used block, tackle, and stoppers to lift the boat, and that took all morning. The



The big project for the shipfitters has been the aft supply vent intake fabrication.

The shipfitters, Doug Tanner, Dave Mardon, Tim Benner, Earl Herchenroder, Danny Statile, and Andy Sheffer have been working on the aft supply vent intake. Doug got hauled off of the job for another emergency repair. The upper train drive on the forward three-inch gun jammed as a result of bad bearings. Doug and his crew got it apart, and replaced the bearings over a two-week period, so the kids can swing the

gun again. **Guy Huse** has the sightsetter all back together, and the azimuth and elevation indicator drums back in, thanks to a part made by our offsite machinist, **George**

Christophersen. George also did a beautiful job restoring and mounting our MK-1 telescopes. **Gary Sheedy** and **Vic Consiglio** have been working on stenciling piping and ventilation systems aft. **Ron Prest** and **Evan** painted out the fo'c's'le and main deck port side, and did a lot of touch up painting.



We were honored when former Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings paid us a visit. None of this would have happened if it weren't for him.

his reaction was, "What have I gotten us into?" Nobody could have predicted how well it would work out. As an example of how well it's going, we hosted the 110' Coast Guard Cutter SITKINAK for a night. The patrol boat made a run up river in support of Boating Safety Month. We were able to provide them with water, electricity, the opportunity to pump out sewage, and a dumpster to offload their trash. We also provided easy access to town for liberty. We've become a full service provider. A far cry from our beginning.

Board President Tony Esposito invited former Mayor **Jerry Jennings** down, to reflect on how he brought the ship to **Albany**. We spent a pleasant hour on the Observation Deck remembering all that it took to get the SLATER here. The Mayor's most vivid recollection was the appearance of the ship when it first arrived in Albany. It was the first time he'd seen the ship, with the peeling paint and rust streaks, and





The Coast Guard patrol boat USCGC SITKINAK spent two nights alongside.

Finally, under the "any and all duties that may be assigned" notice, taking care of the whaleboat isn't normally the duty of the business manager. Most all of you know I'm off Fridays and Sundays, so Thursday night is my Friday night. On the 28th, I'd just gotten home, gotten out of the khakis, mixed a drink and put my feet up, when I got a call from **Rosehn Gipe**. A torrential rain storm had come

through and deluged the SLATER. (We didn't get a drop at my house, five miles away.) The bottom line was that she had checked the whaleboat, which was still attached to the boat falls, swelling up. She found the boat was full of water and the bilge pump wasn't working. I immediately anticipated a drive back down to the ship, and a climb down the Jacobs ladder. But I told her to check the outlet for power and call me back. I got the call ten minutes later, that the outlet had power, the trouble was a bad extension cord, she'd swapped it out and the pump was working. Problem solved, by the business manager/accountant/bosun/electrician. Another example of being surrounded by people who are always looking out for the ship.

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!

