



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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July. The place is humming like a well-oiled machine. This is the season when the maintenance crew takes second stage to the tour guides. Five days a week, we run tours from 1000 to 1700. The Tour Guides have been showing up in force. We're doing a great business with summer day camps bringing several groups of campers through the ship each week. Operating from under the tent that **Claire Oesterreich** so generously donated to us, the gift shop crew generates an amazing amount of income considering the conditions that they have to work under. The lunch crowd has moved from the CPO mess to the picnic tables under the big tent where there is a fresh breeze. It's been a pleasant summer.

A public apology was held at 1330 on 20 July 2001. With the tour guide crew at quarters on the pier, the Ship's Superintendent apologized to **Al Vanderzee** and **Alan Fox** for omitting their names on the tour guide list in the last Slater Signals. They both graciously accepted the apology with some comment about "where the sun don't shine." Certainly there will be more apologies to follow.

Chief Adrienne Daniels and Sea Cadets aboard SLATER



The aft berthing space C-202L is really coming together. Our local Sea Cadet Unit lead by **Chief Adrienne Daniels** put forth a spectacular effort. In one day they stowed all the 40mm ammunition cans, moved a hundred mattresses from the forward magazine to the aft crew compartments, and hung all the bunks in C-202L. That's over fifty racks. They had to measure, cut chain, mount hooks and level. It was a great effort; the most productive day I've ever seen in over twenty years experience with Sea Cadets on three different ships. **Erik Collin** got the deck painted and all the trim work done. After the bunks were rigged, **Chris Fedden** graciously took all the fart sacks home to **Trudy**, who even more graciously laundered them.



Sea Cadets at work in C-202-L



Newly acquired "ASH CAN" Depth Charge on SLATER's portside rack

Bill Coyle is cleaning the metal lampshades for the compartment. **Don Shattuck**, **Bob Callender**, and **Larry Williams** are rigging the compartment fans and the clips on all the bunks. Back aft, **Ed Whitbeck** isn't the lone chipper anymore. He's been joined by **Pat Cancilla**, recovering from hip replacement surgery and doing more every day as he heals. Ed deserves special praise. He goes down there and holds a needle gun over his head working the overheads for six hours at a clip. I don't know anyone else on the ship except **Chris Fedden** who can match him.

Topside, two main projects are underway. The first is repainting the decks. The chippers **Dick Smith**, **Chris** and **Earl Gillette** started on the fantail and are working their way up the portside. Painters **Gene Cellini**, **Mike Muzio**, **Erik Collin** and **Bill Hoeth** are following in their wake with the deck gray. They had a good days help from **Gene Johnson** and his crew from the Albany Naval Reserve Center. We had a major crisis when we smoked the air compressor controller again. **Barry Witte** took time to come in and repair it with parts from a pump controller. When we can't chip, it's a crisis. It seems that the contacts on the pressure switch had corroded to the point where they made intermittent contact causing the contacts in the motor controller to chatter until the surging 440 volts smoked the coil. It's amazing how valuable the electrician becomes when we can't chip.

The rest is a continuation of last month. The engineers are down in the engine rooms engineering. **Ed Zajkowski** and **Steve Whynot**, old friends and volunteer coordinators on the JOSEPH P. KENNEDY JR. DD-850, came over to observe our volunteer operation for a couple of days. In the process they helped **Gus** with the Emergency Diesel and activated a vent fan in B-3. **Rocky** and **Roy** have the interior of the whaleboat coming along nicely. Rocky's going for a yacht finish on the exterior. The ship fitters are fixing hatches and scuttles.

The Collections Department reports the addition of several significant DE artifacts to our ever-growing exhibit.

Actually, the "ash can" Depth Charge had a position waiting right on the rack. This rare piece of original weaponry was donated to us by **Frank A. Jackson**, Historian of USS OTTER DE-210. His father served aboard OTTER and also worked at the Naval Ammunition Depot, Hingham, MA, where this "can" was built. Thanks also to volunteer **Bill Wyld**, who made the trip over to Weymouth, MA to collect the "ash can" and many other items. Frank has donated innumerable articles over the years and many appear in the DE Displays in C201L. Another acquisition "jewel" is a collection of items from USS GENDREAU DE-639, secured for us by **John P. Cosgrove**, DEHF Board member and crewmember of DE-639. These items are on permanent loan from the *Naval Historical Center* and range from Wardroom Table Service to



Service Ribbon Board from USS PILLSBURY DEADER 133

various items of ship's equipment. Sure to be one of our proudest exhibits ♦ ranking right up there with the bell from USS HOLDER DE-410, is the Service Ribbon Board that was attached to the Bridge Wing of USS PILLSBURY DER-133 and saved when 133 was being scrapped during 1966 in Baltimore. This DE played a significant role during the "Hunter-Killer" U- Boat war in the Atlantic with it's famous capture of U-505 and subsequently, our very own DE-766, was to transport a U-505 torpedo from Bermuda to the NAB Solomons Island, MD. PILLSBURY received five battle stars for WWII service and a Presidential Unit Citation and was one of the most decorated of Destroyer Escorts. Thanks to DESA President **Tom Kidd** and Office Manager, **Dori Glaser** for forwarding the offer from an e-mail message to the DESA website so we could follow through and secure the Board. **Herb Gray**, an ex-Marine from Baltimore saved this Board at his home all these years and offered it through his friend **Sonny Walker**, who is the VP of the USS LAFFEY DD-724 Association. We will be most honored to display this piece of DE history and it is sure to receive a lot of interest and admiration from visiting DE veterans and our touring public.

We have a new Boatswain's Mate in the crew. **Beth Spain**, our latest part time tour guide, office assistant and maintenance person and general deck ape is equally at home with a chipping hammer or a computer. She is one of the few people on the ship who can book a tour and trouble-shoot the low pressure air compressor. All of SLATER's Navy activity

must have had a favorable impression on Beth as she enlisted in the Naval Reserve in June. Beth was given the rate, "boatswain's mate second class" based on her previous boat handling experience and the fact that she has her Coast Guard hundred-ton license. Beth will go to Great Lakes Naval Training Center in November for basic. Fellow bosun and SLATER volunteer, **Mike Muzio**, presented Beth with her first bosun's pipe and lanyard at her enlistment ceremony on SLATER's fantail. Commander **Greg Krawczyk**, CO of the Naval Reserve Center in Albany officiated at the ceremony. There is another bit of news here. Commander Krawczyk, a stalwart SLATER supporter, has been selected to receive a well-deserved promotion to Captain in September. We understand that with the promotion comes an all expense paid two-year trip to Korea. Congratulations from all your shipmates here on the SLATER. Greg's change of command ceremony is scheduled aboard in September.



Beth Spain being sworn in by Cdr. Krawczyk



BM2c Beth Spain with her family and SLATER friends



Another new face (although canine) is **Julie & Eric Weidman's** Black Lab puppy who is most appropriately named "**SLATER**". He's already learning what it will take to be a DE MASCOT & has been seen posing on the fantail. The Weidman's will next introduce him to an official perch on the aft three-inch gun. He is serving best as "Official Greeter" and welcomes everyone with a wag & wiggle! Welcome aboard, **SLATER!**



"SLATER" with owners & trainers Julie & Eric

We had some special visitors on Sunday, 1 July, as the family of SLATER's wartime skipper, LCDR Marcel J. Blancq paid the ship a visit. The Captain's daughter, **Patty Smith** and his son **Stephen**, daughter-in-law **Bobbi** and granddaughter **Laura** received a "stem to stern" tour with **Eric Weidman**. It was their first time aboard as they caught a mere glimpse of the ship back in NYC. The highlights were naturally his stateroom, the wardroom and the flying bridge and this much anticipated tour lasted for two hours. A framed picture of Patty as a child is on display in the captain's cabin.

The family of SLATER's Commissioning Captain Marcel J. Blancq visit the Officer's Wardroom



CO Blancq's family on the Flying Bridge



Hopefully, by the time you get this edition of the Slater Signals you will have received your mail solicitation to contribute to the SLATER endowment fund. The Drive was first announced in the recent edition of the DESA NEWS. If I can make my pitch for the importance of the endowment here, you can think of it as a view from the bilge. When I first stepped aboard SLATER on 27 October 1997, the task in Albany seemed almost impossible. We were charged with restoring this ship on a shoestring budget. I questioned my own sanity in giving up fifteen secure years aboard the USS KIDD to take on this challenge. My wife had other words for it.

The first year was really tough. I spent more time sweating about where the next dollar would come from and trying not to get behind on our bills, than I spent restoring the ship. I do believe the Albany locals were smirking behind our back. I'd bet the odds in the gin mills were ten to one against us pulling it off. We begged and bummed everything. The generator, paint, cleaning supplies, coffee, and even the coffee cups. **Earl Gillette** donated the coffee and he still does. I still remember when **Bob Callender** brought down the first box of Styrofoam cups. It was a godsend. Four years later, he's still buying them for us. Once you take on a job here, you never get out of it. I guess some day I should tell these guys that we can afford to buy cups and coffee now. But, that's so much more money we can spend on paint.

Then a miracle happened in the form of **Frank J. Lasch**. Now, I would never give myself credit for getting Frank involved. But if I had anything to do, in the smallest way, with not having him turn and walk away from that wreck we called the SLATER; it is my most important accomplishment for the project. Imagine a man coming to your gangway saying, "I want to volunteer to raise money for you." An experienced lobbyist with forty years of political and fundraising experience, all our financial worries started to melt away when Frank went to work. You can't imagine how much big institutions pay big bucks to have a guy like this as a consultant, and we've got him for free. Three years after stepping aboard the gangway, Frank has gotten us well on the way to financial security. Everything thing the man promises he going to do, he does. How few people do we meet in life like that.

Frank has committed himself to creating a three million dollar endowment fund for the SLATER. The interest income from that fund will be there to support the ship when the DE sailors are not. He is committed to raising 1.4 million dollars from the Albany Community. In return he needs to see \$200 dollars a man from the DE veterans to show Albany how committed we are to the SLATER. Money is coming in from all over the country.

This project has been truly blessed. First was the miracle of finding the ship and raising the money to tow her home on such short notice. Then the hard work by the dedicated New York City Volunteers, in cleaning her up and chipping so much paint. Next, finding a permanent home in Albany, and having the incredible volunteer support there. And most recently, our good fortune in finding **Frank Lasch** to serve as our Albany Skipper.

One of the most important aspects of the SLATER project is the crew. Our average age is not seventy. We're very proud of the fact that we have so many young people involved in restoring the ship and passing on the legacy. In Manhattan there were guys like **Ron Frankosky, Johnny Mohr, John McCoy, Jim Moore** & his son, **Bill Humienny** and the grandsons



of guys like **Lou Yacullo** and **Marty Newman**. Here in Albany we have people like **Ed, Eric and Julie Weidman, Erik Collin, Barry Witte, Gary Sheedy, Bill Siebert, Beth Spain, Mike Clark** and **Larry Lachance**. Over half our crew are folks younger than sixty and many are not even DE veterans. But they are just as committed as you are. What that means is your history is already being learned and passed on. The people who will care for the SLATER when you're gone are already aboard.

We all have a dream of restoring the SLATER so she will remind future generation of the sacrifices and accomplishment of the DE Sailor. That dream is kept afloat by some frail strakes of quarter inch fifty-year old hull plating. Any sailor who has sat on the mess deck and listened to ice scrape against the hull is painfully aware of how frail these ships are. Taking care of that shell plating to keep the SLATER afloat will be an expensive proposition. Sitting on the dock is about \$3,000 a day for six weeks. Waterline hull plate replacement will be about \$400,000. Tank cleaning and gas freeing is a hundred dollars a ton. In researching grants and getting bids, our estimates for dry-docking the SLATER and doing the work right are now in the neighborhood a million dollars for the first overhaul. Then, we must plan for her to go back to the yards every ten years thereafter. Grants are only part of the answer. All the grants are matching grants, which means we have to come up with 20 to fifty percent of the cost ourselves. There's no doubt in my mind that we can do that while we're here, but what of when we're gone. Would you trust the next generation to raise money for your ship?

That's where Frank Lasch's plan to create the endowment kicks in. When faced with a bid on dry-docking the SLATER, the need for asking each SLATER supporter for two hundred dollars becomes readily apparent. To generate the funds to care for the SLATER as long as this nation exists. Success breeds success. Frank is confident is that with a strong showing of support from DE veterans and the Navy community, by raising half the money from us; he can easily raise the other half from Albany businesses and Foundations. But it's terribly important to have a strong showing of support from the DE sailors before going to the Albany community. It's like saying to the wealthy civilians, "Remember us guys who saved your butts fifty years ago and kept you free from the fascists and communists so you could stay home? Well, once again, we've already done our part. So come on, ante up too."

We've got an amazing crew and an amazing organization. The ship is looking beautiful, something you can all be proud of. There's no doubt in my mind that within the next three years we'll get her to the yards, and that one-day those shafts will turn again. So, if you haven't kicked in to the endowment already, look over the brochure and think about staying with us through this last push to ensure SLATER's financial future.

See You Next Month!



Beth Spain, destined to be a Chief.