



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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The big clean up took the last two weeks in March. The whole crew turned-to to try and finish our winter projects and get the ship ready for visitors. Up forward the crew's berthing space is a work of art. Freshly painted, bunks hung, clean and fresh, it looks like a compartment on a new ship. **Dennis Nagi's** dark oak wooden tables there and on the messdeck give the whole area a warm, rich feel. Not quite so sterile as the stainless tables that the Greeks had installed. The ultimate compliment was paid to the crew by one of their own when **Don Shattuck** said, "This is how I remember it." And as **Barry Witte** said as he looked back and admired the compartment, "It's not so much what you see. It's all the ugliness that you don't see, the bent piping, crossed up wiring and ugly ragged metal." A few other people deserve special recognition here. **Chris Fedden's wife Trudy** has laundered all the mattress covers.

Erik Collin, our painter and computer guru is now an unemployed UNIX systems administrator. Since he had a lot of time on his hands, he gave it all to us. He spent the whole month touch up painting, cleaning, and repainted all the interior decks. And you know what? He's still at it. I hate to ruin a good thing for the SLATER, but if anyone out there is looking for a great UNIX systems administrator, I know where you can find one. I don't even know what a UNIX systems administrator is, and I know I probably couldn't afford one even if I needed one, but if you just need a general computer geek who isn't afraid to get his hands dirty, Erik is your man. Just, please wait until his benefits run out to take him from us. Anyway, Erik is the man most responsible for getting this ship cleaned up for spring.

Officer's country has really come back together. **Gordon Lattey** worked with **Erik Collin** and **Pat Perrella** to get officer's country squared away, and they got all the artifacts back out on display. After doing all the bed linen last month, Gordon paid to have all the uniforms dry cleaned. The "cherry on the float" was when **Al Vanderzee** spent two days polishing all the wardroom silver. That will be his permanent cleaning station.

We opened the ship to the public in Rensselaer on Wednesday April 2nd. The first week we had eight customers and the weather didn't help. The clean up continued through the first week of April. **Smitty, Chris Fedden, Raf and Ed Whitbeck** have moved into sickbay and are finishing that up as their last interior project before they move topside. **Kevin Sage** our contract spray painter came in and sprayed out forward berthing, after officer's country and the laundry passageway. **Paul Czesak** has been putting the finishing touches on the supply office. The laundry and the steering engine room will have to wait for next winter. With the completion of the painting and chipping, **Pat Perrella** is back and has been busy setting up the cases and artifacts in the DE museum space. **Clark, Doug and Tim Benner**, the shipfitters have been busy making repairs to the chocks and the gangway. **Chuck Teal** went through and did our annual inspection of all our fire extinguishers. ,



Fending off in Rensselaer.



Tommy Moore, keeper of the camels.

Another man who was instrumental in getting us open to the public was Tom Moore. For those of you who have been following this saga since its inception know Tom is the "camel guy." Most of us hate dealing with the camels. Tom loves it. We had planned to get the camels in the water the third week in March, but another round of ice and snow killed that idea. It took Tom a week to get the camels thawed out so he could get the plugs out of them. Then he filled all the sinkers with Styrofoam. Camel day ended up being Wednesday, March 9. A bigger than expected crew showed up for that evolution including **Smitty, Hack, Stan, Bob Lawrence, Frank, Russ, Kenny, Gene Jackey, Larry Williams, Fedden, Raf, and Paul.** Most importantly, **Ricky** was there with the water department crane. The weather was about forty and calm, so it wasn't a bad day at all. Any way from my perspective down on the forward camels, I didn't really have a good read on what was going on ashore, but I did see a lot of fingers pointing in different

directions. Ricky said he had plenty of direction. Some of it must have been effective, because all the camels were in the water, shackled together and cabled in position by 1230. So much for that evolution.

Thursday April 10th Bill Welch called and said that he could move us the following Saturday, if the wind wasn't too bad. We put out the word Friday that we expected to move the next day, if the wind wasn't too bad. The word was working sailors only for the move, and come sailing time we had forty working sailors aboard. The day started out kind of breezy with gusts up to twenty out of the northwest, but slack tide at 1430, it was as beautiful a spring day as you could want in Albany. Bill left Bart behind and arrived promptly at 1400. A couple guys who came down for the announced 1430 sailing time actually missed the ship. As usual, the HERBERT BRAKE wired up to the fantail to be our engine. For the first time we had one of Bart's big old Bushy boats the CHEYANNE to pull us off the wall since the EMPIRE wasn't available. The CHEYANNE is single screw and more horsepower than you need or want against our tender hull, but she handled the job just fine.



The foc's'cle crew.



On the fantail.

Hack Charbonneau, Frank Beeler and Bob Lawrence handled the foc's'cle crew, while **Paul Czesak, Chief Floyd and Bosun Mike** handled the fantail. Getting underway was a snap, and everything went smoothly. Ken Kaskoun had the sound powered phones hooked up for the first time between the bridge, foc's'cle and fantail. Al Vanderzee hoisted the steaming ensign at 1415.

The trip incorporated many firsts. Gus Negus made it aboard and cranked up the emergency diesel generator. This was the result of a winter of work by him, **Larry LaChance, Russ Ferrer** and several others. For the first time, there was no announcement for all hands to clear below decks because we were going cold and dark. For the first time the announcement was, "Now shifting for shore to ship's power." The load transfer went off without a hitch, and as a result, the coffee never got cold. The lights stayed on, and the IMC continued to work. Barry even had power on the steering gear and the anchor windlass if either were needed. For the first time, Radioman **Joe Breyer**, transmitted from the radio room on ship's power while we were underway and made contact with a Canadian HAM station. They will get a very special QSL card.



Coming home.



The trip across was a pleasure cruise. Bill likes to pilot her from the top of the flying bridge for visibility. This is all in a days work for Bill and his crew, but as I only leave the dock twice a year, this is still kind of stressful for me. When I asked Bill who was skippering the tugs he mentioned two names I'd never heard of and I mentioned, "They been with you long?" He replied with the old pilot's response, "They seemed like nice guys when I met them in the bar last night!" Coming into the Snow Dock, the wind was pushing us off the wall and south pretty good and it took a couple of tries to get perfectly situated so the gangway would line up. Again, the lack of heaving line practice was evident. I made one perfect throw, that nobody caught on film, and then went back to supervising so as not to ruin my average. Truth be told, the first line across was the shore power cable. The electricians were anxious to complete their day of "firsts." Erik Collin shot video and the Andrian's got some beautiful stills of the ship underway. Once in Albany we worked until about 1830 getting the wires on and getting her secured for the season. The last ones to leave were **Smitty, Frank Beeler, Bob Lawrence and Barry Witte.**



Ready on the heaving lines.

The Following Monday, Bob Cross got the Water Department Crane back down so we could hoist the steel gangway in place. We spent the day rigging safety netting, adjusting wires, and

doubling up the mooring lines. **Clark and Gene Jackey** made repairs to the gangway handrails. **Peter Jez**, who hates being mentioned here, came over to give her a great topside wash down that she desperately needed. Now our attention has turned to getting the trailer finished and the pier cleaned up. To that end **Mayor Jennings and Water Commissioner Bob Cross** have been an invaluable help in moving out construction debris and getting the Snow Dock ready for the public. **Larry LaChance** is putting the finishing touches on the handicapped ramp to the trailer and the deck. **Barry Witte, Gary Sheedy, Larry Williams and Ken Kaskoun** are wrapping up the electric power to the trailer. **Dennis Nagi** has completed the inside carpentry and painting. Only the four sets of exterior stairs remain to be built, and we plan to install gutters and an awning on the trailer. Beth and Nancy are moving into the new gift shop. When the gangway is installed the trailer will be in full operation.



Rigging the gangway.



Rigging up the gangway.

Richard Warner out in California has been doing some wonderful work for us from afar. Richard has taken it upon himself to write a personal letter to all the members and widows of the Destroyer Escort Commanding Officer's Association. Richard was former skipper of the **KENDALL C CAMPBELL (DE443)**, and truly understands our need for an endowment fund, and is working to inspire others. Richard also worked out another wonderful donation. We were in need of printing 15,000 visitor guide brochures after they had been updated. Richard made contact with the good folks at Duncan Press in Lodi. A DE sailor, Donald Bedford, founded the firm. He served on the Coast Guard-manned **PETERSON (DE152)** in World War II. Don died in 1989, but the printing business is still run by his wife **Jean** and his children **Mike, Steve and Margie**. They all agreed, in memory of Don, to print the needed brochures for us. All 15,000 are now aboard the **SLATER**, 3,000 miles away from Bedford's print shop, but bound close together by memory of Don Bedford and the **PETERSON**. Another volunteer who deeply understands the need for the endowment fund is **Don Montrym**. Don lives in Massachusetts and has been spending a lot of his spare time researching grants and helping us with proposal writing. He is working closely with Frank Lasch to develop a list of foundations that will give grants to programs like the **SLATER** in our efforts to find funds for the endowment and dry-docking.



The shore power cable was the first line across.



The new deck and trailer at the Snow Dock.

We lost two volunteers this month, both too young to loose. **Chuck Teator**, one of our most faithful tour guides died of a heart attack while driving. We hadn't seen Chuck since the ship closed for tours in December, and his passing came as a complete shock to us. I can't tell you the number of days Chuck stuck with us in the summer heat to handle the last tour of the day. My favorite recollection of him is how he would always take a couple of the youngsters in his tour back to the fantail and let them take down and fold the American Flag at the end of the day. His tours were always large and he brought a special enthusiasm to the project. During previous winters he kept the Chief's mess supplied with bottled spring water for the coffee when we were without running water. He also prided himself in cooking an annual November breakfast for the crew to celebrate the end of the tour season. Chuck was only fifty-one, a year younger than me. And **Daniel Wing** died suddenly at home at age fifty-five. Daniel had been s Seabee in Vietnam and was an accomplished sign painter. His work is on display throughout the ship, and will be with us for years to come. The crew will miss them both.

It has been great to see all the tour guides back. **Dennis Morrissey, Jack Madden, Bob Dawson, George Erwin, Les Beauchaine, Mike Millian, Pat Cancilla, Frank Perrella, Bob Bull, Tom McLaughlin, Bill Schroun, Bob Whitney, Chris Soulia, Alan Fox, and Chuck Marshall,** have all come back out of hibernation with the coming of spring. We also have our guys who wear more than one hat, **Paul Czesak, Larry Williams, Ken Kaskoun, Dennis Nagi and Rafael Suarez.** Nancy Buxton's education department has been very busy. We are producing a twenty-page information booklet along the lines of Trim But Deadly about the history of the SLATER. We are greatly indebted to Richard and Catherine Andrian for the time they put into the booklet. It will be available as a promotional tool and for sale in the gift shop. Erik Collin developed a seven-minute instructional video that will be shown in the new classroom. We are also indebted to Dave Meyersburg for his work in developing our revised tour brochures that were printed by the Bedford Family in California. Dave also did a fine brochure for our planned overnight camping program, and designed the program for Captain Blancq's upcoming memorial service.



Marcel J. Blancq

A note about our upcoming Trim But Deadly newsletter. As you know each issues historian Victor Buck profiles a different DE. For the spring 2003 issue that will be printed in June Vic is working on the history of the USS WILLIAM SEIVERLING (DE441). Victor is looking for a good photograph of the ship for the article. If you one you'd like to loan Vic, they can be mailed to Victor Buck, 1027 Douglas Ave, Wantagh, NY 11793-1760. Victor is very good about returning loaned material, or they can be donated to the museum when he his finished with them at the owners request.

Finally, by the time I get around to writing the next issue, two major events will have taken place. First, as I write, the members of the Michigan Chapter of DESA are packing their tools and preparing to drive east for their spring field day week aboard the SLATER. Over thirty men are coming to help us out, so we're looking forward to a real fun and productive week. They will be followed by the USS HUSE crew the following week. And the original USS SLATER crew is coming back to town the week of May ninth. Don Norris and Cliff Woltz are putting together a fine reunion. Their event will include la memorial service for their Commanding Officer Marcel J. Blancq who died last August. Captain Blancq was a career merchant mariner who skippered the SLATER from commissioning to VJ Day, and his ashes will be scattered from the SLATER's decks. Several of his children and family members will be in attendance as well as his crew. It should be an impressive reunion for all.

See you next month.