



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Ship's Superintendent

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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What a month. It started with another trip to the James River, then the tenth Michigan Field Day week, continued on to the second USS HUSE field day week, the 18th USS SLATER reunion, Captain Blancq's memorial service, our quarterly board meeting, and the 25th year of Tin Can Sailor Field Days. It started innocently enough. A big motor home rolled in from California one morning. It was **Don and Ruthie Martin**, here to spend their annual working vacation. Don went right to work down in sickbay repairing insulation.



The Michigan and SLATER volunteers pose for a group photo.

Ron Zarem and Dick Briel brought the Michigan Chapter back for their tenth field Day week, twenty-eight strong. As usual **Bill Kramer** lorded over the galley crew and kept the crew well fed with the support of **Jim Andrus, Roy Brandon and Paul Monaco.** **Dick Walker** ran past the quarterdeck right up to his beloved fire control shack. He spent the week fine tuning the shack and priming the rangefinder tower on the flying bridge with his buddy **Dave Marsh.** Close at hand **Bob Donlon and Ron Mazure** put the finishing touches on the sonar shack and painted the deck.

Tom Schriner, his son **Joe, Tim Markham and Gary Headworth** made a beeline for the engineroom and spent the week working on the cooling for the aft 8-268A. They worked with **Russ Ferrer and Larry LaChance** and they also tore down the high pressure air compressor and are having rings made for it. Unfortunately, there was no dramatic ending this year as the engine is not yet in running condition.

We had three attendees who came all the way from California to work. DESA Director **Bob Fowler, Gordon Dominques and Emil "Mini" Miniucci** spent the week making repairs to insulation in sickbay, after officer's country and the aft passageway getting it all squared away and ready for deck painting and furnishing. Outside, **Ron Zarem, Gil Rivette, Jim Ray, Dave O'Leary Emmett Landum, Chuck Green and Rush Mellinger** accompanied by Rush's two sons **Deron and Marc** tackled painting the portside superstructure. They rigged scaffolding and painted the whole forward deckhouse from the foc's'cle to the breakwater all the way up to the flying bridge. In addition, they sanded and sprayed out the mount three gun tub, all the depth charged, roller loaders and the depth charge track. Finally the compartment cleaners, **Dick Briel, Chuck Markham, Art Wuckert and John O'Leary** kept the passageways swept and swabbed, the brass polished and the trash dumped all week long taking a real burden off us.



Gil Rivette cleaning up the gun three tub.



Painting the superstructure.



Chuck Green working on the flagbags.



The USS HUSE Crew.

They had no sooner driven off into the sunset when the USS HUSE crew arrived led by George Amandola. George had put together a twenty-man working party. Cook Lou Riccardi provided meals for the whole crew with the help of an unseen, unrecognized helper, his wife Nancy. Jaye Robbins, Roland Robbins, Dave Perlstein, Bob Kehrer, Roy Roetzler, David Kehrer, Harry Strauser, Clem Vaughn, Bill Meehan, Bill Camp, Ed Parnell, Hillman Jackson, Milton Harrison, Wayne Hutchinson, Ernie Aeschliman, Joe Colletti, Gil Liss, Eric O'Brien and Ray Clarke picked up where Michigan left off.

Their first and most challenging job was repainting the superstructure on the starboard side. This area hadn't been painted since 1999, and was really showing a lot of wear and tear. They put a major effort into it and had it looking like new by the end of the week. Clem Vaughn made several repairs to the sickbay cabinets and fabricated the windshield for the flying bridge. They also fabricated the three-inch drill projectile rack on the 01 level and got the dish washing machine moved from the pier down to the scullery, no easy feat. They finished the week by spraying out the prime and topcoats in sickbay to make that space ready for restoration. Finally they did a lot of cleanup and washdown work to keep the SLATER looking sharp for visitors. As you can see, they had a very productive week too.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to former HUSE supply officer and present DESA director David Perlstein. Our quarterly board meeting came in the middle of all this activity. Between making sure there was enough paint, brushes and rollers, and that everyone had all the supervision they wanted or needed, I had to find time to prepare the final draft of the budget for the meeting. Dave was kind enough to volunteer to review my numbers, make adjustments and make sure my numbers were accurate for the board meeting. Of course his shipmates were sure it was just another cheesy excuse to get out of doing real work, but it was a great help to all of us.



Chow call.



The HUSE Crew presents Chairman Sam Saylor with their annual donation.

Our board Members came from far and wide including Cliff Woltz and Ray Windle from Texas, Sam Saylor from Oklahoma, Marty Davis from Long Island, Don Norris from Pennsylvania and locals Gordon Lattey, Charlie Stern, Hal Hatfield, Dick Walker, Paul Czesak, and secretary Al Vanderzee. Notably absent was President Frank Lasch who was in Scotland with Mary Ellen for the birth of their 23rd grand child. Two familiar faces have left the board due to other commitments, Barbara Higbee and Kevin Lynch. Both were instrumental in getting the project off and running in its early days and we all owe them our lasting gratitude. The board searched for replacements. Someone with a very large bank account and a very generous heart who could underwrite building new mooring dolphins, the cost of dry-docking the SLATER, replacing the worn shell plate, and even getting all the engines overhauled. In short, they searched for a real sugar daddy, or mommy, or a recent lottery winner who would donate enough money to pay for all the things we dream of doing. Not finding such a person, the board looked to the volunteer group for replacements.

Elected to the board were one representative from the interpretative side of the house, and one representative from the maintenance side of the house. They are Dr. Dennis Nagi and Doug Tanner. Dennis comes to us having served as Chairman of the History Department of Hudson Valley Community College for the last fifteen years. More recently, he has stepped into Charles Miner's shoes as our lead carpenter on the trailer renovation. Doug Tanner is recently retired from General Electric and now works as a consultant. Doug brings over forty years of experience as a welding, structural and safety inspector. Normally mellow and extremely patient, certain here before unseen aspects of Doug's personality were revealed at his retirement party. These included a propensity for throwing his hardhat against the wall, and using certain adjectives that are preferred by bosun's mates in times of bureaucratic stress. Of course Doug would rather cook breakfast and weld down chocks than sit in on meetings, and Dennis would rather guide tours and do carpentry work than sit in on meetings, so they are both perfect additions to your Board. Welcome aboard.

It should also be noted that at both the SLATER Board meeting and the SLATER crew reunion Banquet, Pat Perrella was commended for the outstanding work she has done in cataloging and displaying our collection of artifacts. Few museums as young as we are can claim to have such a good handle on their collections, and we owe it all to Pat.

We're still scrounging too. Each week, we receive more packages of CAVALLARO parts from **Greg Krawczyk.** **Gordon Lattey, Barry Witte and Joe Breyer** made another run to the James River for diesel parts from Joe's old ship the ASR USS SUNBIRD. And **Paul Czesak** and I were invited to Fall River for the 25th year of Tin Can Sailor Field Days aboard the JOSPEH P. KENNEDY, JR. I mention this only because, once again, thanks to the kindness of the Battleship Massachusetts folks, and in particular Curator **Chris Nardi, Ed Zajkowski** and **Rich Angelini,** we returned with the examining table and medicine bottle rack for sickbay, and an SA radar scope.



The 18th Reunion of the USS SLATER crew.

The primary beneficiaries of all these improvements were the members of the original USS SLATER crew. They held their eighteenth crew reunion here in Albany beginning on May 9th. It was their fourth aboard the SLATER since she returned from Greece and they were overwhelmed by the improvements they have continued to see each time they come aboard. Their reunion began on a sunny Friday morning as they poured on to their ship with their families to view the changes and improvements that have been made to her old home. Almost all of them had seen the SLATER nine years earlier when she first arrived from Greece, and they still regard with awe how the ship has been transformed since her arrival. But we couldn't do it without them.

Their crew is one of the largest donors to the project since it began.

At 1030 sharp the crew mustered for a special ceremony. They were seated on our new deck overlooking the Hudson; we performed a memorial service for the SLATER's WWII Captain, **Marcel J. Blancq.** This was the first formal ceremony on the new gift shop deck. In attendance were three members of the Blancq family, his daughter **Patty Smith,** his son **Steve Blancq,** **Steve's daughter Jeannie Blancq** and **Marcel's nephew Captain Ronald Blancq.** Chaplain **Jerry Ladouceur** read the

sermon, and shipmates **Cliff Woltz** and **Marvin Cash** eulogized their captain. Escorted by the SLATER volunteer color guard the procession moved aft to the fantail where son **Steve** scattered his father's ashes into the Hudson River sunshine, the same river from which the SLATER sailed from on all five of her North Atlantic convoy missions sixty years before. At the end of the service Museum Chairman **Sam Saylor** presented **Patty Smith** with the American Flag on behalf of a grateful nation.



Patty and Steve Blancq accept the ensign in their father's honor.



The SLATER Volunteer Honor Guard.



The Rifle Squad fired a final salute for Captain Blancq.

Following the ceremony, Paul Czesak led the family on an extended tour of the SLATER.

During the course of the tour, the family was questioned at length for details of Marcel Blancq's life and war record. We learned that nobody called him Marcel, everyone called him Pat. The family knows little of his wartime experience prior to taking command of the SLATER. Daughter Patty has memories of playing with her father's Purple Heart medal and pinning it on to her dolls. Where he got it, no one in the family knows. It will be something for us to further research.



The SLATER crew reception.

The crew departed and returned that evening at 1700 for another special event. Each time they come to Albany, the SLATER crew has hosted a special reception for the SLATER volunteers to show their appreciation for what the present crew of the SLATER has done in taking care of their ship. For the affair the deck was tented over and a buffet set up on the deck. We really load tested Larry's deck. Over a hundred and fifty volunteers, former SLATER crew members and their families mingled to talk, reminisce and thank each other for a job well done, sixty years ago, and today.

As a special present to the SLATER crew, **Richard and Catherine Andrian** managed to take a group picture of the crew in the morning and returned that evening with copies for the whole reunion group. With the ship as a backdrop, the weather was perfect for the event, and we hope there will be many more like it. On a comical note, it was one of those rare occasions that I had put on a suit for the memorial service. This event always seems to lead to a good deal of shock and awe from the crew. I had never gotten a chance to change, and was thus about the only one in formal attire at the casual evening reception. Of course the most common comment was, "You dressed for a funeral?" To which I could honestly reply, "Well as a matter of fact, I was."

The following morning it was back to work. The regular crew showed up 0800. They have kept busy doing the work they have been doing ever since the SLATER arrived from Greece. **Rocky Rockwood and Roy Gunther** have been getting the whaleboat ready to launch caulking, sanding, and painting. **Tanner, Farnsworth, Benner, Teal, Jackey, Hume and Erwin** keep repairing chocks and are back up working on the flying bridge rangefinder platform. **Smitty, Fedden, Whitbeck, and Gillette** are chipping the fantail down to bare metal while down below **Pat Perrella** works to keep the museum spotless amid the din of the needle guns. **Erik Collin** continued trim painting in sickbay. **Sheedy, Williams, Kaskoun and Shattuck** are working on running permanent power to the gift shop.



Continue ship's work; Ed Whitbeck chipping the fantail.



The SLATER gift shop is open for business.

Larry LaChance continued working on the B-4 bilge pump system. **Floyd and Desorbo** are still painting out the gun shack, while **Beeler and Lawrence** are painting out the three-inch mounts. Up in radio **Jones, Murawski, Breyer, Engler, Stolte and Bulger** rigged a high frequency antenna for the marine radio so we can now monitor the harbor traffic and talk to anyone we need to. Their next

project is a working Raytheon radar display for CIC. I still don't know why when ever they have to send somebody up the mast it's always the guy who's 82 years old. And tour guides **Guard, Lossi, Goldstein, Kuba, Morrissey, Madden, Dawson, Erwin, Millian, Cancilla, Perrella, Bull, McLaughlin, Schroun, Whitney, Oesterreich, Soulia, Fox, Marshall, and the Beauchaines** continue to man the gift shop and lead tours.

Finally, the day after the memorial service, Barry Witte ran a new twenty pair communications cable down the maindeck passageway that will link the phones, computers and alarms systems between the shore side gift shop and the ship. It got to the point where Barry needed a helper, and no one else was available. I reluctantly put on my grubby overalls and placed myself at his mercy for the bulk of the day. The same crew that had ribbed me about being in a formal suit the evening before now posed the question which outfit constituted the greater fraud on my part. The grubby work overalls or the suit and tie? You'll have to be the judge on that one.

See you next month