

## SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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**I'm sitting at a Burger King table at gate S-1 at the Seattle Tacoma airport, heading back east from the annual Historic Naval Ships Convention. I'm waiting to get kicked out of this table for writing a newsletter instead of eating a Whopper.** This year the conference was hosted by the Naval Undersea Museum, a beautiful facility in Keyport, Washington. **Bill Galvani, Barbara Moe, Joyce Jensen, and HNSA's Chan Zucker, Jeff Nilsson and President Dave Scheau** and all their helpers put on a most informative conference. We had about 120 delegates from ships all over the country attending. For those of you who don't know, the conference is an annual gathering, seminars, and exchange of information. For all in our business, it is a chance to renew old friendships, commiserate with people who have the same problems I do, and to learn from people who are smarter than I am. The Navy always sends representatives from Naval Sea Systems Command and the Naval Historical Center, so there is always the chance to button hole them about missing parts and seek their advice. It is a time to feel guilty about the things other ships are doing better than you, and a time to feel good about the things we are doing better than others.

Paul Czesak and I arrived at Sea-Tac Airport on Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup>. We picked up the Kitsap Air Transporter Van for the two-hour ride over to Keyport, a town that boasts a world-class museum, but is so small it doesn't have a hotel. Paul had made his reservation early enough that he was in the main conference hotel in the beautiful village of Poulsbo. I always wait until the last minute, and the closest accommodations I could get were at the Cimieron Motor Inn in Silverdale. As the van worked its way up the west shore of the bay, they dropped me off at my motel about 1700. To Paul's surprise, when the van reached Keyport, the driver dropped off Paul and said, "I don't go any farther." Fortunately a local who got dropped off with him intervened, took pity on him, and drove him the last three miles to Poulsbo.



The TURNER JOY in Bremerton.

**Well, I never did get kicked out of the Burger King. We boarded the flight, took off and are now over Washington State heading east. We took off to the west over Puget Sound and made the turn south of the bay. A beautiful sight.** Anyway, back in Silverdale, I got cleaned up and set about looking for a way to get to the Museum in Keyport for the opening reception. Too cheap to rent a car, and too cheap to get a cab, I asked the girl at the desk about busses. She said they ran up Silverdale Way to Keyport, but wasn't sure of the schedule. She said that Keyport was about three miles. Now, I routinely try to run two miles a night three nights a week, and having sat on a plane all day, a three mile walk in the beautiful Pacific north woods had a certain appeal. Based on her information I set out on foot to meet my friends. As the sun set lower and lower I climbed up a very steep hill. And then down a very steep hill. After walking for about an hour along Silverdale Way I came to an intersection with a sign that pointed to the right, "Keyport Three Miles." I stopped at a gas station for a Gatorade and it was 1845. I picked up the trail to the right and about a hundred yards down the road was another sign that said "Keyport Two Miles." Thankful for the short mile, I kept walking. Fortunately, the Naval Undersea Museum came into view on the close side of Keyport. More fortunately, I ran into an old friend from the Naval Historical

Center, Frank **"Don't speak to me until you have a curatorial plan" Thompson**. Frank works for the Government, did have a rental car, and based on our years of friendship, the fact that I have a curatorial plan, and that **Pat Perrella** keeps my reports to them current, Frank invited me to dinner and shuttled me back to Silverdale.

**Just finished my turkey sandwich, little bag of Fritos, littler apple and the cup of spring water. I should have tried the ham and cheese. I remember as a kid when I used to look forward to hot airline meals. Ah, but in the "good old days," flying round trip coast to coast for \$300 was unheard of.**

Anyway, over a hundred delegates attended, representing about fifty different ships and organizations. I have served as chairman of the nominating committee for the past ten years, and this year I was part of a panel that presented a seminar on, of all things, newsletters. The big topic of discussion at this conference was the economic hit we have taken this past year. I questioned the wisdom of making the trip in tough economic times, but several board members convinced me it would be worthwhile. Most of the ships are down 25% to a third also and there were rumors of some attractions being down by half. Only the free attractions seem to remain unscathed. I've been beating myself for my marketing failure all season, but by all accounts from my peers, it's not all me. The endless rainy weekends and the lack of disposable income, and general pessimism about job stability all play a role. It's been a tough year for tourism.



Hoisting the new gangway into position.

**My tray table is pretty sticky. I'm handwriting this on the back of the conference program to type later. No laptop for me. The Captain just came on the PA and said we're over western Montana. Two and a half hours to Detroit. Beautiful sunny late afternoon.** Anyway, I came away from the conference with a list of eleven things to follow up on. To make my list public to the world so I will in fact follow up, they are: 1) Contact John McMichael about mattresses. 2) Contact Hartford as they are getting back into marine insurance. 3) Contact Mike Schneider about who carries the insurance on the John W. Brown. 4) Contact Mark Wortheimer about a rangefinder pedestal he thinks he has. 5) Ask Doug Tanner if he can do a test for cathodic activity around the hull. 6) Get the McMaster Carr catalog and order boiler plugs because they are great for stopping hull leaks. 7) Talk to Andrian's about the advantages of PageMaker over Quark Express. 8) Look into a rumor that a floating dry-dock that may be available in Philly. 9) Make sure we send out sympathy letters to the families when we lose a member. 10) Collect volunteer birthdays and send out birthday cards. 11) Read "Leadership as an Art" by Max Depree.



Paul Czesak crossing the new gangway.

For me one of the best parts of the conference was visiting the destroyer TURNER JOY in Bremerton. Her director, **Jim Porter**, is an old-time retired warrant officer who has done

a beautiful job restoring and maintaining his ship. Jim recently took his ship through a seven hundred and fifty thousand dollar dry-docking so I was anxious to pick his brain about his experience. Jim has been through about forty shipyard overhauls, and is so farsighted that he varies the list on TURNER JOY each year to spread out the corrosion that inevitably occurs at the waterline. He had cathodic protection long before most of us knew what it meant. The fact is that most of the funding for these big overhauls now seems to be coming from congressional initiative, or "pork" as we call it when someone else gets it and we don't. The big grant programs have dried up, so it's every man for himself.

Anyway, when I got back to the conference, my friends, who are well aware of my reputation as a scrounger asked me, "So what did you steal from TURNER JOY?" I responded that there was only one artifact on there that I needed for SLATER, and I couldn't get away with it. "Jim Porter's brain!"

**Getting darker. The lady next to me fell asleep reading "Under the Tuscan Sun" by Frances Mayes. Must be a compelling story. Almost as compelling as this narrative. I wish I could fall asleep writing this. The sardine behind me alternately snores loudly or coughs incessantly. I prefer the snoring. It's not contagious.** Anyway, back on the ship, it was a very eventful month. On Friday September 5<sup>th</sup> **Doug Tanner** became the first person to cross onto SLATER's quarterdeck via the new aluminum gangway that connects the ship to the visitor center. It seemed like a long time coming. The previous week Doug had pronounced the shore side attachment ready to receive the gangway. Phone calls were made, and arrangements set. That Friday morning at 0800 sharp, Commissioner **Bob Cross**

provided the Albany Water Department crane and a three-man crew to make the lift. Doug took the morning off and with the help of **Gary Sheedy**, they rigged the slings and lifted the gangway off the grass where it had been waiting for four months. They swung the crane around, moved the 750-pound gangway to the seawall, set the chocks on the crane and hoisted the gangway out over the river. We used the taglines to pull the ship side aboard and it landed right where Doug had the chalk marks. Doug with his full body harness and safety line went over the wall and bolted the gangway to the precut holes. He made a few minor adjustments, climbed up and strode across his latest accomplishment. Doug celebrated by frying up bacon and egg sandwiches for the Water Department crew. By the time the rest of the crew, kibitzers and second guessers showed up the job was done. Doug made some last minute adjustments to the stanchions before heading back to work. **Jack Madden, Stan Murawski, Dave Floyd, "Boats" Muzio and Gene Cellini** rerigged the lifelines, snaking and safety net. The next day the gangway went into full operation permitting visitors to enter and exit through the gift shop, the basic rule of museum operations. We had a second equally momentous accomplishment this month. I stepped into a restroom on the shore, flushed a commode and washed my hands in a real sink with hot water. **Dennis Nagi, Gordon Lattey, plumber John Maguire** and the rest of the Head Team had finally accomplished the goal of giving us a functional restroom. Needless to say, people around here are equally excited about the gangway and the restroom.

**Erik Collin**, our unemployed Unix computer system administrator, finally went through all his regular and extended unemployment benefits without finding a permanent job. He was forced to take a temporary computer support



The new gangway intalled.



Working on the forties.

operations position with one of the local banks at half his previous pay and no benefits. Needless to say, we're not getting nearly as much painting done as we used to. **Stan Murawski and Peter Jez** have been taking up the slack in the deck department. Now that the gangway is done the ship fitters have moved back up to the flying bridge to complete the rangefinder platform and get back on the chock repair project. The chippers have finished the main deck starboard side and are now working inside the 20mm guns on the fantail. The gunners are spread all over. **Dave Floyd and Andy Desorbo** are doing a total restoration of gun 23 just forward of the pilothouse. **Bob Lawrence and Frank Beeler** are about to wrap up repainting the 40's. And **Rich Pavlovic** is doing an outstanding restoration on 20mm gun 26 on the portside adjacent the stack.



Getting ready to dive for that spring housing.

Rich had a near disaster that every gunner can relate to. While working on gun 26 as he was taking the recoil springs off to clean them up, he inadvertently released the barrel spring case and the case and forward spring sailed overboard. Rich and his shipmates spent several days with magnets and grappling hooks fishing for the irreplaceable parts. No joy. We called the Albany Police Department to see if the dive squad was interested in a little exercise, but they were tied up. Finally **Bob Lawrence** stepped forward. His son-in-law is a navy diver attached to the training facility at Ballston Spa, and he brought down a crew of eight that included two divers. They did recover the parts, so they saved the day, and the spring and case are now clean and back on the gun. While they were diving Bob Lawrence shanghaied the rest of the crew and put them to painting on the forties, and greasing the three inchers. Having them aboard made for such a productive day that I may start "losing" more stuff overboard.

**Detroit. The lady next to me ended up at the same gate waiting for the flight to Albany.** It turns out that she teaches school in Seattle and she is heading to Saratoga to visit her son who is going through the Navy nuclear training program at Ballston Spa. Go back to the last paragraph to see what a small world it is. It's amazing how the Navy provides a common thread through so many different lives. She is very proud of her son, and how he has responded to naval discipline. She was interested in what I was writing so I gave her a copy of "Trim But Deadly" and invited her and her son down to visit the SLATER. Anyway, we had several other big events that just happened or are in the offing.



The survivors of the SAMUEL B ROBERTS remember their fallen shipmates.

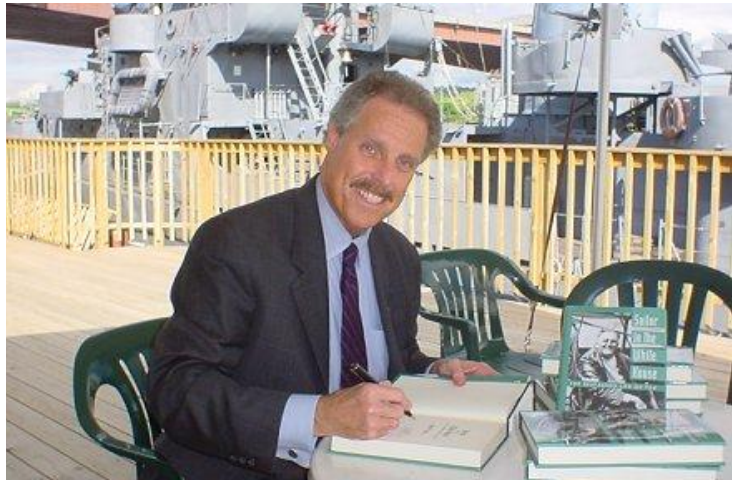
**Greg Krawczyk's** large shipment of USS CAVALLARO parts is on its way from Korea, bound for the Port of Baltimore. New friend **Mike Schneider** of the Liberty Ship JOHN W. BROWN has agreed to receive them at his site. **Gordon Lattey** and I will be driving to Baltimore to pick up the shipment, and hopefully get an authentic rangefinder pedestal at the same time. **Mike Muzio** had the honor of piping the survivors of the SAMUEL B. ROBERTS crew aboard, among the many reunions we have hosted this fall. I had a nice call from **Phyllis Gruber**, and sadly she reported the death of **Lou Yacullo** of the USS LEWIS due to a heart attack. As you may remember, Lou was the retired "Chief Boats" who oversaw the SLATER's restoration in Manhattan, and got us started on the road we are successfully traveling today. Coming on the heels of the death of Phyllis' husband and our good friend, Tom Gruber, it has been a tough year for our SOLDESA plank owners. We'll miss them.

The Michigan Crew coming back with us as I write. **Earl Moorhouse** is in charge of cooks **Bill Kramer** and **Jim Andrus**. "**Michigan**" **Dick Walker**, **Gary Headworth** and **Jim Ray** will work on the fire control shack and flying bridge restoration. **Bob Donlon** and **Ron Mazure** will be back in the upper sonar shack And **Rush Mellinger**, **Roy Branden** and **Earl** are repainting the starboard side main deckhouse. On rainy days they will work below down scaling the deck under the refrigeration compressors. Their numbers were a little thin this year because so many of the chapter members had reunion commitments, but once again, they bring the ship to life and are making a major contribution to our restoration effort. More on that next issue, as well as the annual volunteer appreciation party.



The Tri County Council of Viet Nam Veterans provided the rifle Squad at the SAMUEL B ROBERTS memorial service.

**We just caught the tail end of Hurricane Isabel.** The storm tracked well west of us. The only rain we got was Friday morning. It poured on the memorial services held by the USS NEWMAN and the USS WITTER. We set up the spectators under the awning on the visitor center deck, and put the podium on the main deck portside under the 40mm gun tub for shelter. Both services were fine, moving events. The only irony was that the rain stopped and the sun came out about thirty minutes after the ceremonies were over and it turned into a beautiful but breezy day. And our favorite author, **Bob Cross**, is now in our gift shop. In print that is. Bob's biography on Franklin Roosevelt "Sailor in the White House" is now in stock in our gift shop. Bob will be holding his first book signing in the Albany area on Friday October third here at the SLATER at 1300. For those of you wishing to purchase a personalized copy of Bob's critically acclaimed book and help the SLATER, come down to the signing and visit us. We will be selling the books with a 25% discount at the book signing. The crews of the USS BROUGH and the USS HEERMAN will also be aboard that afternoon, so it should be a great day for the SLATER.



Bob Cross autographing copies of SAILOR IN THE WHITEHOUSE.

**See you at the book signing.**