

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Friday 21 January 2005, air temperature coming in was minus seven. The happiest sight of the day was the wisp of smoke coming out of the stack. The furnace is working okay. Draft marks are fine, eight and a half forward, nine foot aft. List is still half a degree to starboard, as it has been since 1997. Despite being packed in by ice, there's no excess tension on the mooring lines. The agitators are working well, keeping the water between the ship and the pier free of ice, so we have some cushion. We lost the tire by the starboard breakwater. **Gene Jackey** and **Jim Gelstrom** rigged a new one last Wednesday, but we'll have to wait till an east wind pushes us out from the pier a bit so we can slip it in. I really wasn't expecting anyone but **Erik Collin** to show up today, but **Dave Hamilton** rolled in to chip paint, so we cranked up the kerosene heater in B-4 to thaw out the air compressor. By 0930 I could hear the happy sound of a needle scaler running on the reefer deck. The next deadline is the Save America's Treasures Grant application due February first. I better wrap this up so I can get on that. It's the kind of morning when the sailor's prayer becomes, "Please lord, don't let me need to use the portajohn today." We got off easy for a while but the Albany winter is upon us. I want to take a minute to thank all of you who sent Christmas cards full of good wishes, and kept the table in the CPO mess full of goodies over the holiday season. It did wonders for our spirits and our waistlines, but we won't go there. Plenty of time to recover.



Another winter in Rensselaer.

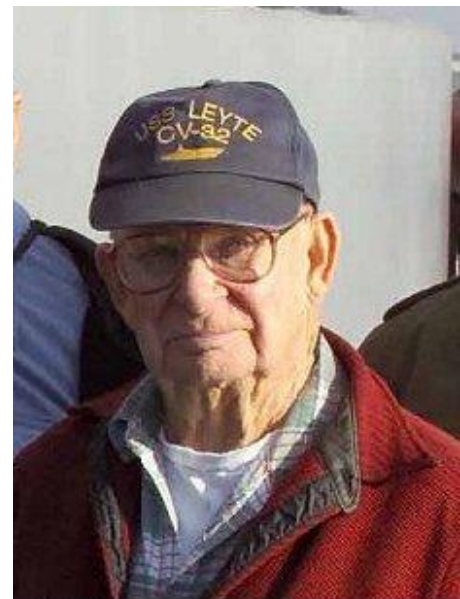
The crew has the ship pretty well torn up, just like being in the shipyard. The galley is a disaster, but well on the road to recovery. **Gene Jackey** removed the last of the old ceramic tile that was under the old ranges and opened up the deck drains that were covered with tile. **Doug Tanner** and **Tim Benner** fabricated a new grease trap for the exhaust vent over the grills. They're working on getting the ranges mounted permanently. **Stan Murawski** has done a great job cleaning all the stainless steel behind the ranges and fridge. He's also gone back to his old job as oil king, making sure we have enough heating oil for the furnace. **Clark Farnsworth** fabricated a stand for the new refrigerator. He also modified an electrical switch panel to handle the increased electrical load we have in there with the reefer



Ed Whitbek and Chris Fedden scaling in the reefer deck.

and the icemaker. **Barry Witte** is feeding a new power line from the messdecks panel through B-1 so the space will have a dedicated circuit capable of handling the load. **Bob Calender, Larry Williams, Don Shattuck and Ken Kaskoun** have removed the old fluorescent lighting and are installing the original incandescent fixtures. We're about to lose the service of three of those guys. Larry's heading to Florida, and Bob and Ken and their wives have tickets to Thailand, purchased long before recent tragic events. We wish them well. Don will be by his lonesome on Mondays.

It should be noted that on Monday, January 3rd, Clark Farnsworth celebrated his 83rd birthday by working on a chock in the machine shop. He had been all caught up, and was waiting for someone with better knees to weld the chock he had finished back on to the deck, and cut off another one to repair. **Doug Tanner** obliged him, and picked a warm Saturday to cut one off the portside waterway just forward of the depth charge projectors. It was a nice day for working outside, eleven degrees. Doug probably did it so he would have another reason to gripe about the lousy working conditions around here. During the winter **"Rocky" Rockwood** keeps the whaleboat covered with a tarp rigged on a wire from the stem to the rudder post. During the last heavy snowfall we came in to find the tarp sagging in the middle. We thought the wire had broken, but it turned out the weight of the snow had broken off the rudder post from the top pintle up. The whole thing is rotted inside. Another woodworking project for spring. Just glad that didn't happen when we were out joyriding in the whaleboat last season!



Clark Farnsworth has been welding for us since 1998.

The chippers Ed Whitbeck, Chris Fedden, Dave Hamilton and now Jim Gelstrom have just about got the reefer deck portside storeroom finished. Chris has already started back in the laundry, which will be their next project. They have to warm up the air compressor with kerosene, and then keep the air tools on an electric space heater to keep them running. It's a tough job in the cold. **Larry Rockwood and Nelson Potter** have been working getting the bosun's storeroom just forward of the anchor windlass room cleaned out. That's on our chip and paint list for next winter. Nelson has an ulterior motive for helping Rocky clean things out. Nelson has really gotten into the business of making rope fenders, and he's always trying to scrounge manila line.



The generator has had a rough life.



Progress on the 8-268A ship's service generator in B-3.

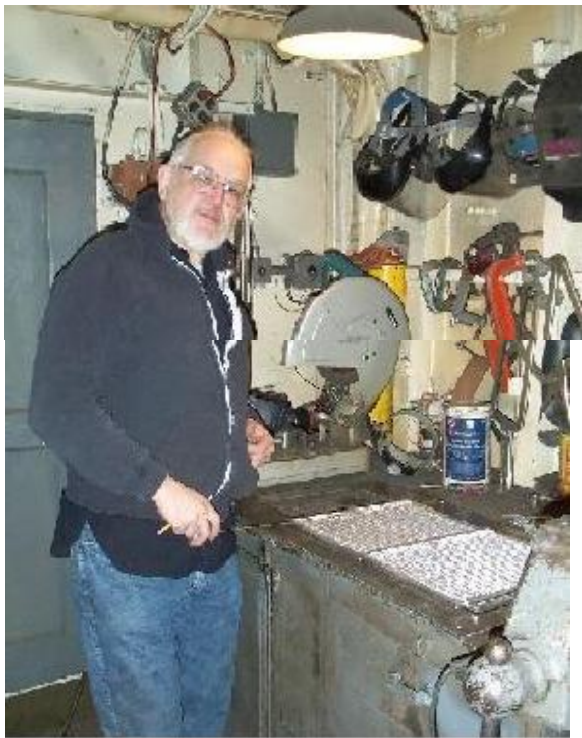
Like any good deck officer, I make it a point to avoid the machinery spaces as much as I can. I have been accused of not knowing where they are. I don't know what possessed me, but for some reason I went into the aft engine room a couple weeks ago. I was stopped in my tracks by what I saw. In the lower level, portside is the shiniest, prettiest, most beautiful restored eight-cylinder diesel I have ever seen. I knew that **Gus Negus** and **Karl Herchenroder** were making progress on getting it to run, but I had no idea of the strides they were making cosmetically. The engine is a work of art, the valve covers shine and the restored gage board truly looks like its Smithsonian quality. Unfortunately, they've had their attention diverted as they've been preoccupied solving the problem with the emergency diesel generator in B-4, but we know they'll be back on it soon. Can't wait for the day that the whole engine room looks like that engine!

On the Albany side, Rosehn thought she was going to have a quiet winter alone to get caught up on accounting and administration, but she was wrong. She's had the company of **Tom Moore, Dennis Nagi and Paul Czesak**, working on increasing the size of our classroom. The rip out of the old wall is complete and they are ready to begin reconstruction. Tom took advantage of a couple of unusually warm days to do some needed repair work on the camels in anticipation of spring.

We owe a great debt to Gary Grimmel of Rensselaer Iron and Steel, the scrap yard adjacent to the SLATER. Gary has been really great about sending a huge front-end loader over to our parking lot every time it snows and clearing us out. When we lost one of our tire fenders, Gary had a replacement tire dropped off at our gangway. He's been a great neighbor. With the price of steel as high as it is, he pretty much cleared out his yard this month and sent everything he could load off to Turkey.



Chris Fedden shipping in the reefer deck.



Stan Murawski making filters for the galley vent.

We always get a little nervous when they're loading scrap. Those ships are so big; they could easily cut us in thirds and hide a piece of SLATER in three holds. Don't worry; nobody has made us any offers. We also are indebted to the crew from **Wildwood School**. As you may remember, we've been providing an opportunity for these learning-disabled kids to work aboard the ship for the past five years, three days a week. This winter they took on the task of keeping us supplied with jugs for water for the coffee mess, as we have no running water in the winter. This is the first winter we haven't had to go on water hours because they've been so effective in keeping the water jugs full.

Thanks to Paul Cora of the Baltimore Maritime Museum, we received three pallets of light bulbs. Paul has a connection with **Philips Lighting** and they keep the TANEY and the other ships in Baltimore supplied. Paul took pity on us during his last visit and asked Philips if they could supply bulbs for the SLATER. I think we're set for about ten years. **Barry Witte** worked with Paul to get the specific types we needed, clear 60 watt incandescent, screw in 60-watt fluorescents, and vibration resistant 60-watt fan bulbs. They are all safely stored in the forward magazine. Coast Guard SK **Dick Walker** was particularly happy about the donation, as he has been buying bulbs out of his own pocket for the past three years. Such are the duties of the Storekeeper on the SLATER. We also took delivery of sixty-one forest green flameproof vinyl mattress covers. These were paid for by a grant from the **Wright Family Foundation** and made locally by Tough Traveler in Schenectady. They replicate the covers that were provided for the bedding on warships in 1945 when the Kamikaze threat with the resultant fires became such a threat. They also serve a practical function in keeping our bedding clean and sanitary for the upcoming overnight camping program.



Valve work by Gene Jackey.

Our thanks also to Michele Vennard and the crew over at the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau. They continue to work through the winter to bring reunions our way in the summer season. Reunion coordinator **Jamie Winters** has been working with several ships to try and get them to visit Albany including the USS Raymond DE 341, USS William C. Miller DE 259, USS Hayter DE 212/APD 80, USS Spangenberg DE 223, USS Blair DE/DER 147, Robert E. Peary DE 132, USS Wintle DE 25, USS Francis M. Robinson DE 220, USS Clarence L. Evans DE 113, USS Wantuck DE 692/APD 125, USS Mitchell DE 43, USS Fessenden DE/DER 142, USS Liddle DE 206/APD 60, USS Stewart DE 238, USS Otterstetter DE 244, and the USS Seid DE 256. If you're thinking about bringing your group our way, give her a call toll free at 800-258-3582.. She's there to make your reunion go a whole lot smoother.



USS SLATER in Rensselaer, before the ice moved in.

Our Education Coordinator of seven years, Nancy Buxton, has left our employment. Nancy played a major role in seeing the USS SLATER evolve from that rusty hulk to a world-class historic ship exhibit. Nancy was instrumental in establishing the initial tour route; guide training program, writing the manuals, and training the volunteers. She established a successful education program from scratch under the most adverse conditions. She applied herself to acquire a thorough knowledge of the history of destroyer escorts, the USS SLATER, and the Battle of the Atlantic. Nancy is a warm, dedicated individual who inspired people to want to do their best for the project through her manner and her own sense of commitment. She has worked at all levels. On the high side, she wrote instructions, inspired the volunteers and trained and supervised them. Yet she has never shirked from pitching in herself give the tours, raise the flags or even dump the trash. She treated her staff and volunteers with respect, fairness, and a true sense of compassion. As a result, we're in the process of hiring a replacement. We've advertised the opening at several places including the Teacher's Center, The Historic Naval Ships website, the Museum Association of New York, and America's Job Bank. So far the result has been very gratifying in terms of quality and quantity of applicants. We will review the resumes at the end of the month, narrow it down to the top five competitors, and schedule interviews for the first two weeks of February in the hope bringing a new person on board 1 March in time to gear up for the 2005 season. In the interim, **Paul Czesak, Gordon Lattey, and Penny Welbourn** are jointly filling the education billet, revising the Teacher's Manual, Guide training procedures, and gearing up for what we hope will be a great year with the overnight camping program.



Pat Perrella's presentation at the Albany Institute of History and Art.

On Sunday January 16th Pat Perrella was invited to do a presentation at the Albany Institute of History and Art on the SLATER's collection of artifacts. The Albany Institute truly represents museum professionalism at its highest level, and to be invited to make a presentation there was indeed an honor. Pat had a power point presentation describing a brief history of DEs, the SLATER, and some of her most significant artifacts from DEs named for veterans from New York State. We had a good turnout from the SLATER crew and I think we all learned a good deal

more about the depth of our collection that we can pass on to our visitors. To show her level of dedication, Pat came all the way back from Florida for this show. But she didn't stay long. The following Tuesday she was on a plane bound for a warmer climate.

Most of the maintenance crew, led by Tanner and Benner, have been talking about following her! Our thanks to all those at the Albany Institute and especially **Erika Sanger** who helped her put on the session. And special thanks to all the SLATER crew who showed up to support her.

We have compiled an annual report of all our accomplishments for this past year that is being included in the Fourth Quarter 2004 Trim But Deadly newsletter. We are including preliminary financial data. However, this data should not be considered final until an audited statement is issued. In a nutshell, our overall spendable income from all sources except the endowment was \$382,025. Our total expenses were \$362,679, so we're running in the black. We increased our endowment by donations of \$50,820. Our attendance was up 19% over 2003 for a total of 12,006 visitors. But before you get excited about that, remember that in 2003 we were down 30% from 14,508 visitors in 2002, so we're still climbing out of the cellar. No ENRON accounting here. Long term, our primary goal has been accomplished. We have turned the SLATER into a first class stationary museum. That's an accomplishment we can all be proud of. Thanks to your generosity, the SLATER is financially viable with 55% of our income coming from donations and grants and 45% from operations.



Beth Spain and fellow crewmembers somewhere in Kuwait.

Thanks to all of you who continue to support us through the winter fund. Our total winter fund contributions since October first has been an amazing \$48,000. **Erik Collin** is finally caught up with the backlog of thank you letters. And we continue to owe a great debt to the "Crossgates Mall Crew" who have continued to man the Dogtag machine and are making money even though the holiday shopping rush is over. **Les and Annette Beauchaine, Al VanDerzee, Jack Madden, Bob Donlon, Eileen Parfrey and Penny Welbourn** continue to give their time on the weekends for SLATER. And finally, our best wishes go to longtime volunteer **Bill Coyle**. He's heading in for surgery this month and will be laid

up for a while. **Don Shattuck** is keeping the clocks wound and set until Bill returns. And to keep all of you up to date on the exploits of our overseas crewmember, **Beth Spain** made Boatswain's Mate first before she shipped over to Kuwait. Last we heard she was completing her qualifications as a small boat skipper and should be running her own boat now. Her unit has a website. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her and her husband **Mark** who is at home with the three kids. We're not

sure which one has the most "hazardous duty." And as I wrap this up on Monday January 24th, go back to the first line. The outside air temp this morning was minus fourteen with a foot of new snow. No kidding. Don't say it can't get worse.

See you next month