



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

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What an exciting month! We opened to the public for our 26th season in Albany, hosted overnights, conducted tours, and continued our maintenance projects while our parking lot was a full-blown construction site.

Shanna started the month by hosting all the tour guides for our annual Refresher Lunch on the first. We used this event to welcome back all the tour guides for the season. Shanna updated them on changes to the tour route and our expectations and goals for the year. The guides took a tour of the Engine Room and Collections Space, to get their bearings again after a long, forgetful winter. Then it was time for the pizza party. With staff, tour guides, and maintenance volunteers overflowing the mess deck, a good time was had by all.



The following Wednesday, the 5th, we opened for the season. The sun was out, but the wind was howling. We welcomed 80 visitors aboard on opening day, and **Alan Fox** gave the first tour. The hiccup was that the temporary power to our register was not working, even though it was fine on Tuesday when we tested it. Did I forget to mention we were operating out of a pod in the parking lot? With our building under construction, we had to go back to our roots and sell tickets and merchandise from the parking lot.

Volunteer, Alan Fox led the first tour of the season.



The trailer demolition was an exciting stage of the Shoreside Facilities Project.

Shanna and Gary have been working for a full year on the new Visitor’s Center and it’s finally here! It all started as a pipe dream for Shanna in March of 2022. The City of Albany announced that they were awarding \$5 million in grants to organizations under the American Rescue Plan. Shanna had been joking about a new building for years, but the money we raised through donations is meant for the ship, not shoreside facilities. Shanna went to work drafting an application, not expecting much, but figured we had to try.

Before we knew it, we’d made it to the next round of applicants. In order to move on to the final round, the application committee recommended that we partner with other organizations to foster community and spread the wealth. That was easy. We took a walk across the parking lot to our friends at **Dutch Apple Cruises** and told them about our application, that we needed a partner, and this would help us improve our area. They agreed of course. Then Shanna edited our application to include Dutch Apple and we submitted again.

This is starting to feel like a very real possibility at this point. Shanna and Gary got to work, planning potential layouts of a new building and our Board began reaching out to construction companies to pitch handling the work. After many meetings, we agreed to work with a local family-run business, **J. H. Maloy Contractors**. We spent many months

considering different layouts, amenities, and features.

When we officially heard that we had been awarded \$500,000 from the ARPA Grant, to be split with Dutch Apple, we were ecstatic and ready to move forward with the plans we had been discussing. This grant money would allow us to tear down the existing outdated buildings, construct two new buildings, upgrade our internet service, install security lighting in our parking lot, and repave the parking lot.

At this same time, Shanna applied for a grant from the office of State Assemblymember Pat Fahy. After a lot of paperwork and many more phone calls, we were awarded \$125,000, to assist in the installation of the new shoreside building and upgraded security of SLATER's shoreside facilities. We also applied for and were awarded a \$5,000 grant from **Berkshire Bank**, for a new handicap accessible ramp to be installed adjacent to the building.



Shanna was certainly excited for the demolition to begin!



The tour guides operated from under a tent for the whole month of April.

We are still about \$50,000 short of funding the whole project, and have embarked on a spring fundraising campaign to try to cover that cost. As previously reported in the March edition of Signals, Shanna and **Jo Ann** vacated their office in the old trailer and relocated to the Wardroom at the end of March. On the 5th of April, as we were opening to the public, the construction crew worked to disconnect the water and power to the trailer.

By April 10th the backhoe had arrived, and demolition began. Some of our volunteers who spent A LOT of time keeping this trailer from falling apart were a bit sentimental to see her go, but we are all excited for the new adventure to begin. Some rumblings of “liability” kept Shanna out of the backhoe to take the trailer down herself, but not for lack of interest on her part!

With the trailer gone by the 11th, the ground was leveled, pilings were dug, and filled with concrete by the 14th. The 19th brought the most exciting news so far. The new building pulled into the parking lot and was going to be put in place! Things moved quickly, but those last 3 inches to have the two halves meet took about 4 hours. The construction crew had a long day, but they got the two halves together and weather-proofed before they left for the day, but not before they had to remove the stairs to our observation deck due to space.

By the 25th the “island” in our parking lot was removed to clear up additional parking spaces. Just don’t bring up the tree, I am still mourning. By the end of the month, the construction crews had the water and sewage connected, electrical activated, deck stairs reinstalled, and steps built from the building to the observation deck.



Ed is continuing restoration in the steering gear compartment.

The first week of May is our spring workweek, and it looks like they may get rain most days. So, Shanna figures that will be some extra attention on the new building, and getting the alarms, internet, and phone lines running. Hopefully the ladies will be out of the wardroom and moved in by the end of the work week. We’ll keep you posted.

Preparing for Opening Day is always a stressful occasion for everyone aboard the ship, including John. In the offseason, Collections becomes a mess of donations and tables, to give us more room to work. Add to that the restoration of the

storeroom directly below the compartment, and it was a dirty, loud, smelly mess. Fortunately, the storeroom was completed and looks fabulous! **Dennis, Ed, and Ron** helped to clean up their winter project and then stowed away the tables for next winter.

Donations have continued to come into the museum. The largest addition came from the family of **Lt. Cmdr. Lewis Iselin**. He was the Commanding Officer of USS **ATHERTON (DE-169)** when she sank U-853. Years ago they generously donated an officer's hat and a life raft from U-853 that was retrieved by the **ATHERTON** crew. Most recently, a binder full of documents related to their father's service, including the Legion of Merit he was awarded, now calls the museum home.



Jo Ann and her mom continue to keep the crew fed on Mondays.



Barry and Art open up our latest acquisition, the portable fighting lights.

A collection of artifacts and builder's plaques have also made their way to the museum by way of the "Newport Dealey's." Due to dwindling membership, they have chosen to end their annual reunions, which ran for 22 consecutive years. Some of their artifacts are now being donated to interested museums. We received two builder's plaques and a shadow box, containing numerous mementos from **DEALY** class ships and their crew. **Marc Arsenault** and **Ernie Pina** made the trek to Albany to hand deliver the items and take a tour of the **SLATER**. The **DEALEY** class was the first class of destroyer escort built after WWII and was similar in design. It was a lot

of fun listening to them reminisce, and we thank them for entrusting their precious artifacts with us.

Another important milestone in USS SLATER's collection came this month when we acquired a partial set of emergency fighting lights. These emergency fighting lights were contained in four large metal boxes and were designed to be rigged if the permanently installed fighting lights were inoperative. Now, in addition to being the only historic naval ship to have a fully functional set of permanent fighting lights, USS SLATER is also the only ship to have a set of emergency fighting lights.

Like all projects aboard USS SLATER, the accomplishment came as a result of a little bit of luck, and a lot of effort on the part of five people. First of all, my dear friend **Ed Zajkowski** made us all aware that these things existed in the first place. Copies of the prints were discovered in the National Archives during our mast research in 2019.

Then, it was Barry Witte, who spotted the lights on eBay. Third was volunteer **Chief Art Dott**, who funded the acquisition by paying for shipping. **Eric Bakker**, a nautical antiques shop owner in California, agreed to donate the emergency fighting lights, once he learned of their historic significance. And finally, there was **Mike Tuttobene**, who made all the



Gene and Dave completing the adjustments to the foc's'cle hatch.

arrangements to ship them from Eric's shop in California.

These lights were intended to be used if the normal, installed system was inoperative. By design, they were battery powered. Things onboard must have been pretty dire if one needed to use these lights. They could be hung anywhere, even if the mast was destroyed.

John also spent a few days in Syracuse, attending the Museum Association of New York conference. He participated in a panel with the **Intrepid Air and Space Museum** and

Historic Hudson Valley, to explain the history of USS MASON (DE-529) and his experience handling a collection on a floating museum. While there, he ran into the son of a sailor who took part in the historic convoy NY-119, in which the MASON crew displayed their bravery. Steven Tedesco from the Buffalo Naval Park also attended and the two were able to “talk ship.”



Danny and Doug discuss the restoration of the aft three-inch ready service locker.



Searching for parts in the forward engine room.

The maintenance crew continued with several projects. In addition to assisting the building contractors as needed, they worked on several projects to prepare the ship for the upcoming DESA Reunion. Most important to me was the chipping and painting of our decks and superstructure. Chipping on the fantail and the maindeck portside to the amidship gangway is complete, as is one coat of primer. We are just waiting for those rarest of days, days with no rain and no visitors.



Run she may, shine she must. Jim and the engineers keep the aft engine room spotless!

The portside breakwater door has been scaled and fitted. It is back on the temporary workbench, while **Doug** and his shipfitter team touch up a couple of things, including a section of gasket channel that is rotted out and needs repair. We'll finish up welding it, prep it for primer, then prime the channel and the door. After the gasket is installed, it will be ready to hang and get a topcoat of paint.

They also spent a lot of time adjusting the dogs on the foc's'c'le hatch. That has been completely primed and painted and the gasket has been installed. They should be back in place by the time that you read this.

Down at Scarano's Boatyard, Tommy Moore has continued sanding, caulking, and painting our motor whaleboat. We hope to have it back in Albany in time for the DESA Reunion and give boat rides. **Walt Stuart** and **Thomas Scian** got the paint float back alongside under the accommodation ladder. Walt has been working on the restoration of our wooden Jacobs ladder.

A lot of work has been going on in the Crypto Compartment. As part of our effort to do a proper display for our ECM Machine, we did a complete disassembly, cleaning, and repainting of the ECM cabinet that we salvaged off the USS CLAMP in 2006. The cabinet has been repainted, and we are making modifications to the Crypto spaces to install the cabinet, and then install the ECM in the cabinet to prepare it for public display.



Gary sure is excited to be rid of the "island" in the parking lot.

Now that the ship is cleaned up, the engineers down below have once again turned their attention to the 16-cylinder project. In the spirit of

doing no harm, we are tracing out plumbing, and isolating the engine we want to run. Normally, these systems are intertwined with the other engine it sits next to, but that just creates more plumbing that can have issues. Don't worry, when you tour the engine room, you won't be able to tell that we made any changes. Everything will still appear just as it was in 1945.

Work continues on removing stuck injectors and replacing them with rebuilt units that the Greek Navy left for us in a cabinet in B1 all those years ago. We are testing them, using the original injector testers mounted in the engine room, then installing them. Once the throttle linkage is free again, we will get to work on the engine timing! Timing needs to be set for each injector, so it is a bit of a job. The looming issue of lube oil is still above us, but we will hopefully have that solved by the time we are ready to turn the engine over again.

On another front, Mike Dingmon has built a special tank in his shop for the 8-cylinder heat exchanger. It is heated and will circulate the necessary solvents to get the fluid ways clear again. The 8-cylinder generator should be making plenty of noise this season.

Doug is planning the shipfitters next big project. The ready service lockers in the aft gun 33 tub are showing considerable deterioration, so he is planning to lift them off their stands

and do a complete repair. We also still have one leak in the deck around gun 31 that needs attention, so these guys do have job security.

Despite all the handicaps we have been working under, our crew rose to the challenge. They have been busy with tours and overnights throughout the month! We've hosted 140 overnight campers and almost 2,000 visitors that have stepped aboard in our first month of 2023. On the 22nd, we welcomed aboard 90 individuals whose families are active-duty military. Working with the **New York State Department of Veteran's Services**, we celebrated the Month of the Military Child by getting these kids aboard SLATER and showing them a fun and educational time.

See you next month.

Tim



The new Visitor's Center is in place! Now we just have to clean up inside and around her.