



SLATER SIGNALS

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

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I write on the first day of the New Year, looking back at December, the first month that we were closed to the public. One of the things I like about being in the Museum Ship business is that I like everything to be neat, clean, and tidy. To quote my wife, "I like my days to be refreshingly the same." I like my ship to be in ship shape. Ask our interns, every day I ask them if they polished the helm.

When we close to the public, we lose our reason for keeping things ship shape. Without visitors, what's the point? The focus is now on maintenance, and the crew set up

several projects that couldn't be done while we were open to the public and cleaned up each afternoon. For me, it feels like we went back to shipyard life. All the noise, dirt, and grime that go with being in the shipyard. It all seems kind of chaotic to me. I have to brace myself for four months of shipyard-like hell. My life feels like it's in chaos. But when we clean up and open in the spring, the ship (and I) will be much better for it.



***Don't worry Rizzuto,
we're running the show now.***

The first project to get started was the restoration of the aft engine room supply fan plenum chamber. What started as a small repair job to put a hinged cover on the intake grew into an extensive rebuild and replacement of a great deal of wasted metal inside the fan room. **Danny, Chuck**

and **Earl** cut away the exterior ductwork, and replaced all the wasted sheet metal on the duct. The stuffing tubes and interior frames are being replaced. At this point the project is about 50% complete. When asked how he's doing, Danny just says, "cold." But he's been here at least 3 times a week throughout December, so he must be tougher than the upstate NY weather.

Forward, Doug, Super Dave, and Earl are tackling the wasted metal on the port side of the wardroom bulkhead. The first steps in the process were cleaning out all our supplies in the storeroom cage below, and removing of all the insulation on the port bulkhead of the wardroom. Next, the port hatch to the messdeck was secured



In the storeroom below aft berthing. Ed, I hope you remember how to put that shelving back together!



The usual, Doug "supervising" Super Dave's work.

and a dust curtain hung in the wardroom. The process of cropping out the wasted metal and fitting in new plate has begun.

At the other end of the ship, back in the steering gear compartment, Gary has hopes for finishing this project in the spring. **Ed, Thomas, and Dennis** got the entire compartment masked for spray painting. Spray painter **Kevin Sage** arrived on the scene to spray out the whole compartment white, free of charge as his Christmas present to the crew. Gary's next task is to match the paint colors of the deck and the mechanical piping, paint them, and reinstall the piping.

During the spray painting Gary turned his attention to the storeroom on the starboard side below berthing space C-203-L. Ed and Dennis went to work too. Despite the cold temperatures and constant bending over, the complaining has been at a minimum. The spare parts stored below were removed. These included signal flags, sinks, trough seats, and boxes of insignia. Shelving was disassembled and scraping and surface preparation for painting has begun. Once it is repainted, it will be another storage compartment for our ever-expanding collection of artifacts.



Radio Steve and his new cipher machine.

Up in the radio shack, we got some support from far away from



James spent another month in the B-3 bilge.

new friend, **Steve Clancy** from North Carolina. Steve noticed that the “H” key was missing from our newly acquired Electronic crypto machine. He enlisted the help of his friend **Sameera Abeyrathna** of Dallas, Texas to generate a new “H” legend. Steve placed one of the “H” legends with the replacement glass and key ring. Sam also printed one “H” in bold and one in a brown background. Steve warned us to be gentle when installing the replacement key due to its age. It’s all about the details.

Down in the bilges, December was a month of cleanup. Tour guide, Tom has joined the engineering team to be an additional safety man for **James**

and his bilge crawling activities. At the start of the month, the engineers drained down the 8-cylinder diesel engine block, and cooling lines. This involved removing the seawater supply line and using a pump to empty it. The block was drained using a valve we installed long ago to make short work of the task.

While doing this, we discovered that the sea chest valve was not seating fully, letting a slow drip into the lines. That meant that the bucket left under the drain to catch the few gallons of water typically inside, was overfilled and emptied into the bilge. We exercised the valve open and shut and tested it.



Tom and Larry standing safety watch for James.

Eventually, it was fully sealed, and the lines are empty. This was an expected result because this valve was rebuilt and lapped back in 2014. Next up was the cleanup.



John and Walt stowed the hedgehog projectiles.

About 60 gallons of water had gone into the bilge, both the clean parts, and the oily parts. This made us especially thankful for the bilge preservation done throughout the year. Hours of tedious scraping, degreasing, and coating has resulted in a resilient surface. The water that leaked into the bilge didn't get through the linseed layer we put down, meaning no new rusting of the hull. Using an air powered diaphragm pump, shop vacs,

and some buckets, we were able to remove all the standing water from the bilge.

Work has now resumed on scraping uncleaned portions of the bilge. We have only 2 more bilge pockets that need to be scraped and coated. These two are especially tight and require moving gauge lines to access, as well as a very flexible bilge rat to fit in. Despite the setbacks that come out of nowhere on such an old ship, progress is moving well.



Tony led Christmas Carols on the messdecks.

Elsewhere around the ship, Walt and John got all the



Grinding in the fan room.

Thanks to all our visitors and donors who allow us to work year round!

hedgehog projectiles stowed and the projector covered for the winter. Walt and Earl covered gun 31 for the winter. Cathy, Tony, and John did their best to give us the Christmas Spirit. Cathy got the messdecks cleaned up and set up our tree in forward berthing.

Besides having to move the date because of inclement weather, our Christmas lunch went off without a hitch. Mary Beth brought in food for our volunteers to enjoy. Cathy decorated the tree, John came dressed as Santa, and Tony led us all in the annual caroling. All in all, it was a fun event, and it is always nice to have everyone together to show them their hard work doesn't go unnoticed.

Unfortunately, moving the lunch meant that some of our Saturday volunteers missed out, we'll have to get them a special lunch before the winter is over.

Shanna spent the beginning of December gathering data to measure our tour season against other seasons. I thought we'd share a little bit of what she found with you. The good news is that all our numbers (visitation, store sales, volunteer hours) are up from last year. We have not quite recovered to our numbers in 2019, but we've made progress and there are a lot of museums that are in a lot rougher shape.



Interns Tyler and Gio are completing inventory inside the Ship's Store.



Shanna and Gary continue to make progress on our new building. Gary is saving the old bookcase to reuse in the new space.

We welcomed over 13,200 visitors aboard the ship this season. 866 of those visitors were part of groups, 558 participated in our Overnight program, and 1,637 attended our events and ceremonies throughout the year. Our brand new 2-hour, Stem to Stern tour was enjoyed by 260 people. This tour is twice as long as the regular tour and brings guests into the Engine Room and Collections Space.

We sold over \$60,000 worth of merchandise in our Ship's Store and brought in over \$90,000 in ticket sales. These amounts are great, and we are so

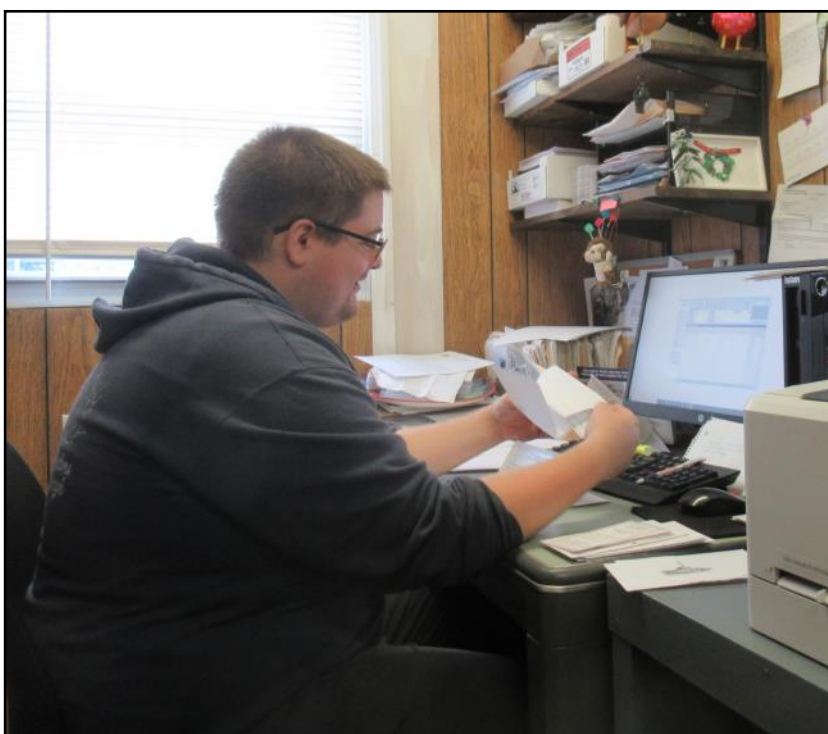
appreciative for each and every person who supports us. But, keep in mind that it costs over \$1,000 per day to keep SLATER afloat. Speaking of which, our Winter Fund solicitation should be on its way to all of you who are on our mailing list. Interns, **Gio** and **Tyler** have been in a few days per week to help Shanna with year-end inventory, and John with his many projects in the Collections Space.

With the season over, the Collections Space has been transformed into a makeshift office.

Throughout the season, pieces that need to be catalogued tend to form piles in the small Supply Office. Without tourists walking through to see our exhibits, the piles have now moved outside the office. Though there seems to be even less space available to **John** now as he opens boxes only to get sidetracked with something else.



Walt and Warren finished covering the guns.



John working on winter fund.

One of the things to sidetrack him was the discovery of a crumbling photo album belonging to Lt. Wagner.

Most of the photographs we already have, but Wagner took the time to write the names of nearly everyone photographed. Our website can now be updated to be even more faces with the names of the SLATER crew.

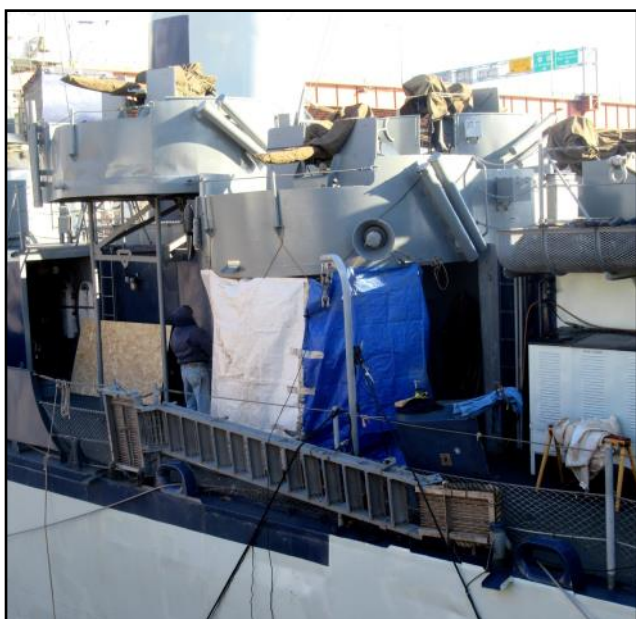
Tour guides Alan and Tom have offered their services to begin the monumental task

of sorting through our individual ship files and binders that we have grown over our 25 years. Whenever a family member of a DE sailor visits, we often grab these for them to look at. Early in the museum's history, all information gathered was usually added to these files. Including print outs of websites, crew obituaries, and photographs. The information will be sorted, most of it returned to the files and the access information trimmed.

The goal is to clean out the unnecessary items to get an idea of what files are lacking in representation and which ships are overloaded. Once the sorting is complete, the hope is to scan the files and have them available in the gift shop for individuals to look through. They can then be emailed directly to



Cathy made sure we had a Christmas Tree up!



The windbreak for the fan room project sure is attractive.

their inbox instead of them taking a potentially bad picture of the pages. But, just like the Collections website, this is a long-term project that will take time.

John's curatorial efforts were shaken up by the late arrival of our Winter Fund donation. Both Jo Ann and Shanna were off the last two weeks of December, just as your Winter Fund Donations began to pour in. Neither John nor I had any experience posting the donations and printing thank you letters, so we had two choices; leave everything for Jo Ann or figure it out. We dove into Jo Ann's

program and found out that membership renewals, restoration donations and endowment donations required a skillset beyond our abilities. But the Winter Fund had been simplified and we think we figured it out. About half the letters went out before John noticed that we needed to change 2022 to 2023 in the letter body.

The bottom line is that if your “thank you” letter is late, wrong, or you didn’t get one at all, let us know. Jo Ann is back on the job and she will be making things right. I suspect she’ll be spending most of January correcting our mistakes. Your response to our Winter Fund solicitation and calendar sale has been phenomenal! We are all so appreciative of our generosity in helping keep the volunteers warm this winter.

So until we can get the ship cleaned up for spring, we’ll carry on with our winter restoration projects, until opening day we hope “everyday will be refreshingly the same.”

See you next month,

Tim



We’re settling in for a long winter.