



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

USS Slater DE-766

PO Box 1926

Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943

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As 2023 comes to an end and we reflect on another successful season, I am overwhelmed with the need to thank all the volunteers, staff, and donors who have continued to support us for so long. I have to believe that consistent communication has been a major part of our success. For 26 years, we have managed to get SLATER SIGNALS out once a month, first in print and now online. In addition, building on the work of **Sam Saylor**, **Marty Davis**, **Victor Buck**, and **Richard Andrian**, we have continued to publish TRIM BUT DEADLY four times a year since 1995.

As a result of this consistency, we have acquired a reputation as being great communicators. One of the comments we often get through SIGNALS and TRIM BUT

DEADLY, is that we have a way of making people feel that they know the volunteers. People are able to follow the progress and be part of the project through all the twists and turns they each bring. That creates a feeling of community that helps so much when we make the Winter Fund appeal.



This crew is ready for their Christmas lunch!

2023 was a watershed year, the shoreside improvements made us all feel spoiled! The newly repaved parking lot is now fully lighted at night, the new Visitor Center gives staff, volunteers, and visitors a more spacious gift shop, classroom, and office, a more comfortable shore head, and something we never had before, a breakroom for volunteers and staff. The new improvements make for a very comfortable set up.

On December 13th Shanna bravely invited all her tour guides to a meeting, for them to offer suggestions on how to improve our interpretative programs. Her tour guides filled Chief's quarters to give their feedback on the season. They brought suggestions and ideas to improve upon for 2024 and what they think we do well. **John and Shanna** were complimented for the excellent job they had done and how smoothly most days seem to go off without a hitch. Stay tuned for the improvements and new opportunities as we open to the public in April!



Ken and Larry work on installing a compartment fan in the Ship's Office.

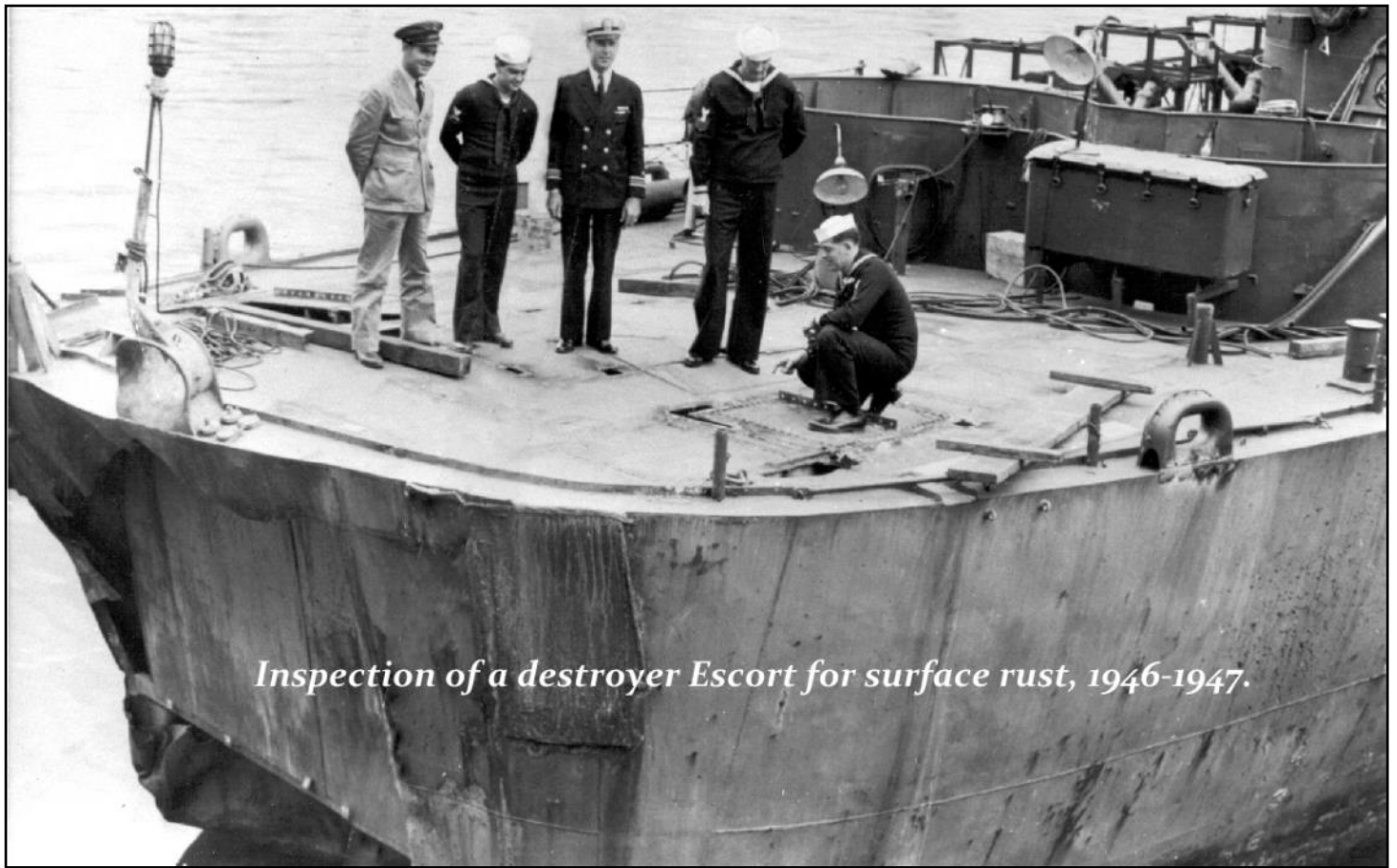
We got a bit scared on December 18th. Following several days of heavy rain, the river started flowing much higher than usual. Several years ago, the ship came very close to floating into our parking lot, from rains from Hurricane Irene. We kept a close eye on the water levels, but at high tide, the river only came within four feet of the top of the seawall before starting to recede.

Our Collections Manager John Epp continues to be organized, meticulous, and focused on getting more of the collection on the web for better access. This month, John



High water on 18 December.

also solved a ten-year-old mystery. Years ago, we received a photograph of an unknown damaged destroyer escort from Green Cove Springs historian **Frank Haggard**. It was captioned, "Inspection of a destroyer escort for surface rust." The photo showed a large hole in the transom extending nearly the entire width of the stern that had been patched with a large sheet of steel plating. A group of sailors, presumably the crew, were standing on the fantail performing an inspection. Interestingly, the depth charge



Inspection of a destroyer Escort for surface rust, 1946-1947.

USS BRIGHT at Portland. Looks like a little more than surface corrosion to me.

racks are missing. This didn't look like "Surface rust," and we mentally filed the photo under mysteries to be solved.

Recently, the son of John Barrett sent us copies of newspaper articles his father had collected. Mr. Barrett had served aboard USS BRIGHT (DE-747) as an Electrician's Mate First Class. The articles were from a Portland Oregon newspaper, and they included our mystery photograph, with a caption with names.

On 13 May 1945, the BRIGHT was operating off Okinawa in an antisubmarine patrol. After bringing the crew to the nightly general quarters, a single plane was spotted at 1918 approaching the ship low over the water, at a distance of three miles. All guns able to bear commenced firing, scoring numerous hits, and causing the port wing to shear off at 750 yards. The plane continued its approach, clipping the depth charge racks and crashing only yards astern. A 500 pound bomb exploded upon impact with the sea. After-steering was destroyed, and BRIGHT began circling as both rudders had been jammed hard left. The depth charge racks and smoke screen generators were destroyed and the after compartments began to flood. Nearby DDs and DEs came to the BRIGHT's aid, as her crew fought back fires and flooding.

Back to the photograph, the newspaper states it is BRIGHT as she came into Portland, Oregon for repairs. She arrived on the evening of 23 June 1945. The names of the men are listed, some of whom departed the ship in August. So, our best guess is it was captured

between late June and early August 1945. The extremely detailed Action Report for the attack on the BRIGT is available to read on our Collections website, <https://usslater.pastperfectonline.com/> Mystery solved, and only a decade later.

We had our annual Christmas Party on Monday December 18th. Tony, Jo Ann, and Shanna put their heads together and promoted the event among the crew. Cathy Wheat set up the tree, decorated it, and made a beautiful tree skirt. Tony remained in charge of Christmas Carols and morale. John passed the Santa duties on to Gio Romano, who dressed up as Santa, but despite the beard, the glasses gave him away. Jo Ann and Mary Beth Mulligan provided lunch and cookies, while Shanna brought



Gio gave us a great impersonation of Santa this year!

beverages and a gift for all the volunteers. She came up with an idea for a classic t-shirt that we believe almost all our volunteers can relate to.



Jo Ann and Shanna served up Christmas lunch.

The maintenance crew has several big projects planned for this winter. Foremost among them is the restoration of the starboard bulkhead of the wardroom. The whole base rotted out from water laying inside the ship behind the sofa and serving cabinet. The shipfitters are in the process of reinforcing the bulkhead, so it won't warp when the lower frames are cut away. The bulkhead around the porthole was badly wasted, so Chuck Tanner removed the porthole, and Danny Statile is rebuilding the frame. Up on the flying bridge, Chuck and Dave got the area secured for the winter and mounted the covers on the base of the MK-52-gun director.

Down below, on the messdecks, **Barry Witte** acquired the plans for the original serving line from **Ed Zajkowski**. With the help of Kent Chase's welding class at Hudson Valley Community College, the serving table has been replicated. **Barry and Seth Powers** are in the process of installing it on the messdecks. This is one more big step in making USS SLATER appear as she did in 1945.

Down in the forward engine room, **Doug, Super Dave, Warren, and Earl** have the overhaul of the first Quincy model 240 "new to us" air compressor completed. The unit is now in service as our primary air compressor. They have disassembled the second Quincy unit and are in the process of overhauling that piece of equipment.

The next goal is to overhaul the **Ingersol Rand starting air compressor**. The book describes it as a "Class T" 600 psi unit, but the folks at Ingersol Rand haven't been able to find any information on the unit, so the search for parts is at a dead end.



Investigating the starting air compressor.



Do you remember this dynamic duo's work last winter? Ed and Dennis are at it again, restoring a storage compartment. At least they can stand up straight in this one.

Gary Sheedy has a big project going aft with the restoration of the storerooms under berthing space C-202-L. He has organized his crew of **Thomas Scian, Ed Nowik, and Dennis Murray** to empty out, scale, clean, and repaint the magazine. They are building additional shelving, organizing all the spare parts, and putting them back in such a way that we will know what we have and be able to find them. Organization is Gary's specialty. Just ask him.

Richard and Henry Bourgeois have established a firecontrolman's workshop in their basement. They acquired and built

the electrical and pneumatic test equipment necessary to fully check out our MK14 gunsights and air units. Even though they are not aboard USS SLATER, this is still a Navy workshop. The bench and many of the tools come from Richard's grandfather, CM2 Henry Lesa, who was with the 23rd NCB (Seabees) on Attu and Guam.

Richard and Henry also did a survey of the of the ship's gunsights, parts, and supplies. They found one of the air units in good electrical condition, but with some problems on the air side. The next step is to diagnose and repair or replace with parts from "donor" air units, and then we'll have a second working air compressor available to operate our gunsights. They are on track to mount a working display on the ship for next season's tours, and we are documenting what we've learned for other ships in the museum fleet.



Richard and Henry in their basement workshop.



Carl, John, and Alan collecting the fans so they can be rewired.

Tour Guide Carl Camurati has two projects going on this winter. First off, he's repainting and stenciling all our helmets that we have on display on all the topside gun mounts. He also is taking the time to mold new liners for the insides of the talker's helmets, where the original padding has rotted away. He is also converting old DC compartment fans to AC and rewiring them, so we have some replacements as our existing compartment fans fail.

We remembered Pearl Harbor Day aboard USS SLATER on the 82nd anniversary of the attack, Thursday, 7 December

2023. On a cold, sub-freezing morning, News Ten remembered the Eighty-Second Anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor by visiting USS SLATER. **Matt Mackie** did the weather at sunrise, and **Stephanie Rivas** did an interview. Thank you for taking the time to remember this day. The links to the videos are here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dipkH_uEMRU and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOiAu-IwZKQ>.

We had two SLATER related passings this month. We learned some sad news this week from Frank Slater's relative, Sandra Walls Tucker. She let us know that Paul Ray Slater, the last of Frank Slater's siblings, had passed away. It's the end of an era, one that we were all hoping would last a little longer.

I also have the sad duty to report that longtime volunteer, Chuck Marshall (CWO-4) crossed the bar on December 4, 2023, at Albany Medical Center.



Dick Walker and his Christmas gift from the staff.



The guns are covered as we wait for spring.

Chuck was an early tour guide who join the crew in 1998, and guided tours for about 15 years before he had to retire due to health reasons. He was employed for 43 years in the Coated Abrasive Division at the former Behr-Manning/Norton Company in Watervliet, retiring as a Senior Product Engineer. An ordnance expert, Chuck served on several destroyer escorts, including USS KYNE (DE-744). He is one of the many volunteers from the early days who helped give USS SLATER the reputation she enjoys today. Fair winds and following seas, Chuck.

Finally, I certainly would be remiss if I didn't thank all of you who have donated to our Winter Fund. Your generosity has truly been overwhelming. It is your

support that enables us to continue to make progress throughout the winter, when we have no admission income. **Jo Ann** and I are having a tough time keeping up with the thank-you letters, but it's a nice problem to have, and we're doing our best. Again, I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't reach out to those of you who haven't contributed, and ask you to donate as we go into the coldest months of the winter. Please help keep the volunteers warm this winter. The link to donate is here: [Donate — USS SLATER](#)



Happy New Year, and we'll see you next month!

-Tim

How long do you think we could lock him in the magazine?



Happy New Year from all of us! Photo from Kris Denkers.