



SLATER SIGNALS

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

USS Slater DE-766

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Fifty years ago this year, the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association (DESA) was founded. To honor this milestone, USS SLATER will host the final reunion of DESA as part of our DE-Day commemoration this June 17th. It is our way of paying tribute to the organization that saved SLATER and created the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum.

In 1973, Frank Crawford, a sonarman who served aboard USS LEWIS (DE-535) and USS EARL K. OLSEN (DE-765), organized DESA. Frank recognized that as the DE veterans grew older and more nostalgic, there was a feeling that history had overlooked their

deeds and service. As these ships were manned primarily by Naval Reservists, there was always a sense that the regular Navy overlooked their contribution to the war effort. Frank felt that DESA would fill a psychological desire that these men should be recognized. Frank served as Chairman through 1978.



DESA gave DE Veterans and their families a way to reconnect with the past.

He surmised that from the fleet of 563 Destroyer Escorts built during World War II, crews from these ships would join and support such an association. He emphasized that DESA was to be a “Last Man” association and would exist to sponsor reunions of ship’s crews, annual conventions, and to record and publicize the history and deeds of the DEs during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War. The first DEs were commissioned in 1942 and served until the last ones were decommissioned in the 1990s. It is estimated that about 150,000 men served on these ships during that period, including the seventy-eight DEs that were turned over to the British Navy during World War II.



***USS SLATER awaiting disposal
at Souda Bay, Crete.***

The greatest accomplishment of this organization was saving USS SLATER. At the 1984 convention in Houston, Texas, DESA members held their memorial service aboard the preserved USS STEWART (DE-238) in Galveston. The attendees were impressed enough with the exhibit that they began to think about preserving a DE themselves. With DESA strongly committed to preserving the history of Destroyer Escorts and those who served aboard them, a movement began to secure a destroyer escort for posterity.

At the 1992 annual convention in Buffalo, New York, the membership charged its officers to look for and, if possible, secure one of the few remaining DEs as a floating memorial and bring it back to the United States. After a failed attempt to bring USS BARON (DE-166) back from Ecuador, DESA found the ex-USS SLATER (DE-766) available for donation. At its peak, the organization grew to 15,000 members, and included a strong and active Ladies Auxiliary, who dedicated themselves to saving and supporting USS SLATER.

SLATER was awaiting disposal in Souda Bay Crete when she was granted a new lease on life by the members of DESA. Following a year-long series of negotiations through the State Department, the Greek Navy agreed to donate the ship to DESA, and the veterans raised the \$290,000 from the membership needed to pay for the costs of bringing the ship to New York City. The Hellenic Navy deeded the ship to DESA, and the group raised the funds necessary to insure and tow her to New York. She was berthed adjacent to USS INTREPID at the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum. Working under the slogan “We brought her home”, the Statue of Liberty Chapter of DESA began the initial restoration work, prior to SLATER’s move to Albany in 1997.

It was at this time that the Directors of DESA realized that a “Last Man” type of organization could not run the affairs of SLATER forever. This was a museum ship that was supposed to last in perpetuity. In 1993 the Board of Directors of DESA voted for and established a new organization, the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum (DEHM). DEHM was incorporated as a not-for-profit educational corporation that anyone with an interest in preserving DE history could join. This was the group charged with maintaining and operating SLATER. Several DESA Board members took on roles in the new organization. In 2022 the last original DESA member on the DEHM Board passed away.



DESA members remember their lost shipmates at the 2013 reunion.

With declining membership, DESA planned a final reunion in Albany, New York, in 2020. However the arrival of Covid cancelled that event and publication of the newsletter ceased. Those of us currently aboard SLATER do not feel it would be right for our parent organization and the group that saved our ship, to fade from the scene without a chance for formal recognition, and a final chance to say, “Thank you.”



Super Dave turned 85 this month. We can't believe he's older than Doug!

Accordingly, the focus of our DE-Day Commemoration on June 17th will be to pay a final tribute to DESA as we retire their pennant for the last time. We are planning a three-day event, with registration and a reception on Friday, the memorial service, visit to the ship, and a river cruise on Saturday, and finally a farewell banquet Sunday evening. The announcement of the reunion hotel, details, and pricing will be published in the next edition of SLATER SIGNALS, but if you plan to attend this event, please email me at Tim@usslater.org so we can get an idea of our numbers for planning purposes.

The maintenance volunteers have continued work on several main projects.

The first is rehabilitation of the aft engine room supply fan plenum chamber. **Danny and Chuck** are continuing the process of replacing all the wasted metal in the confined space. **Doug, Dave, Tim, Warren, Chuck, and Earl** continue work to replace the wasted metal and rehab the portholes on the



DESA members at their 2017 reunion at SLATER.

portside of the wardroom. A question came up about the porthole dog clips. We referred the question to **Ed Zajkowski**, who in two hours provided us with an actual DE porthole blueprints and the following comment, “I challenge YOU to find one person in America, the world, that can come up with this data in less than an hour” (profanity omitted). He also let us know, in no uncertain terms that the proper Navy term for a porthole is an “Air Port.” But you won’t find that in a Google search.



Your donations continue to support our restoration work.

Down below, the engineers, Mike, Jim, James, and Thomas continue their work, cleaning the bilges in the aft engine room. Dennis, Ron, Bill, and Ed continue their work in the confines of the aft storeroom, to prepare it for painting. **Barry** continues working with the RPI Midshipmen and Naval Reservists to reinsulate the messdeck piping with fiberglass wrap.

In the “If I procrastinate long enough, someone else will do it for me” department, for years I have been meaning to get the paint locker in order. This involves standardizing the colors and getting rid of all the paint that we have acquired and can’t use. Well, **Gary Sheedy** finally got tired of waiting for me to get off my duff. He took charge of the

reorganization and spent the month of January reorganizing the paint locker. We've standardized our colors, and one of the main things was moving all the PSX Epoxies into a separate storeroom. That will hopefully keep the amateur painters from using the two-part Epoxy without the hardener.

Up in the radio shack, we had Chuck Chandler back aboard after an illness. It was good to have him back aboard. He and Steve fired up the big TBL-8 to see how it tunes, now that Steve has cleaned some of the controls. The end result was positive on the 20-meter band, but an ongoing contest made the band too busy for our testing to continue. As a Plan B, they moved the RAL-7 down to the 30-meter band and tuned in a few Morse code signals with decent results. They did some preliminary research on tuning the TBL for that band, and our next operating session they will give it a try.



Chuck Tanner also celebrated a birthday this month. He's become quite the expert at porthole restoration.



Steve continues to keep our radios online.

Inside the trailer, Gary and Shanna have been busy getting all the final aspects of our new building set before the factory builds it. The plan is set and they are starting to pack up the trailer. Shanna and Jo Ann need to be out of the old trailer and into the wardroom by March first, so we can dispose of the trailer and get everything ready for the new building before it is delivered.

So far Shanna has emptied, and Gary has taken down, all of the shelving in the store. It will be repainted and reinstalled in the new building. The briefing room shelves have been emptied and repainted, the books stored, and ready for the move. Interns, **Gio and Tyler** have packed up the small items and stored them in the onboard Ship's Store. Thanks to **Cathy** and Shanna's tag

teaming, all the clothing is in boxes stacked in the gift shop. All merchandise is still accessible so Shanna can fulfill online orders, so keep them coming! Many things will be kept in a storage pod that is being delivered mid-February, until we can move them into the new building. We'll keep you posted as more develops. You can always follow along on our Facebook page for updates.

When she's not planning for the installation of the building, and all the grant paperwork that goes along with it, Shanna is also planning the 2023 Historic Naval Ships Association's Annual Conference.

This will be the first time the conference will be held in Albany and we are determined to make it a glowing success.



Thanks to your donations, Gary has a lot of paint to organize.

Knowing that her office may be less than fully operational when they move to the wardroom, Shanna is getting many of her administrative tasks underway earlier than normal this year.

Letters to area libraries and post cards to potential overnights have already been mailed.

Groups are not waiting for spring to book their tours either! Shanna is now booking tours and overnights for this season. Call her soon to get your group aboard in 2023!



John has his collections helpers right where he wants them! There's no escape!

After much consideration, Shanna has implemented the ability to book tours online. Meaning, those who want to purchase tour tickets ahead of time can now do so on our website. As of right now, our visitors can book all our tour options including group tours from our website. This does not change our policy on walk-in tours. People can still arrive at SLATER and get on a tour within twenty minutes.

We also included an order form for our 2-year calendar in the Winter Fund solicitation. If you didn't get the letter, give us a call to order a calendar. It's available in our Ship's Store online and in person!

In collections, Alan, Gio, Tom, and Tyler continue helping John sort through hundreds of folders and binders, containing information on most of the over 600 destroyer escorts built both during and after WWII. We are all learning a lot of interesting tidbits about each ship and their crews. If you notice your tours increasing in length, blame them!

A few more donations have come in this month including: news coverage of SLATER during the early years in Albany, a Zippo lighter from USS COATES (DE-685), photographs of USS ULVERT M. MOORE (DE-442) and USS EDMONDS (DE-406) have all been catalogued. If you are interested in seeing these or anything else in our collection, just contact us! Eventually, everything will be added to an online database.



Dennis and Ed continue their efforts to create more storage space for our collection.



Zippo lighter from USS COATES (DE-685).

Speaking of which, a few more items have been added to our collection's website. The most interesting is a Japanese sword acquired by a crewmember of USS BOOTH (DE-170). After the war ended, BOOTH accepted the surrender of Japanese units on islands bypassed by the Allies advance through the Pacific.

We can't thank you all enough for your continued support of our Winter Fund Drive. Your donations, and Shanna's continued efforts at promoting mail order gift shop sales, are the only sources of income that we have through the winter. With the expenses of the new modular visitor center coming due this spring, we are more

dependent on you than ever. Please keep those donations coming in.

Finally, for the past twenty-five years, in the absence of Doug, who is always the first volunteer aboard, the duty of opening the ship and making the first pot of coffee has fallen on my shoulders. But now, with the hiring of **John Epp** as our collections manager, who arrives earlier than I do. I find for the first time in my career that the coffee is already perking and waiting for me. At the age of 71, it is a luxury I never expected. Now, if I can just get someone to handle the absentee pennant, to mark my arrival and departures from the ship, my life's ambitions will have been fulfilled.

See you next month.

Tim



farewell

DESA

Join us in Albany, NY for

the final reunion

I6-I8 June 2023