

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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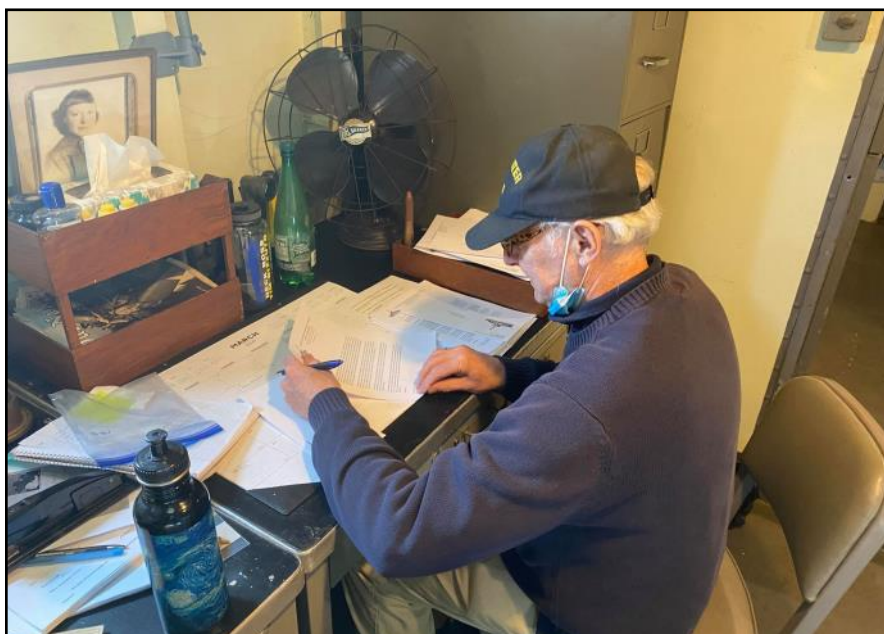
Doug Tanner has always been one of my favorite volunteers. Apart from his giving and generous nature, his technical competency, the leadership he provides, and his aggressive approach to looking for and solving maintenance problems, Doug has one more trait the endears me to him. He allows me to believe that I'm actually in charge of this place.

As part of the illusion, whenever Doug discovers a new problem, I can expect to hear his commanding voice call from the bottom of the ladder well to my office,

"Rizzuto!"



Doug Tanner takes initiative on all types of projects.



I sign thank you letters to every donor. Your Winter Fund donations have kept us afloat all winter long.

He doesn't have to add, "Get your ass down here." The tone of voice tells me I'm expected to come down to the scene, double time.

When I arrive at the site of the new leak, rot, broken pipe, or mechanical malfunction, Doug will point out the new issue, and say "We have a problem. What do you think we should do?"

And that's part of the illusion, deferring to me, to give me the chance to offer my "suggestion." Using the best solution that my forty years of ship keeping, coupled with my liberal arts and history background, can muster, I conjure up what I would do if I were in Doug's shoes. I do this, knowing that he has already arrived at a more logical solution, and is setting me up as his straight man. Or maybe it's his way of showing everybody who is really in charge. Regardless, after I have offered up my opinion, he will propose his idea. Invariably, based on his sixty years of shipboard and industrial experience, his idea makes a lot more sense than my solution.

A good example is the recent leak in Wardroom stateroom 101. I say recent, but it's probably been leaking for five years. I mentioned to Doug last winter that



Super Dave Mardon helped seal up that leak in Officer's Country.



Tim Benner and Chuck Installed the scuttle hatch.

he might want to look at it. The result was a winter long project that involved finding a total of three more leaks, welding them up, replacing the coaming around the ammo passing scuttle, welding up several leaks adjacent to the scuttle, and completely rebuilding the scuttle hatch itself. He finished the project by re-insulating the overhead in stateroom 101 and the passageway.

Most of all, the crew is well aware that my reputation in the historic ship community has been built on the



Danny Statile working at the ever expanding work bench.

time I come back from vacation, it has grown a couple feet of longer. The crew is constantly complaining of the need for more bench space, and they solve the problem without me. I'm afraid that if it weren't for the ladder going up to the 01-level blocking their expansion, the work bench would be all the way back to the fantail by now.

It's the same in the office.

People seem to delight in surprising me. Take the website for example. The whole time we were down in the shipyard, unbeknownst to me, Shanna was busy upgrading the website. I didn't even know she knew how to upgrade the website. When she rolled it out when the ship returned from the shipyard, I was delighted, as it was a great

backs of a bunch of poor bastards, who never will see a paycheck. They do it for the love of a ship, while some other guy gets all the credit. Seeds of rebellion lie just below the surface. As Benner is quick to tell anyone who will listen, "A fish stinks from the head back" and "If this place had some decent leadership, who knows how far along we could be."

It's only a partial joke when I tell people "I only know about ten percent of what's going on around here." Most of the crew likes to keep it that way. Take the weather deck workbench outside the machine shop, for example. From the perspective of historical authenticity, I'm not even sure there was a work bench there when the SLATER was in service, but it sure is handy. So handy in fact, that every



Shanna updated the website, with no direction from me.

improvement. When I mentioned I wasn't aware she was working on it, she just responded, "You weren't here. You were busy." Far be it from me to stifle anyone's creativity.

I actually no longer feel I need to be involved in every aspect of the ship's restoration and maintenance. My attitude is that so long as the crew understands the prime directive of restoring the ship to her 1945 configuration, and keeping her clean, dry, well painted, and watertight, I don't need to be involved in every detail. In fact, the list of things I don't need to be involved in seems to be growing, as the staff and volunteers keep taking on more responsibility.

I really don't understand accounting or the QuickBooks program. I trust Jo Ann to take care of that. All I worry about is the account totals she brings me on Thursdays, showing the weekly totals of how much we have in each account, so I know if we are making money or losing money. I don't feel the need to be involved in the selection of all the new gift



John has finished setting up the displays in the Special Collections Space.

shop merchandise, or how it's displayed. I trust Shanna to take care of that. The same with the tour guide training, brochure development, distribution, and collections management. I didn't tell her to put together a guidebook for the Special Collection space back aft. She took the initiative and did it, with a ton of help from two of our interns, Cassidy and John.

Occasionally, I get to have some input into what the crew is doing. I had planned to repaint the anchor windlass room this winter, and I approached Gary Sheedy about overseeing the project, to which he reluctantly agreed. Again, another winter where his beloved after steering



"Rizzuto, what should we do about this?"

project would lie dormant. But, once Gary agreed to work forward, I no longer had to worry about it. The fact that Gary expanded the scope of the project to include the bosun's storeroom below the anchor windlass room, and the CHT pumproom below the passageway, were all decisions that were fine with me. But, as we approach opening day, turning forward berthing into an adjunct bosun's locker, so Boats Haggart could make up block and tackle is a decision that could prove dicey, depending upon what the public sees when we open.

Of course, now that we're two weeks from opening, and the weather has warmed up, we're waiting for Kevin Sage to report aboard to start painting. The fact that he hasn't started yet is cited as another failure of management in not calling Kevin in a timely manner, like last week when it was fifteen degrees.



Earl and Chuck are bringing water back aboard.



Gary Sheedy pulled up the circulators, and marked them so we can set them up easier next winter.

I didn't have to tell Gary it was time to pull the circulators aboard and roll up the deck mats. He just took care of it. I didn't have to tell Gary to put up the awning on the observation deck. He just did it. I didn't have to tell Doug to rig the sewer line and bring fresh water back aboard the ship. He just mentioned to me one day that he didn't see any more days below freezing in the forecast, and the next thing I knew, we had running water on the ship again.

In a sense, the recreation of the fighting light system is a perfect example of standing back and letting the volunteers do their thing. After we did the initial research with Ed Zajkowski and Chris Wright,

Barry Witte took it upon himself to make SLATER the only ship in the historic fleet, besides HAZARD and McANN, to have fighting lights. My contribution amounted to staying out of the way and letting it happen. When the 2020 shipyard overhaul materialized thanks to the Maritime Heritage Grant, the feasibility of a total restoration of the mast became reality. Every detail was researched, planned, and executed. This past month, our volunteer machinist, **George Christophersen**, brought Barry the brass securing knobs he fabricated for the fighting light control panel, completing a three-year effort.



Angelo continues making bunk straps.

I never told Angelo Bracco to make bunk straps to honor our volunteers who had crossed the bar. It was an idea he conceived himself and executed. **Ron Zarem** recently sent us the names of forty Michigan Chapter volunteers who had worked on SLATER and are no longer with us. Undaunted by that number, Angelo purchased the webbing, and is in the process of making sure every one of those volunteers is remembered.

Up in the radio shack, there is more initiative. Barry Witte took it upon himself to provide sound chips, to reproduce the Morse Code and Sonar sound effects we play in the radio room and CIC. Steve is working on getting the speaker amplifiers playing throughout the ship, so we will have our forties music playing in the living spaces again. He and Chuck are figuring out the wiring, so they can plug the various receivers into the different speaker channels. From there they can be piped throughout the ship. Barry visited them, and gave a tutorial on the audio patch panel in the Coding Room, so that mystery is now solved. They are just two receivers away



Steve and Chuck in the radio room getting things in working order.

from having all of the receivers in radio central working. Chuck figured out the tuning problem with the Elecraft. It turned out to be a menu setting that had been changed by gremlins. Chuck continues to make radio contacts and recruit new members.

While we were in the shipyard, water got into the complex electrical plug that links all the ship's communications systems, Internet, phone, IMC etc, to shore and severely damaged it. I never told Barry Witte and George Gollas to repair it. They took it upon themselves to figure out the problem, order the parts, and get the repair made. This involved George coming up from Pennsylvania to make the repair.

By now I am sure that most of the volunteers and several of my Board members are asking themselves, "What the hell are we paying him for?" Just to reassure, sometimes I do give a direct order. I'm thinking of politely suggesting that it's time to uncover the guns.



Jo Ann keeps the books in check and feeds the crew!



Cathy hasn't reported me yet, and she keeps cleaning up after us.

Or recently I asked **Cathy Wheat** to clean my office while I was at lunch. I told her I'd even give her a five-dollar tip as an incentive. She assessed the situation and responded that it was going to take her a lot longer than an hour, and since the five dollars I offered her put her hourly rate below minimum wage, as a former Department of Labor employee, she had no choice but to report me for illegal labor practices. I'm sure most of the crew would agree with her, but I've yet to receive an official citation.

As I mentioned before, we open in two weeks! Opening day is Wednesday, April 7, at 1000, for

those who want to break down our door. It has been a very productive winter, but we are itching to get our tour guides and visitors back aboard!

See you next month!

-Tim



Paul and "Boats" are leading our deck crew in getting the ship presentable for the public next month.



So the bottom line is, it's our volunteers who make us great!