

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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The Michigan gang arrived on the night of our annual volunteer lasagna dinner. **Stan Murawski** cooked up lasagna for eighty and we had about seventy of our volunteers and spouses in attendance. The weather was beautiful and it remained that way all week. Field Day Coordinator **Earl Moorhouse** put together a team that included participants from Texas, Ohio, Massachusetts, Maine, New Jersey and Michigan. **Earl** and **Roy Brandon** set themselves up as culinary specialists, with **Jim Parker** serving as their messcook.



Some of the Michigan Field Day crew take a break for a photo.

We set up five major goals and accomplished them all. The big job was repainting the starboard side main deck house from the breakwater aft with Epoxy paint. **Jim Ray, Ron Prest** and **Gary Deickman**, with the three Jersey men **Gene Hermansen, John LaMunyon** and **Derwent Cartmel** got to work. **Bill Nixon** joined them later. Monday they prepped the area by pulling all the gear away from the

bulkhead, including fires hoses, applicators, gas bottles and the steel in the racks. All the portholes and condition tags were masked. They got the whole bulkhead spot sanded and feathered in Monday with a coat of Corroseal. Tuesday was primer day. They primed the entire deckhouse. Wednesday they started with the topcoat of haze gray. That work was completed Thursday, as well as some touch up work on the 01 level. Ancillary jobs included sanding and painting all the fire fighting gear and toolboxes. Friday it was clean up and put the whole place back together. Fire hose and applicators were reracked, gas bottles were restowed, steel stowed and the whole deck swept and washed down. The result was a thing of beauty.



Doug Tanner supervises Laird Confer as they straighten the door frame.



Tom Skufca welds in the door frame.

Down below, **Laird Confer**, **Ed Zajkowski** and **Tom Skufca** tackled the watertight door where **Bill Siebert** had left off. Under the careful direction of **Doug Tanner**, the frame was removed one last time and carefully squared. More bulkhead stiffeners were added and the frame was tacked into place. Using a pile of C clamps, the bulkhead was squared against the frame, and when Doug gave the nod of approval the whole frame was carefully welded into place. Halfway through the project, Ed, the veteran of three field days in the shaft alley, began to wonder if maybe he wasn't better off back there. While that work was going on in B-4, **Guy Huse** spent the week removing all the meters and instrumentation from the throttle board in the aft motor room. This is the next piece of equipment to be restored down there, and it was imperative to get this sensitive instrumentation off the board prior to needle gunning. When that task was completed Guy went to work on the reassembly of the aft fire and flushing pump.

Up on the flying bridge, Michigan **Dick Walker**, **Gary Headworth** and **Curt Spangler** spent the week in the MK-52 director tub. They needle gunned the whole deck, primed and painted it. They patched a hole that they found in the deck. They also mounted the two outboard gyro repeaters and continued work with **Larry Williams** and **Ken Kaskoun** on the instrumentation on the forward bulkhead. Electrician **Butch Warrender** replaced some bad wiring on the 40mm gun mounts and spent the week working on the cease firing alarm on 20mm gun 25. This included removing the old cable, replacing the old stuffing tubes that had rotted away, and running new cable. In the end he was assisted by **Bill Nixon**, who had spent the week painting but was a former electricians mate.

Finally, Frank Heckart and Larry Stiles spent the week working on twin 40mm gun mount 43. Frank probably wouldn't want me to tell this story, but for those of you readers who have never served,



Fire controlmen Dick Walker and Dick Spangler in the director tub.

this story makes the point of how much this ship means to the men who sailed these ships. Frank had attended a field day a year ago, and his parting words to me were that he'd loved to tackle one of the forties, but he didn't think he'd be back because he'd been diagnosed with lung cancer. Treatment got the cancer into remission, but it has resurfaced. Frank postponed the start of his radiation so he could come north to spend the week working on SLATER. We were thrilled to have him back with us, and while the forties weren't on the original agenda, we modified the plan and told Frank to pick his gun. He spent the week going over the linkages, train and elevation gears with loving care.

One of the most ironic instances occurred Wednesday. Those of you who remember the forties may remember that there was a pipe guard over the open ring sights to keep them from getting banged around and damaged. One of the sight guards was missing and one was rotted beyond repair. Frank's son-in-law **Tom Skufca**, an expert welder fabricator, was tasked with making the replacements. He spent three days carefully replicating the sixty-year-old parts and did a beautiful job. I mean, where are you going to find 40mm sight guards in 2007? That Wednesday I got a call from **Ernie Mann**, former fire chief in Rensselaer. It was long story, but back in the late sixties, a BUCKLEY Class DE, the USS NEUNZER DE150, was scrapped in Staten Island at the Witte Scrap yard. You may recall the story in the April 2005 SIGNALS. This was the ship that **John Witte** played on as a kid and got in trouble with the Coast Guard for aiming the guns at the passing tugs. Well, it seems that periodically NUENZER parts continue to resurface. Ernie Mann said a friend of his had given him a couple parts that he was bringing over for our museum. Ever wonder how many individual parts make up a DE? Fifty thousand? A hundred thousand? A million? Well, Ernie brought us two. A tachometer from the NUENZER's engineroom and a 40mm ring sight complete with the sight guard. What are the odds? And I do have several witnesses to verify that I'm not making this up, including one disgruntled welder fabricator!



BT Jim Ray wishing he was back in the fire-room instead of painting.

Michigan left the SLATER in great shape for our next big event, which was the Port Festival on October 13th. This event was a commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the dedication of the Port of Albany. On that day it was people, not cargo, who lined the banks of the Port of Albany, as today's PortFest drew hundreds marking its 75th birthday. The day started with a commemoration of the Navy Birthday and a memorial service for EM3 Robert P. Cummings, an Albany resident who was killed aboard the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS at the Battle of Samar. **Barnaby Bullard** was the Master of Ceremonies, supported by **Jerry Jones** and the SLATER Color Guard. Dignitaries aboard included Mayor **Gerald Jennings**, County Executive **Mike Breslin**, Port Commissioner **Bob Cross**, Bishop



The motor barge DAY PECKINPAUGH moored alongside the SLATER for PortFest.

Howard Hubbard, and daughter of EM Cummings, **Mrs. Mary Donovan**. **Frank Lasch** gave the background of the Battle of Samar and **Mike Breslin** detailed the heroic sacrifice of the "Sammy B." Breslin then presented a shadow box to Mrs. Donovan that contained EM Cummings's awards. **Erik Collin's** gun crew fired the traditional three shot volley from number three 3" gun and **Steve Stella** concluded with taps. **Mayor Jennings** closed the ceremony citing the month as the tenth anniversary of the arrival of the SLATER and her significance as a memorial to all our servicemen. He then talked of the 75th anniversary of the port she now calls home, the Port of Albany, and transitioned the event to the celebration of PortFest. The guests retired to the deck to cut the Navy Birthday Cake and PortFest began. The Albany Port District Commission's Festival celebrated 400 years of maritime history at the Snow Dock,

beginning with the replica of Henry Hudson's Half Moon, whose crew first glimpsed the Albany area in 1609, the dry bulk canal barge DAY PECKINPAUGH, built in 1920, the USS SLATER, the tug BEN ELIOT, and the Coast Guard Cutter USCGC WIRE. All the ships were open to the public free of charge for the day, and the DUTCH APPLE cruise boat gave free tours of the harbor while the Albany Trolleys gave tours of the Port.

The SLATER Crew came through in force for this day, and it was a good thing. Erik Collin, Eric Rivet and Dick Walker had planned to station the guides around the ship to control the flow of people. Twenty regular volunteers reported aboard, supplemented by fifteen Navy Midshipmen from RPI. We needed them all, because by our estimates

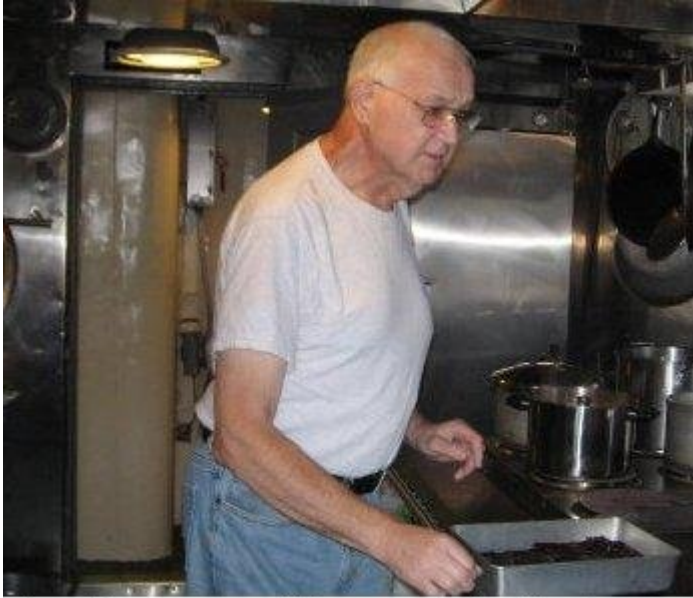


Gordon Lattey and members of the Destroyer History Trust.

over 1,000 people toured the SLATER that day. We stationed guides at the top and bottom of each ladder and everywhere on the tour route that people could wander off track. There was no time for lengthy explanations as the order of the day was just to keep the line moving. Everyone performed superbly and we got through the day with no trips, cuts or bruises. It was the first time since opening day that we had a line waiting to get on the ship. The line stretched aft along the entire length of the 01 level.

The world should know that when we were asked to make SLATER free to the public that day, being the pessimist that I am I assumed we would lose a day's admissions, an amount I estimated to be about \$500. However I didn't count on the perfect weather, exhibits, great volunteer turn out, and volunteer tour guide/board member **Alan Fox**. Alan manned the donation box at the quarterdeck. Alan sells life insurance. Alan sold me life insurance. Alan must be a very good salesman. At the end of the

day, we counted \$1,000 in the donation box. Rosehn and **Mike Collins** also made \$700 in ship's store sales. We had a very good day. **Alan Fox** is my new hero. Our thanks to everyone who helped organize and participate in the event. We couldn't have done it without you.



Stan Murawski cooking up a Saturday Lunch for the crew.

The participants in Dave McComb's Destroyer History Foundation's weekend on Lake George visited the SLATER the Sunday after PortFest. Dave writes, "The event, planned with World War II destroyermen in mind but attended by many others, was hosted by the [Destroyer History Foundation](#). For Sunday's concluding event, **Bill Cole, Dave McComb, Warren Gabelman, Steve and Wynne Davis, Art McComb, Ruth McComb** and **Jane Cole** drove south to Albany, New York. Boarding [USS Slater](#) (DE 766) there, they held a brief memorial service at noon on the fantail, and then toured the ship for 2½ hours with **Gordon Lattey**, who has been a volunteer since Slater's arrival ten years ago. Again the guide and his audience were mutually stimulated. Slater is in beautiful condition and the visitors fully appreciated what they saw, from engineering spaces to flying bridge."

The crew went back to work Monday morning expecting the imminent departure of the DAY PECKINPAUGH from our starboard side. After assigning the crew jobs, **Jim Brennan**, the PECKINPAUGH's engineer, asked if he could lay alongside for the week. Since they are painted gray and we're painted gray, we figured it was no problem. But that immediately caused a readjustment in the work schedule to take advantage of the fact that we now had a floating work platform to reach the starboard side. **Clark Farnsworth, Gene Jackey, Bill Siebert** and **Don Shattuck** went to work cutting off two more rotted chocks amidships on the starboard side. **Don Miller, Chris Fedden** and **Earl Herchenroder** were hauled out of the engine room and went to work scaling the starboard side waterways and outboard of the old depth charge roller loaders. We took advantage of the work platform alongside all week.

The RPI Midshipmen have become a vital component of our maintenance team. They have continued to show up in force since the start of the semester, and in addition to the invaluable security they provided during PortFest, they have continued their work on the fire and bilge system, overhauling the three inch practice loading machine, helping the engineers in the machinery spaces, and working with the shipfitters with the continuing work on the RDF platform.

Many of you are aware that in our effort to keep the SLATER as original as possible, we fly 48-star flags and jacks. We're always on the lookout for old flags and **Russ Padden** recently donated several of his old flags. But new ones in good shape have proved very hard to find. That is why we were most grateful when **Lee Hatfield**



RPI Midshipmen work to remove the 3" practice gun breech block.

Lee Hatfield

located and bought two new nylon 4 x 6 48-star flags for the SLATER. They will look great flying over our commemorations and important ceremonies. Lee's flag will be broken out on Navy day. They are available from **Matt Knowland**, at American Flagpole & Flag Co. for others who may be looking for 48-star flags.

Tankman Greg Wolanin made a donation of 15 MK-6 depth charges that he located in Montana and had shipped to Albany for us. This was a hefty donation worth over six grand. To make a place for them he is now helping us with the fabrication of the missing portside depth charge rack. **Andy Desorbo** has worked up the plans and **Hal Hatfield** has agreed to donate the material. This will be a winter project, and hopefully you'll see the completed rack with a full load of depth charges in the spring. **Erik Collin** took one of the charges, had it sawed in half and carefully turned it into a cut away, using the one detonator that we had, to show people how the depth charges actually worked. The guides and visitors love it, and the maintenance guys are excited, because after hours they're thinking it can do double duty as a hot dog grill.



Tour guide Glen Harrison shows off our new cut-a-way depth charge.

See you next month

