

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

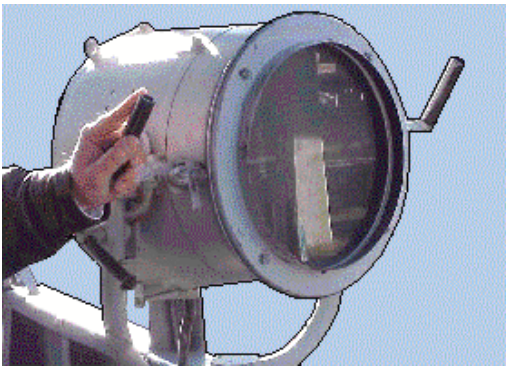
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I don't think anything makes me happier than hearing a tour guide get applause at the end of a tour. That means we're really doing something right.

In my youth, I could never have imagined that I would be running a successful small business. But, if you surround yourself with the right people, anything is possible. This is the time of year when it truly becomes apparent that, despite what you read in this newsletter, we are not running a shipyard, but we are operating a very successful tourist attraction. We remain the number one Albany tourist attraction on the website Tripadvisor.com, and we've had people comment that they have come here because of the rating and the reviews we have received. Kudos to **Shanna Hopson**, who has put together a terrific team of volunteers and interns, and instilled in them the knowledge and attitude to keep our visitors informed and happy.

Sitting in the ship's office, I listen to a continual series of lectures as the tour guides come through and comment about the radio room, captain's cabin, and the ship's office. We don't script our



Our tour is interactive as Paul Guarnieri gets ready to pass around a clip of 40mm ammunition.



It's been a big month for visitors as Charles Starks explains the hedgehog projector.

tours, so each guide brings a unique perspective and different anecdotes about this area of the ship. As I sit working on my computer, hidden from view, many references are made about me as an example of the highly sophisticated level of interpretive robotics available to museums today. Thankfully, very few make reference to the "Dummy." Board treasurer **Alan Fox** always points to me as "Our Captain," with the comment, "Tim has to do something the real SLATER's captain never had to do. That is begging for money."

Our education department has kept busy this month with summer camp groups of all ages, presentations at local libraries, knocking down spider webs, and scrubbing bird poop. Our busiest day of the month, appropriately, was the 4th. Independence Day visitors were greeted by the heat and humidity, but that didn't stop them from bursting with patriotism, and honoring all service members with a tour of SLATER.



Kevin Sage painted out gun 31, completing that restoration project.

Anne Gilson and the groups that she has been bringing aboard for many, many years now, were back two Thursdays this month! “The Gilson Group,” as we call her groups, are always well-organized, order personalized dog tags that we make while they are on tour, and always leave time to shop for more souvenirs in the Ship’s Store before they leave. We always know we are in the real swing of summer when Anne shows up in our parking lot!

Just two days after the 27th anniversary of AETOS being decommissioned from the Greek Navy, Pete Kaldias visited SLATER with his family on the 7th.

Living in Pennsylvania now, he made the drive to see a ship that he has fond memories of. Pete served from 1961-62, and his cousin was the Captain of the ship. We flew a Greek flag from the battle gaff, and he enjoyed

taking his family to C-202L (aft berthing) to show them where he slept. If you served aboard AETOS, let us know when you visit, and we’ll fly your colors from the battle gaff, too!

Our interns get the grunt work every morning to earn their keep. After opening the ship and readying her for visitors, they must ensure the water coolers are filled, the ship’s helm is polished, and trash cans are emptied. And then there’s that gorgeous peregrine falcon that hangs out on our radar antenna. He also relieves himself on our deck, prompting our tour guides to scrub it up each morning. And if they don’t, well then it’s the WALL OF SHAME!

The other half of the bulletin board is the place to be. The Wall of Fame has been filled once again with great reviews from visitors. Kathie Lynch left a review on our Google page, “This was an awesome tour. The boys 7 & 9, had a fantastic time and couldn’t stop raving about it. Mitch, our guide, was excellent and encouraged and answered questions. This was just a great experience.” Also from Google, Stef said, “Paul was our awesome tour guide! He taught us so much! He let the kids test out the guns and bunks!” And on our Facebook page, Wayne wrote, “Our tour guide Grant was awesome! He fully explained life aboard the USS SLATER as we toured the ship. Made me think of what my father lived through in World War 2, aboard the USS CHANDELEUR AV-10, a sea plane tender, but I am sure it was not much different.” We are so grateful for our hardworking guides, who share SLATER’s story with the public!

Shanna was off getting hitched for a week back home in Montana, and she left tour guides Evan and Andrew with the reins. Manning the register, corralling the volunteers, and making sure the poop deck gets scrubbed. Again, it’s a tribute to her that she



Volunteer Walt Stuart prepping a life raft grating for repainting.



Shanna Hopson and Dan Healey check out our new 20mm ready service ammo display.

can leave in the middle of the busiest part of our season, with a staff so well-trained that things continue to function smoothly. In another vein, **Art Dott** gave a presentation at the Town of Ballston Community Library. There was an excellent turn out, and Art reported that they had a great time and asked a lot of great questions.

We had visitors from USS STEWART, the only other DE in the United States. This EDSALL-class DE is dry-berthed in Galveston, Texas, hence our claim to being the last DE “afloat” in the US. Assistant Curator **Aubrey Flaherty** and volunteer **Ray LaFrey** spent two and a half days with us, studying our operation and the way we do things here aboard SLATER. **Rosehn Gipe** coordinated their schedule so that they got a complete picture of our activities. We shared a great deal of information, including our

training materials, marketing programs, and budget information. On the last night, Ray, who is a former army radar tech, and MIT aviation consultant, graciously treated the staff to dinner.

Ray got drawn into the STEWART restoration effort by Mac Christy, of the Edsall Class Veterans Association, and has become one of their most dedicated volunteers. As STEWART was mothballed in her WWII configuration, with all of her documentation, we have leaned on them heavily over the years for information as to how details should be for our restoration. Among the details they provided were plans for the original mess tables, fiddle boards, rangefinder platform, and the smoke screen generator. They were also most generous in loaning us hull plans to copy before we went into the shipyard in 2014. It’s been an important relationship for us over the years.



The first whaleboat run of the season.

August

brings the Coast Guard Birthday; our ceremony will be at 0900 Sunday, 5 August. We also will have a presentation, on the Battle of the Atlantic and Destroyer Escorts’ role within it, at the Canajoharie Library at 1400 Saturday 11 August.

In and around all the tours, there is still a lot of maintenance going on. The big one for me personally is the fact that the shipfitters completed the fabrication of the aft supply vent fan intake. I can’t wait to get that primed and painted--if it ever stops raining. **Danny Statile** did several small odd-welding jobs, including re-welding a flag bag support, replacing a section of railing on the signal bridge, as well as fabricating and replacing a wasted lifeline stanchion forward.



Volunteer Thomas Scian scaling depth charge roller loader number six.



Rewiring the signal lamp, step one. Steve Klauck pulls the old wires. I think these stuffing tubes are shot.



Rewiring the signal lamp, step two, on the hottest day of the year. Of course, the wires run through the fan room.



Rewiring the signal lamp, step three. Reconnecting the new cable.

I sent Carl Camurati up to the pilothouse level to do some chipping. He got right into it, and broke off the stuffing tubes that provided the power to the starboard 12” signal searchlight. Now, it was Barry Witte’s turn to get into it. Working with Danny and Steve Klauck, they ground off the old stuffing tubes, replaced them with new ones, and ran brand new armored cable. It was a nasty job that required them to climb in and out of the cramped forward supply fan room, but they got the job done in two days. No jury-rigging here.



Work has been completed on the aft supply vent intake. We just need it to stop raining so we can paint it.



Gary installing new phenolic tags on the laundry dryer.



We hoisted the Greek flag for Pete Kaldias and his family when they visited. Pete served in AETOS from 1961-62.

With our whaleboat back in the water, Tommy Moore sanded and painted the seats and floorboards. Up on deck, Boats Haggart and his crew replaced the forward davit guy. Mike Dingmon, Steve Klauck, and Larry Williams got the whaleboat engine ready, and took her out on the first trip of the season. She ran just fine. Having conquered the whaleboat engine, the engineers all came in on a Monday, and did a test run of the emergency diesel generator, that included shifting the load. The engine still runs as smooth as ever.

Topside, I decided that the aft life raft grates looked pretty shabby, so I had Boats and his gang make repairs. They pulled the grating from number three life raft on the starboard side, and sanded it, treated it with Thompson’s Water Seal, and then caulked, primed and painted it. They lashed it back into place, and are now giving the grating from number four the same treatment. We’re indebted to Russ Padden, who has a real canoe fetish. As a result, he seems to attract a lot of paddles, and he was kind enough to donate several to outfit the rafts.



Volunteer Carl Camurati priming under the depth charge projectors.

Then I decided that the port 24" searchlight looked pretty shabby, so I had them get a coat of rust inhibitor over the rust. Before that could be painted, I decided that the depth charge projector roller loader number six looked pretty shabby, so I got them needle



Run she may, shine she must. The helm gets polished every morning.

scaling on that. We already talked about Carl needle scaling outside of the pilothouse. So, add in the aft supply vent intake, and gun mount 31, which needs painting, and I now have five projects started and half done, awaiting someone willing to paint and a sunny day.

We have managed to get the whole fo'c's'le painted out, as well as the main deck starboard side and the fantail. The only eyesore is the deck around the aft supply vent fan. However, **Evan** painted out the 20mm ready service locker for gun 27, and we've fitted it out with 20mm ammunition drums, so people can see how the drums were stored.

Back aft, Barry Witte has made a lot of phenolic signage for the equipment and circuits in the spaces that Gary Sheedy has restored, keeping Gary busy installing them. Vic Consiglio is continuing his work, stenciling and piping the ventilation systems. Vince Montouri and Jack Carbone are continuing to work on the smoke generator, having installed the newly fabricated combustion chamber. Ken Powers continues to work on the ignition transformers. Devon Urbano completed the first action of the upcoming winter restoration project, berthing C-201L. He restored a bulkhead fan for us.

Barry Witte has had a big month scrounging things. We were looking for brown porcelain insulators for the mast stays and shrouds we are fabricating. **Dick Walker** went over to the National Grid shops, to see if he could scrounge some, and the security guard told him, "Twenty years ago I would have directed you to the storeroom, but now all I can do for you is to call customer service." Barry reached out to one of his former students, **Matt Fowles**, who now works for **National Grid**. Matt put out the word we were looking for insulators, and apparently they came in from all over the state, because Matt arrived with two boxes full of them, enough for the upcoming mast renovation. Then, Barry needed a valve for the smoke generator. He determined that it had been made by the **Everlasting Valve Company** of South Plainfield, New Jersey. He contacted the company



Finally, our Interpretation Coordinator Shanna Hopson is back on the job following her wedding in Montana. Congratulations, Shanna!

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David Jenkins identified the valve as an Everlasting 4000-A one-inch valve, and agreed to donate one for the project without being asked.

But Barry's biggest find came in the form of research. One of the big projects we hope to accomplish with the mast restoration is replicating the vertical fighting lights, colored lights that were flashed on at night to identify friendly ships to each other. They were removed right after the war, so there is a dearth of information about them. Using the Internet as a finding aid, Barry actually located the National Archives file number for the fighting lights. Using this information, and **Ed Zajkowski** as an intermediary, **Chris Wright** went to the archives and found all the files, memoranda, and blueprints right where they were supposed to be. Chris is in the process of copying the information for us, and I suppose that now makes us the world authority on WWII naval recognition lights.

Midshipman Patrick Madden returned at the end of the month, after being on his summer cruise. Patrick is Nick Grocki's relief, as the NROTC RPI midshipman coordinator. We look forward to starting another productive year of cooperation with the RPI midshipman volunteers.

Don't forget the donate button on our homepage www.ussslater.org and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.

See you next month!



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