

# SLATER SIGNALS

## The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

3 City Square Plaza  
Albany, New York 12207-2863

Phone & Fax (518) 431-1943  
Vol. 2 no. 4, April 1999



**April has been a month of big events here aboard SLATER.** For a ship whose engines haven't turned over since 1991, we're steaming faster than ever.

### **First, a report on the scrounging trip to the James River Reserve Fleet taken 14-18 March:**

The scheduled trip to Portsmouth, VA was accompanied by a coastal storm that dumped a foot of snow on the New Jersey area. Since all of the volunteer group who planned on the trip couldn't leave at the same time the storm complicated the travel plans. **Gordon Lattey** rode ahead of the snow and arrived at Newport News on Sunday night. He spent Monday aboard the **GENERAL NELSON M. WALKER**, a 1945 vintage troop transport, scouting and securing equipment for SLATER. The rest of the crew arrived Monday afternoon. **Roy W. Gunther, CDR, DD 711, LSD-17, Gus Negus, SS-347, Chris Fedden, DD-711, Frank Perrella, DE-326** and **Pat Perrella** (who went along "to crack the whip"). On Tuesday, Roy and Chris worked aboard the USS **DONNER (LSD 20)**; Gus tackled the tugboat **YTB-24** and Pat & Frank returned to the **WALKER** with Gordon. By Wednesday, they had removed and assembled 1 ½ tons of equipment, parts & supplies for **SLATER**. These included 14 stainless steel 3 handled lavatory sinks, a galley steam kettle, 8 interior steel doors, radio room gear, sound powered phones, flag bag letter boards, lamp shades, misc. electrical receptacles, various racks & shelves, mess trays, bowls, a brass stencil kit, brass door hardware & coat hooks and first aid kits. Pat also reports she learned what a "dog wrench" was and the crew found quite a few of those.

**The greatest haul, however, was taken from the tugboat to be used to help restore SLATER's engine spaces.** Gus discovered 2 complete engine gasket sets and 2 dozen unit injectors along with various gauges, piston rings, head, crankcase & air box covers, various bearings, a cylinder head and liner, springs, fuses, tools and supplies. He couldn't wait to get back to the ship with his treasures and already has all the gear neatly arranged down below and installed the new gaskets on the side panel of the Auxiliary Power Generator in B-4. The scrounge crew ended up with so much loot they had to rent a U-Haul to get it back home! One of the interesting reports involved the retrieval of a 125-LB bench vise from the lower machine shop in the **DONNER**. Chris, Gordon, & Frank managed to haul this treasure topside and also over to the fantail of the starboard berthed ship for pick-up. As you can well imagine this involved several intricate maneuvers and Frank has since added a pair of suspenders to his work uniform.....

**Opening day for public tours was April first.** To prepare for that date the volunteers turned out an incredible effort, completely restoring the whole second deck forward, including the Chief's Quarters, passageway, berthing space, A-205L and the messdecks. We also repainted the forward maindeck passageway, including the radioroom passageway and the area outside the galley. This has opened up a whole new area for the public to visit. The crew also did an equally incredible cleanup job to get the ship ready for opening. Fresh paint was applied, bunks were cleaned and rigged, mattresses and pillows hauled out and aired mattress covers washed, fans, battle lanterns and light fixtures wired in and hung, lockers mounted, brass polished, and a ships' clock mounted, wound and set. We even got the piping stenciled. To quote **Larry Williams DE-246**, "She's coming alive and starting to look like a ship." My personal favorite is **Barry Witte's** (LCDR USNR) statement; "I'm almost starting to be proud to be associated with this place!"

**On the actual opening day, Gordon Lattey's phrase " Soft opening" took on new meaning ... Nobody came; and we continued to work and clean** - But things got better. People started showing up Friday, and more Saturday and even more Sunday. The next weekend was better and we hosted our first DE Reunion Group of the season with the 22 former crew and wives of the **CHARLES J. KIMMELL DE-584**. School tours are booking in and our promotion is cranking up. The new season is underway.

**The crew is finishing up below and moving to topside work where the fresh air is invigorating.** **Ray Lammers APD-81** is detailing the messdecks. **Roy Gunther** is finishing up the wardroom's pantry. Naval Reservists from Glens Falls and Albany welded in the steam table and bunk stanchions, repaired an overhead discharge line, fabricated 50 cable support brackets and 25 canvas support brackets for the 40 mm gun tubs; and began cutting out Greek alterations in CIC to make way for the SA Radar console. **Gordon Lattey** is mounting restored MK 14 gunsights on the MK 51 directors and 20 MM guns. He is continuing the work of former volunteer **Ed Wakeman, ENC, DD-946** who now lives in Ohio. **Doug Tanner** and his crew from GE have installed a hot water heater and are moving forward to make the aft head functional so Nancy can wash her hands in hot water. The electricians repaired the SA Airsearch Antenna and she's rotating again. The electricians also completed repairs to the lighting all the way to the midships passageway. They are working their way aft and beginning work on the running lights. The deck force is busy installing snaking and lifeline safety netting to make the ship safer. The chippers have scaled and repainted the whole pilothouse exterior and have begun work on the fantail. The welders are replacing rotted handrails and canvas tie down rails and welding up cable brackets.

**After many weekends of intensive work the crew's entertainment system is now restored in all forward compartments** and with the addition of a donated dual-deck auto-reverse cassette player we can broadcast the music of our WW II tapes sent up by **John Mohr**, NYC Volunteer, throughout these spaces. **Dick Willard**, NORPAC Yeoman, Covington, WA is also hot on the trail of recorded "Tokyo Rose" & "Axis Sally" broadcasts for the "entertainment" of our Field Day troops and has wired this info to **Pat Perrella** via the Internet. (Note: This is a real undercover assignment.)

**Of course, SLATER'S Engineers never do see much light of day but their work continues below decks.** The latest report to reach topside is that the Auxiliary Power Generator has "passed the water" test and will now be drained & filled with oil. We're sure that before long we will be hearing a loud roar from below and greeted by our long-suffering engineering crew with the news that they are one step closer to restoring power to **SLATER'S** engines.

Out on the front line and behind the scenes we have many unsung heroes who are working hard in many capacities for the ship. **Joe Logiudice** has been working to obtain funds to dry-dock the ship through a Department of Transportation Grant. **Nancy Buxton** has completed an application for a McDonald's Educational Grant, **AI VanDerzee** is serving as Yeoman in the ship's office and during meetings of the Executive Groups. **Maralyn Walker** has been assisting with the gift shop inventory. **JoAnne McFadden** has brought us some excellent publicity while operating on a zero budget! We not only had live TV coverage by **Megan Chiplock** of WRGB Channel 6 aboard ship on the arrival of the **SLATER** Crewmembers, but we have had excellent articles in 3 local papers over the past few weeks. Reporters and photographers from *The Gazette* (Schenectady), *Rensselaer Beacon*, & *Albany Times Union*, have visited the ship to report on our project to their readers. JoAnne is working on articles for several publications that have a major distribution and sends weekly press-releases to the local news media. **Michael J. Stenzel**, the DMNA Webmaster continues to be most generous in adding news & photo items to the website located on the Internet at:

[www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/slater/slater.html](http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/slater/slater.html)

We also appreciate the support of our friends at **DESA Headquarters**, Vienna, VA who have added pages of information to their newspaper to inform the DESA members about the news of the SLATER.

**A reminder to all Slater friends-The Memorial Service for Roger E. Oesterreich Lt.Cmdr. USS LOESER DE-680 and dedicated Slater volunteer** will be held aboard ship at 6 PM, May 15th. All are welcome to attend. Claire requests that you let her know if you are attending by May 6th You can reach her at: 875-6721 or by FAX 875-6566. The sad news has also reached us of the passing of volunteer **Frank McMahon**, GM3/c USS **HEMMINGER DE-746**. Frank came aboard as a volunteer after touring the ship with his daughter Mary and worked along with the deck crew making many repairs before he went south for the winter. We extend our sympathies to his family; we will miss him as a friend and volunteer.

**We also heard word that another volunteer is on the binnacle** list ... **Clark Farnsworth**, a 39 year USNR veteran who served aboard CV-32. After working aboard **SLATER** all winter, climbing ladders, braving the ice & snow; he was catching up on some work on his wooden yacht at home & slipped & cracked a few ribs. We'll save your bunk in CPO's for you Clark and hope to have you back on board soon. That is one heck of a way to get a vacation from the SLATER . . .

**The most commonly asked question asked by everyone is, "When are you going back to the Snow Dock in Albany?"** The answer is as soon as it gets warm. **Roy Gunther** and **Tom Moore** are standing by ready to pour liquid Styrofoam into the 12 x 12" holes cut into each camel section. **Frank Perrella** is ready to haul it; and we are just waiting for the sun and some warm days.

**Preparations for the raffle of the WW II Jeep restored and donated by Ray Windle DE-640 have been completed.** As you have probably read in the DEHF publication, *Trim But Deadly*, the winner will be selected at the Annual DESA Convention, October 28th, Kissimmee, FL. All proceeds are going toward the SLATER'S restoration . We will have the Albany Jeep pier side at the Snow Dock to help advertise this project. Plenty of tickets will also be available for you to purchase and sell!

**Finally, Kevin Lynch gave us a "heads up" when the New Scotland Armory was being shut down.** **Dick Walker** brought in his truck and we finally found the ugly government issue sofa for the wardroom; that had a major advantage over other sofas we'd been offered - it fit through the door.

**The culmination of all our efforts occurred on Tuesday, April 20th when the former crew members of the SLATER arrived in Albany for their 14th Reunion.** Pat Perrella made up the hoist "DE 766 Bravo Zulu" and two blocked it into the bright sunshine. Two busloads of **SLATER** crewmembers and their families arrived at 1000. Following photos on the pier, the crew streamed aboard to re-man and inspect their ship. It was a most rewarding day for all the volunteers present, as most of the **SLATER WW II** crew had seen SLATER when she first arrived from Greece and were overwhelmed by the progress that has been made. Much information was gathered from the crew about the way the ship was rigged in 1945. We also were privileged to have **Don Norris** escort **Peter Stanford** of the National Maritime Historical Society through the ship.

**The SLATER crew discovered the siren and horn were operational and those loud signals echoed reminders of the past to all those present.** The crew departed the ship around noon after giving our gift shop one of the most profitable days ever! Later that evening they hosted a cocktail reception for the local volunteers and official dignitaries at the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau at Quackenbush Square under the coordination of **Michelle Vennard**, ACC-VB President. **Mayor Gerald Jennings** attended and extended his salute to the **SLATER** Veterans and volunteers. The ACC-VB facilities provided a perfect setting and it was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to visit and exchange information and ideas.

**We knew they were proud of what we've accomplished but we didn't know how proud they really were of their ship and us.** At their banquet Wednesday night they pledged \$7,000.00 to the SLATER'S restoration fund to help us continue to move **SLATER** forward. To them, we send our eternal gratitude. We only wish we'd been this far along ten years before, so more of the crew could have seen her and be proud.

**They have left us with many unforgettable images.** Who could forget **Colton P. Wagner** and **Clifton W. Woltz** visiting the Officers Stateroom they once had shared? Former Executive Officer **Harold N. Poulson** checking the status of his stateroom and giving important information for restoration details. **AI Rivoire** leading his wife below aft to show her Sick Bay, former Motor Machs immediately heading below decks into the B hatches to check out the engine spaces.

**Frank O. Slater's brother Paul, was 4 years old when his brother was killed in the Pacific and attended the ship's christening in 1944 while dressed in a little sailor suit.** Now so many years later, the ship named for his older brother is the only DE left afloat in the United States and he is touring her decks with his wife. **Anita Kunst**, widow of **Lionel**, who climbed into her husband's former berth in the newly restored Fwrd Crews Quarters. **Charles Kent & Tom O'Neil** pulling the siren and horn in the pilothouse to sound echoes of the past. The many former gunners mates inspecting the 20's, & 40's with quiet memories of their own. And the marvelous wives who came along to share those wartime memories - all of you have convinced us that our work is being rewarded.

**We commit ourselves to say that these and all other donations will be carefully and well spent.** In other words, we'll take good care of her for you. We know there are still many ports of call for future **SLATER** reunions; but we hope you enjoy Albany and will be back to see us next year!