



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum
USS Slater DE-766
PO Box 1926
Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123
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I'm sitting here in the ship's office thinking I'm a week behind in getting this out, but by the time it goes to press, everything I write here will be old news. It's Tuesday, March 25th. Yesterday, the weather was beautiful. Forty degrees, calm and sunny. We got the camels in and the mooring reassembled. Over at Port Albany Ventures, the crew there is working to complete an engine overhaul on the tug CHEYENNE. That should be completed tomorrow. Once the CHEYENNE is available, we should be able to move back to Albany. That may happen before the weekend. Our target date to be open to the public is Wednesday, April 2nd. This is two weeks earlier than we got across last year, so everyone is a little stressed trying to wrap up the winter work. Let's see if I can finish this newsletter by then.

We're in the final throes of getting the ship ready to open to the public for Season 11 in Albany. Aside from that and the move, planning is beginning for the permanent Albany mooring, bidding out our insurance, planning an upgrade to our security system, working with Smithsonian Magazine on an article about the SLATER, working with our local public television station to produce a short fundraising DVD, restocking the ship's store, updating the donor recognition boards, bringing aboard new tour guides and doing refresher training for the old hands, and negotiating with a Japanese movie production group that wants to film on the SLATER. There is a little bit going on.



Tanner, Benner and Siebert



Kelly Lassonde hard at work in the forward bunkroom wiping off the dust that accumulated over the winter.



Jim Gelston and Fred Sirois took care of the aft end of the ship.

So here we are, hopefully spending our last week in Rensselaer. Spring-cleaning has begun simultaneously with the arrival of our contract painters to complete the winter restoration work. The crew was quite amused the day **Erik Collin** posted a notice in the CPO mess announcing that "Spring Cleaning Has Begun. Let's all make an effort to keep the mess to a minimum." A couple days after the sign went up, the sand blasting began and the ship fitters started running the sewer line through the forward berthing spaces. Not to worry. We had two weeks until opening day.

Doug Tanner and the shipfitters were making great progress in the forward crew's head welding up all the steel that they had cut out. Then I stopped the job. Doug doesn't like interruptions, and I interrupted him. Erik wanted to try sandblasting the place, and since dedicated chippers are getting harder and harder to come by, I agreed to try it. This was against my better judgment, because in my thirty years of ship keeping I've found that while sandblasting does a wonderful job, it makes a hell of a mess. But I've given the title "Restoration Coordinator" to Erik, and I figure he has every right to learn everything the hard way, like I did, and then decide for himself if it was worth the mess. All the shipfitters' gear was staged in the anchor windlass room or the CPO passage for the duration of the sand blasting and painting. That pretty well trashed those two spaces.



Paul Guarnieri vacuuming fire fighting gear.



Tim Benner and Doug Tanner are the proud parents of a bouncing baby pipe bender.

Kevin Sage and his cousin Pat Murray dove into the forward heads and passageway, and Kevin worked like a man possessed. Once he got under the air hood he went non-stop for hours. I still can't figure out if he loves the work so much he doesn't want to stop or if he hates it so much he wants to get it over with. But this was a job that couldn't be done with the public aboard. And, like lifting the SL antenna aboard last April, had to be done pier side in Rensselaer, so the compressor and sand hopper could be staged close to the ship. The plan is to coat the area with a white holding primer. Then, after we are moved to Albany, the shipfitters will return to make the forward head operational for our youth group overnight campers. This will mean sinks, a commode, septic tank, hot water heater, grinder pump, and running fresh water and sewer lines into the space. All this equipment and work was paid for by a grant from the Wright Family Foundation in Schenectady.



Garry Sheedy masks the copper tubing and other fittings on the reefer deck in preparation for painting.



Kevin Sage masked himself while painting the forward crew's head.

It's a funny thing about sandblasting. Once the word gets out that sandblasting is going on, it's amazing how many things the crew can find that need sandblasting. Gary Sheedy brought a whole pile of copper and brass piping out of the reefer deck, as well as all of the wooden deck gratings from down there. Barry Witte decided that the safety screens on the back of the aft motor room propulsion control board needed to be sand blasted. Erik brought up a couple for fire extinguishers, and somebody decided that the trough for the forward crew's head would look better after blasting. A virtual mound of equipment began to grow on the fo'c's'le. Ultimately Kevin and Pat worked through the mound, and it has all been returned to its rightful owners and is being reinstalled.

Erik and Paul Guarnieri have the chartroom looking great with the new chronometers safely in place, a tube in the LORAN receiver and fresh paint on the bulkheads. The last detail to be done is installing the brass rail on the front of the chart table and the restoration will be complete. He has completed a simulation in the SL radar console and done a lot of tweaking and detail work, including replacing electrical tags on the switch boxes and refinishing the junction boxes.



Stan Murawski measures cloth insulation covering for the log room.



The log room is better than ever. One Engineer was overheard purring in there.

The engineer's logroom project was another source of growth. Last year, when we repainted the aft passageway, head and DC lockers, everything in the area got repainted with a nice fresh coat of gloss white except for the Logroom. I believe the engineers felt that a form of discrimination, and **Gus Negus** made the comment to Erik that everything in the area looked great, except his office, which now looked like crap by comparison. Well, Erik never forgets, and this year when we brought in **Kevin Sage** to do the contract painting, Erik announced that the Logroom was on the list, along with the forward crew's head and passage, the reefer deck and the chartroom. That was fine with Gus, who immediately began moving all the chairs, file cabinets, bookshelves and books out of the logroom and into the aft head. That wasn't fine with Electrical Officer **Barry Witte**, who planned to do three weeks worth of rewiring in the logroom, and felt that **Stan Murawski** should replace the bulkhead insulation throughout the space. The logroom is a small space that was filled with a lot of strong opinions, and not much time. In the end, Stan Murawski came in two extra days to complete the insulating, and Barry and **George Gollas** stayed one Saturday until 1730 to complete rewiring. The space has since been sprayed out, and Gus has repainted all his file cabinets. It should go back together nicely and be the show place Gus and the engineers deserve.

August, when they filmed the "It's an Age Thing" segment on the SLATER's volunteers, that they wanted to assist us again, and we certainly appreciate their help. That same day a crisis was averted. When none of our regular cooks were available to make lunch, our curatorial intern Kelly Lassonde stepped into the breach to make grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup for the crew. The crew was most appreciative; however, Kelly does have an advantage. It was generally agreed that the crew would still abuse any of our regular cooks preparing gourmet meals. Kelly could serve them cardboard, and they would still be appreciative.



Continuing on the "masking" theme, Austin Jolly and Brian Schuessler bag the filthy remains of five month worth of work in the forward passageway.



The last of the camels, good ole #12, heads into position on the river.

This operation involved using a snatch block and long towline to pull eight of the camels up river and raft them together to form the forward fender. We were good enough that each time Ricky dropped another camel into the river, the previous camel was already shackled in place and the towline was waiting. We started around 0830 and were done by noon. The whole gang returned to the ship for lunch and more clean up, where Erik Collin was tending the contract painters and Stan Murawski was repairing insulation. Dick Walker loaded up scrap metal from the forward crew's head and brought Rosehn back a check for \$300. Tanner's only comment was that as long as we had the whole crew, I should have called for the tugs.

We did a lot of clean up on Saturday March 22nd. Special thanks to RPI Midshipmen **Brian Schuessler** and **Austin Jolley**, who showed up and ended up hauling mounds of trash ashore. The dirty work didn't seem to faze them at all, and since they are both freshmen we hope they will continue to be involved with SLATER for the remainder of their time at RPI. Once we're open to the public, we will get them back on the more technical aspects of ship maintenance. That same day, WMHT producer **Jim Felitte** was aboard with his wife shooting footage of the maintenance crew for an upcoming short DVD that they are producing to help raise funds to dry-dock the SLATER. The Albany Guardian Society, spearheaded by one of our new friends Richard Iannello, is funding this film. They were impressed enough with our effort . **The following Monday, March 24th, we put the camels in the water.** Now that we have the grant to begin the permanent mooring we see the end of this evolution in sight. **Tommy Moore** must be commended for all the work he put in on the camels before camel day, adding additional Styrofoam flotation and rigging the fenders and wires. The evolution is getting so routine it seems a waste of space to write about it. Tommy and I were down on the camels and **Doug Tanner** directed the crane operations on the dock with **Ricky** in the crane. **Tim Benner** made the hook ups, supported by **Eric Rivet, Ken Kaskoun, Gene Jackey, Clark Farnsworth, Bill Coyle, Bob Callender, Chris Fedden, Jim Gelston, Tom McLaughlin, Don Miller, Earl and Karl Herchenroder, Gary Lubrano, Gus Negus,** and with the whole operation photographed by **Richard Andrian.**



Bill Siebert (right) and his dad are working on an expanded metal door for the aft damage control locker.

The SLATER's tour guides are gearing up for another season. We have two new faces to welcome so far this year: **Richard Ireland** and **Louis Sussman**. As the new ship's store manager, Richard will be the first person visitors to the ship meet. He'll also be the last person they see on their way out, so it falls to him to push membership applications their way. Lucky man. Louis, our newest guide, stands ready to take his place among an elite group of SLATER personnel: the Coasties. A former USCG quartermaster, Louis jumped headlong into ship's work by preparing the chartroom for painting. He also adopted the pilothouse as his cleaning station. Louis, Richard, and the rest of the SLATER's education staff will be busy this year. Rosehn and Eric are booking overnights left and right, with the first one coming up on April 25th. We also have school tours starting on April 11th. Finally, Eric will be hosting his annual refresher training at 1300 on Saturday, March 29 and Sunday, March 30. If the move forces a rescheduling he'll let you know ASAP.

There has been continued interest on the part of Japanese motion picture producer Shohei Kotaki in using the SLATER in an upcoming

motion involving an encounter between a Japanese submarine and an American destroyer escort at the close of World War II. Mr. Kotaki's goal is to make a film that will pay tribute to the veterans of both sides as well as making a statement for peace in the future. Sho, as we have come to know him, is taking the time to interview DE sailors and learn all he can about the American perspective, in the hope that his film will teach the younger generations from both nations about this critical time in history. Sho paid another visit to the SLATER and spent two days looking over the ship and the site, a visit that included a trip up the river by tug to view the SLATER from the river. For our part, we are interested in helping Sho make the film as authentic as possible and making sure that the historical inaccuracies that inevitably creep into Hollywood scripts are kept to a minimum.

Dealing with the Japanese has been an interesting cultural experience. Erik has assumed the role of our protocol officer and has done a great deal of research into Japanese business practices on the Internet. Inevitably, he seems to be able to predict what they are going to do and give us advice on how we should respond. They are very polite and well mannered, in sharp contrast to us barbarians who are restoring the SLATER. But one of the comments by producer Sho made us feel very good about the SLATER. Sho said through his interpreter that he had visited other historic naval ships, but the other ships seemed like memorials. He said that the USS SLATER felt alive. After hearing that, I left the wardroom where we had been sharing tea and went down to the CPO mess, where the shipfitters were under the gun running the new sewer line through the compartment. Things were not going well. There were obstructions to get around, ductwork to remove, the pipe threader wasn't working right, and pipe dope was dripping everywhere. A compartment full of griping sailors getting the job done. Needless to say, to quote Herman Wouk, one of my favorite authors, "A certain four-letter filled the air like a fog." I wonder if that's what Sho meant when he said "The SLATER feels alive."

See you next month.