

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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I've stated before, I am driven by guilt. And from the perspective of guilt, there is no way to calculate how much stress my ships have caused in the marital relationships of our volunteers over my thirty-year career. You can't calculate stress the way you can horsepower, kilowatts, or tons per inch immersion. I guess it might be calculated in all those volunteer hours measured in lost income, lawns not mowed, rooms not painted, or gutters not cleaned. Every hour given to the SLATER is one hour less spent on home repairs and improvements. Just remember **Tim Benner's** wife **Carol's** classic quote when she was trying to get Tim to fix the brake lights on the family car, "If the SLATER had brake lights, they'd be fixed by now." The fact that my ships and I have been responsible for at least two marriages probably doesn't atone for my sins.

For thirty years, my wife and I have been a one-car family, and that car is registered in my wife's name. For thirty years she has dropped me off at a ship in the morning and picked me up from a ship in the afternoon. My wife never reads SLATER SIGNALS. I assume that's because she knows where I am all day. Besides, I have a pay stub that shows where I've been all day, and despite what they might say in the Chief's Quarters, I haven't yet been able to turn this into one of those "No Show" jobs. My wife doesn't feel a need to know more. She has about as much interest in reading SIGNALS as I have in reading the weekly newsletter for her second grade parents. That may be just as well, because if she knew what I was really doing on camel day I might be looking for another career.



After chipping Dave applies Coraseal to help prevent the rack from rusting!



When a locker top in an aft bunkroom needed paint Dave was the man to call for the job! It was a tough job in a tight space but a piece of cake for Dave!

So, of course, I make the mistake of assuming all wives are like my wife, and who would want to read this dull boring newsletter anyway? But, hypothetically, if wives were to read the SIGNALS they would be reassured knowing that their husbands are happily engaged in useful, wholesome activity on board the SLATER. So, if a guy tells his wife that he's going to the SLATER four days a week to work on a ship, and his name doesn't show up in the SIGNALS, that might be cause for some suspicion as to what he's been doing all that time. This may have been the case with **Dave Mardon**.

We have a running joke here that for every fifty potential volunteers, (those folks who come down all excited, take the volunteer application and get an orientation tour), only one comes through as a real volunteer. Dave Mardon is that one in fifty. In fact, Dave is one in a hundred. Ever since he got involved with us back in May, Dave, a retired state worker, has been putting in about four days a week, cheerfully doing the most miserable jobs nobody else wants to do. Prior to Dave's coming, it was **Earl Herchenroder** who got the short end of the stick. That was for two reasons. First, Earl is the younger brother of his identical twin **Karl** by about two minutes. Karl never lets Earl forget that, so Earl got the dirty jobs. And then Earl was in the Army. His best buddy, coworker and running mate **Don Miller** was a storekeeper on the destroyer HICKOX. So you've got a pleasant, agreeable, hardworking Army vet who doesn't even know the naval definition of the word "Striker" paired with an ex-Tin Can storekeeper. Any doubt about who's gonna get the raw deal?



Chipping the starboard fantail rack has been a major summer project. As always, Dave was right in the middle of the action!



Dave loves to vacuum! Here he is working on the deck outside the CPO Mess! We wonder who does the vacuuming at home!

And into this situation walks Dave Mardon. All of a sudden, Earl is no longer the junior man. Earl and Dave became friends because they had something in common, a willingness to do all the dirty jobs no one else will do. Except that Dave comes more days than Earl, so he has more time to do dirty jobs. Dave gets along with everybody. He deals with Tanner's evil temper when Doug is having a bad day. He deals with getting jerked around from one job to another when Erik and I are out of sync on our priorities. He's spent time in the aft motor room where Gus and Karl probably have him cleaning bilges. His reward for all this dedication? It sure wasn't getting mentioned in the last SIGNALS. A more experienced volunteer might have just sucked it up and accepted the fact that no one expects justice on the SLATER. But being new and idealistic, Dave dropped me an email that got right to the point.

"Tim, did you forget all the time, sweat and effort that I also put into the depth charge racks and the forward head?" I know the cynical veterans won't believe it, but that did trigger a certain amount of guilt feeling on my part. After I apologized profusely for omitting his name from the June SIGNALS, Dave mentioned that actually it was his wife that noticed it, and that led to even more guilt. So I would like to take this opportunity to apologize to the wives of all the other nameless volunteers I've omitted over the years, and for any other stress my ships and I may have caused in your lives. In my haste to get this gossip sheet out on time I've forgotten a lot of people. Sometimes I forget them on purpose, like Benner for example. But most of the time it's accidental. Trust me. If your husband said he was going to the SLATER, he's probably been here.



Even though Dave is a hard worker he has been known to take some time off for lunch!



After moving a K-gun we found a large round rust spot where it had been. Dave went right at it with a chipping tool quickly getting the mess cleaned up!

Dave has played a major role in our preparations for the upcoming movie. A lot of things are getting done that I didn't expect to see for years down the road. The port depth charge rack is complete, all welded out, painted out and loaded with Mark 6 ashcan type depth charges. Dave was on that job from start to finish, fire watching and corrosealing to help get the job done. When he finished that, Dave went to work on the starboard depth charge rack. He had some help from his buddy **Earl Herchenroder, Don Miller, Chris Fedden** and **Peter Jez**. They unloaded all the depth charges, chipped the whole thing down to bare metal and corrosealed it. **Kevin Sage** is doing the final painting as I type this. We got the release gear fully operational so now we can actually roll depth charges off the fantail. **Karl Herchenroder, Gene Jackey** and **Bill Siebert** had a major role in that, but Dave was hammering on the release gear with them. And since **Jerry Jones** got the passive sonar going, if we hear a submarine we can now drop an ashcan on it.



As always, Dave is hard at work! Here, he is chipping paint and rust off a fantail rack part.



Lower sonar was a mess so Dave got right to it with his trusty vacuum cleaner!



Gene Jackey, a good friend of Dave, tack welds parts on to a new K-gun rack.



Dave stood the always vital and under appreciated firewatch as welder Bob Bareis welded K-gun racks and bases to the deck!

The starboard roller loaders for the "K" Guns are now complete. Again, Dave was fire watch as Bill Siebert fabricated the two missing "K" gun bases. Bob Bareis welded them to the deck, and with the help of Barry Witte, Chris Dennis and Gene Jackey completed fabrication of the number seven roller loader and welded down the base for number six depth charge projector on the port side. Greg Kehrer, a student at Colonie High School, delivered the last starboard side depth charge trolley we need, a semester-long project in metal fabrication for him.

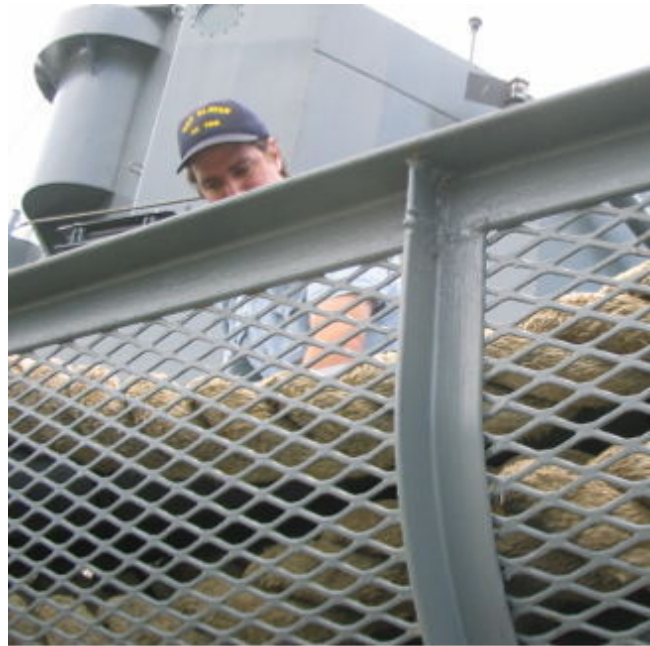
Dave spent several days chipping on the starboard side twin forty millimeter gun mount, which has since been primed and painted with the long-life epoxy paint. The chippers have started work on the port forty. Coastie Rich Pavlovik has finished work on the midships starboard 20mm guns and has started restoration on the fantail guns. He's the one guy I don't think Dave has helped, but I'm sure Dave was there when we moved the floater nets aboard. Bosun Bill Haggart took a bunch of cylindrical floats from an old oil boom, painted them black, and tied them together with some old, very heavy nylon mooring line that we've had kicking around here ever since the ship came in. The result is something that is, from a distance, a reasonable facsimile of a floater net. Working with the tour guides, Bill has created four of them and placed them in the previously empty floater net baskets around the ship. I'm sure Dave was there when it came time to lug those aboard and hoist them into the baskets.

On rainy days we send all the chippers, including Dave, down to the aft motor room to help Gus, Karl Mike Dingmon and George Gollas with the painting and the insulation work. Stan Murawski, our best insulation man, has been back on the job. The upper level of the aft motor room is looking beautiful. Tour guide **Glenn Harrison** refinished the wooden handrails in front of the electrical panels. The one dark cloud in engineering is a vibration that has crept into the emergency diesel generator. Marine Engineer **John Kessler** came up from Florida to spend a few days with Gus working on it. Their fear is that it may be the rear crankshaft bearing, and if that's the case, it may be a long time before we can put the generator back on line. That's one job that may be beyond our means.

The only other operating diesel we have is purring like a kitten. That diesel is the engine for the whaleboat. **Ken Kaskoun, Larry Williams** and the engineers have been taking it out to exercise it on Mondays, and though I haven't gotten a boat ride yet, I'm sure Dave has. I hear that she is running beautifully. All of **Rocky's** hard work has paid off. The boat looks wonderfully handsome riding on her moorings on the port quarter. Librarian **Frank Peter** was so impressed with his boat ride that he now sponges out the bilges every day he is aboard. That's well beyond the scope of a librarian, but Frank likes things tidy. Bosun Bill has been working on the boat davits and replaced the monkey lines. If they want to raise the whaleboat for the upcoming movie, we will be ready.



Dave can walk on water! We've seen him do it! Lou Sussman can also perform magic turning yellow floats into black ones.



We all wish we could be more like Dave! Like Paul Guarnieri as he does some touchup work on a floater net basket.

And then we continue to follow the saga of Doug Tanner, Tim Benner and Chuck Teal down in the forward head. Depending upon your perspective, some people say that our efforts to get ready for the movie have really slowed the progress in the forward head. Other people might say that the work in the forward head has really impeded our effort to get ready for the movie. Regardless of your perspective, this is a job that has really grown in scope and gotten more complicated at every turn. For example, Doug fabricated a beautiful stainless steel septic tank. He planned to put it in the third deck storeroom immediately below the commode. But there was a motor generator set in the way of his tank, so he removed the motor generator set. Of course, the area behind and under the motor generator set had not been scaled and painted in a very long time, so Doug went to work with an air chisel and the ruthlessness of an angry oral surgeon. When the dust settled, Doug was black and there was no deck under where the motor generator set used to rest. So Doug had to replace the steel deck. The good news was that in the process of making repairs, he did some ultrasonic testing of the hull thickness down there at the waterline, and happily the thinnest spot was $.279$ inches, with the average being $.35$ inches. I'm still trying to figure this out, since my understanding was that the original plate thickness at the waterline was quarter inch. Without going into details of the saga of getting the septic tank from the main deck to its final resting place on the third deck, suffice to say that people are now starting to compare this job to **Gary Sheedy's** epic saga on the reefer deck. But Gary has progressed to the point of polishing brass. Doug and his crew have a way to go before he gets there.

Doug has started teaching Dave to weld and Dave has been seen under a hood practicing at the welding table. Doug hasn't yet taught Dave how to cook, but that's okay because we've been well fed this month. We've had a new volunteer report aboard in the person of Captain **Dave Newton** of the Albany Fire Department. Captain Dave has been relieving Doug of his galley duties on Saturdays, giving Doug more time to pursue his work in the forward head. And on Mondays, we are still fortunate to have the culinary talents of **Bernie Smith** and **Ernie Friedon** in the galley cooking lunch for the crew.



Dave was onhand to watch as Paul Czesak explained to the news media what the Fourth of July is all about.



Rosie the Riveter, (Miss Altamont Fair, Rachael Barrett) paid us a visit on the 4th. Like any other day, Dave was there, too!

We held two ceremonies this month, and I must report that Dave Mardon was not part of the color guard in either, nor did he give any speeches at the podium. We celebrated the Fourth of July with a reading of the Declaration of Independence by **Steve Long** and featuring **Rachael Barrett**, Miss Altamont Fair as Rosie the Riveter. Our Coast Guard contingent, led by **Dick Walker**, tired and frustrated over years of neglect, organized and put on a great event August 4th honoring the Coast Guard's 218th birthday. The event was well covered by the media and attended by many Coast Guard veterans. A specially decorated birthday cake was cut for the occasion. Emcee **Bill Kraus** did his usual outstanding job and two proclamations were read, one from the Governor and one from the Legislature. The "Coasties" (or "Hooligans") appreciate the efforts of those members of the SLATER's Navy crew who participated in making the event a success. I had no choice with this threat hanging over my head: "Treat us right or we'll paint it white." I'd like to thank those Coasties that have given so much to the SLATER: **Dick Walker, Doug Tanner, Rich Pavlovik, Gene Jackey, Nelson Potter, Joe Burke, Grant Hack and Lou Sussman. Semper Paratus.**

The LA DESA Chapter Raffle is well under way. I know I received my tickets in the mail. Once again, our thanks to **Earl Johnson** and all his shipmates out there in California who work so hard to put this raffle together. If your not on our snail mail list, drop us a line and we can send you a book of tickets, will all proceeds going to support the SLATER.

Finally, this one is for all the neglected tour guides. Not all the emails I get make me feel guilty.

Some make me feel good, like this one from **Teddy Praeger** of the SOLDESA chapter. Teddy wrote, **"Tim: I want to thank your docents, tour guides and anyone else that takes our visitors around the SLATER. Today I was talking to my neighbor's son, ten years old. He was on the SLATER with a Ukrainian camp group last week and enjoyed the visit. In fact, he enjoyed it so much that all the information was retained by him. Without questioning, he told me about the "K" guns that shoot ashcans or teardrops. They have 300 pounds of TNT, the hedgehogs are fired in an oval pattern 24 at a time, how much water the tanks hold and how steam is used to make fresh water. He told me more, but you get the idea. Your guides, docents, etc. are doing a great job. Teddy."** I can't take credit for the tour guide training. That is all thanks to the efforts of Eric Rivet and the enthusiasm the docents bring to the program.

Now, let's see who complains about being overlooked next month.

