

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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October and it's been cold, rainy. It's felt like November all month. Every Saturday morning the early arrivals huddle in the galley watching while **Doug Tanner** makes the crew breakfast. He is always there before any of us and has the coffee ready by the time we arrive. He must really like us, because in all the years he's been making us breakfast, he never charges us anything for it. He donates all the food. It's always an excellent breakfast: fried eggs, French toast or pancakes, bacon or ham, and usually grits. That's one of the rules. Everyone has to eat grits. Witte says that's why he always comes in late on Saturdays. Apparently Doug was exposed to some rebel cook when he was in the Coast Guard who ordered him to like grits, so now he passes that tradition on to us. You remember how good breakfast smelled when you were at sea. Well, I'm here to tell you, it still smells just as good aboard the SLATER welded to the pier.



Nelson Potter is converting a gigantic fender into two smaller ones.



Archival Volunteer Kathleen Dunsavage organizing the DE reference files.

The Saturday morning "crowd" is usually Collin, Mardon, Sheedy, Haggart, Potter, Teal and me. Benner and Witte are usually late arrivals, and can always count on extra abuse if they show up on time. The conversation never changes. It usually opens with Doug wondering why he left his wife and a nice warm bed at the crack of dawn to cook for such an ungrateful lot of shipmates. The whole crew

waits in the galley in gleeful anticipation of Doug burning the French toast or bacon. Doug's response is always the same, just handing the spatula to the offender. Sometimes it's deliberate. A perfect pancake on one side may be burnt to a crisp on the other, reserved for one of Doug's unsuspecting "Special" Friends. When Doug isn't available, **Erik Collin** has been handling the cook's duties. I'd address the resultant competition as to who can make the better pancake, but the mere mention of the word competition might cause Doug to sleep in on Saturday mornings.

Several years ago, an old diesel boat sailor named Bob "Dex" Armstrong wrote a wonderful piece for the 2004 Sub vets convention program. In a piece called "The After Battery," Dex wrote in part, "The humor was original, engaged in by all and relentless. Like prize fighting, if you dropped your guard and left a sensitive nerve exposed, left a vulnerable opening, you got tagged. That was how it worked. I miss it. I miss the hooting and hollering of good men. I miss the raw unvarnished humor of the merry men of long ago. I miss not having a place where old men, who paid their dues at a time when forgoing crew comforts and gentlemanly hygiene were expected. A place where these unsalvageable bastards can go and verbally kick the hell out of each other simply for yukks."

Dex obviously needs to spend his Saturdays in the CPO mess on the SLATER. You don't want to screw up with this crew for they are very unforgiving. For me, every grant rejection is cause for another verbal beating. For a guy like Super **Dave Mardon** who never makes mistakes, the simplest of errors may take months to live down. For example, Doug detailed Dave to drill new boltholes to relocate the swedges in the replacement watertight door that they installed on the main deck forward. Dave dutifully collected the necessary punch, drill and drill bit and went forward to do Doug's bidding. He drilled and was getting nowhere, so it was back to the shop to sharpen the bit. Back at the worksite he leaned on the drill harder and longer, but still wasn't making much progress. Back to the shop to sharpen the bit, then back to the doorframe with more determination than ever not to let his mentor down. As Doug described it, he came up the passageway to find Dave grunting and sweating, the drill motor grinding and the bit smoking, but nothing happening. Upon closer examination Doug found that "Super" Dave had a wood bit in the drill. All Dave could say was, "What the hell are we doing keeping wood bits on a steel ship?" Needless to say, Dave's "Super" reputation has been a bit tarnished, but we're sure he'll survive the abuse until somebody else makes a bigger mistake, or I get my next grant rejection letter. Ron Prest summed it up best. The lone holdover from the fall field day, he sat with us listening to the insults for a few minutes before he observed, "This isn't at all the way it sounds when I read Signals. I thought you were all one big happy family" That bit of wit brought a roar of laughter, because we are.



Dave "Woody" Mardon

One dirty job that didn't get mentioned last month was the B-2 supply fan room. We had activated this fan to cool B-2 last August when the NPTU CPOs built the platform over the evaporator space. To go back to the beginning, before the Greeks turned the SLATER over to DESA, they cut a hole in the portside of the ship and removed the two donkey boilers and the evaporator, presumably to maintain ships they were still operating. That left us with a big open space on SLATER. If there is one thing that is at a premium on a DE, it's space, particularly storage space. Thus, we made the decision to utilize B-2 as the engineering storeroom for all the mechanical parts we have accumulated. To facilitate this, we had the CPOs deck over the space where the donkey boilers were, above the evaporator. Of course, since they did the work in August, reactivating the ventilation was a must.



Engineer Gus Negus had a grin on his face all day last Saturday. We wondered why...



It turns out he had a female crew working in B3. NROTC Bridget Bizon & Rachel Hill.

That process required us to open up one of the ugliest fan rooms I have ever seen, and we have seen some ugly fan rooms. The space was sealed back in 1993 when they prepared the SLATER for tow, and hadn't been opened since. Now, confronted with this pit of corrosion, we couldn't ignore it any more and determined to do some preservation. The problem was all our regulars lacked the size and agility to fit in there. During the Field Day week, Ron Prest, Josh Maurer and Jim Ray agreed to tackle the space. They spent two days scaling the room, vacuuming and applying Corroseal under some very cramped conditions. They then applied a coat of primer. A couple of weeks ago, Bill Siebert applied another coat of bright yellow chromate. It looked pretty awful to everyone but Katie Kuhl, whose favorite color is yellow, but the space has been beautifully preserved. The work that has been going on down in the machinery spaces is nothing short of astounding, especially considering that it's being done by a bunch of mechanics who would rather be doing anything than chipping and painting. Karl Herchenroder, Gus Negus, Gary Lubrano and Mike Dingmon continue scaling and painting in B-3. The change is like night and day. They're also getting the emergency diesel ready for the trip back across the river. On Mondays Gus serves as **Larry William's** boat engineer when they take the whaleboat out for a weekly run.



Super Dave "Woody" Marden and Clark Farnsworth working on the forward door.



Tim Benner explains the differences between wood and metal to Super Dave.

I mentioned Dave Mardon's great work on the watertight door. Doug Tanner took issue with my statement that the watertight door forward was eighty percent complete. Yes, Laird Confer and Roy Brandon managed to hang the door, but there were still all the swedges to move and install, the lower deckhouse coaming had to be fitted, and rot in the bulkhead adjacent to the door had to be addressed. The work is proceeding nicely and much quicker since Dave started using the right drill bits. As I write, in the three weeks since Laird and Roy left, Dave has the door close to 82% complete. It's moving right along.



The hedgehog firing panel before...



... and after.

Throughout the ship, work progresses in a dozen different areas. "Boats" Haggart and Paul Guarnieri are continuing the replacement of lifeline turnbuckles with the original navy style recovered from the LSM-45. They have the boat falls and rigging gear ready to hoist the boat as soon as we get a decent Saturday weather-wise. Barry Witte has had two projects going. He's been working with George Gollas on the B-3 distribution board. He has taken several panels over to the South Colonie High auto body shop where the students have returned them to the ship with an auto body finish, greatly raising the bar on restoration quality. Chris Dennis completed the largest roller loader sub-assembly for the number six depth charge projector. Super Dave Mardon trucked it down to the ship where Chris Dennis completed additional welding and Erik got it Corrosealed, primed and painted. Erik has been continuing the restoration of the hedgehog projector. We had no information at all on the weapon, so we reached out to Celeste Bernardo and Phil Hunt of the National Park Service who provided us with a copy from the CASSIN YOUNG's archive. Gene Jackey and Clark Farnsworth have been replacing the wasted 40mm shell racks in the amidships tubs. Rocky Rockwood continues taking care of the whaleboat, dealing with a faulty bilge pump.

I don't know if you recall last winter when **Doug Tanner** patched a hole in the hull above the water line in the forward crew's head, but that had never been back welded and we had an ugly black spot on the port bow near the hull number. We finally moved the paint float around to the bow so Doug could climb down a Jacobs' ladder and back weld the patch, prior to priming and painting. Another loose end tied up. **Don Miller** has been working in the forward head completing the insulation work. Outside **Chuck Teal**, **Tim Benner** and **Super Dave** have been doing the last of the welding in the passageway. Now the word is it should be ready for spring. No point in putting water on a system we have to drain down in a couple of weeks. No word yet on who will get the ceremonial first flush.



Derek Tsui in the shop working on engineroom parts.



NROTC Bridget Bizon, Liz Church, Brian Schuessler, Rachel Hill, Sage D'Aprile, and Ben Fulton.

One recent Saturday it was pointed out to me that a very significant event was occurring aboard. That day the number of maintenance volunteers under the age of 25 exceeded the number older than 40. RPI Midshipmen Second Class **Austin Jolly** and **Brian Schussler** brought three freshmen with them. They worked on a variety of tasks. Our new regular **Will Tryon** was working 20mm guns with Colonie High seniors **Derek Tsui** and **Mike Froeschle**. Colonie High graduate and current RPI sophomore **Hsin-Dat Li** was assisting the electricians, and **Chris Dennis** brought **Ryan Bowman** to continue work on the number six depth charge projector rack. That makes 11 young men to the 9 older regulars who showed up that day. This is extremely significant, because if the USS SLATER is to be maintained as intended in the distant future, younger volunteers need to get involved. I am extremely pleased to report this milestone, and I am truly encouraged by how this community continues to impress me with the talent pool here. I look forward to when this age inversion becomes an everyday occurrence. For the record, the age group 26-39 was single handedly represented by **Paul Guarnieri**.



Officer's Country



The aft crew compartment



Lorraine and Ken Kaskoun accept Ken's award.



Ken helps the CPO's cut the Navy Birthday cake.

On a chilly dank Tuesday, October 13th, the Capital District Chief Petty Officers Association celebrated the Navy Birthday. Early on we were worried that our Coast Guard contingent might outnumber the Navy, but the chiefs came through in force. Decked out in their dress blues, they held a formal ceremony on the quarterdeck and then provided their annual volunteer appreciation lunch to the crew. As always, CSK **Bernie Smith** was in the galley making sure everything went smoothly. This is a tradition that has gone on for almost ten years, dating back to when we used to remember Pearl Harbor Day aboard the ship before we moved the commemoration indoors. Each year the CPO Association recognizes a SLATER volunteer, and this year they chose **Ken Kaskoun**. Ken has been involved with the USS SLATER since her arrival in Albany, coordinating the color guard for our ceremonies, giving tours and doing electrical support maintenance. Ken served as aviation electronics technician second class, active from 1952-1956, and as a naval reservist until 1960. His active duty included service with antisubmarine squadron VS-27 aboard the escort aircraft carrier USS KULA GULF CVE-108. Following his naval service he completed his studies and became a professor of physics at Hudson Valley Community College. Ken was on hand with his wife **Lorraine**. We're indebted to the following Chiefs from the Capital Area Chief Petty Officers Association who participated in the Navy Birthday/USS Slater Volunteer of the Year Ceremony: HTC **Randy Bowers** and GMC **Bill Benjamin** who handled the presentations, ETCM **Jack Ryan** who did the Invocation and Benediction and CSC **Art Dott** and YNCS **Sean Robbins** who assisted Smitty with lunch and organized the whole event. More proof that the real Navy is alive and well on the SLATER.

In our report from sickbay, our best wishes go out to Earl Herchenroder who has been missing in action for the past month. He is missed. **Stan Murawski** has just completed another round of chemo and was back aboard to visit for the first time in a month. He hopes to be back in the galley on Saturdays soon. And **Clark Farnsworth** has made a full recovery in time to take a group of his shipmates for a late season cruise on his 1912 motor yacht "Clarede" before he pulled his boat out of the water for the season.

Finally, prepare yourselves. It's that time of the year when I can only hope that we are still on your list of favorite charities. Next month's SIGNALS will be mailed to all members with a return envelope

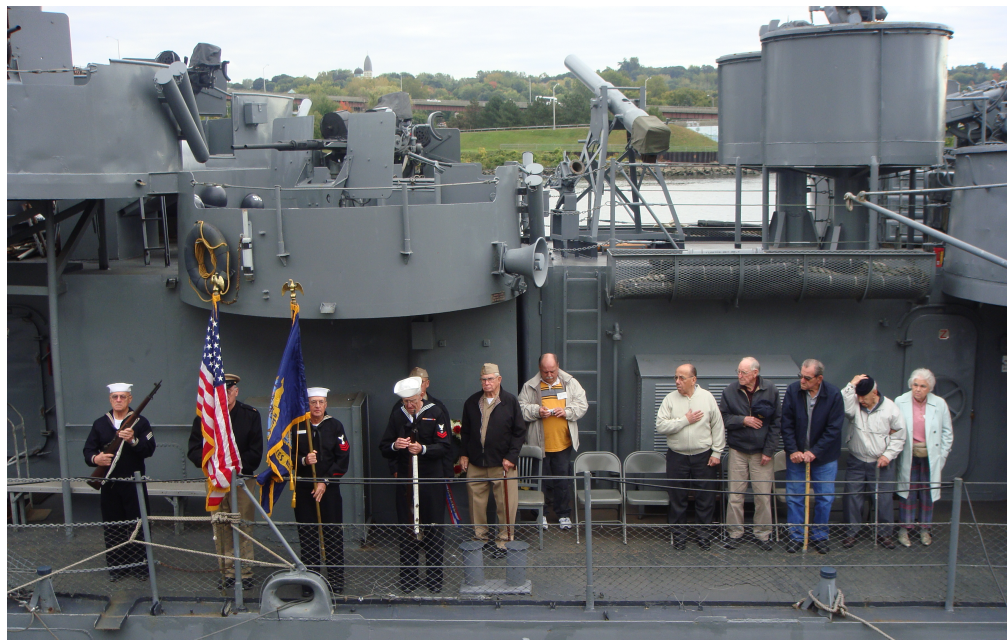


in the hope that each of you can contribute at least \$100 to our annual appeal to help keep the volunteers warm for another winter. Last year, despite the economic downturn you collectively donated \$75,436.23. We know that despite all the good news coming out of Washington, things still are not much better for most of you; however we need you now more than ever. The economic downturn has caused many of the foundations and



corporations that normally provide us with support to decline us this year. In addition, despite the much touted stimulus program, government funding is harder to get than ever. We tried every possible way to get stimulus funding for the dry-docking, without success. And there is virtually no private or government money available to help support the day-to-day operating costs of an enterprise such as ours. As it stands now, sixty percent of our operating income is from your donations. We hope you will continue to be there for us, so we can continue to be here for you, your children and grandchildren.

See you next month



The Memorial Service for the USS BULL and USS BATES Reunion.