



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
Vol. 12 No. 2, February 2009

The header says February, but it's really the first week of March, and I don't know how it got to be March already. In thirty days we're supposed to be back across the river and open for business? Where does the time go? It's pretty bleak today, Monday. That big winter storm that came up the coast is upon us. It's all my fault. Last week the temperature got up to fifty-one day, so I put my long johns away for the season. Needless to say, they are back on. It was sixteen coming in this morning with a biting north wind, and it's supposed to get colder. Then I was one of the ten percent that didn't get the word that Smitty wasn't cooking lunch today. The wife said this morning, "You need a lunch?" I said, "Nope, it's Monday and Smitty will be cooking." Luckily I found a can of soup in the abandon ship locker. We remain moored as before, staring down the barrel of an April 1st opening day and wondering, as we do every year, how we'll get cleaned up for spring.



February in Rensselaer.

I was recently asked to write an article for the Historic Naval Ships Association's "Anchor Watch" newsletter. The topic was on volunteers, and I titled it "Creating the Volunteer Environment." I assume I was awarded this honor because of the reputation we have established aboard the SLATER as a tight-knit team, a well-oiled machine. This assignment will be a source of great amusement to the crew in the Chief's mess, who are still wondering how I find my way from the ship's office to the

coffee pot. But as I say in the article, at the core of any good volunteer program is giving people a sense that they are needed. The crew will all agree that no one is more desperately in need than I am, and when you combine that with the needs of the ship, everyone around here feels needed.

For example, I was in need a couple days ago. It was six degrees outside, and when I came aboard the heat wasn't working. After an hour of doing what basic diagnostics I can do, I found the furnace was doing just fine, but the forward supply fan that circulates all the nice warm air around the ship had some kind of a problem. I put out the word that I was in need. **Gary Sheedy** and **Barry Witte** came down that night after dinner, diagnosed the problem and had the controller and heat back on line in about an hour. High voltage motor controllers are way beyond the grasp of my simple liberal arts education, but there was some reference to a "remote device." If you want to know what the problem was, you'll have to come down and ask, because any further discussion on my part would be speculation bordering on gossip, and I certainly wouldn't gossip about my shipmates.



Chuck Teal looking through our new hole at the ice in the river below as he fits a new patch.

In another area of need, work is progressing in the forward head. The trough is finally in place and all plumbed in. The commode is ready for mounting, but **Doug Tanner** says that's not going down until everything else is done, because he's sure someone will drop a pipe wrench on it and crack it. The door and frame have been mounted. There has been a lot of grinding and cleaning in the shower stalls. There is a lot of wasted metal in the deck and bulkheads that has been cropped and renewed. Even one in the shell plating. There was a 4"x12" hole in the side of the ship behind the shower stalls, so Doug cut an 8"x8" plate out of the side of the hull that encompassed all the wasted metal and replaced it. We'll dress up the outside of the plate from a work float in the spring. Note that this metal renewal was in a larger replacement plate, indicating this wasn't the first time for this repair job. Luckily it was

above the waterline. **Stan Murawski** is insulating the outboard bulkheads.

Another area of need surrounded the beautiful stainless steel septic tank that Doug fabricated on deck to go down into the pump room on the third deck. It needed to be a half inch smaller. Some issue about who measured the square tank to go down the hatch with the slightly curved corners. Nothing that a torch and an additional two days of welding stainless couldn't straighten out. Down below, in the newly designated septic tank pump room, there has been a lot of chipping, priming and painting in the way of where the septic tank is being mounted, so the deck and bulkheads won't waste away when they become more difficult to access. Doug's stainless steel septic tank is a work of art, and it was almost a perfect fit, but again, that story gets into the realm of gossiping about a shipmate. Was Doug "Set up" or "Screwed up?" We'll never know.



Super Dave points to the door latch plate he spent a day fabricating. It is, of course, perfection.

There were several holes through the forward bulkhead of the head, right through to the anchor windlass room.

The location of several of them was right behind the control panel for the anchor windlass, a huge electrical box that no one wanted to take off the bulkhead. First we were going to fill the holes with Bondo, but the idea of using Bondo was so repulsive to **Tim Benner** that he carefully spent a day trying to fill them with weld. The bulkhead was so thin that he couldn't weld on it, so he spent an afternoon carefully filling the holes with brazing rod and then lovingly grinding them smooth. The next day that Tanner came in, love did not describe his reaction to it. His normal reaction would have been to crop and renew the whole bulkhead, a process which would have totally trashed the restored anchor windlass room. A compromise was met when

Doug "I'll never put in a doubler"

Tanner decided to lovingly lay some

one eighth plates over Benner's lovely brazing job, covering it up forever.

The electricians have done a beautiful restoration job on an old circuit breaker panel that will supply power to the new grinder pump down there, as well as the hot water heater and the electric heater.

A lot of new wiring needed to be done. The power feed to the anchor windlass control on deck was badly deteriorated and the stuffing tubes wasted away. We ordered new armored cable and those stuffing tubes were some of the several we replaced, as well as the power cable for the windlass. In the process of restoring the space we've had to renew almost every stuffing tube, as they were all rotted out. Barry found a live 480-volt cable that was in very bad condition. The scary part was that the run went right by a hatch frame that had been cut out, repaired and rewelded, in close proximity to all kinds of welding and grinding. We had assumed all those cables were dead. Investigation revealed that it went to heat detector in a third deck paint locker below the sewage pump room and was designed to cut off the ventilation to the forward area of the ship in case of a fire in the paint locker. Since we won't ever need that space as a paint locker, Barry wisely decided to deenergize the cable that powered this "remote device." Any further discussion about the effects of that decision would be beyond the scope of my "liberal arts education" and might be considered spreading more gossip, and I certainly wouldn't do that to such a dedicated shipmate.

Guy Huse spent a week with us braving the cold working on the main switchboard in B-3. While he was here, he was able to confirm that the instrumentation for the DC generator was accurate, even after all these years. Working with Barry, they began the tedious process of selectively disassembling, restoring, and rebuilding switchboard components. Because this requires the board to be deenergized, this work can only be done when the SLATER is in Rensselaer, where shore power comes in forward. Guy also is working to return the port main motor brushes to their position, a job he began last year.



Gus Negus and Gary Lubrano continue work on the aft ship's service generator.

Back aft, work continues to progress in the aft machinery spaces. I can hear them banging around down there, but I don't pay much attention.

As long as the spaces aren't full of water, I'm not too concerned. **Paul Czesak** calculated that each machinery space we lose will cost us four foot of freeboard. Since we have eleven foot of freeboard, we can lose two and a half machinery spaces before I get my feet wet. Work is progressing in B-3 to prepare the space for public visitation.

Bill Siebert, Gene Jackey, Karl Herchenroder and Dave Mardon have been making repairs to handrails and catwalks to make the place more visitor-friendly. By the way, I received a call from "Super" Dave's publicist that an online picture of a volunteer working in the aft engine room identified as **Don Miller** is in fact **Dave Mardon**. He's everywhere. Down below, **Gus, Gary and Mike** have been working on the eight cylinder ship's service generator.

Back in B-4, **Chris Fedden and Rocky Rockwood** have been chipping away at scaling the main propulsion motors as part of the continuing restoration of the lower lever of the aft motor room. That is, when the air lines aren't frozen and the compressor will run. It's cold down there, but they keep going. Chippers don't get into many arguments because it's tough to argue over the noise of pneumatic tools. Our RPI Midshipmen have been with us, working on the bilge drain system and helping the electricians. And Gary Sheedy continues to make progress. He doesn't get into many arguments down on the reefer deck because nobody wants to go down there. It must be that ABBA music he keeps playing.



Chow call as the regular volunteers and RPI Midshipmen chow down on lunch prepared by Gordon Lattey, Stan Murawski and Doug Tanner.



Meanwhile, 3,000 miles away out in Richmond, California, Tom Horsfall continues to make progress on the restoration of the TBL transmitter without any interference or kibitzing from his shipmates. The first time he saw a TBL was when he was in the Navy Reserve, aged seventeen, as part of an electronics division in Concord, CA. The look

and smell of Navy World War II radio equipment triggered something in Tom that will always be with him. He was involved in radio restoration projects all over the Bay area before we came into his life. The TBL Tom is restoring was removed from the salvage tug CLAMP back in 2006 at the same time we took the SL radar equipment. Tom and the purists like him are truly bothered by the fact that we don't have the right transmitter in the SLATER's radio room, and Tom is doing his part to rectify the problem. Tom estimates he has put in about 250 hours so far, surveying and inspecting, researching missing parts, cleaning parts, repairing parts, fabricating missing parts, making phone calls and e-mailing a network of other collectors to locate parts. He had the TBL on the air recently, and when restoration is complete we will bring both Tom and the TBL east for what will be a major renovation of our main radio room.



"What are you lookin at!" The Slater Volunteer Crew - One big happy family.

Eric Rivet and Rosehn Gipe have been busy.

They completed our 2009 "USS SLATER Educators Guide" and mailed it out to over 1800 regional history and social studies teachers in an effort to bring more school groups in the spring. Eric has also been working on our application to become recognized as a National Historic Landmark. That's a big step up from being on the National

Register of Historic Places. Eric recently attended two job fairs at Hudson Valley Community College in hopes of finding new guides for this season. The fairs were well attended and, despite being the lowest paying organization, he managed to get several interested students to fill out applications. We have since hired four new guides for the 2009 season: **Ron Bailey, Courtney Sheridan, Peter Woznack** and **Natasha Herchenroder**. They now have a month to learn as much about destroyer escorts as they can. Natasha might just have an advantage here, since she's the grand niece of long time SLATER volunteers **Karl and Earl Herchenroder**.

We were invited to a Boy Scout Pow Wow for the first time since the ship has been in Albany. On Saturday, 28 February, **Eric Rivet** and **Mike Collins** went to Siena College to set up a table and offer information and flyers about the ship to Boy Scout troop leaders from throughout the region. Over 300 people attended the session, and Eric and Mike handed out nearly every piece of paper they brought with them. The people who stopped by the table fell into two categories: people who have already slept on the SLATER and people who didn't know we offer overnight camping. We'll see how many new school groups and overnight groups we get this year.

Eric also did a lot of the clerical grunt work in our annual effort to get some federal funding to drydock the ship. I've been spending my time trying to figure out how to get the ship some of this Federal stimulus money I keep hearing about. As we do every year at this time, we have made a request for Federal funding to drydock the SLATER through our local legislative delegation, Congressman Tonko and Senators Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand.

This year we tried a new and novel approach, approaching the legislators in New York City, where the shipyards are located and the funding would be spent. Trustee **Bartley "BJ" Costello** set up meetings with **Senator Diane Savino** and **Assemblyman Matthew Titone** to try and enlist their aid. BJ is an attorney who knows his way around the State Capital and seems to know everyone. BJ was a former Exec of the gasoline tanker USS GENESEE AOG8, a duty station I wouldn't envy. While BJ became a lawyer, his brother Barry stayed the course and retired as a Vice Admiral whose last duty station was Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet. Talk about being well connected.

Finally, be thinking about the spring Field Day weeks. The HUSE Crew will be aboard April 26th to May 1 and they have space available. If you'd like to "Turn to" with them, contact George Amandola at Gamand@aol.com. The Michigan crew is full up this spring. If you plan further ahead than I do, the dates for the fall field day week will be September 27th to October 2nd, so be thinking about that. If you're interested in the fall, contact me directly at tim@usslater.org. Despite what you may think, there is still plenty of work to do. I promise you will feel the need.

See you next month

