



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

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The USS SLATER World War II crew members and families gathered in Albany for their 25th and final reunion.

The month of June started with a bittersweet experience. The World War II crewmembers of the SLATER held their 25th and final reunion aboard their old ship here in Albany. Their numbers were down to six actual shipmates, plus a large number of family and extended family members. **The six who attended were Cliff Woltz, Engineering officer from Houston, Bill Svihovec, one of Cliff's motormacs, Virgil Vonderhaar, Radioman Don Norris, Jack Reynolds and Mort Reed.** Also present to remember their husbands and fathers were several families including were Marilyn Agnew, remembering SLATER's Supply Officer John with her family, Agnes Elze remembering her late husband and, former SLATER tour guide electrician's mate Ed Elze, Nelda Kent widow of Harry Kent, and Edith Colley, widow of Sam Colley with families.

The crew was aboard on Friday June 4th, coincidentally the anniversary of the Battle of Midway.

Katie Kuhl had all of the WWII SLATER crew photos displayed on boards. They spent two hours aboard the ship reminiscing about the ship's days as a fighting destroyer escort before adjourning to lunch. At their final banquet they were given an update on the project, the permanent mooring and prospects for dry-docking. Their final memorial breakfast the next morning remembered their lost shipmates and those who could not be with them. Our thanks to Don and Vivian Norris for all they did to organize the event.



"Stretch" McLaughlin explains the pilothouse operation to school students.

Summertime is vacation time for many, but not for the SLATER tour guides and deckhands who have been working on various projects. Many of the new projects are geared for the general public as well as the Overnight Program. To move this along, Katie Kuhl is working with the Education Department to muster up some objects from the abundant collection that are for teaching purposes. Scouts and visitors alike will be invited to participate in the past and witness what has changed over the decades and what has stayed the same.

The overnight program is currently possible because of Glenn Harrison, Grant Hack, Paul Guarnieri, Tom McLaughlin, Jerry Jones, Jack Madden and Heather Maron (still on Nantucket Island and soon to be back with us. Now we have three additional guides who are interested in joining the ranks of the overnights and they are Rob Nielsen, who has already jumped into doing a program, **Kipp Campbell** who will be a natural, **Julianne Madsen** who is very encouraging to children along with **Gary Gustin** and **Jessica Munsch**. **Gordon Lattey** promised to bring a new supply of breakfast cereal for the campers and, boy, did he ever! We are looking forward to more overnights with the Scouting packs!

The Observation Deck is a nice place to relax while waiting for the next tour or a time to chat about the latest reading on Destroyer Escorts. The guides have been delighting the public with conversation and interesting stories, shared alike. To enhance the already-fabulous deck experience, several activities are underway that will engage anyone of any age. To begin with, a flag pole is scheduled to be installed on the Observation Deck. People will learn about the proper and respectful way to hoist the American flag under various circumstances, and fold the flag while learning the specific meaning to each of the folds. Did you know that the final triangle shape of the folded American flag symbolizes the tricorne hat worn during the American Revolutionary War? You see? There is so much to discover! We can help visitors with no less important technicalities such as is it "half-staffed", "half-masted", "half-mast", or "half-staff"; and who decides when and for how long?



World War II Homefront activities are represented by the Victory Garden and canning demonstrations.

The Victory Garden is growing very nicely now that we have a chicken wire fence to keep out the woodchuck and bunnies. Students from Malta Dayhab made a garden sign as well as the bench for much needed R&R under the shade tree. The placement of the Victory Garden is designed to be directly across the river from the SLATER's galley. We demonstrate and illustrate the connection between the homefront and the battlefield by talking about recipes and the comparative measurements and quantities of ingredients, canned goods that once were available on store shelves but became a luxury item strictly for the armed forces, and the labor-intensive canning process done at home.



Looking aft from gun 40 and over gun 3 to the fantail, new summer home of Katie's favorite blue sun shade.



Larry Williams, Dave Mardon, Ken Kaskoun and Tim Rizzuto got the new awning up under Katie's supervision.

The biggest attraction of all remains, of course, the USS SLATER. Through the hard work and dedication of all of the tour guides, we were able to welcome and provide top-notch tours to more than 1,200 visitors in the month of June. You can regularly hear the applause from visitors upon returning to the quarterdeck. Everyone does a superb job in meeting the ever-changing demands of the visitor!

A major change took place on the fantail. After years of thinking about it, we finally have an awning. At the request, insistence and pleading of collections manager **Katie Kuhl**, we put up a shade sail over the fantail of the ship for two reasons. The primary objective was to reduce the amount of heat building up on the deck and subsequently coming through the overhead to the compartment below which contains collections display and storage, which also happens to be Katie's work space. Excessive heat accelerates artifact deterioration and makes it impossible for staff to work in these areas. The second objective was to provide a shaded area on an otherwise open deck for tours and ceremonies to gather comfortably, furthering our ability to educate the public and provide a site for honoring our service men and women. The shade sail design for an awning allowed us to support the awning with the newly fabricated depth charge projector reload davits, so we didn't have to make any non authentic structural alterations. The sail is also easily detached from its supports for storage in the winter and in the event of extremely foul weather. Needless to say there were several conflicting concepts about how to do the final installation, forcing Katie to come topside and take charge, but Katie has deemed the result a success. I think we can safely say that the shade sail has been a great success. On the first real hot, sunny day the exhibit space was only 85° compared to the usual 95°. Of course **Doug Tanner**, never one to pass up an opportunity to bust someone's chops, is insisting Katie keep a foul weather jacket on hand as Doug says he's getting a chill when he passes through to the shipfitter shop.



Will Tryon installing the new shoulder rests on the 20mm guns.



Stuart Scace's awesome MK14 replica gunsight knobs.

Erik Collin has been working with Jack Bertsch to fabricate and install new rubber shoulder rests for the 20mm guns. Will Tryon has been back to help him with this project. Erik also worked with his other best friend Stu Scace, and Stu came through on two big projects. He replicated enough new knobs for our MK14 gunsights, that we now can replace all the missing and damaged knobs for years to come. In addition, Stu delivered another 100 rounds of replica 40mm ammunition to Erik. It didn't take long for Erik to corroseal and paint the clips, clip the new ammo, and now both amidships tubs are almost full of ready service ammunition. Way to go Stu!

Erik also had his hands full with computer problems as three of our aging machines required major surgery over the course of the same week. Mike McEnteggart got the floater new baskets squared away. Chief Ronnie Cervone from the Naval Nuclear Power Training Center at Ballston Spa sent down a group of about twenty "Volunteers" to assist Gus Negus with the restoration of the lower level of B-4. They spent the day cleaning in the bilges and doing the grunt work that our guys are just getting too old to do. Needless to say, we were most appreciative of their effort, and we're sure it will make them better appreciate the condition of whatever ship the Navy assigns them to when they finish their training.

In B-3 Gus, Karl Herchenroder, Mike Dingmon, Gary Lubrano, Don Miller, Earl Herchenroder and Walt Stuart have continued scaling on the lower level. George Gollas was back from Pennsylvania for a weekend to assist **Barry Witte** with the continued restoration of the aft distribution panel. He's been assisted by students **James Conlon**, assisting him with the aft switchboard, and **Brian Goodman**, who is trying to figure out a way to test our circuit breakers, both to help us out and to develop some professional experience since he is an electrical engineering student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Rocky Rockwood has the whaleboat ready for launching. Now we are just awaiting the right combination of brains, talent and brawn on a Saturday morning and she will be going in for the season. I sure wish we could watch an experienced crew go through this evolution of lowering a boat with radial davits and the anchor windlass, but I'm afraid that ain't gonna happen. It is interesting to note that I've noted several postwar reserve training DEs that welded a second capstan on top of the anchor windlass, creating, in effect, a double drum winch. Certainly an unauthorized shipalt, but we can sure see why they did it. The one issue we found is that the heat exchanger on the diesel cracked so we're trying to effect repairs or find someone who will donate one. **Bill Camp**, can you hear our call?



The Garden Club helped us out.



"Super" Dave got the messdecks strainer right, if he just remembers to tighten the bolts.

Doug Tanner and his team of shipfitters, Clark Farnsworth, Tim Benner, Chuck Teal, Gene Jackey, Chris Fedden and Dave Mardon, have been bouncing between several projects. Maybe I should say Super Dave and his team of shipfitters since Dave won't be happy until he rules the world. Regardless of who is really in charge, Doug is beginning to show a real determination to get that forward head wrapped up. We're so close we can smell it, well, not literally yet. I think all he has to do is wire in and set the alarms and pump controls and he'll be ready for Benner. Across the passageway, the sandblast cabinet has been moved up from below, installed and is just awaiting installation of the discharge drum and the last section of hose on the dust collector and that will be usable again.

When it gets too hot to work up forward, Doug's (Dave's) crew bounces back to the port depth charge projector roller loader number six. Barry Witte's students completed fabrication of most of the framework at Colonie Central High school and the pieces are now aboard. Under Barry and Doug's supervision, Super Dave is slowly putting them together. We won't go into more detail than that. As if he didn't have enough going on, Super Dave has also taken on the task of restoring all the firemain stations that are missing their quick acting strainers. Dave must have slept through that lecture when he was in the Navy, because he installed the first one upside down, but he is improving with each progressive station.

There is news on the radio front. We have made arrangements to ship **Tom Horsfall's** restored TBL transmitter that we took off the USS CLAMP in 2006. The transmitter should arrive here before the end of July. We will temporarily store it in **Hal Hatfield's** warehouse until we are ready to install it. We hope to accomplish that during the fall field week this year. For those of you interested in participating, the dates will be September 26 to October 1. The legendary **Will Donzelli** visited us one day when I was off and left a TDQ transmitter on the pier for us. This is another 400-pound transmitter Will scrounged for us. We are again grateful to **Hal Hatfield** who sent a truck down for it and is storing it until we are ready for installation.

A question came up regarding radio silence by ships on convoy duty during the Battle of the Atlantic. To what extent was radio silence maintained by the escort vessels, particularly with regard to Huff/Duff? When escort vessels got a Huff/Duff contact with a U-boat, did they radio this information to their respective shore-based command centers, breaking radio silence? What was the doctrine? We spoke with **John Metz** who was communications officer on the ELDRIDGE, a ship equipped with Huff/Duff. John said that they did not break radio silence to report contacts. They would use visual signals to notify the convoy or the TBS radio in an attempt to guide the convoy around the contact and coordinate attacks, but no long-range transmissions were made to Tenth Fleet headquarters. Anyone care to add to our knowledge?

Speaking of history, sold out of Bob Cross's new history of Destroyer Escorts, *Shepherds of the Sea* and had to reorder. He is gaining notoriety as Representative **Ike Skelton** answered the question "What are you reading?" by mentioning *Civil War on the Western Border, 1854-1865* by Jay Monaghan; *Andrew Jackson and His Indian*



DE Day was commemorated for the thirteenth time since the SLATER arrived in Albany. Paul Czesak once again did an outstanding job organizing the event, with tour guide and former radio announcer SM2 Steve Long presiding as Master of Ceremony and speaking on the meaning of DE Day. DEHM Vice President CAPT Greg Krawczyk, USN (Ret) spoke from the perspective of a modern-day frigate sailor about what the SLATER means to his generation. Dick Walker called the role of destroyer escorts lost in action, and Katie Kuhl impressed everyone with her rendition of TAPS, exhibiting a talent for trumpet playing we were not aware of when we hired her. We missed Bob Donlon who is normally the keel of this event, but remains on the binnacle list. However, the DE veterans made a strong showing with the presence of Bill Abernathy of EARL V. JOHNSON DE702, from New Jersey, my old friend **Dick Smith** of the EVARTS DE5 from Fort Edward, **Doc Dachenhausen** of the LOESER DE680, **Bill Scharoun** of the OSMUS DE701, **Bob Nolte** of the FISKE DE143, **Ray Lammers** of the TATUM APD81, **Hank Rizzo** of the CHASE DE158/APD54, **Bud Lehner** and **Larry Williams** of the SNOWDEN DE146, their adopted Army vet **John Sautz**, and their adopted minesweeper vet Ron Mazure of the USS SKILL MSO471. Each saluted as they dropped carnations over the side in honor of their departed shipmates.



Chief Smith and Laird Confer promoting the SLATER at the Reading Air Show.

The SLATER had a presence for the third year at the World War II weekend held at the Mid Atlantic Air Museum in Reading, PA. Manning the SLATER display were **Laird Confer**, coming over from Port Matilda, PA, **Bernard (Smitty) Smith** and his wife **Carol**, **Don Shattuck** and **Paul Czesak**. This was the 20th anniversary of the event and in addition to the usual military encampments there were flying demonstrations by World War II aircraft including a British Lancaster bomber, an SB2C Helldiver, and a P-40 Warhawk. The Naval presence was enhanced this year by an impressive Sea Bee encampment that included three structures and construction equipment. Our group enjoyed meeting old friends from the SS JOHN BROWN and the USS NEW JERSEY and spreading the good news about the SLATER to World War II buffs.

The event was also the proving ground for the tent designed by Smitty. On the afternoon of the last day as the event was preparing for the final flight demonstrations a severe rain squall came through. The display panel and promotional material were hurriedly wrapped in plastic tarps, and as pop up tents began being blown around, and people started to look for any available shelter our crew took advantage of an extra tarp for protection from the horizontally driven rain. The tent came through unscathed. We look forward to a repeat performance, less the storm, next year.

Finally, over the past several years many reunion groups have had their final reunion because of diminishing numbers. Several have donated their remaining treasuries to the SLATER, and we thank you. But that's not what this is about. As I said, it was the last reunion for the SLATER crew. At every reunion, SLATER soundman turned mailman **Marv Cash** has written a poem about the event. Marv couldn't attend because of health reasons, but that didn't stop him from writing a poem for his shipmates to commemorate the event. We've never given poetry much exposure here, but this one is special, because it speaks not only to the SLATER Reunion, but to every reunion group that has held their last reunion. I give you Marvin Cash.

In Memory 2010

*The Slater Crew's in Albany for reunion Twenty-Five
to decide that it's our last brings teardrops to some eyes.
But since that's the way it is, we give thanks for a precious run,
of fellowship with Slater friends since reunions were begun.*

*Since our last reunion, as "grim reaper" takes his toll,
we know of four who have joined our lengthening "quiet roll".
Ed Simpson, Ceylon Russell, Al Rivoire, and Larry Wills got called.
We're thankful to be alive to offer condolences to their loved n'all.*

*We're also blessed to have walked those Slater decks once more,
and again recall those memories of friends enjoyed before.*

*As we did our part for freedom in that war now long ago,
we thank those generations new who like dedications show.*

*The museum tours, hospitality, business meeting, and much, much more,
will now long be remembered just like those we've enjoyed before.*

*Our final banquet and memorial breakfast remembering those no longer here, and for those carrying on in Slater's Albany we want
to give a hearty cheer. Now as we once more part and head for home,*

or other places where we might roam,

May our good Lord keep us in his loving care,

'Till that final reunion "Over There".

Dedicated with appreciation...to all who've served with dedication...

...to preserve our freedom and our great nation

Marvin Cash, June 2010 In Memory