



# 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 ,  
December 2012

The first day of December we woke up to an inch of snow and 25 degrees. Despite that, we had 28 volunteers aboard including 14 RPI Midshipmen. **Doug Tanner** and his shipfitters started ripping the galley apart in earnest for the third time in preparation for repairs to the forward expansion joint. **Erik Collin** took a crew of RPI Mids and finished covering guns and secured the flying bridge for the winter by putting a tarp over the instrumentation and stowing **Steve Dull's** new deck gratings in the sound hut. **Karl Herchenroder** had a gang working in the engine room and **Gary Sheedy** spent the day working on the searchlight rectifier. Topside "**Boats**" **Haggart** and **Paul Guarnieri** supervised lifting the accommodation ladder in preparation for the move.



The crew gets ready for the move to Rensselaer.



**The brain trust, Mardon, Sheedy, Tanner and Benner, trying to figure out how to cut the expansion joint gasket.**

**Since then the galley has been pretty well destroyed, and almost all hands have played a part in the destruction.**

First came removal of the stainless steel sheet metal that was covering the area adjacent to the expansion joint. They then ripped out all the sink drain lines to get access to the deck under the sinks.

**Earl Herchenroder, Gene Jackey and**

**Don Miller** spent a couple days using an electric grinder and a couple dozen cutting discs. To speed up the process, **Doug Tanner** decided to scarf out the flatbar that the Greeks installed to hold the concrete in place with a torch. He had quite an audience with **Dave Mardon, Tim Benner, Chuck Teal** and **Gary Sheedy** watching him. Gary remarked about their seeming inability to anticipate Doug's needs as he lay under the sink and had to ask for every tool, much like a surgeon with an inattentive surgical nursing team. Then it was back to Miller, Herchenroder and Jackey who spent a couple days trying to chip out the concrete with our little pneumatic chisels. Sympathetic to their struggles, **Gary Sheedy** brought in a full-fledged electric jackhammer, and it still took two days to get the job done. **Barry Witte** had a hand in that, developing a creative method for using a jackhammer. All this gives us access to the steel bulkhead which is totally wasted away in several places. Above them, **Ron Mazure, Chris Fedden** and **Bill Wetterau** have been scaling the exterior of the expansion joint and removing the 25 pounds of hardened roofing tar we have poured on top of the rubber over the past few years to try and stem the leaking water. Meantime, Benner and Super Dave got tired of watching Doug, so they got a head start on removing the 800 or so nuts that hold the rubber and backing bars in place.

**Meanwhile, down on the reefer deck, when Gary Sheedy isn't kibitzing in the galley, he set up a red devil blower exhausting to a main deck vent.** He cut out all the steps on the reefer deck ladder and replaced them with new steps we had fabricated last winter. Then he went to work sandblasting the paint off the copper cooling coils in the centerline reefer. He's trying as hard as he can not to make a mess, and keeping the dust pretty well contained. The Navy NPTU students continue to work cleaning,



Corrosetting and painting in the B-4 bilges. **Charlie Hancock** was back with two new volunteers, **Micah Farrell** and **James Wilkerson**. They all managed to be aboard for the move, which was a great experience for them. We'll keep them in B-4 until it gets unbearably cold, then move them to B-3 where there's a little heat. The engineers have gotten the emergency diesel all ready for the move. But this year they have a choice whether they want to run the three-cylinder or the eight-cylinder engine. I have to keep a sharp watch on my heating oil consumption, because they keep siphoning off our heating oil to run the generators. Through it all, Doug and Smitty continue to feed us, now providing meals on wheels, and keeping things hot with the hot plate and the electric fry pans on the messdeck.

**On December 7, 2012 we held our annual Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration in conjunction with Albany County and the members of the Joseph E. Zaloga American Legion Post No. 1520.** Our Board Chairman **BJ Costello** served as Master of Ceremonies, introducing **Cathy Dorn** who played patriotic music, **Peter Ubrich**, the Commander of the Post, and the Reverend **Charlene Robbins** who did the invocation. **Jerry Perry** of the Zaloga American Legion Post explained the POW-MIA Table. BJ introduced our three honored guests. **Charlie Ebel**, of Westmere, was a BM2 on the Seaplane Tender USS CURTISS, **Adolph Krenn**, Seaman First Class of the Battleship WEST VIRGINIA, who was on his way to his battle station, the port anti-aircraft director, and was blown over the side when a torpedo hit the ship, and **William Langston** of Colonie, a fireman, also stationed on USS WEST VIRGINIA. Three other local Pearl Harbor survivors who were not able to attend are **Edward Bartholomew**, GM1/c of the battleship USS PENNSYLVANIA, **Leonard Dooren**, Chief Warrant Officer who served aboard the heavy cruiser USS NEW ORLEANS and **Robert "Gus" Grimm** of Albany, a carpenter's mate on the destroyer USS CUMMINGS.

**Several dignitaries spoke in commemoration of the day including Congressman Paul Tonko, Albany County Executive Dan McCoy and Rensselaer County Executive Kathy Jimino. Mayor Jennings**, the man who said yes to bringing the SLATER to Albany, arrived immediately following his Friday morning radio call-in show. The SLATER Color Guard looked sharp as ever in their dress blues as you'll see in the video posted online. Following the ceremony, the Post invited all the guests to a full Navy-style breakfast complete with the traditional SOS. I want to extend my thanks to Albany County Veterans Affairs coordinator **Charles Burkes**, Commander **Peter Ubrich** of the Zaloga Post and **Harvey Martel** who really worked to pull it together. It was one of those times I really missed **Paul Czesak**, as it was he and **Joe Pollocino** who truly led the way for us in learning how to do this event.



**Senior volunteers Chris Fedden and Clark Farnsworth doing some fabrication work.**



**The younger RPI NROTC Midshipmen enjoy Chief Smith's lunch.**

**It was ironic that my 11 minutes and 42 seconds of C-Span fame should happen on my birthday.** On December 8th the C-Span ship tour that we talked about last month was aired, as well as an interview with our favorite destroyer escort author **Bob Cross**, who talked about stories from his book “Shepherds of the Sea.” Bob’s book has been sold out, but will be available again in soft cover from the US Naval Institute Press. Both interviews can be seen on youtube. I made it a point to contact the Videographer/Editor **Adrienne Hoar** and thank her for making me sound more coherent than I am in real life. Our heartfelt thanks go to **C-Span** and **Time Warner Cable** for including us in the series.

**On Monday the 10th, Board President Tony Esposito decided that we needed to have a Christmas Party.** The original idea for steaks got flushed down the scupper when Tony saw the condition of the galley. Chief Smith came through with a casserole, salad and punch. In a move that surprised everyone Heather and I ended up being the ones who assembled the Christmas tree and strung the Christmas lights around the messdeck to give us some sense of holiday spirit. Tony led the crew in Christmas carols, and the spirit of the crew was akin to what you’d expect at an inner city mission I fed you, now sing I had the sense that for once people couldn’t wait to get back to work. A very effective motivational technique that might come in handy in the future. .

**The move was an adventure for several reasons. It started in mid-November when I contacted Chris Gardella over at DonJon Marine.** It seems that the trusty old tug CROW had blown her engine and was out of service. The EMPIRE was working down in the City and only the CHEYENNE was occasionally available in Albany. I turned to my fall-back position, Rob Oldman of NYS Marine Highway. Our relationship with Rob actually predates my involvement with SLATER. It goes back to the early days with Marty Davis, Sam Saylor and Barb Higbee. Rob was the one who got the contract to tow SLATER from Manhattan to Albany in 1977. After the NYS Canal Corp and then Bart Brake agreed to move SLATER as a donation, we hadn’t had a lot of contact with Rob. But every winter when we were tied up in Rensselaer we would look across at his tugs, the MARSHOT and the BEN AMIN ELLIOT, tied up across from us on the Albany side. What made them stand out to us is Rob has them painted gray, and for all the world they look like Navy tugs. My nostalgic side always thought it would be cool to have gray tugs moving the gray ship.



The tug BEN AMIN ELLIOT preparing to move SLATER out into the channel.





Flying "Code Hotel" for the first time in many years.

**I met with Rob and took him through SLATER and it turned out we're kindred spirits.** The only difference is while I'm infatuated with destroyers, he's hooked on tugboats. Rob is one of those uniquely American small businessmen who has carved out a niche for himself doing what he loves. I believe he is the last commercial operator on the NYS Canal System carrying specialty cargos from the east coast to the Seneca Lake and the Great Lakes. More recently, he has picked up work as a subcontractor for Moran Towing as the assist tug in the Port of Albany when a second tug isn't available. He treats his tugs as working museum ships, buying antique parts off E-Bay much as we do. He's presently restoring the old Jokobsen tug FRANCES TURECAMO to operating condition.

**Thus, Rob is a guy who can really appreciate what the volunteers have done with SLATER. He saw her condition when she arrived, and he knows the effort that it took to make her what she is today.** And that's why Rob volunteered to continue the tradition of moving SLATER as a donation. He sent us his standard towing contract, and there were just a couple little issues, insurance being one of them. I'm indebted to **Michele Gallego, Michele Hayes, Bill Bergan** and ultimately **Mike Barry** who, after exchanging three days of phone calls and emails, got something worked out that seemed to satisfy everybody.









...as Heather Maron shifts colors.  
(Stan Dickstein Photo)



Our pilot Paul Capel.

The second issue was that Rob is used to working with a docking pilot, and wanted to have a pilot aboard. We've never had a docking pilot before, but were happily surprised when the stars came into alignment to make this happen. Again, I'm not altogether sure who played what role, but last summer, after **Alan Fox** completed a tour, he came to me and proudly said, "I had a Hudson River Pilot in my group." Well, now that we were in need of a pilot, **Rich Hendrick** and Rob both got involved, and to our happy surprise, The Hudson River Pilots' Association agreed to donate their services. The pilot turned out to be none other than **Paul Capel**, the pilot Alan had given the tour to. He brought along **Bill Von Blomberg**, 86, who served aboard USS HORNET CV12 during World War II, who shared his "war stories" with our volunteers.







**If we have a winter like last winter, there wouldn't be any problem in staying in Albany all winter.** Of course, if we had to stay in Albany, we'd probably have the worst ice in 100 years. I've seen the pictures of ice piled up in the parking lot in the early nineties. So I like to think by moving I've guaranteed us all a mild winter. Rob scheduled move day for 0900 on December 19th. He arrived promptly at 0800 with the tugs BEN ELIOTT and MARGOT and made both tugs up to our starboard side. Shortly after that, Pilot **Paul Capel** arrived aboard. By that time, we had all the wires off and were ready to let go. The only problem was that the emergency diesel sprung a leak in the fresh water-cooling system, so we were forced to go across cold and dark. Of course, the positive side was that freed up a lot of engineers who proved to be capable deck hands. The move itself was uneventful, which is exactly the way you want it. As **Matt Perricone**, who was skippering the BEN ELIOTT said, "Not a very exciting move, and that's the way we like it." Amazing, twenty knot winds were forecast, but the wind didn't pick up until we were made fast to the sea wall in Rensselaer. Just they way we like it.





**"Boats" Haggart, Guy Huse and Bob Scian stow some of the gear removed from TAMAROA.**

**In the middle of all this activity Guy Huse made a run on the old Coast Guard Tug TAMAROA down in Norfolk. It seems after ten years of working to preserve her as a museum, the owner has pulled out all financing and her ultimate fate will be to become a dive reef. Harry Jaeger contacted us about removing equipment, and Guy was the only one available to make the 9-hour**

run down and back. He came back with a truckload of armored cable, a 440-volt submersible pump, 600' of 1" nylon line and many other items. TAMAROA has the same main engines as SLATER, so our snipes are considering a second visit in January or February. We're indebted to Harry and **Tim Mullane**, the current owner of the TAMAROA for their generosity and the assistance they offered Guy. Another person who has been working behind the scenes is **Bob Lamb**. He's been working hard on the ships in the Norfolk area to try and get us some donated inch and a half diameter nylon mooring line. He picked up on my joke about trying to get away with some mooring line off the MASON last September. Considering the newest mooring line we have is ten years old, it's probably about time.

**About the only thing Guy didn't find on the TAMAROA was a sack full of cash, and if that isn't a great segue into my Winter Fund plea, I don't know what is.** I know a lot of you out there know the drill, because the checks have been coming in for three months now. But for those of you new to our operation it goes like this: Each winter we shut down from December to March because of the inclement weather, and to do extensive interior restoration on the tour route spaces. This year it's the galley, the electronics shop, continued work on the reefer deck, and hopefully aft steering and the forward berthing space, as well as continuing the bilge preservation in aft machinery spaces. But what that means is that we are closed to the public and have no revenue stream from ticket and store sales, as well as overnight encampments. So, in an effort to turn lemons into lemonade, this is when we launch our annual fund drive, the Winter Fund, with the purpose of keeping the volunteers warm in the winter.



Please help keep a volunteer warm this winter.

**With your support we have the potential to come out of the winter in a stronger financial position than when we went in.** So, for this reason, I am asking all of you who have not already done so to kick in an additional donation to help us through the winter. The suggested donation is \$100, but just give what you can afford. And if you can't afford anything in these tough economic times, we understand. But by all means, if you can afford more, we won't turn it away. I have made my own \$100 contribution (with my wife's permission, of course) so please ask your spouses if it's okay for you to do likewise. That's the main reason many of you will get this edition of SIGNALS in the mail with the return envelope. Write out your check, put it in the envelope and send it back to us. For those of you who are online readers, or get your information through Facebook, you can go to our website homepage at [www.ussslater.org](http://www.ussslater.org) and click the donate button, or print out a donation form. Trust us that the money will be spent carefully and wisely.





Archivist Franklin Peter at work in the Logroom.

**Overshadowing all these other events is the loss of two of our most dedicated volunteers this month.** Our long time archivist and librarian Frank Peter died Monday, December 17, 2012 at the Albany Medical Center of colon cancer at the age of 75. A former Army vet, Frank spent thirty-six years with the New York State Library. Upon his retirement he spent nearly ten years proudly serving as a volunteer on the USS SLATER. Frank had anticipated spending the winter in the

trailer working on our archives and, three weeks before his death, had hauled about ten boxes of documents from the supply office to the shoreside briefing room in preparation for the move. I actually received the notification of his death just before we got underway, and realized it was the first move. But your donations this time of year keep us from having to dip into the endowment earnings and use up our meager savings. He'd missed in ten years. Frank was religiously aboard every Monday and Tuesday, and did amazing work scanning and organizing our historical documents. He leaves a gap that will be difficult to fill.



**A final Salute from Admiral Paul Czesak.**

**Then, on Sunday December 23<sup>rd</sup>, I received an email from John Thompson that Paul Czesak had passed away on Saturday at the age of 83.** Paul attended Villanova University on a Navy ROTC scholarship and served on active duty in the US Navy from 1953 to 1956 as an engineering officer aboard the USS KEARSARGE CV33. He remained in the US Naval Reserves from 1956 to 1983 where he made the rank of Captain and served in the New York State Naval Militia until 1996 where he retired as a Rear Admiral. A former Trustee and military courtesy, safety and insurance advisor, Paul organized and handled all the ceremonial functions during his tenure aboard. He was one of most admired and respected volunteers because of his

knowledge, integrity and commitment. He was a great mentor to me and set a wonderful example for all of us aboard SLATER. As **BJ Costello** wrote, "Paul was an outstanding man to model our efforts on. He was extremely competent, kind and selfless and always focused on the SLATER and her family. We will miss him but remember him and be inspired to do our best for the rest of our lives! Rest in Peace, Paul!" SLATER's flag flew at half-staff to honor both these fine men, and their shoes will probably never be filled.

**Please give as generously as you can to the 2013 Winter Fund Appeal.**