

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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The Fall 2013 work week crew.

The month of October started with the arrival of the fall work week crew. Michigan Dick Walker organized the effort and, though there were several from Michigan, the participants came from as far away as Texas. Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Ohio and, of course, New York were all represented.

Key man to the whole operation was Chief Bernard Smith, who volunteered to cook three meals a day for the crew for the entire week. He was ably assisted in the galley by **Roy Brandon** and **Jim Ray** on the messdecks who took on the roles of messcooks.

The eighteen men broke out into crews. John Adriani, the new DESA Treasurer, took responsibility for the paint shop and mixing the paints for the crew. He also worked on scaling and priming stanchions on the 01 level. The main paint project was repainting the three 3"/50 caliber gun mounts.

Placed on this detail were gunner's mate **Frank Heckart** from Texas, fire controlman **Mike Marko** and the oldest member of the group and former WWII DE sailor **Bob Butler**. Over the course of the week they managed to scale, prime and repaint all the three inch mounts.

Dick Walker, Gary Headworth and **Ron Mazure** headed to the flying bridge. They did a lot of scaling and priming in the sonar shack, repainted the top of the sonar hut outside, and secured the area for the winter. This meant stowing the lookout binoculars, bearing circles and the other detail items that we leave out during the tourist season.

In our continuing quest to find a solution to the floater net floats deteriorating in the sun, this year we decided to coat them with quick dry roofing cement. Ron Prest, Gary Dieckman and Josh Maurer pulled that assignment. Long time readers of SIGNALS will remember Josh as one of **Laird Confer's** grandsons who started coming up here when he was in high school. Now in the Air Force, Josh took his leave time to come up and help his grandfather work on SLATER.



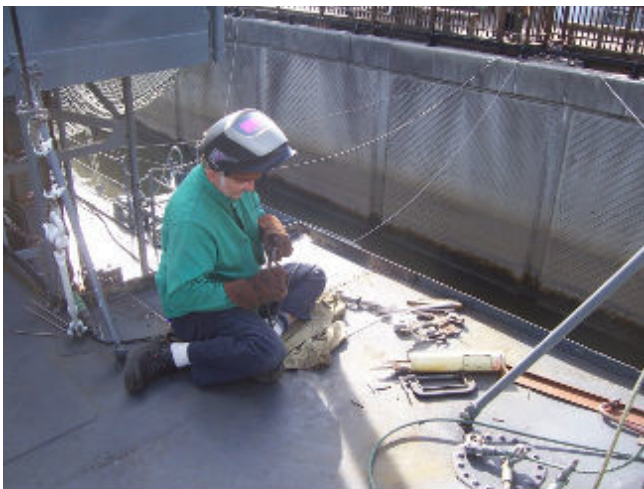
Butch Warrender and Jim Parker replace a hatch gasket.



Laird Confer and Jim Ray work to adjust a scuttle.

In our efforts to improve water tight integrity in the event of ice damage, we had two projects going. One crew was detailed to work to restore watertight integrity to all the compartments below the second deck forward of the reefer deck. **Butch Warrender** and **Jim Parker** took on that assignment with help from **Jim Ray** and **Roy Brandon**. Butch went through and checked all the electrical wire ways for open stuffing tubes and packed any he found with sealing gum. They chalk tested several water tight doors and ended up replacing two hatch gaskets that failed the chalk test. The work on the forward end of the ship is now about 30% complete.

The other watertight integrity project was isolating piping systems and restoration of some pumping capability. To that end **Guy Huse** and **Stan Dickstein** continued work on the aft fire and flushing pump in B-4. They reached a stopping point where they couldn't proceed until the welders fabricated them a piece of pipe, so they went to work up forward on the forward bilge drain system. The old destroyers and destroyer escorts had a permanently mounted 440 submersible pump located on the third deck forward below the crews' head. This was connected to a manifold that enabled pumping of all the lowest compartments forward of the reefer deck. Guy and Stan began the process of checking all those valves to make sure they are closed and then overhaul the valves with the idea of getting the system functional again.



Tom Skufca welding up a deck replacement.



Ron Prest and Gary Dieckman preserve the floater nets.

The welding team of Tom Skufca and Laird Confer went to work completing the deck replacement on the 01 level just forward of the stack. They cut and fitted a new section of deck plate, fabricated a scupper and welded back the lifelines. On the last day they took to the work bench and fabricated the missing piece of bilge drain piping that Guy and Stan needed for the aft fire and flushing pump.

The local regulars picked up when the out-of-towners departed. Gary Sheedy and Barry Witte put their heads together and came up with a plan to utilize two existing sea water circulating pumps in B-4 for dewatering. The beauty of these is that they would not need any priming and could be put on float switches. With the help of our local RPI NROTC midshipmen they got both pumps operational for the first time since 1991, when SLATER was decommissioned from Greek service. The Mids have been learning how to cut and replace gaskets and overhaul valves as that project moves ahead. It's been quite a learning experience for the Mids as they learn what happens to piping systems when you don't have a proper PMS plan in place.



Our RPI Midshipmen learning the hard way about the effects of...



...neglected maintenance on our bilge drain system.

Down in B-3 the engineers, Gus Negus, Karl Herchenroder, Gary Lubrano, Mike Dingmon and Ken Myrick, have been spending most of their time cleaning and resetting the new injectors on

main engine number four. They thought they were ready to go with the startup, but somehow the manual's recommended settings don't seem to be working so now they are resetting them by trial and error. They still haven't given up on the idea that number four will run again in the near future. We also had an assist from **Ron Frankosky** who came up from Jersey for three days. He spent time in the B-4 bilges priming the sections that had been scaled and cleaned by our Navy volunteers.



Dick Walker approves as Jerry Jones tiles the desk at Local Operation Position 3 in the radio shack.

Up in Radio, in the absence of Joe Breyer, Jerry Jones has continued his work wiring up the TBL to the motor generator and the operating positions to Barry's exacting Navy standards. Our primary radio room working exhibit is pairing the TBL transmitter with an RAL-7 receiver, and an LM-13 frequency meter in LOP 2. As a secondary station we are pairing the TBL transmitter with the RBC that was donated and restored **Stan Byrn** and **Tom Horsfall** in LOP 3. Both of these positions will operate on CW and phone at 40 meters. All these work with our original longwire antennas and the yardarm verticals.

Stan Levandowski hasn't been idle. In addition to giving tours every Thursday he is working to get SLATER on the air on a regular basis. Tucked away in a locker in the back corner of the radio room will be a premium Ham station set up in such a way that we can walk in, open the cabinet, flip one switch and be on the air. Antenna tuning will be automatic and instantaneous, but using the original ship's antennas. The station will operate both Morse (CW) and Voice (Single Sideband). This will enable USS SLATER to be able to set up a regular Ham schedule. Stan enlisted the help of **Tony Baleno**, the premier maker of handmade all-American telegraph keys in the United States. His keys normally cost between \$300 and \$500 and each one is made to order. Nothing but the best for SLATER! But, we will also continue in the direction of making the old gear operational aso that the period technology is not lost.



Larry Williams was the coxswain and Gus Negus the engineer as the whaleboat made its last run for the season.

Topside Bill Wetterau has been doing the last painting of the season. As I write it looks like the cold has finally set in for good. We managed to finish up all the amidships 20mm guns and ammo lockers. **Earl Herchenroder, Don Miller, Gene Jackey, Chris Fedden** and **Clark Farnsworth** have been working on all the 20mm ready service lockers, freeing up, cleaning up and polishing the ring dogs. A detail project that is probably the last outside work they will do.

Rocky, Gus Negus, Mike Dingmon and Larry “The Legend” Williams took the whaleboat down to Scarano’s Boatyard for the winter, so it’s safe and sound under inside storage for now. Our thanks to Rick and John Scarano and Eric for their continued help and support over the years. Boats Haggart and his deck force of **Paul Guarnieri, Bob Scian, Walt Stuart and Justin Lesser** have been making preparations for winter. They got the spring wires rigged to the dolphin collars, the accommodation ladder up, all lines doubled and chaffing gear rigged. Their latest project is cleaning out the hold below the anchor windlass room.



Progress on the davit pedestal project.

Doug has a couple projects going. In conjunction with the improvement of watertight integrity forward, they have a scuttle inside the old sound room that has a broken weld on the hinge and the dogs just won’t lock. Still working on that one. Then there’s the davit pedestal. We’re still waiting for the replacement pedestal to arrive. In the meantime he is doubling the deck inside the pedestal to reinforce it and also bring the deck level high enough so any water that does get in will run out the drain hole instead of laying in the depression inside the pedestal.

A project near and dear to my heart is the restoration of the old balsa life rafts. If you remember the whole story,

back in November of 1998 **Roy Gunther, Hack Charbonneau, Larry Williams, Gordon Lattey, Al Urquhardt and Bob Callender** went down to the James River Fleet and brought back four vintage 25-man balsa rafts from the troopship USNS GENERAL NELSON WALKER. They were restored, placed in their racks and lasted about six years before they rotted away and we had to chop them up. Only one original raft remained, that had been fiberglassed over, and did not rot. We replaced them with commercial Styrofoam replicas that were not perfect, but were better than nothing, purchased with a **Tin Can Sailor Grant**. Recently, they have begun to deteriorate. The gratings went first, so we contacted our friend **Steve Dull** over in Gaylordsville, Connecticut, the guy who did such a beautiful job on the bridge deck gratings last year. Steve agreed to make to replica grates for us. **Bill Wetterau** volunteered to make the run to Connecticut to pick them up and they look beautiful.



Time for some new life rafts.

The raft bodies were another issue. We searched for a suitable replacement. Then out of the blue I got an email from a fellow named **Chris Stein** who wants to do volunteer work aboard SLATER. What he had in mind was making fiberglass casting replicas for us of any parts we might not be able to obtain. I don’t believe he was thinking about anything as large as a raft. But, it seems that Chris works for a firm called Adirondack Studios that specializes in fiberglass molding. At any rate, Chris and Steve Nallie came down to look at our raft and make an assessment.

He ended up taking one back to his shop with blueprints for the originals and is in the process of presenting the project to his management. We're keeping our fingers crossed.



Walt Stuart and Chief Smith connecting the spring wires to the dolphin collars.



Boats Haggart tests his new wrench that Tim Benner and Dave Mardon made for him.

Another distance project that has been going on is George Christophersen and his work machining replacement shoulder rest parts for the 20mm guns. The parts currently on the guns are either rusted in place unable to swivel or falling apart. We've finally figured out a good method for attaching the rubber shoulder rest parts that **Jack Bertsch** donated a couple years ago to the metal frame. Last weekend George dropped off some parts for Barry Witte to bring into school for his welding students to weld together. After the welding the finished parts will get painted and installed on the guns. When not working on gun parts George is machining a new valve stem to replace a broken one in B4. Another out of tower who helped out is **Ron Frankosky** who came up from Jersey and spent three days painting in the lower level of B-4.



A salute from our overnight campers.

As the colder weather approaches, the number of overnights and school visits increases dramatically. Some of our newer volunteers, including **Charlie Poltenson, Bob Herbst, and Don Cushman**, have jumped right into assisting with the seemingly endless stream of Friday and Saturday Scout overnights. These overnights include evening activities under the direction of **Tom McLaughlin**, and then standing

watch through the night. Interns **John Abeel**, **Dan Kastanis**, and **Vincent Knuth** have also been staffing these overnights, helping to bring the ship to life around the clock. Scouts of all ages enjoy the opportunity to step back in time and immerse themselves in the experience of life aboard a historic naval ship, complete with red lights and morning colors. On Thursday, October 31, we hosted the reenlistment ceremony for MMC Justin Law on the mess deck. Family and friends joined him on this special occasion. And we had more guests from England in the form of the Choir of Hereford Cathedral, and a reunion site visit for the upcoming reunion of the crew of USS ENGLISH DD-696.



That's a lot of gold. Our local Chiefs celebrated the Navy Birthday.



RPI Midshipmen were the gun crew for the salute.

The big ceremony of the month was the celebration of the Navy Birthday on October 13. As has become a tradition, the **Capital District Chief Petty Officer's Association** sponsored and organized the event. Each year the Chiefs honor one of our volunteers with their own volunteer of the year award, and this year they chose **Leo Baehler** who was featured on our July SLATER SIGNALS. Leo has served SLATER as a Tour Guide over the last 18 years with his service extending back to 1995, while SLATER was still docked in New York City. That makes him the longest continuously serving volunteer. The ceremony was held at 0900 on Sunday, October 13th, with EMCM **Jack Ryan** delivering the Invocation and Benediction. **Art Dott** gave a brief history of the Navy since its inception and our RPI Midshipmen fired number three gun with a three volley salute. The guests were invited to the Observation Deck for the cutting of the birthday cake and a brunch prepared by our ship's cook **Chief Smith**. We received great media attention on the event and we were proud to honor Leo for all his service.

Finally, all those folks on the binnacle list last month seem to be recovering nicely. Heart patients **Ken Kaskoun**, **Chuck Boone** and **John Thompson** are all recovering. Ken and John have been back aboard and rejoined the crew. Having recovered from his fall, **Clark Farnsworth** is back in battery with the welding crew. The crew even took a day to help him cover his boat for the winter. And **Joe Breyer** has been by giving Jerry Jones moral support in the radio room and he expects to regain the use of the two fingers he almost lost. You can't keep good men down.

See you next month.