

SLATER SIGNALS


The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers By
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Once we got back from the shipyard and open to the public, those who weren't familiar with the situation figured it was time for us to kick back and relax. That was far from the case. With all the publicity we got from our visit to the shipyard and the trip back up river, our attendance for July has been at an all time high. It's been a wonderful reception, and it has really kept us on our toes.

I had a running joke with the shipyard supervisors asking if they were going to hire me when the my Board found out I was running a million-dollar scam to get a twelve-week paid vacation in Staten Island. The intense pressure to get the ship ready for visitors when we got back almost made the shipyard time seem like a vacation.



John Del Giorno of WABC-TV/Total Traffic & Weather Network sent us this photo that he took from News-Copter 7 as we headed up the Hudson.

The issue of getting the ship physically ready was top priority. There were four PODS storage containers on the pier taking up parking spaces that had to be emptied. Then all the storerooms on the ship had to be put back together, displays had to be set up, and new guides had to be trained. The mountain of work that had to be accomplished in the shortest time possible made the twelve weeks in the shipyard look like a cakewalk.

Then there was the issue of all the stuff in the PODS. That had to go back on the ship as quickly as possible, but we didn't just want to dump it in the storerooms. We wanted things organized. Tommy Moore began building additional shelving in the aft magazines. In the meantime, we decided to write off the aft compartments C-202L and C-203L and use them as temporary storage for the gear that was to be stowed in the aft magazines. That included all the uniforms, teak decking, IC electrical parts, and signal flags.

First we tried to organize what we had aboard the ship. Piles of dishes, mess trays, and galley gear that are surplus to our immediate needs were moved from C-307A forward and consolidated in A-405A.

Fifty boxes of rate badges in A-405A were moved aft to C-307A so they would be more accessible as gift shop stock. Magazine A-306M, which was full of bunk bottoms, bunk chains and bedding, was cleaned out and moved down a deck so that 20 boxes of chambray work shirts could be moved up. That consolidated the shirts in one place and made them more accessible for the crew.

Next we began to tackle the PODS. We started with POD four, as we counted from north to south. POD four contained boxes of dishes, which all went forward. Then the gas masks all went aft into C-309A. Uniforms and teak decking went temporarily into C-202L until the shelving could be completed in magazine C-304M. Ventilation ductwork went into A-402C. And Katie Kuhl's precious archival storage boxes all went into the depth charge magazine C-305M. That took care of POD 4.

POD 3 was full of electrical parts: 12" signal lamps, flood lights, battle lanterns, radio gear, antenna insulators and water tight door parts, all of it heavy. We were fortunate to have Boy Scout Troop 279 come down on Saturday July 12th. They helped our regulars haul everything out of POD 3. Boat's Haggart lowered it all into B-2 in the forward motor room, where it sits on the upper level in piles until shelving can be built on the lower level. That took care of POD 3.

POD 2 was full of signal flags. Boy Scout Troop 279 had been working on them while we were in the shipyard, but there was still a lot to do. Over the course of the first week back, we did a quick survey of the flags. We cut off all the snap hooks and rings, made up three large trash bags of rags, threw away another four bags that were unsuitable, even as rags, and kept the best six of each flag and pennant. We bundled all these and hauled them down to C-202L. Chief Ed Wakeman came in for a week from Ohio to help us sort things out. He got all the flags stowed down in their permanent home, C-307A, as well as all the boxes of rate badges. Three PODS down, effectively opening up five more parking spaces.



Boy Scout Troop 279 was a big help in getting the PODS unloaded and the gear stowed aboard ship.



ENC Ed Wakeman worked outside his rate sorting and stowing signal flags.

The last POD contained boxed financial records and museum uniforms. The problem was that the uniforms destined for the special collections space was filled up with other gear, waiting for shelving to be built in the magazines. And the financial records were destined for the forward reefer, which was filled with electrical gear from the storeroom below. That's **Gary Sheedy's** storeroom, A-408A, and perfectionist that he is, he didn't want to junk up his storeroom until he had it spray painted. He did manage to get the deck and compartment painted over the first couple of weeks in July, and now is carefully consolidating and organizing all our electrical spares, as well as moving spares in that were scattered around other parts of the ship. It's really amazing what we have accumulated. And **Rosehn's** reefer is now cleared out and just awaiting a group of volunteers who can move the boxes and uniforms back aboard. That will clear out the last of the PODS.

One of the first volunteers to go to work was Chief Smith who gave the galley a thorough cleaning and who started feeding the crew again. Jim Gelston got all the clocks remounted, wound and set. Boats Haggart and the deck crew had a lot to do over the course of the month. First, of course, was rigging all the cables and lines with chaffing gear. The cargo nets had to be rigged under the gangways. Next, it was the accommodation ladder, the cargo net, and repairs to the snaking. Then he was busy cleaning up the anchor windlass room, and rigging the fantail awning. When all that was done, Boats could finally get into the project that he really wanted to do, cutting and splicing the new mooring line. All of our mooring line is now over 15 years old, so while we were in the shipyard we purchased 1,800 feet of three strand nylons to replace the mooring lines. As I type this newsletter, Boats is happily engaged in teaching and making eye splices with Walt Stuart, Thomas Scian, and Paul Guarnieri.



The Monday crew after Chief Smith made a wonderful roast pork loin for the crew. I told them I needed them to pose for a group picture, but it was just a ruse to get them back to work.

The shipfitters, Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Super Dave Mardon, and Earl Herchenroder, have been working to reinforce the steel aft gangway. Chief Clark Farnsworth and Gene Jackey have been fabricating new ladders to replace the wasted ladders in water tanks C-10W and C-11W. Now, if we can just find someone small enough to get into the tanks and bolt them in. At 92 years old, Clark is still doing bench work, though he uses two canes to get aboard. He says that he really doesn't need the second cane, he keeps it handy to beat Super Dave.

Barry Witte and his students Sam Spicer, Colin Steve, Zach Flagler, Cory Hendrick and Griffin Keegan played a major role in unloading the PODS. Since then they have been restoring the firemain and cooling piping for the ship's service generator in B-3. They are taking the system apart one piece at a time, cleaning up flanges, overhauling valves, making new gaskets, and putting it all back together with new hardware that Barry purchased out of his own pocket. These kids are getting a real education in the right way to overhaul a system.

The engineers are still trying to get over the loss of Gus Negus, and it's a loss from which we will never fully recover. Their priority this month has been to help Rocky Rockwood get the whaleboat back into the water and up to SLATER. Gus was the expert on the whaleboat's diesel. So Karl Herchenroder, Mike Dingmon, Gary Lubrano and Ken Myrick have been working to fill the void. As of this writing the engine has been tested and the boat is due to return to SLATER on August 4th.



Visitors Bureau, we hosted the China Ready Fam Tour. They were a most interested and enthusiastic group. Thanks to Gina Mintzer for the photo!

The Radio Gang had a special presentation for RM1/c Joe Breyer, for keeping the watch on the trip upriver. He was awarded the USS SLATER “Ancient Mariner Award 2014” for being the oldest Navy radioman on “Active Duty.” The citation read, “Presented to RM1 Joseph F. Breyer for conspicuous gallantry in single-handedly continuing to man Radio Central during the northbound journey of USS SLATER up the Hudson River. During the cruise, RM1 Breyer suffered an RF burn to his hand, battled voracious mosquitoes on deck, and successfully negotiated his sleeping sack.” Things in the radio shack will get back to normal when **Jerry “Mopar Man” Jones** is finished with car show season.

This year, Heather is excited to welcome back three returning interns, in addition to four new ones. Vincent Knuth has returned for his fourth season, and is glad to be starting at Albany Law School this fall, while **Julianne Madsen** is returning for her fifth season and is currently going for a Master's Degree at The College of Saint Rose. **Dan Kastanis** is joining the intern crew for his second season, and is currently enrolled at Hudson Valley Community College. Also enrolled at HVCC is new intern Andrew Smith, who is a historical reenacting enthusiast. New this season is Jon Palmer, a recent Siena College graduate with well-rounded maritime-related experience. Recent graduate from the University at Albany, and Navy veteran, **Heinz Granderath**, and current University at Albany history student **Claire Burgon**, make up the rest of the seasonal interns. Heather is overwhelmed with their collective enthusiasm and genuine interest in not only the history of the ship, but the restoration process as well.



Volunteer guide Alan Fox explains the intricacies of the MK-14 gunsight to his group of visitors. Alan's father, Sam Fox, served aboard USS HAYTER DE-212 in WWII. Alan's been a docent for 17 years.

USS SLATER has had a lot of day camp visitors, including YMCA groups and home school groups over the course of the month. On July 18th, the parking lot filled with Jeeps as we hosted the Tri-County Jeep Club for a rally that included a tour of the SLATER. On the July 21st, we hosted the China Ready Fam tour, in conjunction with the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau. The group included many young ladies who were a most interested and enthusiastic group. The high point of the month for me was when this old man was asked, "Are you married?" The answer is "Yes, 37 years." Thanks to Gina Mintzer for the photo!

We're still getting great feedback from the drydocking and the trip back up river. John Del Giorno, of WABC-TV / Total Traffic & Weather Network, sent us photos that he took from NewsCopter 7 while we were off the Battery. Turns out John's Dad served in USS BLESSMAN (APD 48) and USS HOLLIS (APD 86) at the end of WWII. He'd been keeping track of us ever since we went into the yard. Thomas Scian, who spent several weeks aboard USS SLATER volunteering in the shipyard, posted all his photos to his flickr account here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/96278469@N03/sets> . Bill Maloney posted his images of USS SLATER's return trip home here: <http://www.williammaloney.com/Dad/WWII/DestroyerEscortSlater/DrydockRepairs2014/TripHomeUpTheHudsonJune30/index.htm> If you want to get a sense of what it was really like, take a look.

Then there has been some great press. In the July 25th Metroland, in their "Best of the Capital Region 2014 Edition," cited USS SLATER as The Best Historic Site. They wrote "The only original destroyer escort left from World War II, the Slater, continued its 15-year restoration from rusting hulk to National Historic Landmark (and one of the area's most popular attractions) earlier this summer when it underwent a 90-day, out-of-water, million-dollar overhaul in Staten Island (entirely funded by private donations), including a new paint job that colorized its navy gray to snazzy ocean camouflage." On behalf of the whole SLATER crew, we appreciate the support of the Metroland staff.

THE USS SLATER,
A WORLD WAR II
DESTROYER ESCORT,
IS NOW A MUSEUM
IN THIS
"EMPIRE STATE"
CAPITAL

Now we know we've hit the big time!

And then on Friday July 25th, USS SLATER was used as a clue on Jeopardy! The \$400 question was "The USS SLATER, a World War II Destroyer Escort, is now a Museum in this 'Empire State' Capital." Nobody could remember if the contestants got the question right or not. Nobody here was expecting it, but using the power of Facebook, Fred Robbins had us a screen shot within 15 minutes.

We're coming up on the Fall Work Week season. If you are serious about working on USS SLATER, there will be two USS SLATER Work Weeks this fall, and readers are encouraged to volunteer. Space is limited. The USS HUSE Veterans will be aboard Sunday, September 7 - 12, 2014. If you have not already done so, contact George Amandola at 610-789-5105, or email gamand@aol.com or Dave Perlstein at 561-368-7167, email dbp14@hotmail.com with the subject header SLATER WORK PARTY in order to confirm. You don't have to be a HUSE former crew member to participate.

The Joint DESA Michigan Chapter/USS SLATER fall work week will be October 5-10, 2014. If you want to sign up, contact Dick Walker at 616-676-1392 or Tim Rizzuto at 518-431-1943 or email tim@usslater.org

Work assignments are assigned according to your skill and ability. Most projects involve chipping, painting, and cleaning. If you have a special skill such as welding, electrical, or mechanical talent, please let us know. Also, let us know of any physical limitations you may have.

The age limit is 14 years old and everybody should expect to bear a hand. This can be a great intergenerational experience, and you don't have to be a DE Sailor or even have been in the Navy to participate. You just have to want to help the SLATER. Just remember that pre-registration is required and space is limited.

Follow us on Facebook and see you next month.

