



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. 18 No. 11,

November 2015



Art Dott gave the last tour of the season.

It's the end of November and the end of the tourist season. Chief Art Dott gave the last tour of the season late in the afternoon of Sunday, November 29th. I remember the old days, when about now we'd be scrambling, trying to lift the gangways, schedule tugs, move the ship and haul out the camels. Though there are some aspects of the move that we all miss, staying on the Albany side all winter has a lot of advantages in the winter. The and saves simple us a lot of pleasures of fresh money. runni

And best of all, we're not stuck using a port-a-jong water and a flush commode are big.

The first big event for November was our Veterans Day Commemoration on November 11th. We like to think that every day is Veterans Day aboard USS SLATER. This year the ceremony was an improvised affair, as we were rained out and had to pull the entire ceremony back to the observation deck under the canopy. DEHM Board Chair **BJ Costello** opened the event, as the SLATER Color guard paraded the colors aboard the ship. Our USS SLATER Chaplain, Rev. **David Collum**, did the invocation and benediction. The commemoration was well-attended by dignitaries, including Congressman **Paul Tonko** and Assembly Members **Pat Fahy** and **John McDonald**, who all paid tribute to our veterans and shared their thoughts on the significance of Veterans Day. Everyone seemed to appreciate the closeness of the podium to the audience, as opposed to our usual setup, where the podium is on the ship and the audience is ashore. It may be an arrangement that will be repeated.

We held our annual USS SLATER Night at the Fort Orange Club on Friday November 13th. One surprise guest was USS SLATER plankowner, **Ed Lavin**. Ed joined the Navy in 1941. He placed the light cruiser SAN DIEGO CL-53 in commission and was with her for her shakedown. Ed went through the whole Guadalcanal campaign on SAN DIEGO, and cried as he watched the HORNET go down at Santa Cruz. In 1944, he was detached for new construction, and sent to the pre-commissioning detail of USS SLATER DE766. Rated an engineman 2nd class, he served aboard until May 17, 1944. On that date the number three ship's service generator caught fire as the lube oil ignited. Ed entered the compartment and fought the fire with portable CO2 extinguishers. He put out the fire, but was seriously burned in the process. Swathed with Vaseline and blankets, he was removed from the ship and sent ashore for treatment and recovery. Another sailor, Willard Werley, was injured with him at the same time. Ed said that he owed his survival to a burn expert who had been flown into Tampa to treat an air crew that had been badly burned in a crash, and was available to give Ed emergency care.



Doug Tanner, Chief Clark Farnsworth, Ed Lavin, Thomas Scian and Boats Haggart at the Fundraiser.

His next duty assignment was shore patrol duty in San Juan. Eventually, he was assigned to the minesweeper USS YMS399, and swept mines off Brazil. He was assigned to new construction, ship unspecified, when the war ended. Ed ended up working in the New York State Tax Department. He became an administrative assistant to Leo W. O'Brien, and also worked for Bobby Kennedy. He was one of the honor guards alongside the Kennedy casket. Now 93 and in a retirement home in Niskayuna, it was an honor to have him and his daughter Sharon at our event.

We had an informative presentation by the Commanding Officer of the Nuclear Power Training Center at Ballston Spa, Captain David Fowler, USN. Captain Fowler was formerly Executive Officer of USS Bainbridge (DDG-96) at the time of the rescue of Capt. Richard Phillips, M.V. Maersk Alabama, from Somali pirates on April 12, 2009. When **BJ Costello** asked Captain Fowler if he needed anything, Captain Fowler replied, "Just bring me an audience." He did a presentation on "The US Navy in the 21st Century," followed by his recollections on Captain Phillips' rescue. He really had the audience's attention as he recounted the story from his point of view, and said that the movie was pretty accurate in the way it told the events.



It was a nice gathering of friends.



The Presentation of the Trustees Award to Doug Tanner.

The Trustees of the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum recognized the efforts of William Douglas Tanner by honoring him with the 2015 USS SLATER Trustees Award. Any regular reader of this newsletter knows that Doug has provided exemplary work toward the long-term maintenance and preservation of USS SLATER, since he first came aboard in 1999. A Coast Guard veteran, he retired from General Electric and is a qualified pressure vessel, and a level three welding quality control inspector. I did a photo presentation to show how Doug has used his welding skills, and knowledge of construction and maritime codes, to restore and ensure the structural integrity of USS SLATER. In 2010, his knowledge of codes and contracts was invaluable, as he took on the task of managing the construction of two mooring pilings for us on the Albany side of the Hudson River. Doug Tanner's leadership and multifaceted expertise has made him one of the most valuable volunteers we have aboard. His contributions include designing and installing the shipboard heating system, installing the SL radar and platform at the top of the mast, and developing our shipboard sewerage system, holding tank, and pump-out system. He continues to be on hand to maintain all these systems he worked so hard to develop.

Board President Tony Esposito called Doug and his wife Carol Ann to the podium, and recounted how Doug has contributed enormously to the physical restoration of the SLATER with his welding expertise, rigging knowledge, and physical energy. Doug is always the one we call upon to handle the most difficult and intricate repairs. In addition, he has worked to pass his knowledge on to the other volunteers who work with him, and thus increasing their skill and value to the project. He brings to every project the desire to get the job done right. His ability to make phone calls and get donated services for the ship has saved us tens of thousands of dollars. Tony then made the presentation of an engraved wood plaque and a framed print of **Len Tantillo's** "Contact" painting. Both now reside in Doug's living room. On behalf of the entire SLATER crew, I can say we would never be where we are today without Doug's dedication, knowledge and skill.

The evening was made possible by the Underwriters, Patrick & Shirley Campbell Foundation of Pleasant Hill, California and George F. Christianson of Independence, Missouri. Sponsors were Dr. Geoffrey S. Bullard, John P. Cosgrove, Mr. & Mrs. Martin Jessen, Charles Wm. Kieb, Jr., and RADM & Mrs. Martin Leukhardt, USNR(Ret). The Honorary Committee included Dr. Nicholas Athanassiou, Sheridan & Susan Biggs, Larry Blount, James & Alison Brown, Dow Clark, Steve & Jean Cleary, Thomas R. Cline, VADM & Mrs. Barry Costello, USN(Ret), BJ & Nancy Costello, Robert & Sheila Cross, Gary Dieckman, Sean Doolan, Tony & Lu Esposito, Alan Fox, Gene Griesau, Roger Hannay, Rensselaer County Executive Kathleen Jimino, Lee & Janet Kempf, CAPT S. Greg Krawczyk, USN(Ret), Gordon Lattey & Michele Vennard, Mr. & Mrs. Stephen M. Long, Jr., Dick & Barbara MacDowell, Robert Malesardi & Doris Fischer, Michael R. McNulty, Don C. Norris, Keith Poulsen, New York State Senator Diane Savino, Robert Schroll, Gary Skoloff, BG & Mrs. Michael Swezey, NYARNG, Congressman Paul Tonko, Bill & Lynn Wetterau, Gregory Wolanin, and Gene White. Corporate Sponsors were Maximum Security Products, Walter S. Pratt & Sons, Inc., Adirondack Trust Insurance Agency, Couch White LLP, and The Riverfront Bar and Grill.

At the close of the program, Captain Fowler and Command Master Chief Eric Playdon presented BJ Costello with a \$4,000 check from the NPTU Chiefs Mess for our restoration program. The relationship between USS SLATER and NPTU continues to grow stronger, as the on following Monday, Captain Fowler put out a call for volunteers. Two instructors, **EM2 Nathan Marlin and ETN2 Shea Hodges**, reported aboard to helpout. We look forward to a continuing relationship with the folks at Ballston Spa. One of the nice parts about the Fort Orange Club event for me was that "my friend **Ed Zajkowski**" drove up from Pennsylvania for the event, spent a day on the ship with us, and even reprised his shipyard role as cook, preparing breakfast for us in the galley the morning after the party.

We had a very successful tour season with our outstanding volunteers and interns. As the season comes to a close, we want to thank our volunteer tour guides. These guys give a lot of time and energy to spend their time here. Many of them come in at least oneday every week, and are available to come in on their unscheduled days to assist with the very large tours. Some days this summer we had groups of over 100, but our guides can handle anything! Our volunteer guides this year were, **Dennis Nagi, Alan Fox, Mike Marko, Don Cushman, Bob Dawson, Chuck Boone, Charlie Poltenson, Ken Kaskoun, Bob Herbst, Nelson Potter, Paul Guarnieri, Will Trevor, Tom Cline, Jim Kuba, Grant Hack, Art Dott, Bill Wetterau, and Tom McLaughlin.** We also want to thank **Dave Pitlyk** for coming in and volunteering, after he finished his tenure here at SLATER. We couldn't do this without all of you! Thank you so much to all of our tour guides!

Our first year Interpretation Coordinator Shanna Hopson has done a great job making sure enough trained guides are always on hand to meet our commitments. She is backed up by our Sunday duty officer, **Vince Knuth**, who has done an excellent job running the ship on Sundays, sometimes with very sparse help. In his second year of law school, Vince keeps very busy, but always finds time to help us out, whether it is last minute overnight duty or covering the register when Shanna is gone. He's always around to pass on his vast knowledge and to come in Saturday afternoon and stretch out his tours. Julianne Madsen, our "longest standing intern" joined us for another year. Her helpfulness is always refreshing. She was in most Wednesdays and Fridays, and is known for her ability to be right on that hour mark for her tours! She is always on the lookout for the resident falcon that likes to hang out on the spinning radar.



The last overnight of the season.



The tour guides were outstanding this year.

Claire Burgon, in her second year here as a tour guide, has taken on some additional responsibilities by helping with the memberships and maintaining our website. Her can-do attitude is always greeted with more tasks to handle. It is always appreciated when she goes out of her way to help out and fill in for other interns. **Jon Palmer** is a favorite of our visitors. His tours are filled with many stories and demonstrations that always leave the guests wanting more. Jon is one of those guys who knows everyone and does everything. He is a huge help with all kinds of projects, whether it is tour guiding or maintenance. Jon will always lend a helping hand. He is working on a degree in Archival Studies and I'm sure he can provide some insights for us. Andrew Smith is our most praised guide on TripAdvisor! Guests always report on how knowledgeable and friendly he is. Andrew is also in his second season here, and has proved time and again how lucky we are to have him. Andrew is knowledgeable on the subject of WWII, and is very skilled at relaying that information on his tours.



Captain Fowler and ETCM Eric Playdon presenting a check to the USS SLATER. The event raised over \$20,000 for our project.

In his first season here, James Braun has been great! His grandfather served on a Destroyer Escort, and that is what initially drew James to SLATER. James is wonderful with the students that come in for tours. He knows just the right amount of information to share without overwhelming them, and still fitting in the right amount of fun into an hour-long tour. We receive a lot of compliments from visitors on his tours about his technical knowledge, and how well he describes the weaponry and engine spaces. Our two newest interns were hired late in the season. **Jon Whyte-Dixon**, with just a couple months under his belt, has shown a lot of enthusiasm. He was very eager to get started on giving tours on his own as soon as he started here. He has shown great determination and was a good addition to our intern lineup. Eric Morgenson was also hired late in this season, and has proved to be dependable, knowledgeable, and a very quick learner. We are still working on hitting that hour mark; he just has so much information to share with the visitors! We are so happy that Eric joined us this season!



The whaleboat is secure for the season.



This trailer is in way worse shape than we thought.

On the maintenance side of operations, Doug Tanner worked with Super Dave Mardon and Tim Benner to complete the winterization of the ship's fresh water and sewer system, before going back to work on the trailer project. Earl Herchenroder and Gene Jackey have been Doug's key helpers shoreside. Trailer Project has turned into a "job" like all other projects we have done, that is to say way more complex than we originally envisioned. Earl and Gene opened a can of worms around the door on the street side. The main support beam is gone at least 3-6 ft. It looks like we'll have to replace all or most of that section, which means we'll have to install a jacking seat on the out side wall, so we can support it and remove the beam. Doug plans to put temporary jacks under the door area, because it had settled when they removed what little was holding it up and the door wouldn't close. The assumption is that the frame is rotten to the south end of the trailer and will have to be replaced. It is doubtful that this project will be completed before winter closes in, so we'll be securing the job and then pick up where we left off in the spring.

Aboard ship, Danny Statile completed repairs to the landing force equipment locker hatch in the gun three tub. The gang is now working on an access scuttle on the forward end of the gun tub. This will give us a whole lot of new useable storage space for our metal stock, and allow air circulation in a space that was previously dark, dank, and subject to severe corrosion. This has ended those problems. Once the metal work is complete, the plan is to spray out the landing force equipment locker white in the spring.

Spending hours behind a needle scaler chipping paint is still the most necessary and thankless job anybody can do aboard USS SLATER. That is why the chippers deserve special credit. **Ron Mazure** is our Monday chipper. Working back in the steering gear room every Tuesday, **Ron Prest** drives in from Massachusetts, and **Bill Wetterau** joins him, for a solid fourteen man-hours of chipping. Saturdays we have new volunteer **Nate Shakerley** on the job. Our old friend **Ron Frankosky** drove up from New Jersey to spend four days back there with a needle scaler. **Thomas Scian** has done his share of scaling. And, even the bossman on the job, **Gary Sheedy**, has spent many hours chipping paint.

With the restoration of the steering engine room progressing well, Gary has turned his attention to the adjacent laundry. All of the original equipment was replaced by European laundry equipment. **Ed Zajkowski** researched the original laundry equipment. The original washing machine was made by the Norwood Cascade Company. The original dryer was a 36" x 24" machine, manufactured by the U.S. Hoffman Machine Corporation in Syracuse, NY. The USS STEWART in Galveston still has her original laundry equipment and, in another act of intership cooperation, her curator Dewayne Davis was kind enough to send us photographs of the equipment we should have. The search is on. Gary has cut all the existing equipment from the deck, so it can be relocated to its original layout. However, if we can find the original equipment, that is even better.

The engineers have completed the installation of the rebuilt starting air compressor in B-1. Karl Herchenroder, Mike Dingmon, Ken Myrick, and Gary Lubrano did a test run of the new unit and it builds pressure nicely. Because the B-3 ship's service generator has been winterized, we won't be able to start it until spring. They also winterized the whaleboat diesel down at Scarano's Boatyard. They are presently working with Larry Williams to find out why both battery chargers on the emergency diesel generator have failed.



Test run of the B-3 ship's service generator.

Barry Witte has been using his education skills to teach his group of RPI Midshipmen about working in the shipboard environment. Led by Midshipman First Class **Tulsa Scott**, the following individuals have all donated time to USS SLATER while they gained hands on mechanical training under Barry's supervision: Mids **Joshua Blake, Conrad Dorn, Frank Riley, Dan Seo, Nicholas Starasinic, Kathryn Hunter, Mitchell Busa, Byron Flynn, Amanda Gallo, Austin Faddish, Robert Claude, Nick Grocki, Angela Popolizio, Peter Gelsthorpe, Matt Gerrard, Eric Brovarone, Connor Hanlon, Emre Kulahlioglu, Nicholas Runyan, and Brian Wisbauer**, along with Bethlehem High School senior **Jimmy Lenden**, and Columbia High School senior **Steve Reilly**, both of whom desire to be midshipmen next year. Under his direction, they overhauled several valves, completed the reassembly of the firemain in B-3, pressure-tested the line, and insulated it. We will now have the ability to pump river water into a firehose that will be located just forward of the weld bench. Barry doesn't plan on testing until the spring. His crew will then continue work on the firemain section removed from B-4, now located in his shop at Colonie High School, where another group of younger students are learning about pipe repair. Then, it is just a matter of lagging and painting to make it look original. Barry plans to have a working fire station on the starboard side amidships by spring.



Midshipmen working on the firemain.



Rigging the new forestay.

All the valves in the system have been carefully overhauled by the Mids. In addition, two of these midshipmen helped **Gary Sheedy** with the heavy-duty metal removal in the ship's laundry. In another Midshipman-related project, **Doug Tanner** picked up the replacement forestay from All-Lifts, and it's a beautiful piece of work. Barry and **Michael Schuster** climbed the mast to rig it. The following weekend, College of Saint Rose students were also instrumental in assisting Barry: **Pat Sutton**, a USN Machinist Mate veteran, and his brother **Shaun Sutton**, a USMC veteran, helped rig the port and starboard stays to the roof of the sonar hut. The tensioning awaits Doug's final inspection.

Finally, it takes money to make all this happen. We want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have already donated to our 2015-2016 Winter Fund drive. Now that we are closed for the season, your donations will provide our subsistence for the next four months, and allow the restoration work to continue. The official notification won't go out until early January, to put some time and distance between that solicitation and the Fort Orange Club Fundraiser, and allow you, hopefully, to forget how often I have my hand out. I've said before and I'll say it again. In 2014, thanks to you, we raised and spent \$2,000,000, including the shipyard experience. Of that, exactly \$1,000 was public money through the City of Albany Arts Grant. The most important thing you can do is to convey to your kids and grandkids why this monument is important to you. Remember that "Donate Button" on our homepage. We are every DE to every DE Sailor.

Don't forget the donate button on our homepage www.ussslater.org and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.

See you next month.