



## SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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Destroyer Escort Historical Museum USS Slater DE-766

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October began with the fall work week, traditionally called the "Michigan Fall Work Week," because it originated with the members of the Michigan Chapter of DESA, back in 1999. "Michigan" Dick Walker continued to coordinate the event from afar this year. Seventeen participants started to arrive on the evening of October 1st. First to arrive was **George Kraft** from Philadelphia, a working tugboat man who works on the same tug as **Bill Siebert**. That same night, **John Meeker** and **Joe Stout** flew in from Seattle. The following day, locals **Guy Huse**, **Gary Dieckman**, **Mike Marko**, and **Ron Mazure** brought their seabags aboard. **Carol Willis** flew in from Denver, with her nephew **Criss Binkley**, and his friend **Ash Keys**. **Tom Jacobs** and **Frank Heckart** came in from Texas, with **Tom Skufca** from Ohio. Ken Sample came in from Oswego, Illinois, and Ron Prest came over from Massachusetts. **Ron Frankosky** came up from New Jersey, and last was **Bill Siebert**, who came down from Maine.



When you combine our locals, the out-of-towners and the Sailors from NPTU, you get quite a crew.



Mike Marko and Tom Jacobs spent a week sprucing up the flying bridge.



The Three Ronnies, Ron Mazure, Ron Prest and Ron Frankosky.



Ash and Criss, here with Carol Willis, got engaged in our whaleboat.

The crew settled in, picked their racks, unpacked their seabags and got to know each other. I'm not sure who was the first to realize it, but there was nobody from Michigan at the "Michigan" work week. Things started to get a little tense as various members of the crew started to vie for naming rights to the event. Frank and Tom made a case for Texas, since Texans feel that they should own everything. Carol made the case that they had the Texans outnumbered with three from Colorado. Ron Frankosky countered with the fact that none of them were representing a DESA Chapter, and since he was a representative of the Garden State Chapter, it was now their work week. John Meeker countered with his three members of the DESA NORPAC Chapter, since Ken was also a member of their group. It threatened to get ugly until the four New York locals out voted everybody and they settled on "Slater Fall Work Week."

**That settled, the crew went to work.** Chief Smith reported to the galley on Monday morning, and took on the task of feeding the crew three squares for the next five days. He was assisted by **Ken Sample**, who was "volunteered" to serve the week out as messcook and scullery man. Their first Monday workload was complicated by the fact that, in addition to the twenty regulars and seventeen out-of-towners, he had twelve NPTU volunteer Sailors to feed. Smitty handled it without complaint.

**An experienced welder, Tom Skufca spent the week in aft steering with Gary Sheedy, welding brackets in the laundry and adjacent compartments. George, John, and Joe took on the task of freeing up the train drive on gun two. After some advice from Doug Tanner, they removed all the base ring gear covers and cleaned out all the accumulated dirt and grime. By the end of the week they had the gun training handily. They also assisted Guy Huse with the disassembly of the sight setter for restoration.**

**Back aft, "The Three Ronnies," Prest, Mazure, and Frankosky, continued needle-scaling the fantail and by the end of the week had the area 95% complete. Criss and Ash worked on scaling and priming the depth charge roller loaders and the waterways. Carol proved to be an excellent detail painter, and spent the week touching-up the camouflage around the ship, as well as cutting in the edges between the decks and bulkheads. To keep Michigan Dick Walker happy, Mike Marko and Tom Jacobs spent the week up on the flying bridge, cleaning and touching-up the paint there. Finally, Frank Heckart, who was operating with a broken foot, spent the week sanding and painting 3" cartridge cases, for use as provision canisters in the life rafts. It's a sad fact of life that the ship always looks her best as we prepare to close for the season.**



Carol Willis from Denver proved herself quite an adept painter.



Ralph Griffen and Bob Lally making repairs to the depth charge roller loaders.



Touching up some new metal following Ed Zajkowski's work week.

**Thanks to Jon Palmer, the crew got a chance for a sunset whaleboat ride.** Several members of the crew boarded the boat on a perfect evening. The event became significant when **Criss** proposed to **Ash** while they were underway. Fortunately for all, she said "yes." I don't know if this is a first for any Navy whaleboat, but it's definitely a first for our whaleboat.

**We had a week break before Ed Zajkowski was back on Sunday, with his "Welding Dream Team."** The welders, Ed's coworkers from the Limerick Nuclear Power Plant, all retired, were **Rick Espenshade, Ralph Griffen, and Bob Lally.** They were supported by **Steve Whynot, Gene Byers, Thomas Scian,** and cooks **Blair Sandri and Phil Zeglin.** They began work on Monday, October 17th in the dark. **Thomas** has the pictures to prove it. This time they ate well, thanks to Blair's efforts in the galley.

**Their primary project was repairing the wasted legs on the depth charge roller loaders.**

Many of the support legs and deck attachments were well rotted, after 73 years. Two members of the team started early doing prep work, which consisted of cutting away the rotted metal and grinding flush with the deck. Once again, **Doug Tanner** reached out to his friends at **Petrochem,** and they donated the use of two diesel-driven welding machines for the duration of the project. Thanks to prep work done by **Ed** and **Thomas** on Saturday and Sunday, the three welders were able to start at 0700 on Monday.

**Weather was perfect, and actually a little too warm on Tuesday.** The team worked 10 hours on Monday, and all work was done and cleaned up by 1300 on Tuesday. They also took on several extra jobs, fabricating and welding an "eyebrow" over the port aft cross passageway door, which had leaked for years. In addition, they made and welded a new scupper on the 01 level, and repaired one foot of waterway bar we missed in May. **Ed** swears that this is his last hurrah, but we've all heard that before. We'll see. Give him a couple of months to rest, and forget how much pain he was in, and then we'll see.

**We also continued to have strong support from the Sailors at NPTU on Mondays and Tuesdays.** They have continued to support **Karl Herchenroder's** aft engine room restoration efforts, bilge cleaning and painting on the lower level.



The engineers continue to struggle with a coolant leak on the B-3 ship's service generator.

Another team has been working in the aft motor room, cleaning, and painting on the starboard side of the lower level. Teams of chippers have been assisting **Ron Prest** and **Ron Mazure**, scaling the fantail and the 01 level forward. The chippers have also been supporting **Gary Sheedy's** efforts in aft steering. We continue to be grateful to have the support of these younger Sailors, who can stretch and reach into places we can't.

**In addition to the cleaning and painting, Karl, Ken Myrick, Gary Lubrano, and Mike Dingmon had two projects going.** The first was trying to diagnose a cooling leak on the B-3 ship's service generator. They've replaced a couple pieces of piping that they swapped from the B-1 engine, in an effort to find their cooling leak. They are also hard at work reactivating another ship's service air compressor in B-1, so we'll still be able to needle gun if the old Ingersoll Rand machine craps out. .

**Following Jim Moore's overhaul in Manhattan, it's been running for twenty years without a problem.**

**The shipfitters have completed all the steel work in the starboard B-3 plenum chamber. The NPTU volunteers are in the process of painting it out. Doug Tanner has started modifying a new watertight door for the galley, while Tim Benner and Super Dave Mardon have been fabricating a new roller, with bearings, for the forward gangway. Gene Jackey also completed the installation of train limit stops on the aft 40mm gun.**

**Boats Haggart and the deck gang, Walt Stuart, Bill Holt, Paul Guarnieri, Earl Herchenroder and the occasional apprentice Cathy Wheat, are making winter preparations.** Boats was ready to swing the davits out in August, to be ready to hoist the whaleboat, but we put the brakes on him. We finally turned him loose on October 29th and he got everything rigged out and ready for the following Monday.



We paid homage to our Greek heritage as AETOS with an Oxi Day Commemoration.



Barry Witte hosted a visit by recently-retired Rear Admiral Alma Grocki.

On Halloween, **Doug Tanner, Boats**, and our gang, with an assist from a large contingent of NPTU Sailors brought the whaleboat aboard for the winter. There were a couple hiccups, because we don't do it enough to get good at it. But, she is safely in the cradle, and **Tommy Moore** pressure-washed the hull. **Angelo Bracco** has been getting the canvas gun covers ready. Trustee Greg Wolanin donated some old army tents to use to make new covers. They'll go on right after we close on November 27th.

The month was complete with several ceremonies. Dr. Niloo M. Edwards was commissioned into the United States Navy Medical Corps on our fo'c's'le and Justin Van Kuren re-enlisted aboard as well. On October 13th, Art Dott, Brian LaPlante, and the Capital District Chief Petty Officer's Association celebrated the 241st birthday of the United States Navy. Each year, the Chiefs honor a SLATER volunteer. This year the Chiefs honored tour guide and Board Treasurer, Alan Fox. Alan's interest in SLATER is closely tied to the story of his father's service during World War II. Samuel Fox was a YN1/c, aboard USS HAYTER DE-212. She was fired upon twice with torpedoes. It is worth pointing out that Alan's connections to destroyer escorts do not end with HAYTER. On his mother's side of the family, Ensign Charles Stern (a native of Albany) lost his life aboard USS OKLAHOMA BB-37 during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He would later have USS STERN DE-187 named in his honor.

**When Alan read that SLATER was coming to Albany he got involved early, out of an interest in history and a desire to understand the experiences of his father.** He believes that the educational mission of the museum is important, and that those who don't learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. He has been a volunteer here with us for 16 years. He is also active in spreading the word about the ship and her history, through public speaking engagements with a variety of other non-profit groups.

We had a visit by recently retired Rear Admiral Alma Grocki and her husband. Her last billet included supervising historic ship inspections for NAVSEA. Her son, Nick, goes to RPI, and volunteers aboard.

**Tour guides have been busy this month. We were open on Columbus Day, and since we are not usually open for tours on Monday we needed guides to give us an extraday that week. Charles Starks, Grant Hack, Don Kushman, Ken Kaskoun, and Art Dott** towed the line that day and it was smooth sailing. We are always so happy with how much of their time and energy our tour guides are willing to give us! The last tour on Columbus Day was Cub Scout Pack 135. They participated in a flag ceremony and lowered and folded our ensign for the day. They were awarded with a ribbon for the Pack deeming them part of the SLATER's "Honorary Crew."

**Groups can also earn these ribbons and the coveted title of Honorary Crew by participating in an overnight.** We had two overnights this month with many more to come in November. We have an overnight scheduled for every Friday and Saturday night that we are open in November! The overnights in October were attended by the Young Marines from Latham and Cub Scout Pack 5 from Broadalbin. They were manned by our fearless tour guides Jon, James, Andrew, and Austin.

**On the 12th of this month we had Grant Hack and Charles Starks give a presentation about "Saving Slater" to a group at the Heermance Library in Coxsackie.** They informed the crowd of the history of USS SLATER; her time spent in the US Navy, Greek Navy, her journey back to NYC, and of course her restoration in Albany. To fill out our busiest week of the month, on the 14th we welcomed forty 8th graders from Warrensburg for a tour.



Alan Fox was recognized as the Capital District CPO Association Volunteer of the Year during their Navy Birthday celebration.

**This October came with a fair amount of sadness as well, as we watched three of our most dependable volunteers cross the bar.** Our thoughts go out to several volunteers who've been on the binnacle list; **Danny Statile** and **Steve Klauck** with different forms of cancer. **Les and Annette Beauchaine** have been moved into senior friendly-housing by their children. And, **Clark Farnsworth** is undergoing physical therapy at Baptist Rehab Center in Scotia, following his collapse at his ship's reunion. He's back up and walking again. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all these wonderful volunteers.

Finally, I want to express my profound sadness with the loss of **Chris Fedden, Bob Bull and John Cosgrove**, three special people who all passed away this quarter. **John** was a founding Trustee and journalist. I remember **Chris** sitting on the wharf, chipping the spray shield alongside **Les Beauchaine** in 1998, when the ship first arrived in Albany. And **Bob** was a dedicated Thursday tour guide for ten years. Watching these veterans "slip the hook" is the most difficult part of my job.

**Don't forget the donate button on our homepage [www.ussslater.org](http://www.ussslater.org) and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.**

**See you next month.**



Sailors from NPTU have continued to support us on Mondays and Tuesdays.