



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

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The Capital District Sea Cadets spent a night aboard.

June kept us all very busy with tours, overnights, and restoration. Many school groups have come to tour SLATER, including the Green Meadow Elementary School, Latham Christian Academy, West Canada School, Hoosick Falls, and Ichabod Crane Middle School. The students learn about real-life situations on their tours. This makes World War II a concept they can better understand, as they develop an appreciation for what other sailors experienced. We also have had overnights with Capital District Sea Cadets, Cub Scout Pack 10 from West Oneonta, Boy Scout Troop 45 and Cub Scout Pack 45 from Walton. These groups get to have the ship to themselves for a night, to practice on the guns, sleep in forward berthing, eat on the mess decks, and participate in educational activities onboard.



Volunteer Aidan Bouton supervises as the last tour of the day folds the ensign.

According to our TripAdvisor comments, Sundays must be the best day to get an amazing tour at the SLATER. "Art Dott was not only knowledgeable, but super engaging. He made the tour and day perfect." "Our guide **Tom Cline** was awesome. Very knowledgeable with a great personality. Felt like we could ask him anything. He pointed out every little detail and had stories to accompany them. A+ for Tom."

"Our tour guide, **Claire** was very knowledgeable, and was able to answer all of our questions. The tour was family friendly, our daughter was able to touch and pretend to use the equipment."

We've been busy off site as well. Tour guide **Bob Herbst** gave a presentation at Heermance Memorial Library in Cossackie. He had a very nice turn out. The presentation was titled "Heroes All Around Us." It explored the fascinating history of destroyer escorts, USS SLATER, and the lives of three men who served in the United States Navy during World War II and who are connected to these trim but deadly warships. The first is Frank Slater, killed in action at Guadalcanal, and for whom USS SLATER is named. The second, Leonard Roy Harmon, came from different circumstances. He served alongside Frank Slater, aboard the USS SAN FRANCISCO, and also lost his life. Harmon received the posthumous distinction of being the first African American to have a US Navy ship named in his honor. Finally, Bob examined the remarkable story of a destroyer escort, the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS. This story highlighted the actions of Paul Henry Carr, the gun captain of mount 52, who continued to try to load his gun although mortally wounded. July will bring another presentation. This time it will be at Chatham Public Library on July 23rd and will be presented by our Battle of the Atlantic expert, **Will Trevor**. Will is an expat Brit who is still recovering from the BREXIT vote. He's taking it very hard.



USS SLATER plankowner Ed Lavin with Tim Rizzuto, Larry Williams and Gordon Lattey.

Also, we've had some personnel changes in the guide crew.

Mitch Lucas has joined us on Saturdays. Mitch is employed at the New York State Senate. He hails from Syracuse and has just recently moved to Albany. Mitch has picked up the tour information quickly and has proved to be a welcome addition to the crew. **Zach Clouse** is a student who volunteered here last summer and has returned to help us out in the archives, as well as giving tours.

We are glad to have him back! Intern **James Braun** is leaving SLATER for another summer opportunity. James' grandfather served aboard USS FIEBERLING DE-640 and his family has donated many of his belongings to the museum. James is a truly great guide, always very knowledgeable about the weaponry and engine room equipment. He was recently featured on an online television interview and exhibited an excellent on-camera personality. We will miss his hardworking nature and enthusiasm around here! Our most seasoned intern, **Julianne Madsen**, will be leaving the area and moving to Long Island to teach. We would like to thank Julianne for her service to the SLATER, and keeping to that hour-long tour for 8 years! You can catch one of her tours on You Tube, too. She will be missed, and we'll keep an eye on that falcon for her!



RM1 Joe Breyer copies code as Stan and Mike look on during the historic ships' radio weekend.

On 4-5 June, USS SLATER's "radio gang" joined 111 other ships to celebrate the 2016 Museum Ships Weekend. This is a worldwide annual event, sponsored by the Battleship New Jersey (BB-62) Amateur Radio Club. The goal is for the museum ships to put their amateur radio stations on the air, and give "ham" operators the opportunity to "work on" a piece of history.

The ham operators also receive a colorful "QSL" card, which confirms their achievement. This is an excellent opportunity for the shipboard operators to talk about their ships, and generate some interest and publicity.

Joe Breyer, Mike Wyles, and Stan Levandowski put WW2DEM on the air, using both voice and Morse code. They made many contacts, and shared a little of the history of the USS SLATER. Some of the ships they contacted included the USS Joseph P Kennedy (Destroyer, MA), SS Cedarville (Ore Freighter, MI), USS The Sullivans (Destroyer, Buffalo, NY). Joe also worked the RMS Queen Mary in Long Beach, CA using Morse code. This was a real treat for Joe, as he used to handle traffic with her long ago, when he was a commercial radio operator. Stan worked a "new" submarine, the USS Requin in Pittsburgh, PA. Mike worked the Thomas Watson Museum, located upstream from the USS Salem at the site of the original Fore River Shipyard, and was built by Braintree, MA resident, Thomas A. Watson. Watson was Alexander Graham Bell's assistant in developing the invention of the telephone. It was especially great to have Stan back with us for a day. Health issues have kept him away from the "Shack," but we're glad to have him back as part of the team. As he said, "Conditions weren't very good, but the camaraderie certainly made up for it."



On DE Day, local dignitaries (from left to right: Bill Scharoun, Paul Tonko, Kathy Jimino, Kathy Sheehan, Pat Fahy, BJ Costello and Dan McCoy) assemble and Marianne Donovan remembers USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS.

The third Saturday in June is traditionally recognized as DE-Day, the day DE veterans set aside to honor their lost shipmates. Ten destroyer escorts were lost while in US service in World War II, and another five were damaged beyond economical repair. Over 1,300 US Navy and Coast Guardsmen gave their lives on these small ships. On 18 June we honored their memory. We had a wonderful turn out of civic officials,

including Congressman **Paul Tonko**, Rensselaer County Executive **Kathy Jimino**, Albany Mayor **Kathy Sheehan**, Assemblymember **Pat Fahy**, and Albany County Executive **Dan McCoy**. Host and emcee was DEHM Chairman **BJ Costello**. Board President **Tony Esposito** served as chaplain, and WWII Vet **Bill Scharoun** (Gunner's Mate, USS OSMUS DE-701) read the names of the destroyer escorts lost in action. Flowers were laid by WWII sonarman **Lawrence "Rocky" Rockwood** (USS COONER DE-172) and **Marianne Donovan**. The most touching moment was when Marianne dropped the carnation for USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS DE-413, sunk in the Battle of Samar. Her father was lost on that ship, and she never knew him. **Steve Stella** was on hand to play taps in what turned out to be a very moving ceremony.



Volunteers Jim Lenden and Barry Witte overhauling the emergency diesel distribution board.

Maintenance work continues unabated, as the days grow hotter. The hot project continued to be the aft expansion joint. I pronounced the job done three times, but each time puddles on the deck of the machine shop proved my announcement premature. **Doug Tanner** and his team kept going at it, tweaking here and adjusting there, until they finally thought they got the rubber fitted correctly, and all 700 nuts tight. **Earl Herchenroder**

and **Thomas Scian** got the area behind the workbench scaled, primed, and painted, and the crew is now working on reassembling the workbench and drawers in the shops. It will be nice to have all the equipment off the weather deck and back inside the machine shop. However, in the process of doing the expansion joint, Doug got into investigating the starboard ventilation plenum chamber, adjacent to the aft engine room on the main deck. There is no natural access to this space, so Doug cut an opening and discovered what you would expect. A mess of wasted metal and rust resulting from decades of neglect. Doug is already making plans for the restoration of that space.



Rocky's hard work over the winter comes to fruition with the return of the whaleboat.

The big news was the return of the motor whaleboat. After a winter-long restoration down at Scarano's Boatyard, "**Rocky**" **Rockwood** pronounced the boat ready for duty. The process first involved Boats Haggart and his team putting the accommodation ladder over the side. The second step was putting the new paint float that **Tommy Moore** built over the side and into the water. Anthony Renna and the Dutch Apple crane assisted us, as we got

the float into the water. We moored the float under the accommodation ladder and rigged up fendering on both sides for the ship and the whaleboat. The engineers went down on Monday, June 13th, and got the Westerbeke diesel up and running.



Boats Haggart teaching the new Navy about old-style marlinspike seamanship.

The following Monday, Scarano's yard foreman, Eric, hoisted the boat into the water. They gave her a few hours to swell up and at 1400, Coxswain **Larry Williams**, assisted by engineer **Mike Dingmon** and bow hook **Thomas Scian**, brought the boat north. That first trip is always exciting because, having been out of the water all winter, the boat really needs about three days for the wood to swell up tight. But, the pump managed to

stay ahead of the inflow and the crew got her tied up to the dock. I'm happy to report she's still afloat. However, I am sad to report that Rocky has announced that this is his last year for physically maintaining the boat. I heard it was almost a tearful farewell when he left Scarano's for the last time. They consider Rocky part of their family. For our part, we are indebted to the good folks at Scarano's, for the time and material they have donated to the boat, as well as all the assistance they have given Rocky over the years. We trust Rocky will be available for consulting for several years to come.



We've had some great support from the Navy Nuclear Power Training Center in Ballston Spa. The Command Master Chief, **Eric Playdon**, has been sending groups of prospective students down on Mondays to help with ship maintenance. Chief beneficiary of these young Sailors has been **Karl Herchenroder**, working down in the aft engine room, restoring the lower level. Armed with cans of degreaser, detergent, primer, and engine

Volunteer Sailors from NPTU experience chow on SLATER's messdeck.

enamel, the prospective machinist's mates have been crawling into places Karl could never hope to fit into, cleaning, priming, and painting. They have even been in the bilges. Thanks to their efforts, main engines three and four are looking factory fresh. They've painted out the lube oil purifiers, fire pumps, strainers, and ancillary piping in preparation for repainting the deck plates. They are making Karl's dreams come true, and we're sure **Gus Negus** is looking down at us smiling.



Shipfitters from NPTU replace a ladder handrail and students from NPTU work outside their rate, scaling decks, topside.

These Navy Nuclear Power Training Sailors haven't confined their assistance to the engineroom. Topside, they've been getting lessons in the use of the needle scalers, electric wire wheels, and grinders. With their help, the fo'c's'le has been repainted, the 01 level forward has been scaled and primed, the gun three tub deck is nearly ready for

painting, and they are making good progress on the maindeck port side. The site also sent down some Sailors from their maintenance section. These were trained shipfitters and electricians. The shipfitters welded down a chock, added an additional scupper aft on the starboard side, and repaired a ladder hand rail. The electricians assisted **Barry Witte** with the restoration of the emergency diesel distribution panel. Barry has taken the whole unit down and has been taking the panel covers to Colonie High School, where students from the auto body shop have been repainting them and sending them back to the ship factory fresh.



Somebody help out Cathy and Angelo. We're still looking for a volunteer SM who lives locally to take care of the flagbags.

Bill Wetterau was back from Denver for a visit and we put him right to work priming and painting decks. He spent his last day in Albany priming the deck in the gun-three tub. Elsewhere around the ship, **Boats Haggart**, **Walt Stuart**, and **Angelo Bracco** have been restoring, painting, and re-rigging the liferings. Gary Sheedy spent the month reinsulating the laundry. With all the Navy guys aboard on Mondays, Smitty has been feeding upwards of thirty people. Pasta goes a long way. We had a special Monday, when **Gordon Lattey** brought WWII SLATER plankowner **Ed Lavin** down from Brookwood Home. I think Ed was quite impressed with all the activity he saw aboard his ship.



This time they've gone too far. Apparently somebody is trying to make a statement about morale aboard this ship.

Finally, the crew has done it. This time they've gone too far. One recent Saturday, I ascended to the 01 level to find a live potted palm tree on the deck outside my office. Now, if you're old enough to understand the symbol of the potted palm tree, understand this: I have no problem with the symbolism of being given a potted palm tree by the crew. What I was incensed about was that whoever gave it to me had it in a plastic bucket, and also gave me a plastic watering can. Everyone knows that plastic wasn't commonly found on ships in 1945. It should have been in a steel bucket or galvanized pail,

along with a galvanized watering can. I hate plastic buckets, spray bottles, and coffee cups. Plastic has no place on a restored WWII ship. **Rosehn Gipe** came to the rescue and produced a proper gray steel pail, properly stenciled with the words, "Property of Captain. Keep away!" Then she repotted the palm in said can. The simple picture of the plant created uproar on our Facebook page and, by the time the comments subsided, almost the entire script of **Mr. Roberts** had been posted. And, the culprit remains at large.

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

So, see you next month. I've got to go water my palm tree.