

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Any normal person would be embarrassed. It was 20 degrees on the Tuesday morning that **Ron Prest** showed up, driving two hours from Webster, Massachusetts. Waiting for him was warmed-over day-old coffee, because I'm too cheap to make a fresh pot, when I still had half a pot left over from Monday. The bagels were a week old, but tolerable when warmed up for 20 seconds in the microwave. The donuts were fresher, left over from Saturday. His work assignment was to go out into the morning cold, and scrape out the inside of a 20mm ready service locker by hand. Then, he handed me a hundred-dollar Winter Fund check and said, "I really look forward to this."



Boats Haggart, Walt Stuart and Gary Sheedy got the circulators in the water just in time.

I'm writing this on December 28th. I checked the temperature before I left the house, and it was minus four. I got to the gate at 0655. The first pleasant surprise I got was the padlock wasn't frozen. That was a good thing. My normal procedure for dealing with a frozen lock is to wrap my hand around it for a minute, and the body heat always thaws them out, but at minus four, that isn't an option. The second pleasant surprise was that I saw smoke coming out of the stack, which meant that the shipboard furnace

was operating okay. This shouldn't be a surprise, but as a great believer in "Murphy's Law," I am greatly relieved. The third pleasant surprise was that, while the river was frozen solid, the circulators were working well and have kept the area around the ship ice-free. There was a large cluster of ducks and birds gathered at the edge of the ice, apparently fishing.



Jo Ann has been processing your Winter Fund donations in the Code Room.

The gate lock was frozen, so I went through the shoreside store, and turned off the alarms. I looked for the propane torch to thaw out the gangway lock, but it was nowhere to be found. So I spread some ice melt on the aluminum gangway, and then moved forward. Inside the messdecks, the thermostat was set for forty-five, but coming in from minus four, it felt like seventy. Then I went down to the CPO mess for the most important evolution of the day, putting the coffee on.

I anticipated a quiet day. Shanna was on vacation in Montana, and **Rosehn** and **Jo Ann** are the only ones expected. **Jo Ann** will be in the code room, processing Winter Fund donations, and will generate a stack of "Thank You" letters for me to sign. No volunteers usually come aboard on Thursdays in the winter. It's a good day to concentrate on SIGNALS.



Barry Witte instructing students on valve overhaul. The RPI Midshipmen and NPTU Sailors are gaining practical experience by volunteering on board.

Though no volunteers are expected aboard today, this is the time of year that their dedication really leaves me humbled and in awe. **Gary Sheedy**, **Alan Fox**, and **Bob Callendar** were all in yesterday, and it was just as cold as today. Gary rewired another 440-volt heater and mounted it in C-202-L, so we can continue working there through the winter. Tuesday, in anticipation of the two weeks of temps below zero temperature that's forecast, **Barry Witte** and **Devan Urbano** came in the day after Christmas.

They continued the work that Dick Walker had started, sealing up doors, plugging up air leaks, securing hatches, and checking the circulators to make sure we were ready for the deep freeze. We're surviving okay. No worse than winter in the North Atlantic in 1944. On Saturday, 23 December 2017, two days before Christmas, with snow, icy roads, and then rain, fifteen volunteers still showed up to work aboard USS SLATER. We were happy to see **Nate Shakerley** and **Ken Powers**, as well as new volunteer **Rich Mouzakes**. And, there was no lunch that day. These guys will work all

winter long, in miserable conditions, without compensation, to get the ship ready for our visitors come spring. They are an amazing crew.



Post-war modifications removed from berthing space C-203-L.

wasn't as critical as water, so two fuel tanks were converted to water tanks, and additional piping was added to service them. Using research provided by **Ed Zajkowski**, **Barry Witte** marked all piping that had been installed post-war for removal, including three bunks that were rigged athwart ships. Imagine trying to sleep in one of those during heavy seas. Our understanding was that, when in Greek service, SLATER/AETOS made midshipmen training cruises during the summers. The regular crew who slept aft would move ashore, and the Cadets would take over the aft crew's quarters.



Gary Sheedy is making sure all the electric heaters are ready to go.

Ron, and most of the crew, is now focused on the restoration of berthing space C-202 aft. **Cathy Wheat** supervised, as **Boats Haggart** and his gang took all the mattresses and stowed them in the adjacent compartment, C-201-L. Then they took all the racks down and stacked them into three piles so they could be protected from the sparks, dust, and dirt. Ron is back to his needle gunning, catching all the spots we missed when the compartment was last repainted. While in Greek service, range

Gary Sheedy and **Thomas Scian** have turned their attention to after officers' country. This five-man stateroom, on the port side just forward of the steering gear compartment, served as the junior officers' stateroom. It was a space often requested by visitors who had served as junior officers on DEs. After twenty years, we're finally bringing it up to shape. Besides their pipe removal in C-202-L, **Barry Witte's** crew, including **Jim Lenden**, **James Conlon**, **Nick Grocki**, **Pat**

Madden, Vince Montuori, Paul Nauman, and Josh Freitas, have been engaged largely in removal of post-war modification in C-202-L, as we prep that space for repainting. They have also continued work on the smoke generator, and are fabricating the missing handrailing in B-3.



Danny Statile restored the AT AETOS nameboard in honor of our Greek Service.

of Ceremonies, and introduced Albany County Executive **Dan McCoy**, Rensselaer County Executive **Kathy Jimino**, Albany Mayor **Kathy Sheehan**, Colonie Town Supervisor **Paula Mahan**, and Assembly Members **Pat Fahy, Phil Steck, and John McDonald**. They all gave their thoughts on the significance of the day. **Steve Stella** was on hand to play taps, and the event concluded with a delicious Navy breakfast, served up by **Dan and Sandy Willis** and the **Zaloga Post Kitchen Staff**. Once again, we give special thanks to **Harvey Martel**, who seemed to be every place at once, making things happen.

Once again, we remembered Pearl Harbor. On December 7th, in conjunction with the **Joseph Zaloga American Legion Post** and Albany County, we hosted our annual Pearl Harbor Memorial Breakfast. We paid tribute to the more than 2,400 American military personnel who were killed in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941. Our color guard was joined by the cadets of **Christian Brothers Academy**, to parade all the service flags. Our Chairman, **BJ Costello**, served as the Master

Thanks to Board President Tony Esposito and our Chief Commissary Steward Bernie Smith, we had our annual "Christmas on the messdecks" Party. **Cathy Wheat** brought us a new Christmas tree and did all the decorating. Chief Smith cooked up two turkeys with all the fixings, including stuffing and homemade mashed potatoes, mashed up in SLATER's own Hobart mixer. Twenty-six SLATER volunteers were on hand.



Board President Tony Esposito leading the Christmas carols on the messdeck.

They enjoyed the festivities, eat the food, and sing Christmas carols under Tony's direction. The highlight of the event was **Tim Benner**, unwrapping the 2018 pinup girl Christmas calendar, presented to the crew by the Executive Director. Our heartfelt thanks to Smitty and Cathy, who really made the party happen.



Cathy Wheat decorated the messdeck for Christmas.

The trailer rehab project has successfully gone as far as it can until spring. Doug's crew removed all the rotten siding and framing, and got replacement siding nailed up before the weather turned bad. It turned out that none of the windows needed replacement, so we got off easy. Earl Herchenroder even managed to get all the new siding painted with white primer. Come spring, we'll rehang the gutters and finish the trim and painting. Doug is researching the best type of material to use to put a new roof on the trailer.



Angelo Bracco has been fabricating canvas covers to keep all our topside equipment protected over the winter.

Working from afar, Trustee Greg Krawczyk has been working with Fleet Superintendent Martin Walker of the James River Reserve Fleet, to obtain needed parts. They have supplied us with a variety of gear for our continued restoration, including brass door hardware, and modules to keep our alarm panel operating. Martin has been supporting the SLATER's restoration for twenty years. They have a new Electrical Superintendent, Wayne Hancock, who did all the real work to get us the items. Our thanks also go to Gordon Lattey, who transported them north from Greg's house.



Now that the tour season is over, Shanna is working on the artifact collection.

For Shanna, our Collections Manager, the month was spent in C-203L; getting her feet underneath her and preparing to set up the special collections space. The first thing she jumped into was getting her office in working order. Computer, printer, and scanner were set up with Internet and PastPerfect (artifact database) access. Then, she proceeded to start unpacking boxes. A lot of paperwork from previous Collections Managers needs to be reviewed and filed accordingly. Then, she'll scan

photos that were not yet in our database, and catalog all log books, war diaries, and action reports.

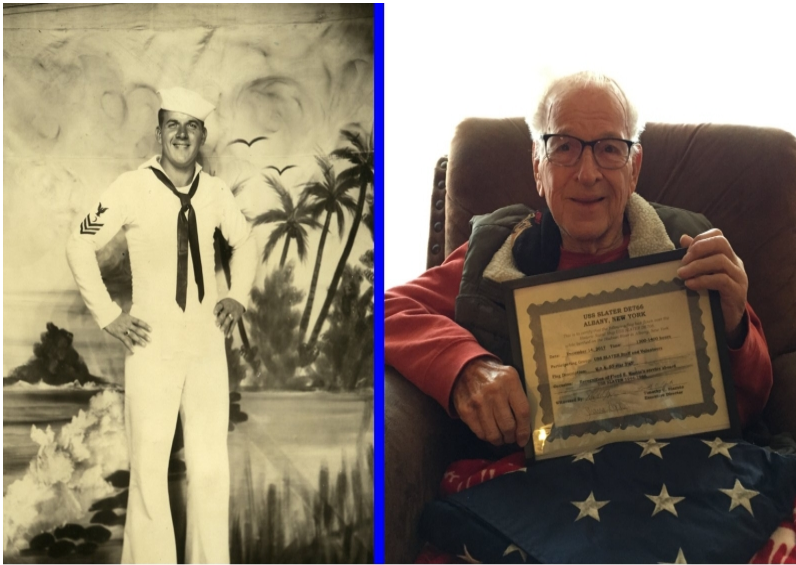
Shanna moved artifacts that will soon be on display to the other side of the compartment, leaving two rows of racks that were empty and ready for experimentation. Wanting to set up the displays correctly and efficiently, she spent some time thinking and testing different strategies for the set up. How many racks would be used for display purposes? What light bulbs should we put in the footlockers? How should signage and organization work? Is the present overhead lighting sufficient? She got this far and left, traveling across the country to be with her family for Christmas in Montana. Five flights and 7 hours of driving later, she's back in New York, and happy to be away from the negative 30-degree (without wind-chill) temperatures. She's ready for 2018, and to return to the work back aft!



Volunteer Sailors from Ballston Spa have been rewiring CIC.

For Rosehn, winter gives her time to prepare the year-end statements, to get ready for the 2017 audit, and begin preparations for 2018. She has already gathered up all the records the auditors have requested, and set them up with a table and chairs in the store. She's ready for their encampment. In addition, she's working with Jo Ann to process all the Winter Fund and year-end donations, prepare

deposits, update the donations in our database, and prepare "Thank-You" letters. We also have two presentations scheduled for January in the Capital District. **Alan Fox** will be at the Beltrone Living Center, at 1200, on Thursday 18 January. **Will Trevor** will speak on the Battle of the Atlantic, on Saturday, January 27, at the Gloversville Public Library at 1300.



Then there were nine. Floyd Martin in 1945 and Christmas 2017.

We are down to eight known living crewmembers that served in USS SLATER in World War II. We're so used to getting obituary notices, that we were quite surprised when we got the following note: "Hello, My name is **Natalie Phillips**, my grandfather served on the USS Slater. His name is **Floyd E. Martin** (served 1944-1946). I have some old original pics of him & the crew. I would like to share them with your museum/archive to be displayed in his honor. He is 92 now & I am

hoping that maybe there is some kind of certificate that you can send so I can present it to him for Christmas. I think he would love to know his ship is still going strong and sends him some love for the holidays. Thank you, Natalie Phillips" We had no record that Floyd was living, but he's on the muster list as a ship's cook, first class. We were happy to send Natalie a Flag that flew over the SLATER, and a certificate of proof for her grandfather's Christmas present. We're working with Natalie to get an oral history from Floyd. Now we're up to nine.



Chief Smith still manages to keep us fed, without running water.

As the month ended, we experienced the coldest weather in SLATER's twenty-year stay in Albany. Starting the day after Christmas, the forecast for the next eleven days called for daytime temperatures that wouldn't get out of the teens, and nighttime temperatures well below zero.

Historically, it has been below zero for four consecutive days on five different occasions since SLATER came to Albany. This current stretch has exceeded that, and even worse is forecast for the first week in January.

With that in mind, we can't thank you enough for your support of our Winter Fund Drive. Since the Drive began in October, we have raised about one-third of the \$70,000 we hope to raise. I know that following the last two balmy winters where the river never even froze over, my loyal volunteers were starting to accuse me of running the "Winter Fund Scam," raising money under false pretenses. Trust me, none of them are calling it a scam this year. So, "Thank you" and "Happy New Year" to you all.

And, if you haven't made your Winter Fund donation yet, please be as generous as you can. You can donate here! Happy New Year to you all! 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!



**Your Winter Fund donations are helping us through this!
Please keep them coming!**