



## SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

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This is what an Albany winter is supposed to look like. It has snowed a few times, really.

everything down in preparation for painting next week. **Gary Sheedy** was off on a two-week cruise, but immediately upon his return, he started doing the preparation work in the steering gear room, laundry, chemical warfare stowage, and the passageway, to get those spaces ready for painting. The only issue may be the humidity. With the incredibly warm days we've been having, and the cold river water, the steel has been sweating profusely.

**In conjunction with the steering gear compartment, SLATER had an oil-fired smoke generator back there in 1945.** This was the replacement for the original FS chemical smoke bottles that were mounted topside in eight cylinders. The chemical mixture used to make the fog proved so toxic to sailors in the event of battle damage, that it was replaced by an oil burner below. The unit was removed during SLATER's

**The end of February is a time when we look around and think, only four weeks until we open for the season.** It's the time of year I start to stress out, because there's so much to do before opening day.

**The contractors have completed the insulation work in C-203-L. Boats Haggart, Cathy Wheat, and Thomas Scian** are all back there as I write, scrubbing, vacuuming, and wiping

Greek service and, in their quest for authenticity, **Barry Witte** and **Gary Sheedy** plan to replicate the smoke generator for SLATER.



Barry Witte and David Altman documenting the smoke generator aboard USS STEWART.

**With that in mind, on his own dime, Barry went to Galveston, Texas for two days to document the smoke generator aboard USS STEWART DE-238.**

Assisting Barry was **David Altman**, a mechanical engineering student at Clarkson University, who is also skilled in computer modeling. Barry wanted to document all the dimensional details of STEWART's smoke screen generator system. To the best of our knowledge, the system on the STEWART is the only original one remaining in the world. The unit is mounted on the aft bulkhead, in the steering gear room. Barry and David measured all of the dimensions of the five major components of the smoke system, and created a virtual model of them

in a 3D engineering program. Over the next year or so, that virtual model will be used to construct our replica. Additionally, they took hundreds of photographs, to allow for maximum accuracy in our replica, including all of the connection details. While Barry was there, he also assisted STEWART's staff in correcting a few electrical problems, as well as providing a thermal camera for an electrical hot-spot survey. That's dedication.



NPTU Sailors hauling out the circulators for the season.

**As we prepare for opening day, we have all the laundry bagged up aft.** The mattress covers, blankets, and pillow cases are all being sent ashore to be cleaned. It's time to set up the annual inspection for fire extinguishers. It's so late in the season that there's little chance of a really hard freeze, so on Monday the 27th we had the **Ballston Spa Sailors** pull out all the circulators and stow them.

Over the course of March, we'll uncover the guns, put all the battle helmets back in the racks, and make up all the bunks with the freshly laundered mattress covers, pillow cases, and blankets.



Andy Sheffer and Tim Benner working on the galley sink drains.

**Andy Sheffer and Tim Benner have continued working on the starboard galley sink.** When that job is complete, everything in the galley will have to be hauled out on deck, scrubbed down, hosed down, dried, and then put back in place.

**The engineers, Karl Herchenroder, Gary Lubrano, Mike Dingmon, and Ken Myrick are still trying to figure out how air is getting into their**

**cooling system on the B-3 ship's service generator.** They hauled the heat exchanger and the expansion tank ashore for testing. Ken has been on the binnacle list for several months, so it was great to have him back with us.



Thanks to a mild winter, Doug Tanner and his crew got the trailer all back together.

**Intern Andrew Smith has been keeping busy, working on the radar simulation in CIC.** The hard drive on the computer died, so Andrew is putting together a new computer that will drive the radar display, and all the sound effects. He hopes to have it up and running by opening day. **Doug Tanner, Earl Herchenroder, Gene Jackey, and Super Dave have the trailer back together.** They jacked up the river side of the trailer and completed reinforcing the main support beams under the trailer.

**Also, they replaced the classroom door and framed it in, repaneled part of the classroom, and replaced some of the most badly deteriorated siding on the outside of the trailer.** Replacing the rest of the siding, replacing the gutters, and reframing the windows will have to wait until next winter.



We had a guest from Russia. The one thing Dmitrii Naumov wanted to see while he was visiting Albany was the USS Slater. He's here with his host Sony Stark.

**We received a personal email from Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan regarding arranging a special tour. Albany has a sister cities exchange program with Tula, Russia.** The one thing that **Dmitrii Naumov**, a Tula exchange intern, wanted to see most while in Albany was the USS SLATER. So, we made special arrangements for him to tour the ship with his host **Sonja Stark**. We gave him the full tour of the ship that included seeing

the restoration work underway back aft, a Smitty lunch, and he got to meet the crew. Sonja took this great series of pictures that document the condition of the ship one month before opening day, and we posted them to our Facebook page. It was a pleasure to have them aboard.

**As all the hammering and sawing was going on outside, inside the trailer, Rosehn Gipe accomplished a goal she has had for several years.** Each year we participate in Smithsonian Magazine's "Museum Day." In return for our participation, Smithsonian gives us the opportunity to solicit some of their subscribers to join our own organization. Up until now we've never had the time to take advantage of this offer. However, this year Rosehn made the time to develop a brochure, along with personalized regional letters to Smithsonian Magazine readers, inviting them to support our USS SLATER. The mailing will soon go out to nearly 10,000 subscribers. We'll let you know how we make out. Next up is a review of our own mailing list to cull people we haven't heard from in the past two years.

**Approaching opening day, my stress level is nowhere near that of our interpretation coordinator, Shanna Hopson.** I go into the trailer each morning, greet Shanna, and ask her how her day is going. Her usual answer is, "Not too bad," as she's checking emails and settling in for the day. I dare not ask later in the day, when her to-do list has grown exponentially. This morning was different though, she responded with a heavy sigh and an eye roll. She's having car trouble again, and her fiancé had to give her a ride. The two work in opposite ends of the area, so it'll make for a long commute at the end of the day, that won't end until 1800. It has been a long winter, and with only one month to go before opening, Shanna is feeling the pressure.



Shanna Hopson showing prospective intern Merissa the radio room.

**Recently, she's been trying to hire new seasonal interns.**

Shanna wrote the hiring ad, provided applications to those interested, and scheduled the interviews. These perspective new employees have busy lives themselves, so fitting in time for an interview is a challenge in itself. They have class all day, so Shanna schedules their interviews on a Saturday, her day off. Then we end up fitting three interviews into one day. As you can imagine,

not much else gets done on those days. But I get the volunteers started on their projects for the day, and she uses the time between interviews to start cleaning up the Ship's Store.

**In a continuation of the "Black Hole" theme, we do not have a physical street address.** The post office has never given us one, and will not deliver mail here. So the next challenge with our applicants is explaining how to get to the ship. "The corner of Broadway and Quay," or "At the base of Madison along the river," works for people from the Albany area, but not for many students who are not from around here. Most of them use their smart phones or GPS for directions. It takes some convincing to get them to just type in "USS SLATER" as an attraction, to see that it will show up. If that still doesn't work, she just ends up telling them that we are next door to the U-Haul building at 139 Broadway. Of course, U-Haul has an address that works!



Colonie High School industrial technology students, Lucas and Carl, fabricated water tight door latches.

**We advertise primarily to history majors at the nearby Universities.** During the interview, some of our interview questions are "Name an Allied power during WWII" and "Name an Axis power." We've had a number of applicants who couldn't! Are you kidding me? Nothing is more stressful than working to preserve history, and the people who are supposedly invested in it do not know this basic question. I will usually add

in, "Do you know the date of Pearl Harbor?" and most know December 7th, but very few know the year. Kids these days, I swear, what's the world coming to?

**We get through the interviews and decide who to hire.** Now is the time to mold them into SLATER tour guides. You've got to be knowledgeable, you've got to be entertaining to all audiences, and most of all you need to be dependable and willing to work. A quality that is lost on today's youth all too often. The scheduling nightmares do not end here. Now, Shanna has to find time for them to come in for training between their classes, as well as setup a weekly schedule with our existing tour guides. Many of our volunteer tour guides "fly away for the winter," and return to the area at various times once spring has sprung. Shanna needs to track all of their plans and ensure that enough guides can be here when we open in April. April and May are slower months for our walk-in tours, but we have plenty of schools that book field trips, and we are booked full for overnights in these months as well. Overnights eat up four guides every weekend that cannot work during the day shifts, so she needs additional guides for those days as well.

**Shanna is also planning our annual Training and Refresher Lunch for all tour guides.** Pick a date, decide on food, make sure guides will show up, and how many, so we don't have leftovers for two weeks, or worse, not enough food for everyone. I would be remiss if I didn't add that we're always looking for new volunteer guides. So, if you have an engaging personality, a working knowledge of history, and time on your hands, think about volunteering with us. Shanna is waiting to hear from you.

**Shanna is also sending out postcards, letters, and emails to area libraries, schools, and day camps, urging them to book tours, buy museum passes, or schedule host presentations.** Speaking to these parties on the phone, trying to answer questions and book events, all happens while construction continues on the trailer. Chain sawing, hammering, and semis rumbling by on the road shake the entire office. It's enough to make you scream. She wishes she had a place to escape. Oh wait, she has an office on the ship, but it's under construction, too.

**Back aft in the museum space (C-203L), there is a light at the end of the tunnel!**

After her first plan was shot to hell in one foul swoop, she is starting a new one. (If you missed the story of the first plan, make sure you check it out in the December 2016 issue of signals, available on our website.) She's hoping that the new plan will be intact when she is ready to take action. If I write it in Signals, maybe the black hole won't take it hostage. Here's the plan, so I'm held accountable. First, get her office set up. Next, take inventory of all the items moved, and place them in the newly finished berthing compartment, organizing them by artifact type. Then get new lightbulbs in the footlockers, and put down the padding inside them. After the year-long inventory project has finally been completed, she'll set out the plan to get displays set up, and make the museum suitable for visitors.



When all else fails, call in professionals.  
Scott and Mike reinsulated C-203-L.

**She also needs to get the tour route ready for visitors, re-print any new signage, get the ship's store put back together, dusted, and vacuumed, restock merchandise, and print price tags.** We had some new keys made recently; need to make sure that the Sunday Duty officer gets one, as well as the set of overnight keys. Speaking of the Sunday officer, she needs to get him trained, to make sure he can run the show on his own, when neither of us is there.

**Technology makes some tasks so much easier, but sometimes it is just a pain in the butt.** Shanna and Rosehn answer phone calls all winter long "Are you open, your website says your open, it's so nice outside why aren't you open?" FYI our website does not say that we are open, Google says we're open. Because Google can't get mail to us to verify our business, (see paragraph above about our address) and they won't accept a post office box, we can't change their information. Yes, this winter has been filled with some nice days. However, we also cannot plan ahead for sixty-degree days in February, in upstate New York. One day it is sunny and sixty, the next is snowing, with an inch of ice on the deck. We do not want to be giving tours with ice on the deck.

**Google is not the only technology she fights with.** We are attempting to upload some items from our ship's store to Facebook, to be available for purchase, and the button won't show up. She's clicked the button and saved the settings, and nothing, it won't work. It's infuriating! If anyone has set up Facebook Shop and has some pointers, we're interested!

**On top of all this stress at work, Shanna is in the beginning stages of planning her Montana wedding, from 2,000 miles away.** Her solution to all this stress? She's taking a week off, and heading to France for a vacation in March. Let's just hope her plan is intact when she gets back. Could this be her revenge, trying to put the stress back on me?

**Au revoir, and see you next month!!**



Engineers Mike and Gary ponder what to do about their heat exchanger.



RPI Midshipmen masking the steering gear for painting.