

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Ship's Superintendent

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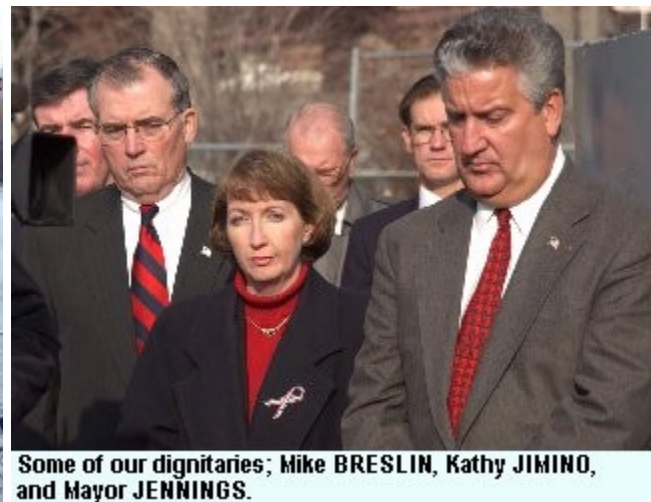
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Another December. We sold our last ticket on Sunday, November 25th. The following week Nancy Buxton got her crew together and they packed up all the gift shop stock and material that we normally keep in the shed, and moved it aboard the ship. **Kira** and **Beth** did the annual gift shop inventory and we officially called it a season. The crew went into winter work mode.

So Saturday the first of December was supposed to be an all work day. It was a beautiful warm sunny day for December in Albany. As the work crew prepared to go to work, **Paul Czesak** came in and announced that he had heard one of the local radio stations announcing that it was the last weekend to visit the SLATER. We looked through the ranks and had guides **Paul**, **Lawrence Corbett** and Russ **Ferrer** available. So we put the contribution box out and opened the gangway to any takers. We made about a hundred and twenty five dollars that day.

Just because were closed doesn't mean we're not busy. It's been a hectic month with our annual Pearl Harbor Memorial Service, the move of the ship, and pulling out the camels all falling within a one-week period.

The Pearl Harbor Memorial Service was a beautiful sight. By our standards, a huge crowd of about 200 people had gathered, mostly on the pier, for the ceremony which began at 1030 a.m. on Friday, December 7th. The weather was perfect, sunny and forty-eight degrees. **Frank Lasch** was the Master of Ceremonies, and the SLATER color guard, now resplendent in dress uniforms, performed its final duty of the year. Bosun **Mike Muzio** piped the dignitaries aboard: Albany Mayor **Jerry Jennings**, Albany County Executive **Mike Breslin**, Rensselaer County Executive **Kathy Jimino**, and Congressman **Mike McNulty**, State Senator **Neil Breslin** and Assemblyman **Jack McEneny**. Our honored guests were three survivors of the Attack, **Andy Bovitz** of the Battleship **WEST VIRGINIA**, **Charlie Ebel** of the **USS CURTISS**, and **Art Biskin** who was stationed at **Wheeler Field**. All were piped aboard by the names of their ships or stations. Chief **Dave Floyd** rang the ships bell as they crossed the gangway. All the speakers reflected on the attack and made comparisons with Pearl Harbor and the World Trade Center disaster. They all and expressed their appreciation for having the SLATER here in Albany as a reminder of the sacrifices that have been made by our nation in times of conflict.



Some of our dignitaries; Mike BRESLIN, Kathy JIMINO, and Mayor JENNINGS.

The veterans laid a wreath in honor of those who had fallen. A Rifle Squad from the **Henry Cornell American Legion Post 234** from Ballston Spa, stationed in the number three 40mm gun tub above the ceremony, fired three volleys in honor of those lost on that fateful Sunday sixty years ago. The sound of tap then drifted out over the calm Hudson, and the colors were retired. At the close of the ceremony, dedicated volunteer **Alan Guard** of the **USS ULVERT M MOORE** presented the SLATER with a fifteen hundred-dollar donation from his crew.



Our Heros; Charlie EBEL of the USS Curtiss, Andy BOVITZ of the USS West Virginia, and Art BISKIN who was at Wheeler Field.



Henry Cornell American Legion Post 234 Rifle Squad from Ballston Spa, Stationed in #3 40mm Gun Tub

What was especially pleasing for us was that the press hasn't forgotten. **Deb Moore** did a great job working with the county and getting all the major TV stations and newspapers to cover the event and interview the participants. They were still talking about the ceremony on the radio the following Monday. We thank all who participated and look forward to having you aboard next season.

Anyway, as soon as the crowd cleared the pier, the crew went to work. They changed into working uniforms. First up was taking down and stowing **Claire's** tent, the big awning under which we operated our gift shop and ticket sales all season. The electricians went to work disconnecting the electrical lines that run across the gangway to the ticket booth.

Post Memorial interviews with the Media.



Right at 1300, **Jimmy** drove up with the **Water Department crane** and set up right where the tent had been a scant hour earlier. It only took us about twenty minutes to rig the chain sling and hoist the heavy steel gangway to the pier. Ready to get underway. Then they got the three-inch guns covered for the winter, and called it a day.

Next up was the move. **Bart** had scheduled us for Monday the tenth. He said he'd call me at home Sunday to confirm, assuming the weather looked okay. Three warm, calm, perfect weeks had gone by, so you can imagine what we were expecting! Sunday afternoon came. It was sixteen thirty when **Dick Walker** called me up and asked if he should notify the

line handlers. I hadn't heard from **Bart**, but since the weather looked good, I said let's go. **Dick** made the calls and we had everybody on standby for 0800. **Dick and Maralyn** went out to the **Maritime Mission** that evening to volunteer. And at about eight that evening, **Bart** had **Guy Falkenheimer** call to say that they had to move another ship Monday morning and they'd rescheduled us until Tuesday. No choice but to get on the phone and recover all the ground **Dick** had covered and tell everybody to hold off a day. We still had a pretty good crew show up for work on Monday, and we tied up some loose ends on the pier to get the ship ready to go.

Even SANTA came to help.



Shifting Colors.



Tuesday dawned sunny, calm and forty degrees. We couldn't believe our luck. The crew arrived on the pier and began the now familiar routine of taking off the wires, breaking down the water hose, and disconnecting the electrical power. We had about twenty-five line handlers aboard according to the logbook. There were another six or eight on the pier to catch lines. **Raf** and **Chief Floyd** were in charge on the Foc's'cle with **Hack Charbonneau** there to provide the common sense. On the fantail, it was new **Bosun Beth** and **Paul Czesak**, with **Doug Tanner** providing the experience. The two tugs arrived right at noon, with **Bart** himself steering the HERBERT and **Denny** on the EMPIRE. We cabled up the HERBERT to the fantail. **Denny** brought the EMPIRE around to the starboard bow to pull us away from the pier. The fantail crew went up into the aft 40mm tub to hold up the light aluminum brow, while **Tom Moore** tied the shore end to his truck and pulled it off the ship. Starting from the fantail, **The Walkers, McLaughlin, Sheedy and Ferrer** let the lines splash into the river and the crew hauled them aboard. **Les Beauchaine** hoisted up the steaming ensign, **Jerry Jones** gave a long blast on the ships whistle, and we were away for another season. The only disappointment was we couldn't run the emergency diesel generator as a cooling leak had cropped up, and thus **Jerry Jones** couldn't play "Anchors Away" over the IMC when we left the pier. It broke his heart.

The EMPIRE nudges us out into the channel.



Bart was at the helm of the HERBERT BRAKE



Bart got her off the pier and turned her gracefully in the river. The shore gang drove across the Dunn Bridge while she was making the turn and had to resist the impulse to stop on the bridge to watch and take pictures. The day was beautiful, especially for December. The trip down river was uneventful. The **deck gang** busied themselves with faking down lines and wires; and slipping two-foot lengths of fire hose over the mooring lines for chafing gear. The **electrical gang** pulled the shore power cable up through the amidships passageway in preparation for the starboard side to hook up. **Richard Andrian** got some beautiful shots of the ship coming into the pier on the Rensselaer side. As usual, our line handling was a little ragged. We don't get much practice. Those damn heaving lines are just too short. On the fantail, **Bart** kept yelling, "Get that aft spring line on!" and we kept looking at that one quarter chock that already had a tow wire

and two mooring lines on it, wondering where to put the spring line. Do any of you old DE Boatswains' recall not having enough bitts on the fantail?

Heading South against the Albany Skyline.



Making the second turn.



Anyway it didn't take long to get her tied up and the wires back on. Bart had the gangway lined up perfectly. They quickly rigged the gangway, and were all grateful to have a Portajohn waiting for them on the pier. Everything was secure by 1400, and the crew began to depart. The next big adventure was camel day. This is the toughest. It doesn't have the glamour or fun of move day. It's just stinking bull work. Stinking because when you pull those camels out and the water pours out of them, it **don't** smell too good. And it was raining to boot. **Jimmy** showed up with the crane at 0800. By that time, **Tommy Moore** and **Dick Smith** had all the shackles loosened up. **Hack Charbonneau**, **Bob Lawrence**, **Les Beauchaine**, **Tom McLaughlin**, **Paul Czesak**, **Lawrence Corbett**, **Russ Ferrer** and **Kim Statts** were hand to help out. **Tommy** and I went down on the camels, **Hack** rigged the chain and we started making lifts. We were very fortunate that the rain let up around eight thirty and what could have been a really miserable day got better. The only problem was then the wind began to kick up.

Coming alongside Rensselaer.



Rafael makes the throw..

Several of the camels are so waterlogged that when you step on them to attach the lifting sling, they and you start to head for the bottom. We have learned after four years that the most important part of this project is to make sure that the last camel is a floater, not a sinker, because you have nowhere to go. We had fourteen of them out by 1030, and the last two out by noon. All the gear was stowed, and we were out of there by 1300. **To all of you who helped with the move and the camels, my heartfelt thanks.**



The ship is now on winter hours. We are manned (and womanned) Monday to Thursday and Saturdays. The volunteer crew is working to complete the aft crew's quarters. The winter plan is to finish C-203L and C-204L which includes the aft officer's stateroom, laundry and passageway. We also want to catch the machine shop, pilothouse, IC room passageway, and the reefer space. The radio guys and ship fitters want to mount a new motor generator set in the radio room. We have to scrounge and hang all the bunks in C-203L. The electricians are working on the bunk locker lights in C-203L, and plan to installed a USN style breaker panel in the galley to replace a Greek modification. The ship fitters will be working on watertight door gaskets to try and get this place a little warmer in the winter.

Our West Point Army type board member Hal Hatfield has been doing good work for us. As the owner of a steel fabrication shop, he has had his guys fabricating steel locker tops for the aft crew's quarters that will be used in C-201L and C-202L. **Chuck Longhore** came in with his **three daughters** and they spent the day sorting and alphabetizing signal flags in the aft crews quarters. **Doug Tanner** performed the most significant piece of restoration work since the ship came to Albany. He fabricated a beautiful new stainless steel shelf in the Chief's mess for the coffee pot. It is so well done it looks like original construction. Anyone who ever shared a cup of joe with us remembers the little rickety coffee-stained cabinet that the pot used to sit on. Now there's room for the creamer, cups, sugar bowl, spoons, napkins and even the condiment basket! Now all we need is a mess cook.

We owe a big debt of gratitude to **Chuck Marshall**. He mentioned one day in the CPO mess that he was upgrading his computer system. Always one to use the subtle approach, I asked, "And to which of your favorite charities do you plan to donate your old computer?" which was about three generations better than anything we have aboard the ship. **Chuck** thought about it for a minute and gave in. The only problem was that the computer he was about to donate was about one generation better than his son's computer. We can understand blood being thicker than shipboard loyalty, and when the dust had settled, **Chuck** had taken his computer to his son down in Virginia, and brought back his son's computer for us. He also took the time to install a scuzzy card, zip drive and network interface. So we now have a new computer that is still light years ahead of anything we had aboard. **Erik Collin** and **Jerry Jones** have networked our whole system of three computers, so now any computer can access the memory of any other computer and we can really get confused. And remember, I'm the guy who came up here with the attitude that **if they didn't have it on the ship in 1945, we don't need it today**. Where's the carbon paper?

The emphasis is now on Nancy, Annette and Les Beauchaine to generate what income they can make selling dog tags at Crossgates mall. To that end **Larry** and **Rosemary Williams**, **Beth Spain**, and **Kira Zaikowski** have joined them to keep the booth open longer hours during the holiday season to keep a little money coming in.

This of course would normally be the lead-up to my winter fund appeal to help us get through the winter. However, don't write your winter fund check yet. Due to our slowness in getting the Endowment Fund solicitation out to you SLATER SIGNALS readers, the winter fund appeal will be postponed. Some of you haven't even received your formal endowment solicitations yet. Even I can't see my way clear to sending two pleas for money so close together. May be I do still have an ounce of pride. So go ahead and make your endowment pledge now, and fear not. I won't go away. I'll be hiding in the bilges until the time is right, say about March when I'm really desperate. Then you can count on me with the late winter fund appeal. (I'm sure as you read this, some slick professional fundraiser is asking, "What the hell fund raising school did this guy go to?") Anyway, special thanks to **Art Dott** and **Gordon Lattey**, who didn't wait for the winter fund appeal. They already sent in their checks without being asked. And, you two both know, that won't get you off the hook for spring. Thank God the old English laws about jail time for beggars and hanging pirates seem to have gone by the wayside.

The next issue you get should be from the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum. The corporate change happens on December 31, but don't be surprised of we look the same for a while. We'll use us all the old stationery and brochures before we go out and print a bunch of new stuff.

Finally Kira Zaikowski completed her full semester internship aboard the SLATER, and is returning to her regular studies for the spring semester. Her Dad, a former aerographer's mate on the USS AMERICA, is so proud of her involvement with the ship that he wants her to come and give a speech about the SLATER project to his American Legion Post on Long Island. You can see that her involvement with us has done a lot for her social life. We seem to have a bad effect on the girls involved with this project. We turned Beth into a Boatswain's Mate. Now Kira is be getting invitations to speak to World War II Veteran's groups. What a fate for a college girl. Think what the SLATER can do for you.

See you next month.