



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Saint Patrick's day is over, none too soon for some of us. You may not be aware, but Saint Patty's Day is a big deal here in Albany. The place has a very large Irish population, so it's real big. We even celebrated on the SLATER. **Doug Tanner** made a delicious traditional corned beef and cabbage lunch in his little skillet in the CPO mess. It's amazing the meals that he can turn out with that little skillet. But, some things are best left on the ship and unsaid at home. Like, after twenty-five years of marriage, when my wife says, "This pot roast came out a little tough", I am **not** supposed to agree with her. But some of our guys aren't that smart, and some of our guys don't know when to keep their mouths shut. Like, take **Gary Sheedy** for example. It seems that after having **Doug's** wonderful lunch on the ship, he went home to corn beef and cabbage prepared by his lovely wife **Sharon**. It seems he made the comment that it wasn't tender like **Doug's**. This is a guy who's been married longer than I have. I received the following email from **Sharon** that Monday.

"Dear Tim,

I thought I would tell you that this fellow, Doug, who cooks breakfast and supper on the Slater, is inheriting a husband.... namely mine. This past Saturday, 3/16/02 I heard all about the wonderful and delicious corned beef meal that Doug prepared. On Sunday, St. Patrick's Day, the very next day, I prepared a planned traditional corned beef dinner and was told by my husband how much better Doug's corned beef dinner was compared to mine. Well-l-l-l, needless to say, Doug has now inherited said husband, namely Gary Sheedy, for all future dinner meals 7 days a week. I don't mind that the Slater is my husband's "mistress", but I will not sit by while a "cook" on the Slater outdoes a volunteer's wife in cooking. Tell Doug I said Bon Appetit and hello to his new husband".

Now, this is a woman who was living in Hawaii when she met Gary. They met when he was in the Navy and he brought her back to Albany. My wife says that should have been grounds for divorce right there. We truly hope this doesn't push **Sharon** over the edge. By the way, if that wasn't bad enough for **Gary**, the Wednesday, following St. Patrick's Day, he was coming home from a job during one of the few snowstorms we've had this winter. An oncoming car swerved into his lane on the slippery roads and totaled his company van. Thanks to his seat belt and air bag, he came through it unhurt. But it wasn't a good week. But the only real issue that remains here is who is going to tell **Doug's wife** about their new house guest.

**Meanwhile,
between
meals, we
actually**



Erik Collin trim painting C-203L.



Dick Smith chipping in the reefer machinery space.

have been getting a little work done.

According to the goals set on the winter work list, we did pretty well.

Accomplished about half the stuff we wanted to get done. To give you an idea of the work that goes into restoring just one space, let's look at C-203L, the big bunkroom aft. This will soon be the new DE museum space. **Pat Perrella** will be setting up the museum here, moving out of C-201L for more

space. To give you an idea of the teamwork involved, the **Michigan gang** started cleaning out the space last May, and took up all the tile. We went to work there in earnest last November. The Chippers, that most essential and dedicated group on the ship, **Dick Smith, Chris Fedden, Ed Whitbeck, Rafael Suarez and Dennis Morrissey**, completed chipping out and cleaning the whole space last month. **Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Clark Farnsworth and Chuck Teal** installed a missing watertight door, repaired all the holes in the deck, added stanchions and safety chain around the hatches to the second deck storerooms. The electricians, **Barry Witte, Mike Clark, Gary Sheedy, Larry Williams, Bob Callender, Ken Kaskoun, "Rocky" Rockwood and Ray Lammers** restored all the electrical boxes, removed the fluorescent lights, remounted navy standard incandescent fixtures, installed all the bunk locker lights and rewired many of the 120 volt electrical systems in the space. **Tom Moore** repaired all the insulation and sprayed primer throughout the space. The **RPI NROTC Cadets** painted out all the bunk lockers. We got **Kevin Sage of Sage Brothers Painting** to spray out the topcoat and lockers. **Erik Collin** followed behind doing the trim and touch up painting and painted the deck. He took a week off from work to help us. We made a little trip to Virginia to get bunks and mattresses for the space. **Bob Callender, Chris Fedden and Bob Lawrence** went to work hanging all the bunks. **Trudy Fedden** laundered the sixty mattress covers for the space. **Paul Czsek** is putting the supply office back together. We're getting some file cabinets to improve our archival storage. And there are still a whole lot of people I didn't mention. In a couple of weeks **Pat** will be setting up displays again.

That's the effort that has gone into just one space. The same kind of effort has gone into restoring the pilothouse, the passageway below the messdecks, the reefer machinery space, and into making improvements to the radioroom this winter. In particular, the



Larry Rocky Rockwood putting the finishing touches on the pilothouse.



Ed Sakas cleaning in CIC.

pilothouse and the radio room are looking beautiful. **Jerry Jones and Don Bulger** have spent a lot of time super-detailing their equipment, and they're ready to deploy. **Don** has inventoried all their spare parts and tubes and they

have developed a store room in a forward three inch magazine that is so organized it's the envy of everybody else who has a jumbled mass of spare parts. **Rocky and Bob Dawson** have been giving CIC and the pilothouse the same loving care.

The Shipfitters have a major outside project underway. That's the installation of the rangefinder platform on the flying bridge. **Doug Tanner** is a good friend who seems to have lots of other good friends, and he asked **Flach Crane Services** to donate the lift. They sent two guys down to the ship with a seventy-ton crane to lift 500 pounds. Those two guys were really efficient. In the space of time it took me to go to the office and load film in my camera they had the whole rig set up and were ready to lift. **Dick Walker and Bill Siebert** were on hand to help with the rigging, hookups and picture taking. **Tim Benner** had the four-inch pipe legs already in place, so it was just a matter of setting the platform on the legs. They also set the rangefinder and **Roy Lustenader's** pedestal up there. The whole operation only took about thirty minutes. They folded up the rig and were out of here. **Doug** took vacation time that afternoon to come down and level the platform and weld it in place. We were really lucky that the whole flying bridge wasn't covered with four feet of snow during this operation. It's been that kind of winter. We'll now put that project on the back burner and concentrate on things that are on the tour route. We'll get back to the flying bridge after the ship is open to the public because it's a quiet isolated place to work when the ship is swarming with kids.



Shipfitter Clarke Farnsworth making bunk hooks.



Chris Fedden making bunkhooks for C-203L.

The guys next went to work in the machine shop. Now that the lathe is operational, some real nesting instincts seem to have taken hold of these guys. This last Saturday, in an effort to clean the place up and get more organized; they move the AC welder to the battery-charging shelf, so now both the AC and DC Machines are on the rack out of the way. That created more floor space to put the plasma cutter in next to the battery charging rack. **Doug** next went to work on the plasma cutter and got that working again which will

be a real help. For those of you old-timers who don't know, this is an air operated electronic torch that allows you to cut steel with a minimum of heat and slag. You can cut on a steel bulkhead and barely

scorch the insulation on the opposite side. It eats through stainless like butter. We never could have done the aft head without it. Finally, they remounted the bench grinder by the port bulkhead and welded a steel plate in back of the grinder to keep all that metallic dust from going into the electrical boxes. You can almost move around the shop now. Their next big projects are making missing bunk hooks for the aft crew's quarters and working on the fantail hatch to try to give it some level of watertight integrity, at least to keep the rain water away from the artifacts.



Buddies Doug Tanner and Gary Sheedy at the lathe.



Russ Ferrer in the Machine Shop.

The

electricians are wrapping up their winter projects.

Barry Witte, Gary Sheedy and Mike Clark are putting the finishing touches on the new galley electrical panel and vent motor controller. **Ray Lammers** did a beautiful job refinishing these boxes, and they will be up and running in time for the spring field days. If not, **Barry** has promised to feed the crew at his house. They are also putting all the

electrical fixtures together back aft, mounting newly restored shades on all the overhead lights and remounting the fans and electrical box covers. They have pulled in the water circulators that keep the water stirred up to keep ice from forming around the hull. The circulators did a great job this year. The river never froze over. In fact, I only think we ran them about seven nights all winter. It's been, by Albany standards, almost tropical.

The engineers, Larry Lachance, Russ Ferrer, Chuck Longshore and Gus Negus are still working to get the starting air compressor back together. The compressor has been run and makes air. They are now reworking and checking the lines connecting the compressor to the starting air flasks. They are also working on the fire and bilge pump in B-4 to improve our pumping capability. They have removed the pump and manifold for overhaul and are getting the cases sandblasted. They also had a problem with a leaking oil cooler on the emergency Diesel generator, so they took the identical unit out of the in-port generator in B-2, restored it and are putting it in B-4.

The big bad news -- we got shot down on our second attempt for the Department of Transportation's TEA-21 Grant for dry-docking the SLATER. They had a



Barry Witte installing an outlet box in C-203L.



The weekday electrical gang: Larry Williams, Bob Callender and Ken Kaskoun

disqualifier in there for aviation and military museums. We tried to get around that by saying the SLATER was an essential component in the history of merchant shipping in the Port of New York. No dice. So, now we don't see any grant

programs big enough to support the dry-docking of the SLATER. I say big enough because we need a million dollars to dock her, blast and paint the bottom and double the shell plating at the water line for ice protection. Two million would allow us to do the job the way the Coast Guard would want and crop and renew any thin plate with thicker steel. Five million, and we could probably get underway.

I now believe the only hope we now have for this kind of big money is at the federal level with a senator or congressman taking the initiative to get us a member item. I think this is called pork when somebody else is asking for it, but when it's for us, it's absolutely essential to support a vital historic preservation project that thus far has come an incredibly long way with a minimum of governmental support.

It may be time to think about forming a nationwide political action committee to lobby congress from all states to try and get the funds we need to get the SLATER through her first dry-docking. How such a committee would be organized and function, I'm not sure. This is far from my area of expertise. But here's a basic example. At a recent **Catholic War Veterans** breakfast here in Albany, **Les Beauchaine** related how one of our unnamed supporters raised his hand and asked our **Congressman Mike McNulty**, "How about getting some money for the SLATER. They've never gotten anything!" I understand this guy buttonholed **Mike** after the luncheon and wouldn't let up. Imagine if this started happening to Congressmen and Senators all over the country. So, think about it, and if you have any political connections, or special talent at this kind of organizing and lobbying, drop us a line.

We now have two grants still pending. The City of Albany has put in a request of \$70,000 in federal funds to help us build the mooring dolphins that will enable us to stay open year round at the Snow Dock. And we just applied for a \$250,000 grant from the Department of the Interior to take care of tank and bilge cleaning to help prep us for shipyard work. This latter grant is part of the "Save America's Treasures" program. We'll wait and see. **By the way, let me express our heartfelt and serious thanks to all of you who contributed to the winter fund. Thus far we've received almost five thousand dollars, with more coming in every day.**



Greg Krawczyk in Korea.

Over in Korea, Greg Krawczyk is still working on trying to obtain some parts of the CAVALLARO for us. He sent us six sounding tube caps which we really did need to replace the temporary steel plugs we've been using. **Erik Collin** has been photographing electrical fittings under **Barry's** direction and we've been e-mailing the pics to Greg so he knows what to look for. Too bad she's so far away. Speaking of accessions, **Sam Saylor** is working on getting the MK 9 depth charges shipped from Nevada and we estimate they'll be aboard by May 1. Also, if your interested in volunteering for one of the upcoming May field days, please get in touch with coordinator **Bud Ried** at (847) 272-7938.

Nancy Buxton held her first seasonal guides meeting as scheduled on Saturday March 16th.

Twenty guides showed up ready and enthusiastic for the start of season five. It was great to see and to "catch-up" with everyone there. We discussed the "big three," the sign-up sheet, the tour route and duration of tours. From what I can see, the days that we fall short for guides are Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Please call **Dick Walker at 872-2622** if you could come on any of those days. Remember, I would appreciate any sea stories or memories you would like to share with all the guides. We thank you all, because without you guides to interpret the ship to the public, all that work that we're talking about loses its meaning. It's the guides that really bring the SLATER to life for the public.

The big clean up will be this coming Saturday, March 30th. The camels are in the water. **Bart Brake** stopped by yesterday, and he is supposed to move us this coming Tuesday or Wednesday, so we have the crew on standby. That means I better hurry up and get this written, because I sure don't have enough space left to write about the move. I should have had this to the printer a week ago.

Wednesday, April 3rd, we open to the public, no matter where we are. The effort and dedication this crew has put forth this winter has been incredible. It's just a shame not everyone sees it that way. **Tim Benner** recently related that his wife asked him for the umpteenth time, "When are you going to get around to fixing the backup lights on my car?" **Tim** replied, "As soon as the weather gets a little warmer." **To which Carol replied, I'll bet if the SLATER had back up lights, they'd be working!"**



The 2002 Tour Guides pose for a picture.

See you next month