

# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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Clark fitting pipe in the machine shop.

**It was my second worst nightmare come true.** Monday is our best volunteer day. We've had upwards of twenty volunteers showing up every Monday. These are the retired guys, the mainstay of our support. For their whole lives they went to work every Monday, and they're still doing it for the SLATER. This Monday, something was wrong. I met **Clark** in the maindeck passageway. He was in a bad mood. He was angrily coiling up all the welding cable left on the passageway deck strung from the machine shop to the messdeck. He was muttering something about those Saturday guys who never coil up the cables and leave them out for some poor old man to trip over. When he finished that he went aft to the machine shop and started putting tools away and dusting off the bench. He muttered, "Takes a man half a day to clean up enough to go to work."

**Now, Clark Farnsworth doesn't get much credit around here.** Clark is a retired aviation metalsmith who was president of the USS LEYTE Association, and ran the damage control trainer at the Albany Reverse Center for years after. When they

made Noah retire because of his age, they made Clark go too. But he still looks sharp in his whites. He is retired out of the GE Silicone plant in Waterford. He owns his own 1911 motor yacht that he puts on the water every year, and he still does all the welding at the Schenectady yacht club. He also teaches the safe boating course for the power squadron several times a year. His best friend is a schnauzer named **Scotty** who makes occasional visits to the ship. hose of you who've been following the Albany Chapter of the SALTER saga since the beginning recall how Clark attended a Chief's Association meeting back in 1997 when the call for volunteers first went out. Clark said he wasn't going down to that damn rusty ship and sit around waiting for someone to tell him what to do. He didn't know me.

**When Clark did come down the following spring, he hobbled aboard with his cane.** His knees were so bad I didn't think he was gonna make it across the gangway. He said he could weld and fit, and could do a little bench work if we had a project for him. A month later he was up on the 02 level sprawled on top of a flagbag welding on the tie down for the canvas cover. The cane disappeared. He's been coming every Monday ever since and sometimes Wednesdays too. Clark is old school. He never leaves a mess, puts away everybody else's tools, and always sweeps the bench and the deck



The Monday crew contemplating punitive measures against management.

the deck when he's done working. He wishes I'd stop giving him welding jobs where he has to spend the day on his knees or lying on the deck. But then I guess at eighty-one, he has a right to complain. This day Clark was obviously in a bad mood, so I let him be and headed down to the Chief's Quarters to find out why I didn't hear any needle guns. Nobody was working. I walked into the Chief's quarters and the twenty guys in the Monday gang were all sitting and standing around the table. It got real quiet. They just quietly sipped their coffee and munched on their donuts.

**Smitty finally spoke up.** Nice job on the last SLATER SIGNALS. Sure is a good thing we have that Saturday crew to carry the load for the rest of us geriatric invalids. Say, they don't seem to do much chipping on Saturdays. Do they do any chipping on Saturdays?

**Somebody else spoke up, "Naw, they're the high tech guys.** They're too talented to chip paint. Say, who is this **Benner** guy. I've never seen him. What's he doing? He had his picture in the same newsletter four times. I ain't never had my picture in the newsletter. He must be some special kind of welder. And this guy **Tanner**. You see where they threw him a big party and gave him a fancy welding helmet just for turning sixty? Hell, that boy is barely an adolescent. They ain't never give **Clark** a welding helmet, and made a big deal out of his birthday, and he's eighty-one. He's up there cleaning up after them right now." Smitty spoke up again, "You know as your teamster shop steward, I'm thinking we may need to call a work slowdown 'til the weekday crew gets some recognition. Ship's tore up from one end to another. Only six weeks left 'till opening day. Be a shame if that crew compartment weren't ready for opening day. "Naw, gotta take care of the ship. But, you know there is that Senior Citizens abuse hotline. You know that one you call if you're living with your kids and they ain't taken care of you, or start abusing you. You know I think management is abusing us around here. Maybe we should give them a call. What's that number" The police were handcuffing me and reading my rights when I snapped back to reality. What woke me up was laughter coming from the dining room. Frank was mad about the SLATER SIGNALS and Clark was mad about that. The crew compartment was getting down, so



Ray Lammers staked out a warm spot to work in the CPO mess between meals.



More senior citizen abuse. Bob Lawrence in the bilges.

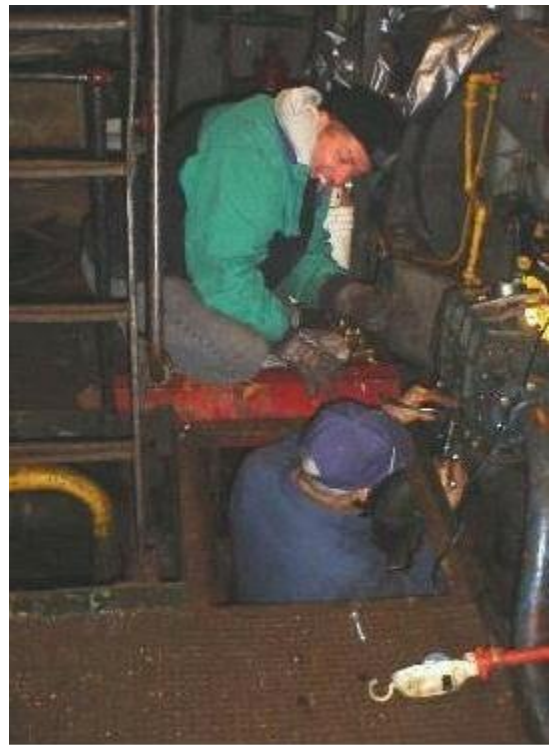


But it's February, when people start coming up to me and saying, "How are *you* ever going to get this ship back together for opening day?" I start to ask myself the same question. Everybody has been pulling together to do a lot of great work despite the cold. The chippers has been plugging doggedly away at the overhead in forward crew berthing in A-205 L facing a March 15<sup>th</sup> deadline before we plan to spray it out. Likewise, the welders have been busy continuing the restoration of the bunk lockers, compartment stanchions, firemain and ventilation ducting; undoing Greek modifications and putting the space back to original configuration. They have done a lot of grinding off old welds on the deck, and pulling out old electrical cable and running new armored cable for the flood alarm systems. We have four newly completed replica wooden messdeck tables that includes all the brackets and hardware to hold the table wings up at mealtime.



Phm Steve Hurley chipping in sickbay.

Back aft, we have pulled everyone out of the laundry and after officer's country to finish forward berthing, except for Steve Hurley who is still trying to get sickbay chipped out for opening day. There has been all kinds of activity down in B-3. Bill Siebert has retained an enthusiastic crew of **Bob Lawrence, Frank Beeler, Stan Murowski, Russ Ferrer, Larry LaChance, and Bill Coyle** to get the eight pack ships service



Bill Siebert telling Bob Lawrence how lucky he is to have this job.

generator going. They have worked out the fuel supply and keep dealing with cooling leaks. They have had two attempted starts, and the engine has run briefly, but was shut down twice for problems. As Bill says, he wants to run it long enough to find out what's wrong with it. In B-4, **Larry LaChance** has recruited two new volunteers Adam Van Horn and Dave Merkel. Both are college students and bring some youth to the crew. They got the cooling problem in the **Gus Negus's** beloved emergency diesel solved, air in the radiator. They successfully ran the engine for forty-five minutes on the fifteenth, including a thirty minute test under load. They are also working hard on the fire and bilge pump manifold piping in B-4. In the meantime, **Claire Oesterreich** has graciously offered to donate five hundred dollars to purchase copper piping to replace the present plastic piping to the main deck radiator. I've never heard so many different opinions about machinery.

**We were in the middle of a brief four-day thaw, and I was in the office just getting ready to update the mailing list.** They told me we had water in B-4 and a flooded shaft alley. Turned out that a 1" drain line on the bottom of the stern tube bearing in the port shaft alley froze, split, flooded the shaft alley, and then progressed into B-4 through the shaft seal. There was a lot of discussion about why the bilge alarm hadn't worked and management's usual lack of preventive maintenance. The first thing I said was, "Where's the bilge alarm?" It was wedged in between a frame and a pipe. As soon as we moved it **Beth** came running down from the office in a panic saying, "The Alarm Company is on the phone! They say we're flooding!" I should have been checking the shaft alleys every day since the thaw. We pumped all day to get the water in the shaft alley down. **Frank, Bob, Larry and Stan** stayed on it and broke off the pipe and got a DC plug into it and shored it up. Tanner scoured some packing, and **Russ Ferrer**, after complaining so badly about how I was abusing his knees and back, repacked the shafts going from the shaft alleys into B-4. At least if they flood again, the flood will be contained. By the way, **Russ** says he greased the packing so they're prelubed so we won't do any damage when we turn the propeller. More cooperation between the weekend and weekday crews.

**To help get the ship cleaned up, this year we are going to try something new.** The last week in March, from March 22 until April 1 we are going to open the ship up for overnight stays for anyone who wants to help us get her cleaned up for opening day. We have mailed out letters to the Presidents of all the Northeast DESA chapters inviting them to participate and pass the word along to their members. Each spring one of the biggest problems we face is getting the SLATER cleaned up for opening day, the first Wednesday in April. We want to develop a joint field day week where each Chapter would come aboard for 2-4 days, patterned after what the Michigan guys do. You bring a cook, get everybody kick in for food and keep a night security watch. The work focus would be on housekeeping. Bring a bucket, rags and a vacuum cleaner, and clean up the loose ends from the work that has been going on all winter. I think that we might want to make it a coed activity, given, (I hate to be sexist and say it), the nature of the work.



February 10th. Another foot of snow.



It seems there is always more to shovel.



The volunteer exchange program. Smarter than the rest of us, Frank Pat Perrella are spending the winter volunteering on the LST 325 in Alabama. We're wondering why they haven't sent anybody to Albany in return!

**Admittedly, Albany weather can be fickle at that time of year.** We usually plan to move the ship the last week in March, but I can never promise that. Depending on the river conditions, we've been stuck here until the first week of May. The heat is working well, especially forward, so we'd try to berth you in CPO and Officer's country. We can put people back aft if the numbers are high enough. We have forward berthing tore all to hell, and we'll be in the process of putting it back together. Fresh water is another issue. If it's warm enough, we will run a fresh water line to the ship. If it's as cold as it is now, we'll be hauling water and using the portajohns. Showers are available for a fee at the Riverside Truck Plaza should cold prohibit running water aboard. We cannot be

responsible for providing food service, but the galley is available should the various chapters want to coordinate cooking aboard. Nearby diners are also available. In addition to cleaning details, all hands will be expected to assist with standing night security watches on a rotating basis. Remember that volunteers need to be in fairly good physical shape as this is still a rugged place to work in. The normal inside temperature of the ship this time of year is between 55 and 60 degrees, so dress for it. Parking is available adjacent to the ship.

**If you're interested, contact your chapter President to see if they are organizing it as a group.** If not and you want to come as an individual, contact me here on the ship by email or by phone at 518-431-1943, or by mail. We'll get a sign up sheet back to you. The office aboard is manned Monday thru Thursday and Saturday 0800-1600.

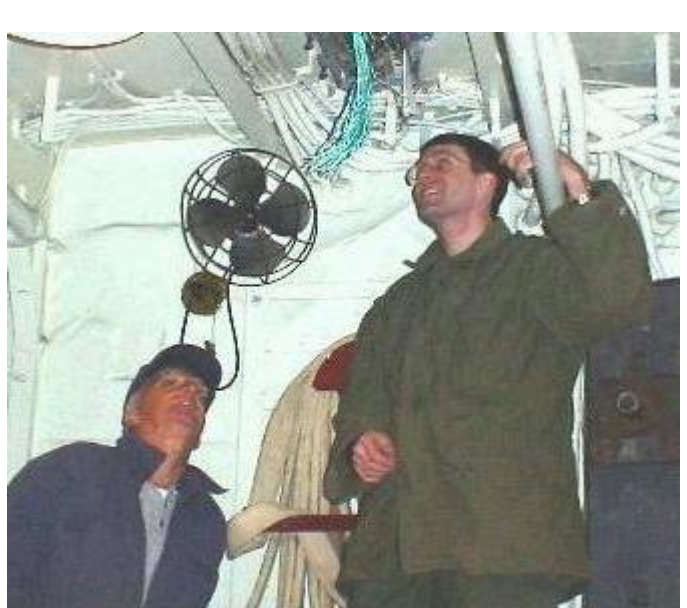
**For those of you who like warmer weather we have three other field days scheduled.** The Michigan Gang will be coming back the last week of April and, as usual, all their slots are filled. The USS HUSE crew will be aboard May 3-10, so anyone interested in joining them should contact George Amandola at 610-789-5105, Finally the Northern Illinois Chapter of DESA will be coming back June 20-26. If you are interested in working aboard that week contact Bud Ried at 847-272-7938.

**The preliminary year-end financial figures are in for 2002.** In operations and contributions last year we made \$271,458, while our expenses were \$316,000. The shortfall came out of our working capital account to get us through the 2001-2002 winter. We also put \$96,067. Into the endowment fund during that period. This year, thanks to your generosity contributing to the winter fund and the LA Chapter raffle we should be able to get through the winter without dipping into savings. This coupled with the improved gift shop in the trailer and the start of the overnight camping program has us projecting a balanced budget for 2003.





Gene Cellini, Bob Callendar, Larry Williams and Ken Kaskoun clearing cable runs on the messdeck.



Larry and Barry Witte wiring in Bilge alarms.

**My favorite grammar critic and our former museum registrar, Kira Zaikowski has completed her masters degree and moved on.** Another one out of the nest so to speak. When I emailed her the last SIGNALS and asked her to check my grammar, I got the following response;

**"It looked pretty good to me.** Of course, after reading the end of the Signals, I was laughing so hard I couldn't really concentrate anymore. Aren't you glad there are no raging feminists aboard? Things are good at Ten Broeck. I was just telling Nancy today that I thought I only learned about the Navy, DEs and the vulgar humor that is so intertwined with the two on the SLATER but fortunately, I guess I picked up a lot more; about boards, networking, raising money, education, interns, volunteers, etc. I really want to get over to the ship, but there really has been no time. The one weird thing I can't get used to is the constant heat, and the luxury of our boss allowing the heat to be turned up to 66 or so on really cold days, and I totally cannot get used to the indoor plumbing. I keep expecting to make a long cold trek out to the port a john, and then realize hey wait! I have the luxury of not one but two indoor bathrooms! The small staff is nice and I am looking forward to meeting volunteers later in the year, but I truly do miss the "young guys" at the SLATER. Tell everyone I said hi. I hope I can find some days in the summer to volunteer at the ship; the one bonus (so far) about Ten Broeck is that we get holidays off or the museum is usually closed. I also hope I can think of some way for Nancy and I to join forces, although connecting a WWII ship and a 200 year old historic Dutch/Greek revival house are a little difficult, there's got to be some way to do it! See you soon."

**Another guy who doesn't get much credit around here is Bosun Mike Muzio.** In a sense he has become the soul of the ship and our most dedicated volunteer. It's Mike's voice and Bosun's pipe that Jerry Jones programmed into the 1MC system last summer to make the announcements, ring bell time, and make pipes in accordance with the old plan of the day. Every half-hour the ships bells are properly struck, every morning at 0800 he pipe quarters for muster, and every afternoon at 1600 he pipes liberty call, and all the pipes in between. He never misses, never forgets, is never late. We never see him, but we know he's here. It makes the ship come alive, a real DE. One noontime recently, Ed Whitbeck, stopped chipping for lunch. He took out his earplugs just as Mike started piping sweepers. Ed scowled at the 1MC speaker and yelled, "Ah, shut the #@\*\$! up!" Just like old times. How it was is how it is on the SLATER. It doesn't get more real than that.

**Finally, I can't get that line out of my mind from Mister Robert's, the one where Captain Morton says to Roberts, "Listen here Mister, any disharmony aboard this vessel will be my doing!" See you next month.**