



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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February. 21 February 2004, forenoon watch. Moored as before, starboard side to, lumber dock in Rensselaer. So far, so good. Nine mooring lines, all doubled. Three wires. Not taking any chances with the ice. Taking electricity from pier. Plant on cold iron. What else is new? Draft is eight and a half forward, ten aft, no change. Still listing half a degree to starboard, as we've been ever since they took the donkey boilers and the evaps out in Souda Bay. Sometimes, with the ice getting under the counter aft and pushing us off the pier and a strong west wind, the list will increase a half a degree, but she always settles back. No water or sewer connection. The heavy ice has broken up south of Troy. We had about eight inches. But it went out with the warm spell last week. Now we are just getting some light sheet ice every night. Up north of the Troy Lock, we still have to wait for all that ice to come down, and it will probably be a few weeks for that. Then we can put the camels in and make plans to get back across the river.

It snowed about six inches last night and has been spitting snow all morning. Schools and State Offices are closed because of the Holiday. Probably because of it, the roads were really pretty bad. My wife said, "You're not going in today, are you? Nobody will be there." She doesn't know this crew. **Ken Kaskoun, Ed Whitbeck, Don Shattuck, Bob Callender and Erik Collin** all showed up on this side. Over at the Snow Dock, **Rosehn** is there with **Tommy Moore** and **Barry Witte** rewiring the enlarged classroom. Work goes on despite the weather. I got in about fifteen minutes behind **Erik Collin** who had the gangway and the starboard side shoveled by the time I got there. He eyed me suspiciously and said, "Don't think I don't know your plan. Show up right after the shoveling is done. I know how you operate." That did make me feel good, because most of the crew don't give me credit for having a plan.



Weekend galleycrew: Breyer, Benner, Tanner, Murawski, Sheedy, Teal.

An example of that would be the galley project. Put Doug Tanner, Barry Witte, Gary Sheedy, Tim Benner, Chuck Teal, Ken Kaskoun, Bob Callender, Don Shattuck, Larry Williams, Stan Murawski, Gene Jackey and Clark Farnsworth in the same compartment for a couple of months, and you may get some differing views on how things should be done. The plan would be to restore it as it was in 1945. But the galley has been one of the most interesting projects we have ever undertaken. Maybe I should say "Interested."

Everybody's interested in the

galley. I have never seen a group of men debate so seriously such small details, or give a job more attention.

The original plan seemed simple enough. Just rip out the old ranges, install the new ranges, and put in incandescent lighting. That would be easy if we could just stick to the original blueprint, which is taped to the bulkhead for reference. But we have several serious "Culinary Specialists" aboard, and you know how touchy artistic chefs are. They all have varying opinions about areas the galley is inadequate in. Take counter space. They all want more counter space. To make that correction, we have extended the counter over the dough mixer, and installed the new cutting board there. Lighting has been a hot topic of discussion. The fixtures were changed twice, the location of lights a couple times, and a new light gas-tight fixture placed directly over the grills because "It's so dark, we can't see if the burgers are getting burnt." We installed a new electrical panel so we could split the load on all the new 120-volt equipment that wasn't there during the war, the refrigerator and the icemaker. Now the icemaker is going shore side to make more storage space under the counter. That's okay; it wasn't there to begin with. There's a big debate over whether the refrigerator should be mounted on lockable wheels that came with it, or a steel frame welded to the deck. Racks to hang the utensils are a big deal. Next we'll want hooks for the aprons and a shelf for the chef's hat. Even the clock got moved twice. I just hope the renovation makes the cover of *Better Homes and Gardens*.

Other work has been simpler. Chris Fedden, Dave Hamilton, Peter Jez and Jim Gelston have been chipping away in the laundry. Up forward, Ed Whitbeck has been finishing up on the reefer deck. By the time you read this, chipping down there will be done. We've already lined up our spray painter Kevin Sage for the week of March fifteenth. Things are coming together.

The other big electrical project is the replacement of the modern battle lanterns with the original WWII style steel lanterns. Barry Witte has purchased about forty of the lanterns on E-Bay and worked out a method of powering them with modern batteries and lamps. They are being installed all over the ship, another small detail in the continuing restoration of the SLATER to make her more authentic.



Barry Witte working on his battle lantern collection.

Doug Tanner is embarking on his next winter project, the fabrication of a septic tank in compartment C-201L. We were using a fuel tank, but want to get a tank that is separate from the skin of the ship to eliminate the corrosive effect of the sewage on the shell plating. Doug has enlisted **Steve Barber of Port Welding** on this project. Steve is providing the material and letting Doug use some of the tools in his shop. **Clark Farnsworth** is back welding on chocks now that he has recovered from carpal tunnel surgery. Our best wishes go out to **Bill Coyle** who is recovering from surgery. **Don's** been winding clocks in his absence. And speaking of illness, **Bob Callender** and **Ken Kaskoun** and their families returned safely from their Thailand vacation. Bob managed to get pneumonia while he was over there, but he is recovering nicely. They were inland, so they weren't affected by any of the devastation we have seen on the news.



Nelson Potter with his fenders.



Gordon Lattey has been laundering all the SLATER bedding at home in his "spare time."

We have some real seamanship going on in the place where real seamanship should be going on. **Nelson Potter** has been coming in Saturdays and is working up in the windlass room making a monster of a rope fender. The thing is bigger than he is. He's planning to make two monsters and then get back to some more reasonably-sized. He really paid attention when **Tommy Doin** showed the crew how to do it last fall. Macramé for men! If anybody is interested in learning, he'll be glad to take on apprentices. It's great to see the restored anchor windlass room being used to keep the old sailor's arts alive.

Big Changes are also going on in the Classroom at the Snow Dock. **Dennis Nagi, Tommy Moore, Barry Witte, Erik Collin** and **Paul Czesak** have been working to enlarge the size of the classroom. Rosehn graciously agreed to give up her storage closet and about a third of her office space to make room for the expansion. The project is progressing nicely and should be all set for opening day. As with most SLATER projects, the planning and execution of the classroom has been another exercise in

democracy. Dennis has been leading this project, and has been waxing nostalgically for the days when he worked for **Charles Miner** and there was no democracy, just Charles' way or else. Shows how a first class petty officer gets more respect than a PhD around here. Rosehn is looking for a benefactor to donate a large flat panel television/monitor for the classroom, so if any of you feel really charitable, please contact her.

From Pat Perrella we recently received word of the passing of another of our beloved WWII Destroyer Escort Commanders, Richard E. Warner, USNR (ret) at his home in Lodi, CA.

Those at SLATER won't ever forget his enthusiastic spirit during the times he visited us as part of the DECO delegation, another time with his grandson Bradley and most recently with the reunion of the USS KENDALL C. CAMPBELL DE-443, when he toured the SLATER decks with "his boys" and daughter, Katie Burke. All of his daughters and grandchildren have fond memories of all the Navy stories he would tell them over the years. Later on in his life, many of them were able to accompany "the commander" on his Navy reunions to reminisce with his shipmates. In recent years, he took a few trips back to Albany, New York to visit the USS SLATER, a destroyer escort ship he was involved in helping to restore. CDR Warner served as Executive Officer of DE-443 during the Pacific Campaign and was appointed to the Command of USS GEORGE DE-697 following the Japanese surrender. Dick worked tirelessly on SLATER's behalf and contacted many of his former DE associates and their families to secure donations for the ship. It was also through his efforts that SLATER received the donation of 15,000 Visitor's Guide brochures from the Duncan Press in Lodi. A former DE sailor, Donald Bedford, USS PETERSON USCG DE-152, founded this firm and his family provided this special printing in tribute to his memory. His Death Notice follows; true to form, he requested that any memorial tributes on his behalf be sent as donations to USS SLATER DE-766.



Chuck Teal and Doug Tanner installing grease screens above the new galley stoves.



Bob Callender works on pop riveting stainless back on to the galley bulkheads.

Dick Warner's death reminds us again that we need to do a better job getting you guys to put your recollections down on paper. Many of you who served aboard DEs in World War II today are answering that new call. Thank you to those of you who are assisting **Robert F. Cross**, an author working on a new book about DEs and the men who sailed them. Bob, who is a trustee of the USS SLATER and also author of the recent book, *Sailor in the White House: the Seafaring Life of FDR*, published by the Naval Institute Press, reports that he has conducted more than a dozen interviews so

far, and has another 25 ready to schedule. He continues to receive letters from many of you offering to help him tell your story, a story that, for the most part, has never been told. Bob is very appreciative of those of you who take the time to tell him about your days at sea, providing him with your war diaries and other memorabilia. So, it's not too late. If you want to talk to Bob and be a part of his new book, send your information and telephone number to: Robert F. Cross, Destroyer Escort Historical Museum, PO Box 1926, Albany, NY 12201. Do it today!



Jim Gelston hard at work chipping the laundry.



Unconfirmed reports claim Tim Rizzuto was seen with a needle gun in the laundry.

Up in the office, it's been a lot of preparatory work for the coming year. We have made another attempt at securing a Congressional federal appropriation to dry-dock the SLATER and build a permanent mooring for the ship on the Albany side of the river, to avoid this fun-filled, but disruptive trip back and forth across the river every year. We also made our annual application for the "Save America's Treasures" grant to do tank and bilge cleaning and other work that would have to be done prior to going to a shipyard. **Mayor Gerald Jennings** nominated the ship for a New York State Preservation award, and we gathered back up documentation on his behalf that effort. We have been working closely with **Don Norris** on the upcoming USS SLATER former crewmembers reunion coming up this May, and working with **Ron Zarem** and **George Amandola** on the Michigan and USS HUSE Field Days.

Finally, we've hoisted the recall signal for the tour guides. We are planning to hold an introductory meeting aboard the ship here in Rensselaer on Saturday March 5th. The meeting will commence informally at 1130 with coffee and a pizza lunch on the messdecks. This will be a chance for you to meet the maintenance gang and see what they've been up to all winter.



Enginemen Gus Negus, Adam VanHorn and Karl Herchenroder.

Following lunch, we'll collect your updated guide schedule sheets and gather any thoughts you may have on ways to improve the upcoming season. We will be scheduling two refresher training sessions.

We'll hold each session twice so everyone has a chance to attend. Session 1 will be held on Sunday March 6th and on Saturday March 12th. This will be a review of safety, procedural and a brief overview of World War II. Session 2 will be held on Sunday March 13th and Saturday March 19th. This session will deal with the tour route and tour content. We ask that each of you try and make both sessions.

We are in the process of hiring a new Education Coordinator. We formed an impromptu search committee made up of the first five unfortunate tour guides who wandered in my office on other routine business. **Dennis Nagi** arrived first, so he got to chair it. The other unfortunates are **Alan Fox, Dick Walker, Penny Welbourn** and **Paul Czesak**. We received 20 applications. After we sent them the three-page job description and the salary range, ten remained interested. We narrowed it down to five and are conducting interviews. We hope to have our choice aboard in mid-March. In the meantime Penny has volunteered to coordinate things to get the season started. It's amazing how fast winter goes when you plan more work than you can possibly hope to accomplish. We'll see where we are in a month!

