

# SLATER SIGNALS

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

Destroyer Escort Historical Foundation  
USS Slater DE-766  
PO Box 1926  
Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123  
Vol. 9 no. 4, April 2006



The smoke begins to clear after firing the number 1 3"50 upon returning to Albany for the summer.

**We're back in Albany.** We're back to the land of flush toilets and hot running water. So many of you who have been reading this newsletter over a long period of time may wonder about this writer's continued obsession with toilet facilities. But I think I can speak for the entire crew when I say that until you've experienced an Albany winter without indoor plumbing, you can't imagine what a luxury it is to have it again.

**The winter had been exceptionally mild, so we weren't faced with any major snowmelt or anticipated flooding.** We felt comfortable putting the camels in a little early. The crew mustered on the pier on Monday March 20<sup>th</sup>. The day was calm and warm with temperatures in the forties, near tropical weather by our standards. **Tommy Moore** had spent the previous week fixing up the fendering and adding additional Styrofoam floatation to the camels that needed a little boost. As always **Bob Cross** sent

the crane down with **Ricky Karlquist** to do the heavy lifting. **Doug Tanner** and **Tim Benner** supervised the operations on the pier while **Tommy Moore** and **Eric Rivet** worked off the floats on the river. As always, we had a great turnout among the volunteers for this most unglamorous task, and we had the whole thing wrapped up by noon. I got talked into taking the crew out to lunch, which thrilled Doug to no end to finally get me to pay for something. But his glow dimmed a little when they wouldn't take my American Express card and I had to borrow ten bucks from him to complete the transaction. I've since squared up with him.

**We spent the next two weeks in Rensselaer waiting for a tow. Port Albany Ventures** has our regular towboat the HERBERT BRAKE still working the Gulf in the wake of the hurricanes. The CHEYENNE was undergoing an engine overhaul, so they didn't have two boats available until that work was complete. That gave us a little extra time to complete the painting and cleaning and get the SLATER spruced up for opening day. **Kevin Sage** and **Jason Sherlock** wrapped up repainting the passageway outside the CPO mess and the maindeck passageway between the wardroom and the machine shop, as well as the portside of the reefer deck which is our electrical parts storeroom. This is part of our futile effort to keep **Gary Sheedy** happy and make him believe that we are still supportive of his five-year effort to restore the reefer deck. The crew from **Quick Response** finished up their cleaning with the main deck passageway aft of the machine shop. Our own volunteers cleaned up the after berthing spaces C-201L and C-202L. **Gordon Lattey** and **Eric Rivet** went through officers country and got all the bunks made up and the displays set up again. **Erik Collin** has the rest of the SLATER looking shipshape.

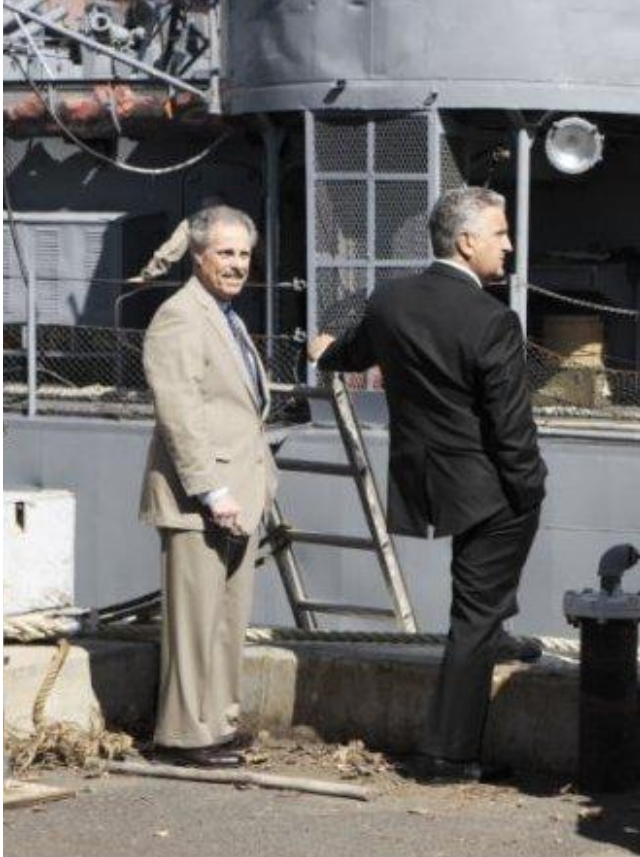


**90% of the work moving the ship involves line handling.**

**Don Martin of the USS SWEARER is back with us for another couple of weeks.** One of the hardest working and most generous hands we have, we're getting a lot of extra work done thanks to his presence. He and **Chris Fedden** scrubbed all the fire hose and racked them back up. The messdecks hammocks have been scrubbed, and they're continuing to chip paint in the CPO head. Don also dropped another five

grand into the endowment fund, so we are truly grateful for his continued support. He works really hard to keep his beloved SWEARER near the top of the donations list.

**Tim Benner** and **Chuck Teal** got the new floater net basket mounted on the portside aft. As soon as that was up, **Doug Tanner** laid out the third basket, and **Clark Farnsworth** went to work welding it up. This third and then the fourth baskets will be mounted forward adjacent to gun two on the 01 level forward. **Barry Witte** and Gary completed the rewiring repairs as a result of the fire, and Barry has continued making improvements to the alarm system and diagramming and replacing the electrical circuit tags on all our fuse and junction boxes forward. The net result of all this activity is the ship is really looking great on the inside. Better than she ever has.



**Albany Port Commissioner Robert Cross and Albany Major Jerry Jennings watch as the SLATER ties up.**

**Port Albany Ventures moved us on Monday April 10<sup>th</sup>.** There were a couple of postponements waiting for the repair of the CHEYENNE. The last word I had from **Chris Gardella** on Wednesday the fifth was that the most likely date would be Tuesday the eleventh. I sent out emails to that effect and had the crew standing by. As planned I called him Monday the tenth to confirm and he asked if we could be ready by 1300 on that same day. I replied, "Can do," and scrambled to get the crew together. As Monday is normally one of our best volunteer days, we already had a fair number of crew on hand. I emailed the rest of the gang, notified **Bob Cross** that we would be needing the services of the crane, notified Rosehn to alert the media, and called a few of the most critical and e-mail impaired players such as **Tommy Moore, Gary Sheedy, Gus Negus, Chris Fedden, Rich Hendricks,** and the **Andrians**.

**The weather was perfect, sunny, calm and sixty.** **Erik Collin** handled the fo'c's'le with **Eric Rivet** as his understudy, and **Nelson Potter** and **Paul Czesak** handled things aft. We mustered the crew on the fantail and they chose up teams, like high school gym class. We even enlisted the help of contract painters Kevin and Jason to handle lines since they were among the most agile in the crew. **Gus Negus**

and **Karl Herchenroder** cranked up the emergency diesel, and **Ken Kaskoun, Larry Williams** and **Bob Callender** shifted the load over from shore to the ship and disconnected the phones and power lines. The wires came off, the lines were singled up, and we made the tugs fast. Since the HERBERT wasn't available, we put the little pusher EMPIRE against the transom and cabled her up to the stern chocked. The bigger CHEYENNE made up on the portside amidships. **Denny Donovan** supervised the operation from the CHEYENNE with his son aboard to coordinate our crew on the SLATER. The brow came in, the last lines came in and we moved smartly away from the Rensselaer wharf. Grimmel's were loading a scrap ship astern of us, and we joked that we got out of there just in time, before the giant clam shells started picking pieces off of us. You had to be there to appreciate that kind of humor.

**The trip up river was made at a leisurely four knots.** As we went by the Albany Yacht Club, Erik let go a gun salute with number one three inch, another milestone.

The first time gun one has been fired in many years. The Yacht Club didn't have their battery manned to return fire. We made the approach to the Snow Dock, and the line heaving and handling seemed to go better than usual. It took us about thirty minutes to get the gangway alignment right, and then we released the EMPIRE and started doubling up. We were honored to have **Mayor Jennings** on the pier to greet us, as well as **Bob Cross** and a fair amount of media and TV cameras. **Barry Witte** was on the pier and we were back on shore power about twenty minutes after the first line went across. The special multi-pair communication plug-in line that he and **Jerry Jones** developed had all our shipboard communications and Internet service back on within minutes, instead of having to run separate connections for each system. We spent the next three hours, and in fact the next couple days, rigging wires, chafing gear, gangway safety nets and getting the pier cleaned up. Our thanks to the **Albany Department of General Services** for their help with the pier clean up. One new volunteer deserves special mention. **Bill Haggart** was a nine-year boatswain's mate who served on the CVE PALAU and the ASR KITTIWAKE which we recently stripped diesel parts off of. Having an honest to god boatswain's mate aboard again is a real time saver when it comes to getting the SLATER shipshape for the visiting public. He just instinctively knows what "squared away" means. Needless to say, we worked his butt off in the days following our arrival.



**Rich Pavlovic and his 20mm gun project.**



**The fleet oiler TRUCKEE and sub tender ORION in the James River Ghost Fleet.**

**We embarked on two separate scrounging trips this month.** On Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, **Barry Witte** headed out from Albany leading a crack team of scavengers that included **Gus Negus, Karl**

**Herchenroder, Doug Tanner, and Tim Benner** down to the James River Reserve Fleet to strip parts off the USS ORION, a submarine tender with GM diesel engines. Down there they met up with **Greg Krawczyk, Bill Hickman, Brian and Gary Thomas and John McMichael**, Master Chief in charge of the CAVALLA and STEWART in Galveston who joined forces with us on this expedition. In their four days stripping ORION, KITTIWAKE, TRUCKEE and MISSISSINEWA, they returned with a truck load of spares including buss fuses, junction boxes, fans, electrical panel latches, refrigeration valves, firemain valves, quick acting strainers, diesel parts, pyrometers, lube oil system valves, gauges of all types, and new shore power cables. The World War II era ships are disappearing rapidly and we're racing the clock to build up our spare parts inventory so we can keep the auxiliary equipment running aboard SLATER for years to come. We all agreed that pickings are getting slim.

**That same week I headed to Philadelphia with Ken Kaskoun, Larry Pyle, Ed Zajkowski and a crew from the JOSEPH P. KENNEDY JR. in Fall River on a joint scrounging trip during the yard's open house.** The Philly reserve fleet holds an annual open house for the members of the historic fleet to permit us to remove parts and we scrounged aboard the ammunition ship SANTA BARBARA and the LPD/AGF LASALLE. SANTA BARBARA's cargo deck was most impressive. As we worked our way through the ship we tried to imagine the frenzy of activity that took place on that cargo



**One man's treasure can be found in another's dumpster!**

deck as bombs and missiles came up the elevators and were highlined off during the countless UNREPS she performed over the course of her career. It was an easy thing to close your eyes and visualize, the crew living and working in now empty spaces; the paint locker, the bridge, engineroom, CIC, the female enlisted berthing space, and adjacent aerobic workout room. Back to reality, the big finds for us were WWII-era ventilation motor controllers aboard the LASALLE and a large television set for the classroom. I am indebted to **Ed Zajkowski, Steve Whynot, Brown Beezer and Gene Breyer** for their help in getting the monster off the ship, as well as **Rich and Mike Angelini** for their support during the trip. We also picked up wooden clock bases, compartment fans, sink faucets and a special request for **Erik Collin**. He had requested four toilet seats for use in restoring the officer's head, and as I was bent over a commode working for twenty minutes trying to undo the rusted bolts I realized this was Erik's revenge. We got the seats.

**That's not all the scrounging that's going on.** Last month we got the QJB sonar. Well now we've got a hot lead on the coveted SL surface search radar for CIC. It seems that a couple of years ago, **Rich Pekelney** got aboard an old salvage tug in the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet, the **USS CLAMP**.



**The basket of spare parts ready for the SLATER.**

**CLAMP is one of the few ships left that has seen no postwar service.** Though pretty well stripped out, she still has the original SL radar console aboard, and all the support equipment including the radar antenna, dome, and wave guide. Rich went back and photographed all these items for us. We began working towards permission to obtain this gear. The vessel was first on donation hold as

a possible museum and the historic review of the ship had not been completed. I gently nudged MARAD a couple times a year about how rare and critical this radar unit was to our restoration. I really expected it would take another year or two before anything would happen, but word come back from Washington that they would release the radar gear to us.

**When I began making arrangements, Rich Pekelney reminded me that there was additional gear we could use.** The ship still had a TBL radio transmitter; the same style the DEs carried. At the present time we have a radio transmitter in radio central, a TAJ transmitter, and given what it took to get that in there, the thought of replacing it with the TBL was pretty daunting, meaning I must be getting old. The purists will have none of that and insisted I ask about the TBL. We'd figure out the logistics later. The CLAMP also has a mint condition wardroom bookshelf identical to what the DEs carried. That did not scare me. With some trepidation I contacted MARAD about the additional



**Doug Tanner loads up his tools.**

removals. I mean they have bigger problems than our little DE and the historically correct radar. Congress and the environmentalists are screaming at them to get rid of these old ships, historical groups are screaming at them to save ships, so we're a pretty small blip on their radar. Well, they approved the removal of the TBL and the bookcase, and I am tentatively planned to head out there the week of May 7<sup>th</sup>, between the Michigan and Huse Field Days. Rich has offered to put me up to save the cost of the hotel room. The Fleet Superintendent out there, **Joe Pecoraro**, still remembers me from my KIDD scrounging days. I don't know if that is a good thing or not, but he has been most helpful with the arrangements. And remember **Will Donzelli**, the guy with the QJB sonar stack. It seems he will be on the West Coast at the same time on another surplus deal. He has volunteered to help us remove the equipment and truck it east for us with his load. **Rich Pekelney** says I don't deserve this kind of luck. But now the purists want to make sure I take the TBL motor generator set too, another 800 pounds. We'll keep you posted.



The exhausted crew at the end of a hard day of salvage work.

So we're deployed again. Back in full operating mode for season nine. **Leo Baehler, Bob Bull, Joe Burke, Mike Collins, Carina Comiskey, Paul Czesak, John D'Anieri, Bob Dawson, Bob Donlon, Alan Fox, Grant Hack, Glenn Harrison, Floyd Hunt, Ken Kaskoun, Jim Kuba, Tim La Goy, Gordon Lattey, Mike Long, Steven Long, Jack Madden, Katie Maguire, Chuck Marshall, Tom McLaughlin, Amanda McLaughlin, Mike Milian, Nelson Potter, Bill Scharoun, Chuck Teal, Al VanDerzee,** and several more are all back on duty giving tours and interpreting the ship to the visiting public. One of our most special volunteers, **Les Beauchaine**, was nominated for a Jefferson Award for volunteer service from the Times Union, Channel 13 and St. Peters Hospital for his years of service and the countless dog tags he and Annette have made. And **Tom McLaughlin** was the subject of an amateur video that has been posted to the web and **Bob Donlon** was kind enough to send the link.

See you next month.