

SLATER SIGNALS

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

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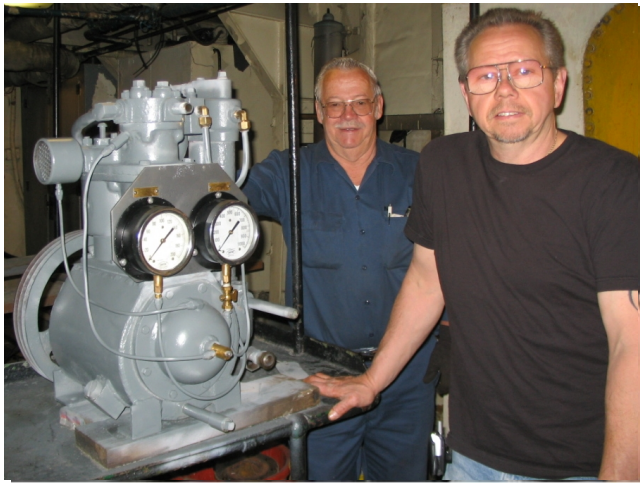
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I wish I had the same propensity for making money for the ship as I do for finding parts. I don't even look for parts any more. They find me. But there is a fine line between precious artifacts and crap on the pier, and I'm not always sure where it is. One of the nine-year struggles I've faced, and I'm sure most other historic ship executive directors have faced, too, is a struggle to keep your pier looking like Disney World when much of the activity going on is more reminiscent of the Terminal Island scrap yard.

We have two gangways to the ship. The aft gangway is a heavy red steel structure that lands from the pier just forward of the fantail 20mm guns. This is wide and handicapped accessible, so all the wheel chairs and hand trucks go over it. Thus, this is where junk tends to pile up. Right now, adjacent to the aft gangway, is a pile of badly rusted scrap metal that came out of the shaft alleys so the bilges could be accessed. That's been sitting there for a month, but the pile isn't big enough to justify a scrap run. Very attractive to visitors. Next to that, under a brown plastic tarp is a pile of gifts for friends. There's a piece of deck grating, and a couple crates of torpedo straps and miscellaneous parts destined to get packed up and shipped off to **John McMichael** on the STEWART, as soon as I can find time to deal with that. Then, sitting on top of the deck grating is a stainless steel refrigerator that is supposed to go to my friends on the JOSEPH P. KENNEDY JR. as soon as they can pick it up or I can find a way to get it over there. Then there is the SL radar transmitter, consol and domed antenna. The antenna is in the open as it is weather proof. The cabinets are covered with those attractive blue vinyl tarps that we've gotten used to seeing everywhere. My intent had been to put the antenna on the observation deck for people to examine when they go on tour. It's not often you can get up close and personal with an SL antenna. They are usually 90' in the air. I suspect the consoles will sit on the dock until we move the ship. Then I'll haul them over to Rensselaer and lift them aboard to the CIC room when we are pier side. As the last SL radar known to man, it is very near and dear to my heart, so I can live with that pile.



Disney World meets the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Welcome to the USS SLATER.



Karl Herchenroder and new volunteer Gary Lubrano with the recently restored starting air compressor in the forward engine room. Russ Ferrer, Tom Schriener and Tim Markham all had a hand in this one.



Larry Williams and Ken Kaskoun showing off the windshield wiper parts they have been restoring and installing.

Paul Czesak drove up today with a pile of steel in his truck. The pile of steel is the result of an important and wonderful project that Barry Witte has initiated. Working with the industrial technology students at Colonie High School where he teaches, Barry's students are designing and fabricating the missing depth charge roller loaders, the racks that hold the reload depth charges for the "K" Guns. They are making great progress. However, school is out for the year, and there is no place to store these over the summer, except of course the pier by the SLATER. So today several pieces of roller loader arrived on the pier. The piles do not seem to shrink. They grow. Jerry Jones got all excited about a month ago when he saw an SA radar transmitter cabinet on E-Bay. We already have an SA transmitter that came off the USS GAGE, but Jerry said this one was brand new. I thought it was one more piece of crap on the pier. The guy wanted a grand for it, so I tried to ignore Jerry. I thought it would go away. I got a crisis call from Jerry yesterday. The guy was selling the building, he was ready to donate the transmitter, and Jerry needed a pickup truck to come get it. I didn't have anyone with a pickup truck, so I ignored him. He found Joe Breyer. Now bear in mind that Jerry doesn't get off the couch for anything unless he's heard they're serving lasagna for lunch aboard the ship. He not only found a truck, begged Joe, but he physically helped lift the consol on and off the truck on to the pier. Now I have another nice unit, covered with a pretty blue tarp, awaiting installation aboard the ship, at which time we will have to figure out what to do with the same unit that came off the GAGE.

Our Damage Control Experts were back aboard with another load of gear for the repair locker, and it didn't end up on the pier. Ken Carter and John LaGuardia came up from Virginia with a van-load of World War II vintage damage control equipment. Ken and John actually took the time to off load it, and display some of it in the aft repair locker and forward cross passageway, and stowed the rest of it below or in the amidship repair locker. Our thanks to Ken and John for the hard work, and to **Hank Kuzma** for organizing the trip. These guys are great and we hope they will be back in the fall for Field Week. Next week, part of our crew heads to Philadelphia to spend a week pulling parts off the cruiser DES MOINES, which is headed for scrap. I'm sure the crew will find innumerable precious items that will result in another tarped pile on the pier. **Tim Firme** called from Baltimore today. I got a message that he had old 3" gun parts in a warehouse. We'd make room on the pier for them, but it turned out to be the whole train-bearing race, and I don't anticipate having a crane to lift the mounts off any time soon.

Meanwhile, lets talk about what's happening to those parts. Aboard the ship, the weekday electrical gang, **Larry Williams, Ken Kaskoun, Bob Callender, Bill Coyle and Bernard "Smitty" Smith**, has been working on the pilothouse level mounting the original porthole windshield wiper motors and controls. This is a nice cosmetic detail that we've been collecting the parts for several years. Meanwhile **Barry Witte** has been working towards completion of the battle lantern project, in which all our shipboard emergency lights will be the authentic WWII era battle lanterns. He has also completed making new phenolic tags for all the electrical junction boxes on the second deck forward and is working his way through the superstructure. **The shipfitters have been working under a handicap this month.** **Doug Tanner's** part-time retirement job has swallowed him up and we haven't seen much of our leading shipfitter at all. **Tim Benner, Clark Farnsworth and Chuck Teal** have been picking up the slack and have nearly completed mounting both forward floater net baskets. Clark has also found time to keep the chock project alive and has another one on the bench that he is repairing.



SUNY volunteer Nick Larkin takes a break in the trainers seat on gun #1 which he helped paint resulting in a restoration masterpiece.



Tour guide Tom McLaughlin leads a group of summer campers on a tour of the SLATER.

The guns have been getting a lot of attention. Erik Collin and new volunteer **Nick Larkin** have nearly completed the restoration of three-inch gun number 1 and repainted it with the new Imron paint, so it should look great for years to come. It is a work of art. Gun two is a yearlong story centered around two frustrated enginemen, **Gus Negus** and **Karl Herchenroder**, along with **Gary Lubrano**, tapped to work outside their rate. The story actually begins several years ago, when we stripped the two helical gears on gun number 3. In our effort to get that gun restored **Frank Beeler, Dave Floyd, Andy Desorbo** and **Bob Lawrence** removed the lower gear unit from gun 2 and installed it on gun 3, an important move since this gun was to be our saluting battery. Gun three was restored to working condition and gun 2 sat in limbo. Then last summer the upper train gear box failed on gun 1, the gun that the public sees and can access. **Russ Ferrer** removed the upper train gear unit from gun 2 and installed it on gun 1 and got gun 1 back in working order. That left gun 2 with screwed up upper and lower units. This past winter Gus and Karl "volunteered" to overhaul the upper gear drive. They spent all winter disassembling the unit and replacing the bearings, which had totally disintegrated. Rumor was that they were willing to do this for two reasons. First, the gun shack was a whole lot warmer than the engine room. Second, rumor had it that someone glued a "General Motors" label onto the train gearbox, and they assumed I had them working on a diesel engine part.

That left the issue of the lower gear drive and two very expensive helical gears that needed to be replaced. Doug Tanner had tried to repair them, and probably would have succeeded if given enough time. But along came Jack Bertsch, owner of Polymer Conversions Inc. out near Buffalo. Jack said he could get the gears made as a donation. Now, I don't know what polymer conversions has to do with gears, but I gladly accepted the offer. Keeping in mind that all the gunners originally involved in the disassembly of this gearbox were now gone, we located all the old parts and sent the gear out to Jack. Months passed before we learned that Jack had tapped two of his friends at QTA Machining, Thomas Pelczynski and John Hake. They did a beautiful job machining the gear and Jack Fedexed them back to us in May. Now the ball was in Gus and Karl's court to try and get the whole mess back together. You know what the auto mechanics say about fixing your car



"Trust me, Gus. If it has a GM tag, it must be a diesel. Just don't ask questions and keep working on it."

after you've started working on it yourself. They were not the ones who took it apart, and there was no plan. They found only one missing part that Gary had to fabricate, but managed to get it back together over two weeks in June, and with an assist from Russ Ferrer, we now have three guns that train beautifully in manual drive. Rich Pavlovik has been fighting his own battle with 20mm gun #24, the upper portside gun adjacent to the stack. It started as a simple chip and paint project, but the gun was jammed in train and Rich was determined to free it. He removed both magazines, guns, splinter shield and is now well into disassembly of the cradle. For months he has been applying Kryoil and grease to break up the rust. He has looked all over for a hidden weld or locking pin. He has used everything from a hydraulic jack to a sledgehammer. It will be a story to watch. Another SLATER saga pitting man against the machine. Rocky, Gene Jackey and Ken Kaskoun have been putting serious hours into the whaleboat restoration. Rocky has the whole portside

sanded, caulked and painted, and the inside is almost finished. As I write, we put the boat in the water the past Saturday, turned it, and hoisted it back aboard backwards so Rocky can caulk and repaint the starboard side which is now inboard.. Then we'll be ready to put her in the water for the summer.

On Saturday June 17th we held our ninth DE Day commemoration here in Albany. Bob Donlon and Paul Czesak put together a beautiful program that was attended by Congressman Mike McNulty, Mayor Jerry Jennings, Albany County Executive Mike Breslin, Rensselaer County Executive Kathy Jimino, Assemblyman Robert Reilly, and a representative from Assemblyman James Tedisco's office. The only issue was the rain. It poured during the ceremony. Fortunately we were able to keep the podium and dignitaries under cover under the 40mm gun tub, and the guests under Claire Oesterreich's awning. For me the most somber point of the ceremony was remembering the volunteers we lost this past year, Leo "Hack" Charbonneau, Ed Whitbeck, Ed Elze, and Charlie Havlick. The most dramatic moment was the firing by the Saratoga National Cemetery Honor Guard and the three rounds Erik Collin fired from gun 3. We held two wonderful reunions this past month for the USS WATERMAN DE740 and the USS ATHERTON. Both ships were CANNON class, sisters of the SLATER, and in both cases their crew brought kids and grandkids to see the SLATER as they reminisced aboard. They left some great artifacts with Pat Perrella for the museum, including some of the best photo albums we have ever seen. Preserving their history is the reason we exist.



Rocky is working on the whaleboat rudder under the signal bridge overhang to stay dry. We've never seen as much rain as we've had this May and June. Knock on wood.

Despite a late start and a rainy spring, the SLATER's tour guides are keeping busy. There are a lot of new faces among our part-time student guide staff. This year we lost **Mike Long, Dave Athay, Amanda McLaughlin and Katie Maguire** to graduations, so we wish them all the best. We've picked up several new guides, including **Robert DeRanieri, Bryan Dempsey, John Posillico, David Pitlyk, and Greg Sleasman**. We've also had several volunteers return after long absences, including **Chuck Lossi, Dan Goldstein, Joe Van Ullen, and Bob Whitney**. We're also happy to welcome **Mike Milian** and **Bill Scharoun** back to the ship after brief tours on the binnacle list. The SLATER currently boasts fifty-three volunteer and part-time guides. We can't do what we do here without them, and we don't tell them that nearly enough. Now if we can just keep the rain away so they stay busy!



Fire training in Rensselaer...



In the "You can't teach an old dog new tricks category" Erik Collin and Chuck Teal were determined to teach me that my training on firefighting was obsolete. I'd never been a fan of dry chemical extinguishers because I heard they were messy to clean up. I preferred CO2 because, "If they were good enough to win World War II, they're good enough now." Well Erik and Chuck set up a fire extinguisher class over on the Rensselaer pier. Chuck, who does this professionally, brought all his training aids including the big pan, gasoline, oil and matches. He set a beautiful blaze going, and they gave me a CO2 extinguisher to put it out. I dumped the whole extinguisher on the blaze and it flashed back. Then they gave me a dry chemical extinguisher. One spritz and the fire was out. End of story. If I had to quantify it, I'd say the dry chem. was ten times more effective than the CO2. I am a believer.

So back to trying to find money. These days it seems I spend most of my time behind this computer trying to find money. Remember that if your getting SLATER SIGNALS both through your computer and in the mail and you want to save us mailing costs, let us know if you want us to remove your name off the postal snail mail mailing list. Working with **Eric Rivet** and **Rosehn**, we completed applications for the "Save America's Treasures" grant program for shipyard money, the History Channel's "Save Our History" program for money to build depth charge racks, the NYS Parks and Recreations Grant for continued maintenance painting, and a Department of State Grant to engineer the desired permanent mooring system. Our brightest glimmer of hope is a \$100,000 Federal appropriation that has been requested y Congressman Mike McNulty to help preserve the ship. Our application had been for \$975,000 to cover the cost of dry-docking, but we will gratefully take whatever we can get. But we'll see if this appropriation makes it through the budget chopping process. The most prolific donors are still you, our members. The LA DESA Chapter's SLATER raffle is going great guns. We still haven't received our first infusion from them yet, but Earl reports that he has a pile of envelopes to open and we thank you all for your participation and support.



Tour guide, bosun's mate and carpenter Nelson Potter repairing planking on our observation deck, once again shows the versatility of our Coast Guard vets.

See you next month.