



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

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So, it's November, and that means it's time for my annual "Winter Fund" pitch. That time of year when I beg you all for enough money to carry us through the four months of winter when we will have no visitor income. You know the drill, just like years past, but now with the additional hurdle of Covid-19.



Help keep a volunteer warm this winter!



SLATER as she pulled into New York City in 1993.

The first time I saw the ship, in October of 1993, was when I did an initial survey to determine what parts they would need to restore her to 1945 configuration. I'd never seen such a rust-bucket. USS SLATER was a beat up, stripped-out hulk, with forty years of hard running, headed for the scrap heap in Crete. Thanks to the generosity of the

Greek Government and several thousand others with a dream, a wild idea came to fruition. To quote **Marty Davis**, this was a dream that “had a snowball’s chance in hell of success.” And here we are today, as one of the most beautiful and completely restored ships in the historic fleet.

Fortunately, we had the roots of an organization, in the form of the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association, that we could draw on to build the museum membership. It is amazing that so many people have come together for this ship, and have donated so much money to make two trips to the shipyard possible, and still leave us with a sizeable endowment.



You have to start somewhere. Lou Yacullo and the Manhattan Crew

The SOLDESA (Statue of Liberty Chapter) crew chipped an amazing



What did I get myself into?

Tim with founding Trustee Ray Windle shortly after his arrival in Albany.

amount of paint, but when I came to Albany in 1997, on a one-year leave of absence from USS KIDD, she was still a rust-bucket, with only \$5,000 in the bank. I thought the job was to restore the ship but, though I didn't realize it at the time, the real job was building a base of support. We created a simple business plan: make people love the ship and beg them for money. How to do that? Get a newsletter going and communicate, which we did, first through print and the post office. Then we added email, and now we utilize all the forms of social media that are available.



Rocky and Roy restored the motor whaleboat.

Establishing a large support base and frequent communication has been one of the primary reasons we are where we are today. There is a saying that goes, “Success begets success.” We kept our supporters engaged and informed with Trim But Deadly, Slater Signals, and Facebook. Individuals, organizations, and local businesses also provided their essential support. This support includes our annual Fort Orange Club Fundraiser and the Winter Fund.

The history of this project is that the right people always seem to step up to the plate at the critical time. Probably the most important thing that we did early on was to establish extremely high standards for the restoration. In the beginning it seemed hopeless. However, now the results are visible to everyone who walks aboard. Early lead volunteers like **Gus Negus, Gary Sheedy, Doug Tanner, Jerry Jones, Don Bulger, Roy Gunther, “Rocky” Rockwood, and Barry Witte** set high standards and led by example.



When we couldn't afford tugboats to make our annual move to Rensselaer, first Bart Brake, then Don-Jon Marine stepped up to donate towing.

We always seemed to be blessed by having the right volunteer arrive just at the right time to accomplish critical tasks. Before I knew what the Internet was, **Mike Stencil** had our website up and running. When we were flooded with donated artifacts in the early days, **Pat Perrella** stepped up to get the collection organized. When our accounting was a mess, **Rosehn Gipe** came aboard on staff to get us organized. When they brought in that wreck of a trailer, tour guide **Charles Minor** volunteered to lead the effort to rebuild it. When we had our fire aboard in 2006, the insurance adjustor wanted to total the ship because of damage to the wiring. **Gary Sheedy** and **Barry Witte** led the crew in replacing it. When **Paul Czesak** had the idea for the dining out fundraiser, **Doris Fischer** stepped in to organize it, giving us the template that we still use today.



Doug Tanner and Spec Consulting supervised the installation of the mooring dolphins.



Our maintenance volunteers get the job done.

Not many people now remember the effort of installing the sixteen four-ton mooring camels at the beginning of each season. And then lifting them out in the fall, thanks to **Bob Cross providing a crane crew. How can we thank **Doug Tanner**, the bedrock of our maintenance program, for the planning and oversight he gave to the mooring dolphin installation. That eliminated the arduous**

and dangerous task of lifting those old, waterlogged camels.

However, no discussion of having the right people step up at the right time would be complete without looking back on a history of our leadership. First, it was **Marty Davis**, crazy enough to think we could bring a ship back from Greece, balanced by the stability and focus of **Sam Saylor**. When USS SLATER needed a home, it was **Kevin Lynch** who encouraged **Mayor Jennings** to take the risk and bring the ship to Albany. And then **Barb Higbee** opened the initial doors, before passing the project on to **Frank Lasch**. Frank stabilized the Board of Trustees, created the endowment, and brought his successors aboard, **BJ Costello** and **Tony Esposito**, who have put us where we are today.



Marty Davis, Sam Saylor, and Mayor Jennings.

Dick Briel, Ron Zarem, and George Amandola stepped up to organize the first volunteer work weeks.



Michigan Work Week 2002

That required the establishment of shipboard hotel services. In the early years, the technical volunteers prioritized lights, heat, cooking, compressed air, running water, and sewage systems. Without those, the rest of the restoration would not have been possible.

Without these “hotel” services, the Michigan and Huse work crews would not have happened. Our overnight camping program could not have happened. Those crews made huge contributions to the maintenance effort.

We established a sizeable stock of spare parts when the old ships were still available to strip. In the early years, many volunteers paid their own way to go to the mothball ships and built up a supply of WWII authentic parts that allowed us to restore the ship as authentically as possible. We have sufficient parts to keep the ship well-maintained for another decade or two.



SLATER tour guides are here for you rain or shine.



Tim and Ed have been restoring ships together for over 40 years.

Aside from the exquisitely detailed restoration the volunteers have done, look beyond at the hard-core preservation. We had **Ed Zajkowski** aboard, to shepherd us through two shipyard dry dockings. The efforts of the volunteers have given us two working diesel generators, and a working fire pump. They completely rebuilt two expansion joints. The things I'm most proud of are the repainted bilges in B-3 and B-4, and the fact that we painted out the void under the



Shanna & Jo Ann are the dynamic duo of trailer operations.

steering gear compartment. We've had the mast hydro-blasted and restored. We installed a completely new state of the art fire alarm system last year. **Jim Gelston** continues to wind and set all 25 clocks weekly, to keep us on time. Not many ships get into that kind of preservation.

That tradition of the right person stepping up at the right time continues to this day. Our program manager, **Shanna Shuster**, has set her sights on merchandising and online fundraising to make up for the loss of visitor income.

Most importantly, the cumulative effort of her tour guides has resulted in USS SLATER becoming the top-rated "Thing to do in Albany," according to TripAdvisor. Consistently excellent reviews are something we are all to be proud of. When Rosehn's departure left a void in our accounting, **Diane Watters** stepped in to train our data base manager, **Jo Ann Mulligan**, on how to keep the books. We are now functioning as smoothly as ever.

We lost one of our longest serving volunteers this month with the passing of Bob Callender. It seems Bob has been a fixture here, ever since USS SLATER came to Albany. He occupied the outboard forward seat in the CPO mess every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday morning. He started as part of the electrical/mechanical gang. He had served as an



Bob Callender kept track of our volunteer hours for 20 years.

engineman aboard USS KYNE (DE-744). His favorite story was bidding farewell to his family following bootcamp and reporting to the ship in Brooklyn. To the unexpected surprise of his family, he returned home the next day on weekend leave. Following his naval service Bob attended Albany State Teachers College, and then following an insurance career, retired from the Traveler's Insurance Company. When he got too old to do maintenance aboard ship, he took to diligently keeping track of our volunteer hours, handing me a report of the total hours at the end of each month. We must now find someone to step up and fill that slot. Our deepest condolences go out to Bernie and Bob's family.



Frank Lasch took over as Chairman of the Board and established our endowment fund in 1999.



That mast restoration sure looks good on her.

Our deepest condolences go out to Bernie and Bob's family.

And now we look to you to step up. Please support our dedicated core of volunteers, first in Manhattan, and now in Albany, who have lavished their talents on this ship ever since she arrived from Greece in 1993. The fact is, that in addition to the admission revenue lost, we cannot hold our Fort Orange Club Fundraiser, and that means the loss of an estimated \$30,000 of revenue. As always, I personally pledge \$100

dollars from my next paycheck to the Winter Fund Drive. In addition, we anticipate 100% participation from our Board of Trustees in underwriting the work that the volunteers do.

I urge you to do the same. If you can do more, then please do so. If you can't do as much, please do what you can. Thanks to you, while other ships were forced to shut down due to Covid-19, the income stream you provided enabled us to continue "Steaming as before," and even fund \$600,000 of our \$800,000 overhaul at the shipyard. Please, continue to show the kind of support you've given us in the past. We can't do it without you.

Please be as generous as you can to our Winter Fund Drive.

See you next month,

Tim



You can see this photo, by the Albany Fire Department, every day on our 2021 Calendar.

The calendars are for sale in our Ship's Store (www.ussslater.org)