

## **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Episode – SLATER Volunteers**

**John Epp**

Hello everyone and welcome to *DE Classified* a podcast showcasing the history of Destroyer Escorts. Each month a member of USS SLATER's education crew will highlight a specific Destroyer Escort and share the stories of the sailors who served aboard these Trim But Deadly ships. This month we've got a special episode for you. In honor of USS SLATER's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of her arrival in Albany we are celebrating the backbone of our organization, the volunteers. The men and women who restore, maintain, clean, and lead tours aboard SLATER are the reason we are considered one of the best ships in the historic fleet. Today we are going to DE Classify the volunteers of USS SLATER.

For 25 years, USS SLATER (DE-766) has called Albany, NY home. At 78 years old, the SLATER, by all accounts, should not be around. She should be razorblades or home to ocean-life as an artificial reef. Designed and built cheaply during World War II, SLATER and her sister ship destroyer escorts were meant to serve in a temporary capacity protecting merchant vessels and other warships as they transited the oceans. At no point in their construction was thought given to preservation as a museum. But SLATER has defied the odds and father time, to become a model of maritime preservation. Throughout her nearly 30 years as a museum, one constant has remained the same: the volunteers.

Before SLATER even left Greece in 1993 for New York City, members of the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association began the grass-root volunteerism necessary for a former warship to become a museum: you must get the ship. Through their members and fundraising efforts, nearly \$300,000 was secured to cover the cost of hiring an ocean-going tug to safely tow SLATER through the Mediterranean Sea, across the Atlantic Ocean and into New York City. Oh, and not to mention insuring the entire venture. Prior

to anybody stepping aboard the ship to begin chipping paint or restoring electricity, hundreds, if not thousands, of volunteers opened their checkbooks to bring SLATER home.

In talking with some of the volunteers who first saw SLATER when she came back to the United States, the first thing they always say is how much of a rust bucket she was. “The rust was rusting,” said one volunteer. There was no electricity on board the ship and the Greeks had stripped anything of use off her before they handed the ship over to the Destroyer Escort Historical Foundation. Not only would a group of aging volunteers need to get the ship looking nice, but they were also going to need to find things to fill the compartments! Not to mention organizing tours to bring through the ship. From 1993 – 1997, the New York City volunteers and staff of the Intrepid Air and Space Museum, worked tirelessly to bring life back to a World War II ship long past her expiration date. To say it was an uphill battle would be an understatement. Many of the volunteers acknowledged that they would probably never live to see the day SLATER was fully restored. A lot of these men and women will go unnamed. They never sought acknowledgement for their blood, sweat, and tears. They simply wanted to bring an old girl back to life and honor those that served.

Fast forward to 1997. The SLATER had to find a new city to call home. Mayor Gerald “Jerry” Jennings realized the SLATER represented an opportunity to bring tourism to a capitol city that had fallen on hard times. He offered Albany, NY as her new home. As it turns out, this was one of the best things to ever happen to the little destroyer escort. At first glance, Albany doesn’t seem like the first place you would think of for a World War II Museum. But that’s if you have never lived here. Sure, there is no hiding the fact

that Albany can't compete with New York City for population, money, or tourism. But the city dates back to 1614 when Dutch traders-built Fort Nassau for fur trading. Albany was in the perfect location for traders sailing the Hudson River. Up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city remained an important center of commerce thanks to the Erie Canal connecting the western part of the state to New York City.

The other thing Albany has that New York City doesn't is fresh water. Ships will degrade quicker in salt water than they do in fresh water. By homeporting SLATER in Albany, the life of the ship has been prolonged. But the common theme in all of this is the volunteers. As the only ship centered museum in the Capital Region, the interest in helping has never wavered. From the moment the ship tied up at the Port of Albany, volunteers from all walks of life have contributed to making the SLATER the successful museum she is today. From selling tickets and merchandise under an awning in the parking lot to the bilge divers and mast climbers and everyone in between. Because of the contributions of an untold number of individuals, veteran groups, and businesses, the SLATER has been self-supporting from day 1 and never requires any government support.

Stepping on board today, in 2022, visitors get to see first-hand the result of over two decades of work. The electricity and plumbing works, bookshelves and tables are fully stocked, and the naval guns still move. But unless they do some deep diving into our history, it's hard to see just how much work has gone into the ship. While the SLATER is first and foremost a museum dedicated to educating the public on the impact of destroyer escorts and their crews, the restoration process itself is museum worthy.

Each month, a newsletter is published by the museum and sent out to thousands of museum members and others that have shown extra interest in the ship. Titled SLATER

SIGNALS, this newsletter is 100% free to you and is available for reading on our website [ussslater.org](http://ussslater.org). At the top of the page, select Publications, and enjoy hours of reading. If you don't feel like waiting for it to go live on our website, you can get it directly in your email inbox. Just contact us and we will be happy to add you to the list!

Written by our Executive Director, Timothy Rizzuto, SLATER SIGNALS is a treasure trove of information and pictures documenting the progress of the ship from 1998 – present day. When it was first published, it was (and is still) meant to be a way of saying thank you to our supporters and showing them where their donations are going. But now, after 25 years, it has become a resource for tracing the history of SLATER in her new life as a museum ship. If I was to explain each item done to the ship over her 25 years in Albany, it would take 25 years! So, what follows are a few selections from each year.

Let's travel back in time to January 1998, Volume 1, number 1. I was a few months shy of my 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was lucky to be potty trained, let alone aware that 25 years from then I would be working on a World War II ship. But this isn't about me, it's about the dedication of our volunteers. In those first few months in Albany, the museum didn't have all the fancy tools and equipment necessary to restore the ship. From the first days of SLATER's volunteer program in Albany, the men and women of the area showed up with their own tools and equipment. Before electricity was restored aboard the ship, they brought their own generators to help and spent their own money on gas. Since the ship's electrical system had not been restored during her New York City years, generators were needed for things as simple as brewing coffee. So, one of the first major projects identified was the cleaning of the electrical distribution boards and circuit breakers. This was needed to remove years of built-up grease and oil film. A diagram of the electrical system was

undertaken. Within a month, the electrical switchboards and circuit breakers were all cleaned and most of the lighting circuits were inspected.

Assistance from local and state agencies was provided whenever asked. The Albany Police dive team volunteered their services to inspect the area of the river now home to the ship. They made sure the water was deep enough and clear of potentially hazardous debris that may damage the ship. The New York State National Guard provided a crane to move a generator donated by the NYS Office of Emergency Management onto the ship. Over the next two decades, the Albany Water Department would be instrumental in volunteering their cranes and employees to help move heavy equipment onto the ship. The Port of Albany volunteered their tugs twice a year to move SLATER from her summertime berth to a winter berth further down river. They covered the cost and continued offering their services until the museum was able to install mooring dolphins in the river. Now, SLATER stays in one place year-round. Without the assistance of these agencies and countless others, SLATER may not have succeeded in those early years.

By April of 1998, lighting was restored throughout the ship. Hundreds of people flocked to tour the ship each day no matter the weather. New restoration volunteers were recruited from these tours and some still report aboard today to work. With the turning on of lights, electric paint chippers were able to be used. Chipping, priming, and painting the decks and bulkheads is a never-ending cycle. By the time you make your way down the length of the ship, something you had painted 6 months prior is ready to be painted again! 25 years later, the sound of chipping paint is still heard. Heck, on the morning I am writing this Ron Frankosky, a volunteer dating back to 1995 in New York City, was

chipping and priming the 20 mm ready ammunition lockers on the 01 Deck. As long as SLATER is still around, we will need people to handle a needle gun and paint brush.

If you have ever toured the ship or seen photographs, you will see equipment such as radar antennas, search lights, desks, fans, radios, etc. I think it is important to recognize that a lot of this equipment is not original to SLATER. During her 40 years of service in the Greek Navy, a lot of stuff was removed and “modernized,” as is expected. When SLATER was brought back to become a museum, 1945 was chosen as the target restoration date. By the nineties, most of the original WWII equipment had been removed. Fortunately, there still existed period naval ships in reserve fleets across the country. When these ships are chosen to be scrapped, the Navy will often invite museum ships down to take what they want for their own vessel. Otherwise, it will end up at a scrap yard or on the ocean floor. Barry Witte, Ron Frankowsky and Scott Dessingue made a four-day run to Portsmouth to obtain lifeline cables and turnbuckles, talkers' helmets, circuit breakers and other electrical spares from the old WILLIAM. C. LAWE (DD763) and an old LST in the James River Reserve Fleet. Chris Nardi of the Battleship Massachusetts had the gear off loaded and drove the truck back north with it. It adds up to about a ton of very scarce gear. Other museum ships such as the Battleship Massachusetts and the submarine PAMPANITO, to name a couple, have been instrumental in helping scavenge necessary pieces for SLATER's restoration.

The mast received some love in these early years as well. Tom Beeler and Hack Charbonneau removed a large platform on the yardarm that was added in the seventies and installed a lower platform to eventually mount the FMC bullhorn. 1,000 pounds of steel was removed from the mast without the use of a crane. Both flag bags were removed and

lowered to the 01 level to be repaired and painted. Roy Gunther repaired and painted nearly everything in the Wardroom pantry. This included mounting the refrigerator door, painting the drawers, and fabricating a dish rack. Gordon Lattey and his team removed all the post-war equipment from the radio room. The "Three Fuses", Barry Witte, Gary Sheedy, and Larry Williams reactivated the forward and aft ventilation systems. Tony Dude and his engineers began their work to get the Emergency generator running. 25 years later, it is still in running condition.

The Department of Transportation offered their crane services to install a 35' steel gangway and cleaned up the ragged cuts from where the Greek torpedo deck had been installed and subsequently removed in New York City. Even the Coast Guard has had a hand in SLATER's restoration. The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter STURGEON BAY came alongside starboard for three days to attend the Rensselaer River Festival. While here, her crew of Coasties got to work scaling the port roller loaders, weld the flag bags in place, and cleaned the exterior bulkheads. During this time, a future volunteer named Doug Tanner came aboard for a tour. A former Coastie, he was so impressed that he has yet to leave!

Fundraising is a never-ending job for all museums. Over the years, we have been fortunate to received grants to help off-set the cost of restoration. A \$90,000 grant from the NYS Division of Parks and Recreation was received to paint the hull above the water line. Since then, other grants have enabled us to dry-dock SLATER twice for hull and mast work, purchase equipment and tools to make the ship more accurate to 1945, and even a grant to build a new shoreside facility.

At the end of 1998, Roy Gunther (DD-711) and SLATER crew member Don Norris traveled to the reserve fleet in the James River, Virginia and returned with wardroom, stateroom, and electrical fittings along with four ships clocks. Roy, Bob Callender (DE-744), Al Urquhardt, Leo Charbonneau (DE-531), Larry Williams (DE-246), and Gordon Lattey returned to the James River reserve fleet and scavenged four 25-man (400 lbs. each) balsa life rafts, mattresses, pillows, life jackets, electrical parts, mess trays, and dishes from the GENERAL WALKER (T-AP-125).

Gordon Lattey, Roy Gunther, Gus Negus (SS-347), Chris Fedden (DD-711), Frank Perrella (DE-326) and his wife Pat Perrella traveled to the James River reserve fleet and scrounged 14 stainless steel sinks, a galley steam kettle, 8 interior hatches, radio equipment, sound powered phones, flag bag letter boards, lamp shades, electrical receptacles...the list goes on and on. Gus retrieved a treasure trove of parts for SLATER's engines. If you have ever served on these ships, you will be happy to know your ship lives on at the SLATER!

In many compartments throughout the ship, the Greeks had laid down tile. It will take many years for all of it to be taken up. Even today, in 2022, tile remains in the captain's personal head. In the galley, concrete was removed by Gary Sheedy with the help of a jackhammer. It's a miracle he didn't go through the deck! Even our director Tim was caught on camera shoveling the chunks of concrete off the ship!

Don Martin (DE-186), Dick Smith (DE-5), and Earl Gillette (DE-441) worked to chip and paint the aft head and showers. The painting crew from the Michigan DESA chapter scaled and primed the fantail, quarterdeck, K guns, and the 01 level. The forward life raft racks port and starboard of the superstructure were mounted. The WWII sinks were

mounted in the aft washroom. Chris Nardi of Battle MASSACHUSETTS donated a plotting table for CIC. Starboard shaft alley leak was repaired thanks to Doug Tanner and Jude Gosh (USS Saipan).

Thanks to the \$90,000 grant from the NYS Division of Parks and Recreation, hull painting is about halfway completed by June 2000. Four 10-hour workdays involved using vacuum-shrouded needle guns to chip Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Painting was done on Thursday. The starboard head aft has been re-insulated and has been chipped in preparation for painting and installation of the trough. John Waechter and Barry Witte got the anchor windlass working and tested it by walking the port anchor out and then stopped. The brakes held!

Doug Tanner replaced a 2' x 8' steel plate starboard side where the laundry room is. The Greeks had overlaid a plate with the AETOS name. Corrosion caused the original steel of the ship to become paper thin. A nice picture window was in the laundry for a bit. Roy Gunther has started working with Scarano Boat Building in Albany to rebuild the motor whaleboat. A new engine and transmission were purchased for eventual installation. He has also gotten the davits swinging freely to raise and lower the boat from the ship. With Tim on vacation, the volunteers continued the never-ending painting jobs. Gene brought his sprayer and sprayed a light coat of haze gray over the entire portside deckhouse from stem to stern. Tommy Moore continued painting the boot. Barry and Gary worked on restoring lighting to the after-crew's quarters. Gary is also thinking about restoring the reefer deck. Turns out, this would become nearly a 10-year project. The hull painters put a chisel through the side into C-203L two feet above the waterline. A 2" x 18"

patch fixed that. The motor whaleboat has been caulked and painted and is nearly ready to return to the ship.

Rolling into 2001, MK14 gun sights for the Oerlikon 20mm anti-aircraft guns being repainted inside the mess deck. All electrical box on the ship also restored to brand new condition. Three coppers, a potato peeler and a splash plate were all reinstalled in the galley now that the tile and concrete had been removed. Ship's deck cleaned and painted from bow to stern. Everywhere else on the ship, chipping and painting continues.

In January 2002, Tim, Chris Fedden, Beth and Mark Spain traveled to the James River Reserve Fleet to scavenge from the troop transport GENERAL NELSON M. WALKER. The scrapper that had bid on it had defaulted on the pickup and this gave the SLATER crew another chance at finding some goodies. Chris Nardi from the Battleship MASSACHUSETTS offered his assistance. Dozens of bunks, mattresses, fart sacks and bunk chains were gathered. Office chairs, vent diffuser covers, vent inspection covers, a DRT bag, fans, a battle lantern, lampshades, a rolling pin, a radio desk lamp, two dozen life jackets, dust pants, anchor balls, a line gun reminder, 50 whistles, bunk straps, and a weighted canvas bag for the radio room. Chris Nardi and his crew brought everything up to Albany a few days later. Ed Whitbeck, Dennis Morrissey and Rich Pavlovick have been chipping the reefer deck. Rafael Saurez and Erik Collin are doing their own chipping in the IC passageway. A motor generator set for the transmitter in the radio room is being installed as well.

The pilothouse has been completely chipped and holes were found. The shipfitters were called upon to replace three 2' x 2' patches. Jerry Jones and Don Bulger got the motor generator installed inside the radio room. Jerry also fabricated a steel workbench to place

over it. Hal Hatfield and his shop fabricated a platform for the rangefinder to sit upon on the flying bridge. In the Machine Shop, the English Harrison lathe installed by the Greeks was repaired and now works. It was a replacement for the original 13" South Bend lathe. The Navy agreed to donate 36 inert MK9 depth charges to the ship. DESA covered the \$5,500 shipping and handling cost.

Ron Zarem, Tim Markham, and Chuck Green chipped the machine shop. It took them four days to complete and a day to repair the insulation. It was painted by the USS HUSE crew. On the flying bridge, Dick Walker, Dave March, John Clark, Ron Mazur, and Bob Donlon began restoring the sound shack and fire control shack. Jim Lerner (USS DAY) and his daughter used white primer on the entire reefer deck that had recently been chipped. Former SLATER radioman, Don Norris, took the new (old) trailer project under his wing. AC units and windows were donated, and the trailer was properly leveled. Frank Beeler (USS SAVANNAH) made it his mission to get Gun 33 moving. Jerry Jones recorded bells and pipes and set it up to announce every 30 minutes. You can still hear them 20 years later. New chucks are being acquired after one was found to be rusted to hell.

SLATER veteran Norm Sullivan and his kids came up to help paint. Greg Krawczyk, who is in Korea, was able to gather a few items from the former USS CAVALLARO prior to her sinking as a target. This included an entire 1MC amplifier rack, two lube oil purifiers, a low-pressure air compressor, a complete "K" Gun and roller loader, a load of circuit breakers and meters for the electrical panels, and more gear for the MK 52 radar room.

It's now 2003. In the warmth of the machine shop, Gary Sheedy overhauled the needle guns, Russ Ferrer was working on a furnace repair, Larry LaChance machined studs for a valve for the fire and bilge pumps in B-4. Barry Witte, Mike Ripley, and George Doin mounted a restored electrical box in the mess decks. Doug Tanner spent the day in the fuel oil tanks ventilating and gas freeing them. Dennis Nagi worked on fabricating new wooden tops for the mess deck tables with drop leaves. In the radio room, Joe Breyer, Jerry Jones, Walt Stolte and Don Bulger continued their work on the TAJ transmitter. Rafael Suarez and Steve Hurley worked to scale sick bay, an area without heat. In forward berthing, A-205L, Chris Fedden, Dick Smith, Ed Whitbeck and Dennis Morrissey scaled the overhead and Gene Jackey grinded down the weld marks from her forty years of Greek modifications. In B-3, Bill Siebert, Bill Coyle, Frank Beeler, and Bob Lawrence worked to get the 8-cylinder generator up and running. Thanks to their efforts, it still runs great 20 years later. We recently turned it on after two years and filmed it. You can see it run on our YouTube channel.

The superstructure was repainted thanks to the Michigan DESA chapter and the USS HUSE crew. Clem Vaughn made repairs to the sickbay cabinets and fabricated a new windshield for the flying bridge. An examining table and medicine bottle rack for sickbay along with an SA radar scope was given to the ship from the Battleship Massachusetts. An autoclave from USS GAGE (APA-168) was also installed. Sick Bay looks just about ready to accept patients! Memorial service for Captain Blancq was held and the SLATER crew held their reunion.

The reefer deck restoration started by Gary Sheedy is slowly coming along. A month into 2005, the portside storeroom has been chipped and is ready to be painted. This room

has now become Gary's electrician's shop. The laundry room, aft, was also chipped in preparation for painting. This room will also fall under the care of Gary. A fixture on all Navy ships are battle lanterns. The restoration of SLATER could not be complete without the installation of working battle lanterns. Barry Witte took this project under his wing and did a lot of the work in his kitchen. Today, all of the battle lanterns you see on tour work thanks to the skillful work of Barry.

A new range has been installed in the Galley and a septic tank has also found a home on SLATER. Prior to this, all sewage had been pumped into a former fuel tank and then removed via a septic company when needed. With a septic pump installed, we were able to connect directly into the city's sewage system. Work continued on the motor whaleboat; sanding of the portside has been completed along with caulking and painting. A new rudder is being fabricated.

Down in the reefer deck, all the shelving has been reinstalled after being painted. And in the B-4 Motor Room, work continues to get the Emergency Generator operational thanks to parts stripped from USS Sunbird (ASR-15), USS Kittiwake (ASR-13) and USS Preserver (ARS-8).

2006 opened with a doozy! Around 1100, volunteers were welding outside the CPO Mess when a fire started. Because of the enclosed space, smoke quickly filled the passageway and made its way up and into the superstructure. The fire department was called, and they quickly dispatched the flames. Fire damage was limited to a corner, but smoke damage was extensive. This was a wakeup call for us and new welding and fire watch procedures were instituted. Nothing like that has happened since. A contractor, Quick Response, got to work beginning the cleanup from the fire. They removed the racks

and mattresses from CPO mess and brought them to their warehouse for cleaning. CPO Mess, the passageway, and Officer's Country got a good scrub down with soap and hot water in preparation for repainting.

A contact of Tim's alerted him to a QJB sonar stack from USS LOESER (DE-680) for sale on eBay. The asking price was a little steep for the museum. The National Association of Sonar Veterans heard about it through the grapevine and did a fundraising campaign through their members. Enough money was raised to purchase it and 15 years later, it still resides aboard SLATER. Field trips were made to the James River Reserve Fleet as well as to Philadelphia to strip the last remaining WWII ships before they went to the scrappers. A lot of spare electrical and diesel parts were scrounged. Ventilation motor controllers, wooden clock bases, compartment fans, sink faucets, and four toilet seats for the officer's head. Tim was assigned to toilet duty. A SL surface radar for CIC, a TBL transmitter, and a wardroom bookcase was acquired from USS CLAMP (ARS-33).

The SLATER crew went south to strip the old cruiser DES MOINES. 1MC speakers, WWII steel battle lanterns, compartment fans, sound powered telephone headsets and jack boxes, two target bearing indicators, battle helmets and lines, kapok life jackets, vent diffusers, mess trays, spare parts for the GM 278A engines, two portable examination tables for the battle dressing stations, and two typewriter desks, to name some of the haul. 20 1.5" fire hoses were removed and are now on display on SLATER as are two desks for the ship's office. Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Karl Herchenroder, Gus Negus, Gary Lubrano, Jerry Jones, Barry Witte, Chuck Longshore, and five midshipmen traveled to the carrier FORRESTAL in Newport, Rhode Island. They salvaged fire main valves,

washroom sinks, a refrigerator for the wardroom pantry, compartment fans, and spare parts for the GM 16-278A.

2007 and the Combat Information Center has become a focus. Some of the original equipment that would have been found in here has been reinstalled and restored to look like they work. The chart table has also been rebuilt. Elsewhere, the aft passageway has been stripped of tile and repainted. Some of the 20 mm and 3-inch guns have been painted and look ready for service. A crane was brought in to remount the 20 mm ready service lockers on to the 01 deck. The crane was also used to lift two desks aboard to be placed in the Ship's Office. These had been scavenged from the DES MOINES and are still used today.

The museum does its best not to modify the ship in a manner that is different from 1945 or that would make it harder for future generations to maintain SLATER. One of the exceptions to this rule has been the installation of two watertight hatches into the bulkheads between the aft engine room and aft motor room. It was decided to do this to make it easier and safer for our volunteers to perform their work and eliminate the risk of falling down a vertical ladder. The easier access to these spaces has also enabled us to bring tours into the engine rooms. This extra tour has been extremely popular, and visitors are always amazed to see the ship's engines up close. A lot of the cosmetic restoration of the aft engine and motor room happened in 2007. Today, the compartments still look immaculate!

2008 was rung in with the removal of wasted metal in the forward crew's head. Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Joe Breyer, Clark Farnsworth, Chuck Teal, and Nelson Potter, 500

pounds of wasted steel and equipment were removed. With the “fun” work done, the space is now ready for painting and refurbishing.

Barry Witte and Gordon Lattey led a group of volunteers to the James River Reserve Fleet for the final spring strip trip. They were assisted by a group of sailors from the carrier USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT CVN71, in an arrangement Barry worked out with their Chief Engineer Commander Larry Scruggs. Chief James McPherson, and sailors DCFN John Pike, DCFA Crystal Latham, DCFN James Justin, FR Roxanne Raley, DCFN Mark Hazzard and DCFA Matt Bailey worked three days with Barry, Gordon and Adam Shaker to remove and offload over 2500 pounds of parts and materials for use in the SLATER's restoration. The junior enlisted sailors were hard working and energetic, and Chief McPherson proved himself a dynamic "take charge" leader in the best "Old Navy" tradition, who managed to keep the others motivated and productive throughout the three-day evolution. The parts ranged from mess benches to light fixtures, to old style lockers and spools of armored cable. One of the most surprising finds was ceramic soap dishes and holders that Latham and Raley found. Three of them have already been cleaned up and put on display. Gordon Lattey and crew made one final trip to USS GAGE. Only days before the ship was set to be opened for scrapping bids, the Maritime Commission gave the SLATER permission to remove six watertight hatches. These are the same type used on SLATER and a few have been installed since.

Fire controlman Mike Marko took apart MK-51 director for mount 43 with the help of electrician's mate Butch Warrender and Dick Walker. They found the problem to be frozen synchros and bearings. Once they disassembled, cleaned, and reassembled the

assembly, it is now freely moving. Since then, Mike has done the same on the other two MK-51 Directors.

2009 came in cold and icy. After shoveling and plowing snow for most of the month, a lot of work is going on in the aft engineering spaces. New handrails and deck plates are being installed for future tours and work to get everything ready for chipping begins. In the forward head, work is getting closer and closer to being finished. A wasted section of steel was removed from the hull, filling the space with even more cold Albany air. The hole that was cut seems to be in an area that was already patched decades ago by the Greeks.

Gary Sheedy continues his multi-year restoration of the Reefer Deck. He has replaced the second bronze condenser into its brackets in the overhead and is now working on the motor controllers. Nearly everything has been polished; if you dare take a trek down there, you may want to consider sunglasses!

Another salvaging field trip was made this year. Barry Witte, Gordon Lattey, Dave Mardon, Bill Siebert, Tim Rizzuto and three of Barry's former students made the trek to Jacksonville, NC to strip LSM-45. A lot of AC electrical equipment was removed for spare parts. This included the entire electrical distribution board, two diesel heat exchangers, a diesel starter, light switches, motor controllers, pumps, canvas pipe bunks, engine room deck plates, a lighting transformer, an AC dough mixer, engine room meters and gauges, two twin 40 mm receivers, elevation springs and locking pins for the 20 mms.

We are often asked if our radar and sonar is still operable. While our radar is spinning, it isn't transmitting anything; it's just for show. But in 2009, our sonar was briefly used!

I'm going to copy the details word-for-word from SLATER SIGNALS August 2009, volume 12, number 8:

“**Greg Shippie**, former STG1 who served in CALCATERRA, came down from Vermont to get the SQS-4 going in passive mode for the Japanese movie. The sonar presentation played a major role in the movie. In the course of working on the gear he discovered that SLATER's sonar was still the low powered 115-volt version of the SQS-4 and had never been modified with the Rotational Directional Transmission (RDT) upgrade, so it didn't require the water cooler that the higher-powered versions did. Thus, SLATER actually has one of the few active sonars that could be made operational. He returned to the SLATER with **Dick Ross**, another KENNEDY refugee. **Greg is retired from Raytheon and has a great deal of experience with sonar.** Dick still works for Raytheon as a field tech, and they send him all over the world repairing and upgrading Navy sonar gear installed on foreign ships. He is well acquainted with the shipyard in Souda Bay, Crete. On August 24th they arrived onboard the SLATER with the intent to continue the restoration of the modified AN/SQS-4 Sonar. Their intent was to restore the active transmit mode of operation. Monday the 24th saw some minor repairs to the transmitter unit and much testing of power supplies in this unit. Tuesday morning at about 0930 the sonar sent a 400 cycle CW tone into the Hudson River. By 1030 hours the sonar was transmitting regular 12kc sonar pings in its normal mode of operation. Having used only about half of their allotted time, they decided to bring the AN/UQN-1 (Gertrude or Gerty) underwater phone back to life. By the time that they departed the Slater at 1130 hours on the Wednesday, both the AN/SQS-4 and the AN/UQN-1 were operating in both the transmit and receive modes of operation. They had also hoped to get the fathometer

back in operation. The fathometer is divided into five pieces including a motor generator set. They located only two of the units. The indicator was in CIC in relatively good shape. They found the transmit oscillator stowed under the work bench in the lower sound room. It seems that **Mr. Sheedy** had removed it from its original location on the reefer deck to install an electric heater so he could stay comfy in the winter. The unit was pretty well trashed internally. The other components were never located, so they don't hold out much hope for the Raytheon fathometer, which is an original 1944 piece of gear. Again, our thanks go to **Will Donzelli** who provided the tech manual last year. We couldn't have done it without him."

After reading this from the August SIGNALS, **Rich Pekelney, Tom Horsfall and Peter Papadakos** made another trip to the CLAMP. Aboard her Tom and Rich recovered a near pristine depth sounder transmitter, the guts of the receiver in fair condition and a beat up indicator for SLATER.

I'm going to read word-for-word again from SLATER SIGNALS, this time December 2009. Tim wrote an excellent update to the near decade long restoration project that was the Reefer Deck by Gary Sheedy. Bear with me.

"A Google search of "Slater Signals," "Sheedy" and "Reefer Deck" shows us that Gary started the project back in January of 2001. Now for most of us, this would be a six-month project but, given Gary's high standard of restoration, it didn't look like he would ever finish. But this year, as autumn drew to a close, Gary felt like he was turning the corner and the end was finally in sight. All the bulkheads have been chipped and painted white. The deck has been chipped and painted red. All the pipe insulation has been repaired and painted white. The compressor bases are chipped and painted metallic silver gray and have been remounted. The

first compressor has been restored to like new condition and remounted. Missing parts and valves were obtained from the LSM-45. All the gauges, instrumentation and piping have been cleaned, restored, and shined and are in Gary's home shop awaiting installation.

**He's finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel after almost nine years.** The place will be a showpiece and there won't be any place on the SLATER that can compare to Gary's exquisite restoration job. And he's even making plans to restore the reefers. He's spent the last nine years collecting period looking vegetable crates, fruit crates and boxes for his reefer display. One section will be his display space, one cooler will continue to house Rosehn's financial records, and one cooler will be Gary's personal tool room.

**There was just one little problem, an annoying little stream of water that would occasionally appear from pinholes in the bulkhead between the coolers and the machinery flat.** That, coupled with the fact that the coolers always seemed a little damp, didn't seem like a big deal. A lesser man would have ignored it. But **Gary Sheedy** isn't a lesser man, and **Gary Sheedy** couldn't ignore it. He just had to find out where that water was coming from.

**So, with the end in sight and the restoration of the reefer decks coming down to remounting the gages, polishing the copper and hanging the pinups, Gary went into the starboard cooler and started ripping out the false decking.** Carefully of course, so it could be replaced. Carefully drilling out one pop rivet at a time. When he had enough of the decking out to slip his hand in there, what he felt wasn't encouraging. The false deck contained about six inches of fiberglass insulation. Very wet fiberglass insulation.

**Gary, the perfectionist who has been working on this project for nine years, dutifully removed all the sheet metal decking in the starboard cooler and began pulling out the**

**sodden fiberglass by hand. It was all bagged and hauled ashore to the dumpster, sack full after sack full.** The corrosion revealed under that fiberglass was a bit unnerving to say the least. The ship lays with about a one-degree list to starboard because the Greeks removed the donkey boilers and the evaporator, all located on the portside in B-2. Thus, the heaviest amounts of water had been lying against the starboard shell plating in the reefer, right below the waterline, with the fiberglass acting as a big damp sponge. That shell plating was only a quarter-inch original build. The idea that the damp fiberglass had eaten through the shell plating at the waterline seemed like a very real possibility.

**Thus, it was with great trepidation that Gary rigged a dehumidifier and waited for the results.** Over the course of the following week the compartment slowly dried out, and the water did not return. It looks like we have been spared for now. Gary enlisted **Chris Fedden** and **Ron Mazure** to help him needle gun the deck, with instructions not to go at the side shell plating with anything heavier than a putty knife. After some severe beating with a needle gun, the deck turned out to be solid, with no holes. No such pressure was applied to the side plating. A coat of Corroseal, then primer, and then Gary will reinstall the false deck. While the scaling was going on in the starboard cooler, Gary set about to tackle the forward centerline cooler. The crew hauled twenty boxes of **Rosehn's** financial records up to the berthing space, and in the process found our Christmas tree, which we set up and decorated on the mess decks. Gary set about removing the false decking there, following the same process of removing, bagging, and disposing of the fiberglass, and then drying the space out. It wasn't as sodden as the starboard cooler, but it was far from dry. After a week under dehumidification the space was bone-dry.

**Now that the worst-case scenario, pinholes at the waterline, has been proven unfounded, there remain a couple of theories as to where the water came from.** One is

that it's a result of storing our winter drinking water in the bunk lockers in the CPO mess. Occasionally the jugs would leak, flooding the bunk lockers. The water then found its way to the magazine below, and then through pinholes in the bulkhead to the adjacent reefer deck aft, saturating the fiberglass. **Erik Collin** partially solved the problem a couple years ago when he put flat pans in the lockers to hold the water jugs, but several gallons had leaked through over the previous ten years. Then there's the possibility that most of the water was a result of fighting the fire in 2006. A lot of water flooded the starboard side lockers in the berthing space above and there's a good chance that some of it found its way down to the reefers. Maybe condensation from the years she was in service? And who knows what else may have happened when she was in Greek service.

**The net result for Gary is that his completion date for the reefers has been pushed back several more months.** He will go through the same process on the port side cooler and the centerline entryway, neither of which borders on shell plating. Once again, the fine film of rust dust that results from needle scaling has coated all of Gary's polished piping and paint work. A lesser man might have difficulty accepting the setback, but **Gary Sheedy** is not a lesser man.

We are going to end 2009 with a tribute Tim wrote to two of SLATER's volunteers that passed away that year. "Captain **Ken Hannan**, former CO of USSSWEARER DE186 was a strong supporter of SLATER. Ken was in the Atlantic on a corvette in the dark days of the Battle of the Atlantic before DEs came on the scene. I'll always remember his as a friend, and the guy who preferred to walk back to the hotel rather than ride during his last reunion here several years ago. He was ninety-four at the time. **John Bartko from Livonia, Michigan.** John first came to the SLATER as part of the Michigan Field Day crew in May of 1999. A

former motormac who served aboard the O'REILLY DE330, John was a graduate of Saunders Trades and Technology High School, Yonkers, and had just retired after a 51-year career with Ford, ending up as a Primary and Instrument Panel Designer in the Engineering Department. I really didn't have a need for an instrument panel designer, so I hired him to work in the aft head chipping paint. My recollection is that he worked with **Charlie Markham**. That was a tough time for us, going into our second year, before we had the endowment, grants and all you members supporting us. We didn't have two nickels to rub together. It was at this point that as I passed John in the machine shop, he pulled me aside and said, "I want to make a donation." He pushed some tools out of the way, pulled out his checkbook, and began writing a check on the grimy machine shop work bench. The check was for five thousand dollars. I believe when he handed it to me his words were, "Maybe next year I can get a better job." I was so overwhelmed I asked **Dick Briel** if he thought it was okay for me to cash the check. It was.

**John did get better jobs and John continued to donate.** Each year thereafter he made a \$5,000 donation to the endowment fund. His efforts over the years made him the largest individual donor to the project and placed his beloved O'REILLY at the head of the "Top Fifty" list of cumulative totals for ships. Always jovial and just "one of the guys," John continued to attend field days until just couple of years ago. His chapter mates used to accuse me of catering to John, bringing him coffee, making sure he had a wardroom chair to sit on when he was painting or chipping, letting him sleep in officers' country, and giving him days off to go visit his sister Mildred in Yonkers, who he always spent time with when he came east. Okay, maybe I did make concessions to John that I wouldn't have made for the average motormac third. Live with it. I should have been bringing him breakfast in bed.

**John ended up in a long-term care facility and Dick Briel and his chapter mates used to visit him on a regular basis.** John died after a long illness on November 30th. We flew the ensign at half-staff in his honor when we learned of his passing. We thought we would hear no more from John, but when he passed away, he wasn't through with us. A couple weeks later we received a notification that John had named the museum as the beneficiary of an annuity valued at \$123,000. **The Trustees of the Museum have agreed that \$100,000 of this bequest should go into the hull fund for the long-term preservation of the ship John cared so much about.** The remainder will go into the restoration fund to pay for the ongoing preservation of the SLATER. The SLATER crew, in the number two position, was slowly creeping up on the O'REILLY with continued individual donations. But now it looks like **John Bartko's O'REILLY** will be at the head of the list for a long time to come."

2010 started with hope and excitement. After accepting a bid to install breasting dolphins—basically steel beams driven into the riverbed to prevent the ship from crashing into the seawall—cranes and materials are beginning to arrive. At the end of March, the pilings were loaded onto a barge and upriver from the port to SLATER's current home. The four 48" sections of 1" thick steel pipe, each 50' long, were positioned in place and were hammered into the muddy riverbed. Down in B-3, Barry Witte, Paul Guarnieri, and a few of Barry's students are restoring the electrical boxes. They now look as if they came directly from the builder's yard.

Barry Witte, Greg Krawczyk, Will Donzelli and Gordon Lattey lead a group on our annual spring trip to the James River Reserve fleet to gather parts. They were backed up by youngsters Mike Malone and Adam Shaker from Maryland, both providing a little more muscle. They worked three days on the ships and brought back a truck full of non-historic,

mostly consumable items. The World War II-era gear is gone, so now it's a chance to stock up on consumables such as gaskets, light bulbs, fuses, brand new coils of line, chipping hammers, wire brushes, scrapers, coffee mugs and galley gear. The gear is from newer ready reserve ships that are now headed for the scrapyard. They filled a U-Haul truck with useful gear that is aboard, stowed and now in use.

Boats Haggart and Paul Guarnieri have replaced nearly all the non-Navy lifeline turnbuckles. The big job was getting the TBL transmitter and motor generator aboard. Through begging, borrowing and theft, we obtained all the proper equipment with one exception. We did not have the right radio transmitter, the refrigerator-sized 800-pound TBL. Instead, we substituted a refrigerator-sized 700-pound TAJ transmitter we obtained from the USS GAGE. In 2006 we located the proper TBL transmitter on the USS CLAMP in the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet in California. USS PAMPANITO volunteers Tom Horsfall, Rich Pikelney, Aaron Washington and Jim Adams determined that we needed to have the proper transmitter on the SLATER and removed it for restoration. Ashore, Tom Horsfall spent two years restoring the unit to operational condition. Using a crane and a lot of elbow grease, the TAJ and motor generator was removed from the radio room and off the ship, then the TBL and its motor generator was brought aboard. I'm sure cool heads prevailed throughout the entire ordeal.

Around opening day 2011, the radio gang completed the wiring of the motor generator and TBL transmitter and even fired it up. Before the TBL even got up to speed, the 440-line fuses blew. Barry Witte replaced the 15-amp fuses with 25 amp. After that, she purred like a kitten. The Huse crew arrived and immediately got to work. One of the biggest tasks was the repairing of the starboard side expansion joint aft. The rubber had degraded over

time and for years rainwater was entering and making its way into B-3. Doug Streiter, Paul Suzdak, Don Bean, and Dave Mardon tackled this project. First, half of the machine shop work bench had to be removed to access the joint. The hope was the steel bulkhead behind it would be in good shape. Nope. Sixty years of corrosion had left it looking like swiss cheese. The rubber joint had to be removed which required an air impact wrench to remove about 100 bolts. While this was going on, Guy Huse repurposed a section of neoprene backed 4" firehose that he would cut open and install as the new rubber joint. This took the guys their full week vacation aboard SLATER to repair.

The Michigan work crew followed the Huse crew's efforts with jobs of their own. Our forward sewage holding tank and pump is in the forward compartment A-304E. The bulkhead between 304 and 305 was found to be wasting away. It took two days, but everything was repaired! The wasted bulkhead found behind the work bench during the expansion joint replacement was also tackled by the Michigan crew. Laird used his plasma cutter to crop out a piece of rusted metal four feet long and four inches high. He then fabricated a replacement and had it welded in place by week's end.

Entering 2012, a lot of the major projects have been accomplished. General maintenance and upkeep is the name of the game. The port shaft alley was cleaned of all the rust and debris that had accumulated over the years. Once that was completed, the entire shaft alley was Coorsealed. The starboard side was needle gunned the following month by Brandon Easley and Anthony Amandola. In Connecticut, George Christophersen, former machinist aboard USS BEATTY (DD-756) volunteered to fabricate a new depth charge release mechanism for the port depth charge rack. With the

help of Barry Witte's students, the pieces were welded together and are now installed on SLATER.

The SLATER has been fortunate to have been in dry dock four times since the end of her Greek service. In 1991, SLATER was dry docked following her decommissioning for future disposal. Two years later she was dry docked again when the Greek government agreed to donate SLATER to the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association at the Souda Navy Base, Crete in late June 1993 and surveyed by Stewart & Hazell Marine Services. During this survey, the underside of the ship was found to be in excellent condition, well painted with conventional antifouling paints and free from marine growth and barnacles. Some of the hull steel had been renewed to a considerable extent and were free of any noticeable indentations. From the wind-water line up to the main deck was a different matter. The ship was noted to be in bad condition here with framing clearly visible and variously corroded and indented over practically the whole length of the ship. The deck, superstructure, and mast were in good condition. A lot of the deck equipment, such as guns, were in poor condition and sections of lifelines were missing along with portholes and damage to watertight hatches visible. In reference to the missing portholes, replacements were taken from HS PANTHIR (D-67). PANTHIR was the former USS GARFIELD THOMAS (DE-193).

Let's skip ahead to 2014 and SLATER's first dry dock as a museum. In preparation, the ship is being organized and cleaned. A decade and a half of *stuff* has accumulated in the forward motor room, B-2. If we didn't have a place for it, there it went. Tommy Moore took it upon himself to clear out a space and install shelving. It is much more organized now. A surprise to many was the discovery of a large steel pan where the evaporators were

once installed. The Greeks had removed this at some point and to compensate for the loss of weight, built a steel box and filled it with iron ingots.

The day of the move finally came on the morning of 7 April and SLATER moored next to dry dock number 6 just before sunrise on the 8<sup>th</sup>. A few hours later, the lines were passed to winches on the dry dock and with the assistance of the yard tug L.W. Caddell, SLATER slowly entered the dry dock. The whole process took about two hours. Once the dry dock was refloated, yard workers came aboard to begin the cleaning of fuel tanks and the pressure washing of the hull. Shortly after the hull cleaning began, two holes were punched in the hull along a weld seam. Because of this, it was agreed that a very light sandblasting of the hull would be done instead of the original high-pressure cleaning. Ten more small holes were discovered but overall, the hull looked to be in great shape.

In the fuel tanks, crews began the tedious process of cleaning and de-gassing. The forward tanks were completed in two days. The lube oil tanks in B-3 took longer than expected thanks to the addition of the six engine sumps.

One of the most important projects during the 2014 dry dock was the welding of a doubler plate along the entirety of the wind-waterline. Ed Zajkowski made a significant discovery. One of the design characteristics of WWII DEs is that the bilges in the aft magazines are decked over and the false deck is welded in place. There is no way to maintain the bilge below. Our guys started cutting into it, and the condition of the bilge below was a disaster. A couple frames were rotted right out. We knew we had to address this in the yard, because it would be most unfortunate to put an air chisel through the bottom back in Albany. So we instructed the yard to cut away the false decking, clean and preserve the bilge, and install a removable lightweight fiberglass decking. Another

expensive add-on. Here is the list of the add-on work. Repair hull as needed, grind out and re-weld 25 sea chests. Replace blanks as necessary. Clean up and re-pack outside stern tube shafts. Install valves on shaft alley packing glands. Weld on draft marks over doubler, open one sea chest for the aft ship's service generator and place steaming out connection. Repair scuppers as needed, cut out the false decking in aft-most magazines and clean and preserve 10 voids under aft magazines. There are several more items that are more convenient to do in shipyard. Included are to scarf off accommodation ladder supports, open up a port for pumping forward, open up port for sand blast cabinet exhaust, finish welding on port 40mm shell cage, since it's right by our gangway, install missing section of mast ladder, grit blast waterways and snaking tie down bar, grease the shrouds, spot blast main deck aft, move the practice loading machine to original position, repair some rot in stack cap, repair the wasted steel under the searchlight platforms, fabricate gaff on stack for the battle ensign, and repair the dent in the port bulwark, including removal of the Greek davit pedestals. There are also three watertight doors that need replacing but it looks like the final tally will be \$1.5 million, so we had to dip into the endowment.

Rick Meyerrose, the Marine Surveyor, went over the hull inch by inch with audio gauger Kevin Desousa of ABC Testing. They pinpointed all the thin spots and Rick is writing up a report detailing the recommended repairs. In essence, the hull is in much better shape than we thought after we blew those three holes through with the initial pressure wash. Rick identified 15 areas of thin plating for deteriorated welds that need to be addressed. The studs for 100 magnesium anodes were installed, hopefully they will stop any future pitting.

The anchors and chain were lowered to the dry dock floor by the SLATER crew and the anchor windlass. They were all hydro blasted and painted. The chain locker and the depth charge storage magazine were power washed, dried, and primed. The 32/3D dazzle camouflage was painted on the hull, and she was lowered into the water to reposition on the blocks. A small leak was detected in the stern tubes. An attempt had been made to seal them with Splash Zone Epoxy which hadn't held. The solution was to weld a 3/8" steel box to the hull and shafts. They were pressure tested and passed with flying colors. In the future, if the decision is made to get SLATER moving under her own power, these boxes can be easily removed in dry dock.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, SLATER was refloated around noon and moored portside to Pier B. Some more work was completed at the pier and on the 30<sup>th</sup>, the tugs MARGOT and FRANCES arrived and tugged SLATER back to Albany.

Let's fast forward again to our most recent major restoration project: 2020 dry dock. A lot of what follows is taken directly from our website write-up. Originally scheduled for the end of March, everything was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. April and May pass by us and then in June, we get word that an opening is available. The catch? We have a month to get ready and sail for Staten Island. A few weeks later, at 0700 on 5 July, USS SLATER casts off her mooring lines for the first time in six years. Tugs NATHAN G. and SARAH D. accompanied SLATER on her voyage southbound. It was a beautiful trip down river. We were escorted by multiple law enforcement agencies and a constant convoy of private yachts, and pleasure craft. Spectators lined the shore and bridges until dark. We used Facebook to give continual reports on our location, until our wifi overheated and we had to go offline with a final post, "Computer is too hot, shutting

down.” At that point, our fans took over and continued to use the post to update everyone on our progress. The key man on the trip down river was Mike Dingmon, our only regular diesel engineer. With Barry Witte’s help blowing out the sea chest, Mike alternated between 3-cylinder and 8-cylinder gensets and kept power to the ship for the whole trip. The engine watches were the toughest in the heat.

SLATER arrived at Pier G at Caddell Dry Dock at 0700 on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Work started immediately on erecting the scaffolding around the mast, the main project. The yardarm was removed for easier restoration and attachment of period correct equipment. The Air search radar came down (the only SA antenna in the world that we know of. It came off USS GAGE (APA-168) and tracked kamikazes at Okinawa. The motor will be reworked, new bearings installed, and wasted parts of the antenna replaced. On Tuesday, 14 July, a major milestone occurred, when the first piece of newly fabricated equipment, the SL radar service platform, was welded in place on to the mast.

By Wednesday, 15 July, shipyard day ten, the major components of the SL radar maintenance platform, the bullhorn mounting bracket, and the whistle platform had been hoisted to the mast and tacked in place. On Thursday, production welding continued on all the pieces that had been tacked into place by that point. By Friday, 17 July, the replacement gaff support was made, and was tacked into place. The blocks in dry dock 5 were positioned for us, and the yardarm was stripped, blasted, and primed. The yard brace and middle ladder support were also installed.

Bill Wetterau dyed 1800 feet of 3/8” nylon line to look like 1945 manila for the halyards. Most important, the high-pressure hydro-blasting of the mast started. On Tuesday, 21 July, which was shipyard day 16, work continued hydro blasting the mast,

stack cap repairs, repairs to the long wire radio antennas, and the air search radar reassembly. Gary Sheedy successfully tested and rotated the air search radar antenna. We welded the IFF antennas to the yardarm. They came from the LSM-45. She too served the Greek Navy and was returned to become a museum, but the project, sadly, failed.

Monday 27 July, work began in earnest with hydro-blasting the mast, and pressure washing the bottom. Steve Klauck completed the restoration of the IMC mast-mounted bullhorn and departed. Metal work continued on the mast and stack simultaneously, with the hydro-blasting. That evening Brendan and Jack felt ambitious enough to haul the ship's whistle up to the new whistle platform and begin its reassembly.

On Tuesday, they completed the hydro-blasting on the mast and pressure washing of the hull. The condition of the paint looked excellent! There was a question about the condition of the magnesium anodes. Brendan, Jack, and Thomas took off six, and we weighed them to get an assessment. It took a few days of research to determine that they were in much better condition than they looked.

On Wednesday, the 29th, work continued on the mast wave guide assembly, the stack cap repair, and priming the stack. Thomas finished up repainting the pilothouse. And the month finished as the priming was completed on the mast. The stack cap repair and metalwork on the mast were completed, and preparations were made to begin sand sweeping the hull. On the last day of the month, things started coming back together. The SA air search radar was repainted, hoisted up, and bolted on the mast. The bullhorn was also hoisted into position. Preparations for sandblasting were completed.

The biggest event for Ed and Barry was the installation of the battle gaff at the foretruck. The biggest American flag flies from that when ships are in battle conditions. The two halyards are in place. Brendan has our eyes and legs here. Knows the mast thoroughly. Climbs an average of six times a day, and a couple of times in the evening. Cook, Blair Sandri sorted out the sockets. The crew restored the air search antenna and returned to mast. The bullhorn was mounted to the mast, reassembly of the lower recognition lights started, and the curtains were hung before we sandblast. The stack cap replacement is complete, as is the 3" band on top. One antenna bracket is welded on, one to go. All 7 diesel exhaust covers are installed. The yard workers removed all 100 of our anodes and the studs covered with plastic, in preparation for sand blasting and painting. All the brackets from the mast are drying. To be bolted on the mast with the electrical cables and lights on Monday

Two blasters worked, one port, one starboard. A nice easy sweep blast. They were about 50% at the end of the day. The crew attached cable supports to the mast, applied the topcoat the yardarm, began the fabrication of a ladder to access the inside of the stack cap, and life raft number 1 is lowered to the main deck so we can replace the straps, that Angelo Bracco made over a year ago. The sand blasters and painters from Union Maintenance Corp climbed into the void under the steering gear compartment. The space experienced severe corrosion and needed preservation. These are the guys who make it happen. Always something to do on a rainy day, but at least it was cooler. Later in the week we wrapped up sandblasting and started electrical installation on the mast. Aircraft warning lights, breakdown lights, and sidelights were installed.

Ron Frankosky touched up paint of the 02 level and on the yardarm until the rain caught up with him, the hull was painted with epoxy paint, the final coat of paint on the mast was applied, replacement of the wasted metal on the lookout stations was completed, we finished

painting the voids under aft steering, and restoration continued on the life raft number 1. The first coat of red paint is on the hull, Ron painted bits, Jack, Mike, and Barry wired up the aircraft warning lights at the top of the mast and side light connections. We pressure washed both sides of the superstructure, and the second coat of paint on the black boot top on the hull was applied.

On 10 August. Ed painted antenna insulators, red for transmitters, blue for receivers. The upper section of scaffold came down today. It was like watching the bandages being removed after cosmetic surgery and the antenna rotates again! The final coat of epoxy red was applied, props and shafts were covered for painting, the yardarm when back up, superstructure was primed, and anodes reattached.

The bridge level has been repainted pale gray to conform to our 32/3d camouflage pattern more closely. Six painters worked all day, the scaffolding on the stack began to come down, both repaired flag bags were hoisted back aboard, Ed continued his passion for color coding radio antennas, and the cleaning crew started their detail. The next day on the 18th, the orders of the day were shipyard equipment removal and the continued painting. The stack was finished, and the scaffolding broken down and taken ashore. The yard's pressure washers were taken ashore, the restored life raft was lifted into position. 19 August, with one working day left before departure, the weather wasn't very cooperative. We had showers most of the day, at a time when every painting minute counts. Our towing plan has been approved by the Coast Guard, and departure is still scheduled for 1030 Friday. The rain didn't hinder the cleaning of the rust streaks along the hull, or the re-installation of the transmitter antenna insulators. Jack restored the original 1944 compartment label tag for the gunfire control hut on the flying bridge. On the 20th, the shipyard work has been completed, the tow plan approved, and the tugs are due to arrive tomorrow morning. Our shipyard adventure is about to end, and a new chapter is about to begin,

the trip home. Our Northbound riding crew arrived, and we raised the first ever Ensign from the new battle gaff. The Kelly family of Union Maintenance Corporation donated ribs and hamburgers for the trip home. Their employees did all the painting while we were in the yard.

Departure day has arrived along with NYS Marine Tugs SARAH D. and MARGOT will tug SLATER up the river to Albany. It's been a long six weeks in the yard, and we are ready to head home. At 0800 Chris Deeley arrived to coordinate the tug hook up, the yard workers prepared to sink the dry dock, and the tugs SARAH D. and MARGOT were standing by. As the ship floated off the dry dock, the volunteers checked all the interior tanks, voids and bilges for leaks. A serious leak was detected by Steve Klauck in the aft motor room, B-4. The shipyard management was contacted, and the decision was made to put SLATER back in the dock to repair the leaks. The yard will work over the weekend, with an estimated depart date of Tuesday, 1300. Let this be a warning to other ships in the historic fleet. The Slater is one of the best maintained ships in the fleet, but we have huge hidden problems just as you do. No one wants to climb under machinery to inspect the void pockets. We got the smallest, skinniest person to crawl under to see why we had leaks. Extreme rot and wet debris will sink any ship in just a few years. Ships rot from the inside!!! EVERY bilge pocket needs to be clean and dry using only a putty knife. Tim and Ed have been doing this for 42 years and still missed this. Start a bilge cleaning program by doing the pockets starting at the waterline working to the keel.

On the 22nd, we sent half the crew home while we await developments. The doubler was completed today, and departure is scheduled for Tuesday afternoon. The plate was craned into the dry dock first thing this morning. Jacks were used to hold the plate into position for welding. High pressure water was shot at the double from every direction, while we monitored from the inside, to insure there were no leaks.

SLATER pulled out of Drydock number 5 (leak free) at 1345 on 25 August and made her way north with NYS Marine tugs SARAH D. and MARGOT. It was dark by the time we passed West Point, and our RPI Midshipmen made sure to signal “Go Navy! Beat Army” in Morse Code as we passed. By daybreak we had made it to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. We passed Hudson, Athens, Cossackie, and Castleton-on-Hudson. By 1000 Albany was in sight! [Dutch Apple Cruises](#) met us south of the Port of Albany, and the excitement of finally being home kicked in! We had many fans, volunteers, and news crews in our parking lot waiting for our return. Once the tugs had us in place, we started placing a gangway, hooked up the electrical, sewage, and water lines. We were finally home!

SLATER, to many volunteers over the years, has come to be a second home or even an adopted child. Hundreds of people have come aboard on a regular basis to help restore this old girl from a rust bucket to the pride of the historic ships fleet. From scraping the bilges to climbing the mast and everywhere in between; the dedication of our volunteers is legendary. I have mentioned a few names throughout this podcast, and I apologize if I missed yours. There are simply way too many people to thank for the service to the ship and museum. In my time here at the SLATER, I have been fortunate to speak with some of the volunteers that are still able to make it down a few times a month. Though many now have difficulty climbing the ladders, the glint in their eyes is clear as day when you ask them what the ship means to them. Some no longer have families to care for; their kids have moved away and maybe their spouse is no longer with us. The SLATER gives some a new purpose in life. A few of them were happy to explain that if their time came while aboard the ship while painting or drinking their morning coffee down in Chiefs, they would be happy with that. Tim relays the time when Dick Smith (USS EVARTS DE-5)

visited him at the ship and with tears in his eyes explained that it was getting too difficult to travel down twice a week. Being a volunteer is widely different from going to your day job. Volunteers come aboard because they *want* to be here. They could easily spend their time doing other things. But they choose instead to spend their days aboard a nearly 80-year-old tin can. Even for those out there that never served in the military, the ship becomes your own. Just like those WWII DE vets that proudly told their battleship counterparts at the local bar that they served aboard a destroyer escort, telling people today that you help on the SLATER is kind of like bragging. There is no other ship in the entire world like the SLATER and I think it's because of the breed of volunteer we were able to recruit here in Albany.

Thank you for listening to DE Classified. This podcast is brought to you by the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum aboard USS SLATER. You can find a transcript of this episode, accompanying photos, and a bibliography at [USSslater.org/DE Classified](http://USSslater.org/DE%20Classified). You can also find each issue of our online newsletter, SLATER Signals under the publications tab. Thanks to John Epp, our Curator for researching and writing this episode. And of course to the hundreds of volunteers that have given their time aboard SLATER over the last 25 years, thank you. SLATER would be no where without you. We are eternally grateful for all that you do. Please join us next month when we DE Classify USS AMICK.