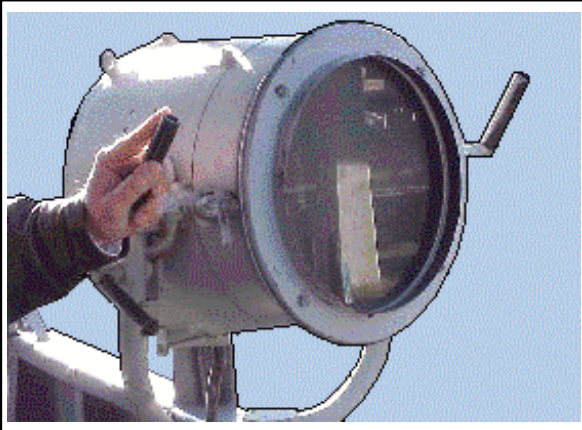


SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

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

Phone (518) 431-1943
Vol. 22 No. 9, September 2019



September seemed to be reunion month, as old Sailors seemed to flock to the ship. We hosted the 44th Annual Destroyer Escort Sailors Association convention. The attendees included the World War II veteran, **Joe Piccirillo**, of the USS POOLE (DE-151), **Al Gregg**, who served in USS JACCARD (DE-355) as well as **Jim Klepper**, who served aboard USS FARQUHAR (DE-139) and was accompanied by his family. Also in attendance was founding DEHM Trustee, **Earl Johnson**, who came in from California. Earl served aboard USS ALVIN C. COCKRILL (DE-366). The first Monday of the convention, I was asked to give a presentation on the high points of the ship's 75-year history, like how she was saved from the scrapyard to become a National Historic Landmark.



*The DESA ceremonial participants:
Timothy Day Slisky, Steven Hoback,
and Edwin Glaser.*



*NSA Saratoga Springs provided
the color guard.*

Tuesday was DESA's **SLATER Day**, and they spent the morning reminiscing aboard the ship with their families. Threatening rain held off on Thursday morning for the Memorial Service, presided over by **Tim Slisky** and **Steve Hoback**. Senior Chief **Courtney Roach** of NPTU Ballston Spa provided a Navy color guard. The sixteen U.S. Destroyer Escorts that were lost in action or declared damaged beyond repair and the 1,323 Sailors who were lost with those ships were remembered during the ceremony. The Convention ended with a banquet Thursday night. We are indebted to the **DESA Ladies Auxiliary**, the **Garden State Chapter** and the **Northeast Chapter** for their donations.



WWII SLATER Quartermaster, Dan Drummond, with his daughter, Debbie and her husband, Rich.

It's not every day we have a former SLATER crewmember aboard. Quartermaster, **Dan Drummond**, spent a day aboard with his daughter Debbie and her husband, Rich. Dan served through SLATER's whole wartime career. Though he's 95 years old, Dan made it up to the chartroom, pilothouse, and down to the crew's quarters aft. Dan definitely remembered a torpedo being fired at SLATER in August of 1944, when she was on her way to New York from Key West, on 17 September 1944. The log makes note of going to general quarters around midnight, and dropping two depth charges, but does not mention the torpedo. It was an honor having Dan and his family aboard! We only know of seven WWII SLATER crewmembers still living, Dan among them.

John Fersch and his family gathered aboard USS SLATER for John's 85th birthday. John came all the way from Denton, Texas. He served aboard USS CHAMBERS (DER-391). John was joined by his extended family, including Lauren Mary, Dan Fersch, Barbara Fersch, Brandon Johnson, Jenniffer Frances Fersch, Ryan Fersch, and Emand Kay. It was a great family reunion.



John Fersch and his family gathered aboard USS Slater for John's 85th birthday. John is from Texas, and served aboard USS CHAMBERS DER-391.



Anthony Marino at his post.

The same day as John's visit, "The Greatest Generation" was represented by a visit from **Anthony Marino** and his family. Anthony served as a radioman aboard USS MANLOVE (DE-36) in World War II, and had his picture taken at the operator's position in our radioroom.

We also had 30 Veterans from USS FISKE (DD-842) arrive in Albany for a reunion on the 26th. They returned to their glory days, telling stories and reminiscing with shipmates and families. September was a busy month for our tour guides. We had Boy Scouts from Elbridge stay for an overnight on the 6th, and seniors from the Glens Falls Senior Center stopped by on the 12th. **Charles Starks** made his way to the Poughkeepsie Library on the 14th to give a presentation on SLATER, and promoted our Museum Pass Program. **Bob Wheelock** did the same at the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library on the 20th, and the Watervliet Library on the 24th. We finished the month with the Oriska Seniors and Cub Scout Packs.

I'm not sure if I've mentioned this before, but our Ship's Store now has USS SLATER challenge coins available. Former RPI Midshipman, now ENS, **Nick Grocki** designed a coin with a lot of symbolism, featuring USS SLATER on the observe and A/T AETOS on the reverse. At the same time that we were working to get this coin into production, a volunteer, **Art Dott**, was working on another challenge coin as a "surprise" for us. The two coins are quite different and available for \$10 each in the Store, plus postage if we ship them.



Using the HARVEY as a work float Dave and Chuck did some welding and grinding.

Coming up in October, we will be hosting our Fall Work Week during the first week of the month. On the 13th at 0900, the Capital Area Chief's Association will be hosting the Navy Birthday Celebration, as well as honoring **Paul Guarnieri** as their USS SLATER Volunteer of the Year. Paul has been one of our most dedicated volunteers since 2009, doing both guiding and maintenance, a rare combination.

We're also open for tours on the 14th for Columbus Day. Shanna Schuster is setting up a photo display at the Voorheesville Library for the month, and our annual fundraiser "USS SLATER Night at the Fort Orange Club" will be on the 17th.



WWII Vet Jim Klepper served aboard USS FARQUHAR (DE-139), seen here with his family.

While all this was going on we hosted the Fireboat JOHN J. HARVEY alongside for three days. She is fresh out of the shipyard, looking great, back in her authentic fireboat paint job. You remember that last year she sported a red dazzle camouflage paint job as part of an art project. It was most appropriate that the JOHN J. HARVEY was alongside for September 11th, as she had an unexpected encore when the World Trade Center towers came down. While assisting in evacuations from Ground Zero, officials radioed JOHN J. HARVEY, asking if her pumps still worked. Responding that they did, she was told to drop off her passengers as soon as possible and return to the disaster site, reactivating her official designation Marine 2. Alongside two other FDNY fireboats, JOHN D. McKEAN and FIRE FIGHTER, she pumped water at the site for 80 hours, until water mains were



Huntley Gill made a nice gentle approach. No more dazzle. She's painted-up like a fireboat again.

restored. The National

Trust for Historic Preservation gave JOHN J. HARVEY a special National Preservation Award recognizing her contribution. That's proof that Museum Ships can still serve.



Devon Urbano, working on the IFF antennas.

We took advantage of the HARVEY being alongside to do some maintenance on some normally hard to reach areas. In other words, we used HARVEY as a work float. **Dave Wason** and **Chuck Teal** welded up some

scuppers that never got completed and ground off some padeyes that had been welded on to accommodate a gangway when SLATER was in Manhattan. **Thomas Scian** and **Bob**



RPI Midshipman Brendan Lutz, Tim Benner, and Danny Statile got the major parts of the SL surface search radar maintenance platform tacked together.

Tomlinson got all those areas primed and painted. **Bob** and **Ron Prest** used the HARVEY to paint the outboard side of the starboard depth charge roller loaders, the lifeline stanchions, and the waterway. And **Boats, Warren Brozio** and **Walt Stuart** worked off HARVEY's gunwale to scrub the rust streaks off SLATER's starboard quarter.

Throughout the month, we've averaged 15-20 maintenance volunteers on Mondays and Saturdays. The team of Ed Zajkowski, Barry Witte, Danny Statile, and the RPI Midshipmen have made considerable progress. They are prefabricating parts that will be

installed on the mast during the shipyard overhaul. The bullhorn support is complete. Alex Titcomb got the bullhorn turning gear



It takes a lot of welding blanket to move a bell. Chuck and Dave Wasson got the new bracket welded and primed.

The maintenance platform for the SL radar antenna is about 75% complete. Midshipman, Devon Urbano, has the two IFF antennas nearly completed. He figured out how to stick weld by himself, well enough to tack things together for the professional welders.

The fighting light enclosures have been welded up and primed. The midshipmen climbed the mast and found the ship's whistle support very deteriorated. Two RPI midship-

men and Barry Witte got the ship's whistle removed from the mast. It will be disassembled, restored, and reassembled before March. Work on a replacement for the badly deteriorated original has begun. Work has also started on the spreader, for the yardarm brace cables that project forward on the mast.

men and Barry Witte got the ship's whistle removed from the mast. It will be disassembled,



Removing the ships whistle for restoration.

Doug Tanner's gang got the ship's bell relocated to its original position. The most difficult part of the job was getting the bell apart. They had to make a special wrench to hold the clapper. Dave Wasson and Chuck Teal welded it up on the 02 level on the starboard signal bridge. Dave Mardon ground off the weld scars with another team effort. The location that the bell had been moved to on the 01 level interfered with the surface search radar antenna replica waveguide that we will be installing. Doug, Matt Clifford, and Thomas Scian mounted an enclosure in the forward supply vent fan room, so that work can begin in rebuilding the wasted exterior duct-work.

The most difficult part of the job was getting the bell apart. They had to make a special wrench to hold the clapper. Dave Wasson and Chuck Teal welded it up on the 02 level on the starboard signal bridge. Dave Mardon ground off the weld scars with another team effort. The location that the bell had been moved to on the 01 level interfered with the surface search radar antenna replica waveguide that we will be installing. Doug, Matt Clifford, and Thomas Scian mounted an enclosure in the forward supply vent fan room, so that work can begin in rebuilding the wasted exterior duct-work.



What did you do to them, to make them stick you in the fan room, Thomas?

Doug, Tim Benner, Super Dave Mardon, and Alex got the gun 33 train gear assembly back together. Now we will turn our attention to the sight assembly. The only other ordnance project left hanging is the reassembly of the upper train gear on gun 32. The completed handwheel assembly, with new bearings, is on the workbench in the shipfitter shop.

We have a new radio shack volunteer. Steve Syrotynski is relatively young, by our standards, and understands military vacuum tube equipment. Best of all, he lives close by, just across the river in Rensselaer. He's worked two Saturdays with **Mike Wyles**, figuring out the mysteries of the TBL transmitter. They are also working with Barry on the shipyard overhaul. The overhaul involves planning for the installation of two ground plane antennas that will work with the modern HAM gear, as well as the long-wires and whips. We are also planning to replicate the TBS antenna and will install a marine VHF antenna on the starboard yardarm.

Cathy Wheat continues her cleaning, **Smitty** keeps the crew well fed, Storekeeper **Dick Walker** SK1 USCG is on the road running for supplies, and **Jim Gelston** keeps the clocks wound, so we're all on time.



DE veteran and Tuesday regular, Ron Prest, kept right on painting. Ron was a radioman aboard USS CHARLES BERRY (DE-1035).



Walt and Warren scrubbed the rust streaks off of the hull from the HARVEY.

We are looking forward to the upcoming “USS SLATER Night at the Fort Orange Club” cocktail party. This year, we will continue to raise funds for our Maritime Heritage Grant match. Our guest speaker will be Captain **Philip Malone**, the Program Manager overseeing the construction of the future USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CVN-79), USS ENTERPRISE (CVN-80), and unnamed CVN-81 *Ford*-class aircraft carriers. CAPT Malone is as charismatic as his resume is impressive, and will give an excellent presentation.



Challenge Coins for sale in the Ship's Store.

It is with deep sadness that I announce the passing of the wives of two of our most dedicated volunteers, both from cancer. Board Treasurer and Tour Guide **Alan Fox's** wife, Holly, died on Saturday evening, September 21, at the Hospice Inn, at St. Peter's Hospital in Albany. Only 62, she seemed way too young to go. **Earl Herchenroder's** wife, **Patricia A. Farrell Herchenroder**, was 84 when she passed away at Gateway House of Peace in Ballston Spa, with her family by her side, on Sunday, September 22. Our condolences go out to both Alan and Earl, as well as their families.

The big event of the month that brought us national attention, for those who haven't heard, was almost a non-event. The DUTCH APPLE, a local river cruise boat, had some kind of mechanical issue, lost way, and the wind blew her into our fantail. The only damage was a bent pipe on the starboard depth charge rack. The rack kept the hulls from touching. Fortunately, we had fireboat HARVEY alongside, with her bow projecting beyond our fantail. HARVEY's bow locked the DUTCH APPLE in position and kept her from being blown up-river. If that hadn't happened, the depth charge rack projection would have taken out all the windows on DUTCH APPLE. Pinned against SLATER and HARVEY by the wind, the tug JAMES TURECAMO was called and came to the rescue. Her skipper did a masterful job of pulling the boat away, and getting her back to her dock without doing any additional damage.



High wind held the Dutch Apple in place.

Fox News picked up the story, and reported that a cruise ship had crashed into a destroyer in Albany, New York. I got emails from all over the country, wanting to know how severe the damage was, and if we were okay. I even got an email from the skipper of the destroyer, USS RALPH JOHNSON (DDG-114), in Everett, Washington. You can't buy the type of publicity the event generated. That was the best part. I'm not going to fix the pipe for a while, so visitors can see the "scene of the crime." But, somebody needs to school Fox News about the difference between a ship and a boat.

See you next month.

Don't forget the donate button on our homepage www.ussslater.org

and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.