

# SLATER SIGNALS

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

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

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As we entered the third month of the COVID-19 lockdown, I found myself settling into a general malaise about things. This is the time of year when flags should be flying, the brass should be polished, radars should be rotating, and hordes of happy visitors should be writing great reviews about our tour guides on TripAdvisor.



*After ten weeks of social distancing lockdown, this isn't really how it looks, but this is certainly how it feels.*

But instead, each morning, I report aboard a grimy, silent ship, as if in mothballs, waiting to be awakened. The guns remain shrouded in canvas. Cobwebs are laced around the lifelines, the pigeon droppings spot the deck, and the Big Band music that usually emanates from the entertainment is silent. I look at the piles of correspondence collecting on my desk and think about filing them. Maybe tomorrow. The group brings energy. It seems that, for me, no group means no energy.

Yet there is life. Thomas Scian, Chuck Teal, Bill Wetterau, Warren Brozio, and Paul Guarnieri have all been coming in for a few days a week, needlescoring decks, so they can be reprimed with the Rustoleum Rusty Metal Primer. This is the only product we have found that creates any adhesion between the steel and the paint. Gary Sheedy, Tommy Moore, and Earl Herchenroder have undertaken a project that many will appreciate. They have removed the corner curbstone around the base of the tree in the middle of our parking lot. Almost everyone has caught that corner with a wheel at one time or another, and this modification will make it a lot easier to get in and out of the parking lot.

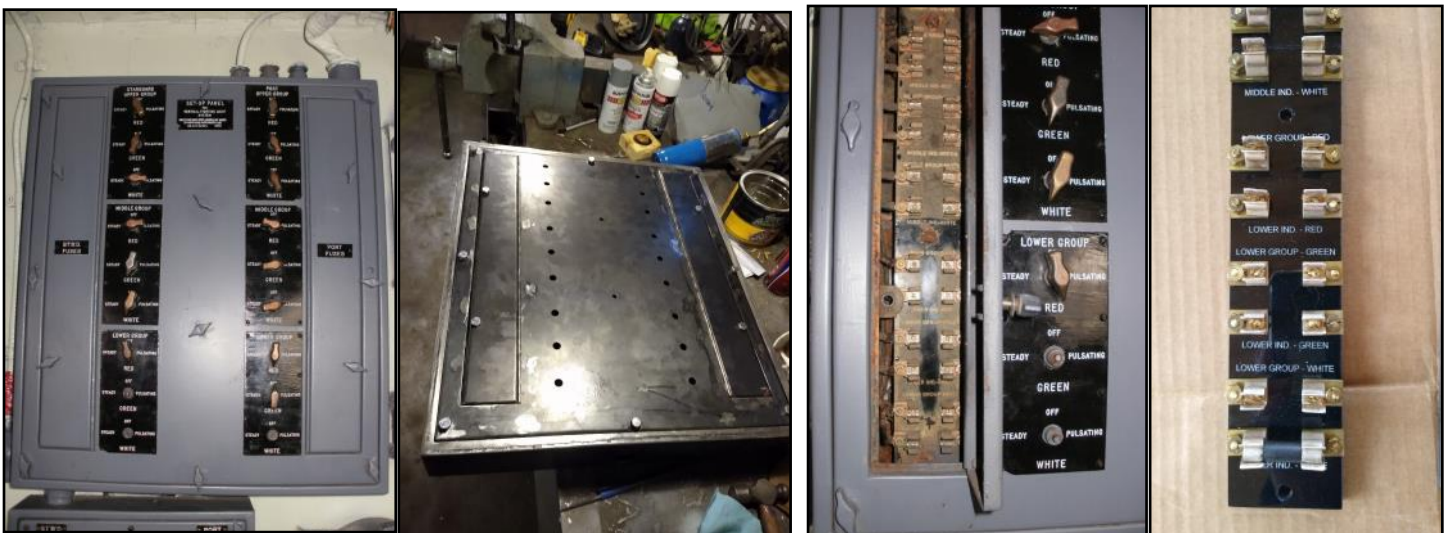
**Gary also is continuing his work in the pilothouse.** He has been replacing insulation board and cleaning up the degaussing junction boxes. He and Earl also restained the whole observation deck, handrails, and even did the paint float with an assist from his son **Kenny**. **Earl** went on to scale the old navigation light tower that is by the seawall, and repainted it white. He is also repainting the seawall guardrail.



*Earl Herchenroder scaled and painted the navigation tower base.*

**At home, Barry Witte has been making progress on SLATER's replica of the vertical fighting lights.** Barry is using blueprints from the National Archives thanks to research done by **Chris Wright** and **Ed Zajkowski**, as well as photographs from **Duane Gallagher** aboard minesweeper, USS HAZARD, a historic ship in Omaha. HAZARD has the last installation of Fighting Lights to exist in the world, as far as we know. Our goal is to create a functioning replica. Slater's replica is being built exactly to the details specified by the original blueprints and guided by the photographs.

**Modern manufacturing methods allow us to create an exact replica.** The sheet metal panel was cut on a CNC waterjet, with the cooperation of our midshipmen volunteers at RPI. The acrylic fuse blocks were cut and engraved using a laser cutter.



**HAZARD Panel**

**SLATER Panel**

**HAZARD Fuseclip**

**SLATER Fuseblock**

*The images show SLATER's replica Vertical Fighting Light Panel compared to the original on USS Hazard. Inside the panel are two fuse blocks, with a fuse for each light. Every detail is meticulously replicated.*

Thanks to our friends in the historic fleet, we have obtained the original style fuse hardware to complete our replica fuse blocks. We originally had only 14 fuse clip sets installed out of the 36 total needed.

Onboard, while working at an appropriate social distance, Barry and Gary have installed all of the cabling needed for the fighting light system, with assistance from Earl Herschenroder. Dan Statile has been working on his own to weld the fuse and switch foundations inside the control panel. We anticipate mounting the control and indicator panels in the pilot house shortly after the pilot house gets painted in June.



*Gary Sheedy, staining the observation deck.*

Electroswitch, the company that made the original switches, is still in business. We are awaiting word from them to find out if the switches can be made available again. If we can get 18 switches, we will have everything needed to complete this project. After coming out of the shipyard with a renovated mast, SLATER will be able to recreate the history of the US Navy's Fighting Lights, and share that history with our visitors.

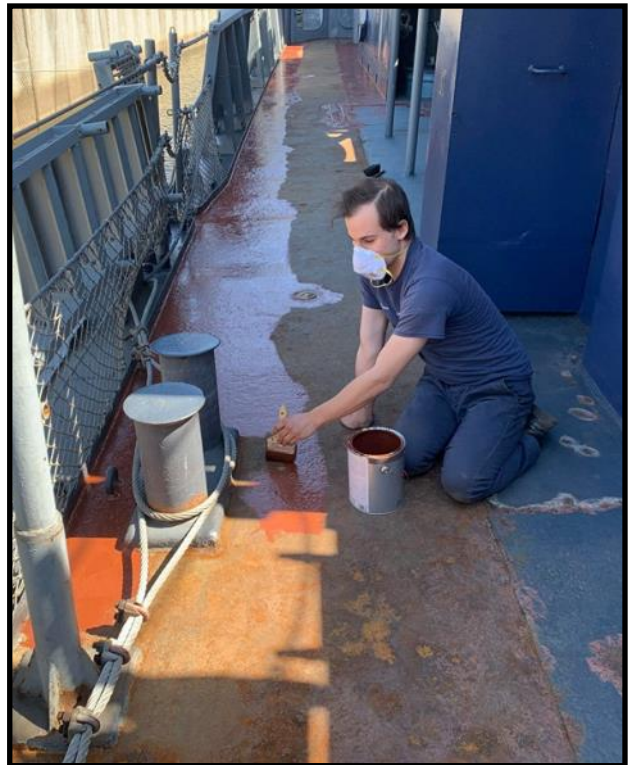


*Paul, Chuck, and Thomas Scian have all spent many days chipping.*

Barry has been coming in Sundays, with Midshipmen Brendan Lutz and Jack Carbon. They have been continuing work on the new CIC plotting table. Steve Syrotynski has continued his work at home on our radio equipment. He completed repairs, and brought back the now functioning RCH receiver. For you radio techies, this receiver was a bit of a mess. The selector switch front upper left on the panel was cracked. He replaced 18 resistors, and 7 caps as well. Bands 1,3,4,and 5 now work just fine. Band 2 has a strange issue with the dial. Turned fully counterclockwise, it receives only 590 AM, a local station in Albany. But he now has the RCH, RBL-5, RAO-2, and the two RBN's operational. Next up will be the RCK and RAL, and he is working on a donated power supply for them.

**Financially, as you can imagine, with no ticket income, it has been a pretty dicey time.** What saved us in the month of May was the donations from all of you, and the cherry on top was the arrival of a \$10,000 check from **Tin Can Sailors**. This was part of the **Thomas J. Peltin** Destroyer Grant program, to support the restoration work in the pilothouse. The money is being used for insulation repairs and contract painting. The check could not have come at a more opportune time.

**When the Board of Trustees heard about the Cares Act and the Payroll Protection Plan that included forgivable loans to not-for-profits, Bob Lazar and BJ Costello encouraged me to apply.** I went through the normal channels at KeyBank and was told that they were so swamped with submissions; they were no longer accepting applications. Nobody seemed to know anybody in the food chain, high enough to help us. Enter **Barry Witte**, again. Remember **Barry Witte**? He asked me if we were applying, and I said they were not accepting applications. He made the offhand remark, “Oh, I know people at KeyBank.”



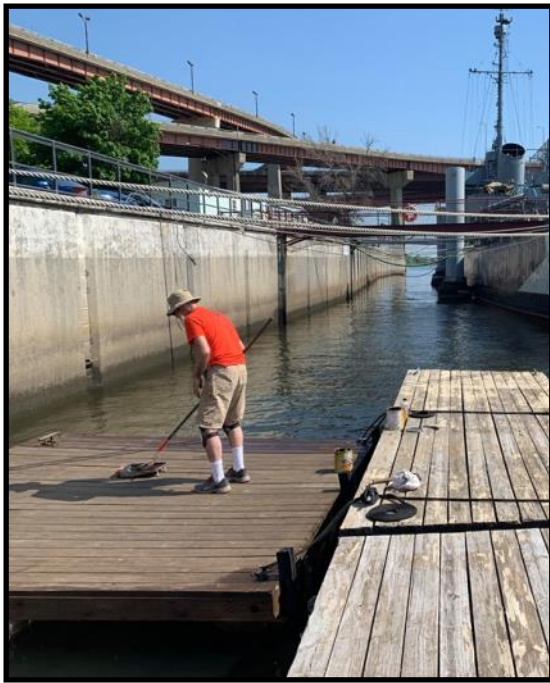
*Thomas Scian, priming the main deck.*



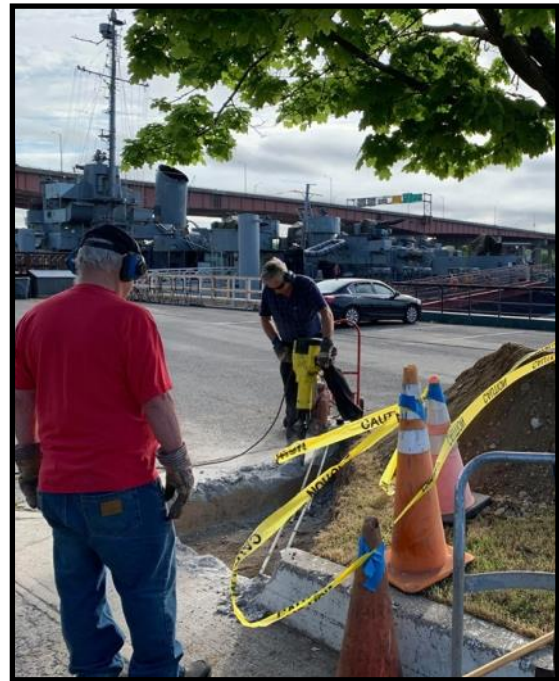
*Angelo A. Bracco made bunkstraps honoring the late volunteers, Jack Madden and Andy Sakalais.*

**The next day I had an email from April Ulrich, a Senior Vice President with KeyBank in Cohoes with an invitation to apply for a Payroll Protection Plan Loan.** April guided me through the application process, and after it was reviewed, I got an email from a **Rachelle Hawkins**, requesting additional information. I had some questions, so I called the number listed in the email. To my surprise, I didn't get a machine and a dial by name directory. I actually got a voice that said, “This is Shelly.” I thought that was pretty amazing.

**Over the course of the week, I found out that Shelly was so accessible because she was working from home, in her basement in Michigan.** We exchanged several phone calls over the following week, and she gave new meaning to the term customer service, as she guided me through the complexities of completing forms with DocuSign.



*Tommy Moore rolled another coat of stain on to the paint float.*



*Earl and Gary were up at the crack of dawn, working in the parking lot.*

**The most difficult part was photographing my driver's license with my iPad to confirm my identity.** It took me three hours and eight attempts to figure out that the iPad had to be perfectly level when I took the photo. When I finally got that figured out, it took me two more attempts and another day to submit the forms, with the checking account number and the routing number in the right place. Through whole process, **Shelly** retained her sense of humor and patience. A special thank you to **April, Shelly,** and the whole **KeyBank** organization.

**Shanna has been a bit distracted this month, while working at home.** She is still answering many questions via email, and making sure our programming is ready for whenever we get to open. A lot of her time shifted to caring for her husband, who had to have emergency surgery on his detached retina this month. His recovery is going well, no doubt because of the excellent care he receives from his wife.

**Shanna is "attending" virtual meetings with other historic sites in the Albany area, as well as with her Emerging Leaders in Non-profit classes.** These meetings are filled with discussions on how to best prepare for when the world can reopen. With tourism being one of the last sectors allowed to open, **Shanna** is using all information available to her to start imagining what SLATER's 2020 season will look like, and what policies we will have to enact.

**There are other forms of life here too. Jo Ann comes in on Tuesdays to generate the thank you letters to all the donors who are getting us through this crisis, and prepares the deposit.** Always cheerful, she recently completed a last call to newsletter recipients who we haven't heard from in the past two years. And she pays the bills. **Dick Walker** comes in on Wednesday to stuff the envelopes and prepare the mail.

**Jim Gelston** still winds clocks on Wednesday. **Thomas Scian** has done a magnificent job of restoring the pilothouse running light panels. **Bob Callender** is back, totaling up the volunteer hours. And on the last Saturday in May, we had ten volunteers aboard, as the crew slowly returns from lockdown.

**And despite the lockdown, the old veterans continue to find us.** Ted Bogosh and his father, Ted Senior, called to visit. Ninety-five year old Ted Senior was the leading motor machinist mate aboard USS CATES (DE-763), in World War II. They made the four-hour trip to make a visit happen. Dick Walker, USCG, was on hand to host their visit. That same day, Frank Perrella stopped in for a visit. Frank was one of our original tour guides, when we opened in 1998. He served in USS THOMAS J. GARY (DE-326), at the end of World War II.

**Jacque Slater, (No relation) from WNYT channel 13, was aboard this month, checking out how we were surviving the coronavirus shut down.** You can check it out here: <https://wnyt.com/albany-new-york-news/uss-slater-destroyer-escort-shutdown/5727900/?cat=11953>

**Thanks Jacque! We won't be able to fully reopen until New York State reaches phase four.** Remember that our gift shop is open for mail order sales. Shanna has the Ship's Store all ready to go, and she's adding some of our new items to our Facebook shop. Much of our merchandise is for sale there. Check it out, and lend your support as we continue to wait to see you all again!

*See you next month,*

*Tim*



*Being 95 years old didn't stop the senior Bogosh from visiting his old work space.*



*WNYT's Jacque Slater, reporting from the wardroom.*

**Don't forget the donate button on our homepage, [www.ussslater.org](http://www.ussslater.org) and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.**