



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, Fax 432-1123
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Tour guide Leo Bahler, a WWII EM off USS GUSTAFSON DE182, is our longest serving volunteer, having given tours in Manhattan prior to his 12 years service in Albany.



Summer Intern Tour Guide David Pitlyk leads a tour aft from the wahleboat on the O1 level.

Surprisingly, the place where there has been the most activity has been the engine rooms. In another empty promise, I had told the "black gang" that I would make sure they had lots of help down there during the field days. But with forty people aboard, we still had more work than bodies, so you know who got cut out. They just seemed to shrug it off with the attitude, "What else is new," and then took matters into their own hands. Given all the bitching they did last year about their mechanical talents being wasted with paint scrapers and wire brushes, I didn't expect them to scrape another flake. I mean, these are highly talented professionals. But when I came back from the North Carolina trip, I found the entire starboard side of B-3 had been beautifully scaffolded and planked over the diesels to enable access to the overhead. I assumed they were prepping things for the fall field day crew. However, it wasn't long before Karl, Mike, Gary, Gus, Earl and Don started showing up for coffee covered in paint chips.



George Gollas and Barry Witte restoring and testing circuit breakers.



James Conlon shows off the progress restoring the Aft distribution board.

The job is going in two directions, depending on whom you talk to. Karl Herchenroder is determined to get the overhead in the lower level of B-4 finished, something he has wanted to do from the start. Finish one before you start another. He's talked Gus and Mike into working with him. They are making great progress as **Chris Fedden**, the last of the original chippers, has stayed down there with them to show them how chipping is done. In B-3, **Earl Herchenroder** and **Don Miller** have been scraping the overhead of the upper level, starting with the starboard side, where **Ernie Aeschilman** from the HUSE left off. They have also been reinsulating the overhead, replacing all the damaged and missing fiberglass insulation board with new material. Overhead work is no picnic, and that's what all these guys are doing. Also in B-3, **Barry Witte, George Gollas, Brian Goodman, James Conlon,** and **Joe Tassarotti**, with tech support from **Jay Jones** of Ohio, have been restoring the electrical switchboard, returning it to like-new condition. Brian learned all about tearing switchboards apart on the LSM-45, and now he's leaning how to restore them to factory fresh condition. The project should take a year.

Up on deck, Erik Collin has been focusing his attention on the decks. He's had his gang spot-scaling and priming the 01 level, as well as repainting the fantail. This is the last step in really making the fantail look fresh, to complete all the work that has been done on the depth charge projector roller loaders and the fantail racks. Under the direction of Erik and **Eric Rivet**, there's been a lot of detail work on the gun mounts. All the three inch mounts now have the bearing numbers painted around the gun tubs, aircraft recognition charts mounted, and all the helmets in place on individual mounting clips, WWII DE style, as opposed to the helmet racks and stacked helmets that other classes of ships had. Each helmet is stenciled with the number of the gun mount it's associated with. **Natasha Herchenroder, Peter Woznack, Heather Maron** and **Dave Pitlyk** have stenciled all the gun mount helmets for the AA guns, and are now striping the right 20mm magazines, a late war feature so gunners could tell them apart on the twin mounts. **Gene Jackey** and **Clark Farnsworth** are now fabricating and installing the missing helmet clips on the 20mm and 40mm gun mounts. **Rich Pavlovic** is doing a complete overhaul of the twenties, and Ron has been working on the midships mounts. **Larry Williams** completed the reassembly and repainting of the sight setting mechanism on gun 2.

One of the weapons that make the SLATER special is the hedgehog projector on the fo'c's'le. The Manhattan volunteers did a beautiful job of fabricating replica hedgehog projectiles back in the nineties, but the only hitch was they were missing their fuses. A hedgehog fuse is a very complicated looking mechanism. A couple months ago we received an e-mail from **Mike Brueckmann**, who just happens to have a hedgehog fuze that had been cutaway to show the inner workings. He said he would



be happy to trade it for a 5"/25 round, something we don't have and didn't know were to find. We eventually struck a deal in which we would borrow the fuse while we kept looking for the elusive 5"/25.

The fuse arrived and Erik Collin quickly forwarded it to Stuart Scace, our current best friend, fabricator and benefactor. You may remember Stuart as the one who made the dummy depth charge pistol pieces for us a few months ago. Stuart took some time off from his current project, fabricating replica 40mm shells to line our three 40mm gun tubs with ready ammunition, to create 24 replica hedgehog fuses. As with previous jobs, Stuart delivered the goods in record time. The replicas are

The hedgehogs are fused and appear ready for action.

truly works of art, consisting of the exterior part of the fuse machined in aluminum; they have safety pins and vanes that spin. We spent a few days installing them and repainting and stenciling the hedgehog bodies. The fuses are indeed a thing of beauty; I'm sure any U-boat Captain would be honored to have them falling around him! By the way, if you have or know someone that has a 5"/25 round of any type please give us a call. This is one big favor I feel the need to get paid off as quickly as possible.

On the whaleboat, Rocky has completed all the seasonal repainting of the interior and port (inboard) side and is just waiting for us to turn the boat around in the davits so he can do the starboard side. This means launching her, reversing the boat and picking her up with the starboard side inboard. We overhauled the head blocks and boat falls this winter, and **Boats Haggart** reversed and reeved the fall lines. Everything is good to go, but we are making new pins for the head blocks. Almost everyone has been involved in the whaleboat in one way or another. **Dave Mardon's wife's** cousin **Bill Fuller** is making the new head block pins over in his machine shop in Wilton, New Hampshire. **Super Dave, Doug Tanner** and **Gene Jackey** removed the head blocks. Gene rebuilt them. **Russ Ferrer** replaced a missing roller bearing and got temporary pins. **Mike Dingmon** has been there every time we've had to lift the headblocks. Everyone wants to be a bosun's mate. I've switched them back and forth three times in an effort to get them right. And of course, Boat's has done all the rope work and rigging.

On our two long-term projects, Doug Tanner and Gary Sheedy keep plugging along. Working with **Tim Benner, Chuck Teal, and Dave Mardon**, in Doug's case the plugging is plugging troublesome leaks in the sewer line that keep popping up during air testing. We also decided to install automatic shutoff valves to the water system to stem the possibility of sewer overflow in the event of pump failure. That installation considerably expands the scope of the job. Doug even brought down his son-in-law **Jay Lawrence** to help out. It didn't take Jay long to size up the situation. Jay remarked to Doug on the way home that they were making great progress until that guy from Glens Falls came down and called a coffee break. Progress hit the skids after Benner's arrival. To know him is to love him. Doug continues to cook breakfast for us every Saturday morning, at his own expense. As a reward for Doug's effort, Gary Sheedy recently suggested calling a medivac helicopter to transport the bacon to the Westchester Burn Center. That was the same morning Gary suggested Doug could solve his sewer leak problems if he used the pancake batter instead of the traditional pipe dope. No good deed goes unpunished. In **Gary Sheedy's** case, down on the reefer deck, he finally found a helper. New volunteer **Wiley Johnson** is an Air Force vet who has been spending his Saturdays helping Gary move



Gary Sheedy repainting the refrigeration compressor bases on the reefer deck.



Super Dave Mardon and Tim Benner put the finishing touches on the forward septic tank.

the project along, chipping, doing brightwork, and now refinishing the wooden reefer gratings. Gary now has most of the brightwork finished and is working on restoration of the motor controllers, compressor bases and gauge panels. He's even started collecting vegetable crates for his anticipated reefer display.

The radio gang was back in action participating in the Museum Ships on the Air Weekend on 6-7 June 2009. Museum Ships on the Air is an amateur radio annual event to honor the officers and sailors who served on historic vessels that have been preserved and are now open to the public. For the event, federally licensed amateur radio operators set up their "ham" radio stations aboard the ships and then make contact with other radio operators scattered throughout the world. Radio operators who once served aboard these historic ships or who have a special connection to a ship are encouraged to share their stories. This activity encourages interest in historic ships and helps boost visitors who wish to experience history first-hand. Special certificates are awarded to radio operators who manage to contact at least 15 ships participating in the event

The event was sponsored by the ham radio group on the battleship USS New Jersey, call sign NJ2BB. There were 85 ships in 14 countries participating, including the USS Slater, call sign WW2DEM (World War Two Destroyer Escort Museum). Ham radio operators around the world participated in the contest to "work" (talk to) as many of the museum ships as possible. Hams who "worked" at least 15 of the ships receive a certificate from NJ2BB. Slater's radio room was manned by chief operator **Stan Murawski N2LBX** and **Jerry Jones K2AYM**. Most of our operation was on 7260 kilocycles with a little on 14.260 megacycles. Slater's location, alongside and under a conflux of arterial elevated highways, interchanges and a tall bridge, seems to create a "radio black hole" that sucks radio signals, both sending and receiving, right into the Hudson River. In past years, we have had limited success, but this year Stan came up with a winning combination of radio, antenna and tuner which worked very well and gave us good signal reports.

They worked nine other museum ships and about 15 states. An eerie moment occurred at midnight on Saturday when the Slater was called by WW2IND, which identified itself as the USS Indianapolis! It was soon clarified that it was not the ship, but a memorial station to The USS Indianapolis located in a VFW post in Indianapolis. WW2DEM has a nice "QSL" card featuring Slater's picture. We send our QSL to all stations that work us and send their QSL along with an addressed, stamped envelope. Next year we are hoping to have an operating WWII navy TBL transmitter together with a navy RAL receiver on the Slater for this event. Incidentally, between periods operating WW2DEM, Stan was also the duty cook and made lunch for the Saturday work crew, including a luscious peach cobbler!



Promoting the SLATER at the Mid-Atlantic Air Show are Don Shattuck, Paul Czesak, Laird Confer and Chief Smith.

We sent another gang on the road this month. A select group from the SLATER set sail on June 4th for the World War II reenactment at the Mid Atlantic Air Museum in Reading, PA. Senior **Chief Smith (Smitty)** and his wife **Carol, Don Shattuck, and Paul Czesak** rendezvoused with **Laird Confer**. As always, all our volunteers covered their own expenses. They promoted the SLATER to the thousands of WWII enthusiasts who attended the event. The SLATER display was located in the hangar, flanked by the "Band of Brothers" book and picture signing on one side and the USS New Jersey and the SS John Brown displays on the other. Couldn't ask for better company, and a chance to remind the public that it was up to the Navy to get the "Band of

Brothers" through the U-boats and land them in Europe. My friend **Ed Zajkowski** attended the event and made the comment that there was more military equipment there than at Normandy on D-Day. Although our SLATER exhibit was modest in comparison to many of the displays (how do you compete with a B-17 and 3 B-25s?) our display attracted our fair share of attention from diverse groups, including active and veteran military, school teachers, scout leaders, history buffs, and the just plain curious, as well as a sizable number of former DE crewmembers. The consensus from our crew is to do it again next year!



Sheedy's dream is to have Rachel Ray cook breakfast for the crew.



Sheedy's reality is collecting cardboard cutouts and serving pancakes to Tanner.

Katie Kuhl, with the help of Bill Haggart, has been preparing the U-Haul storage space for the museum collections. Soon she'll be inventorying and transferring objects not on exhibit over there in the hopes that Aft Officer's Quarters (where most of these objects are now in storage) will one day be open for tours and visiting DE sailors. With the help of **Tommy Moore**, there is now secure storage for the rifle and weapon collection – we can all breathe a sigh of relief. Her latest project involves replacing all our Maritime Commission clocks with authentic U.S. Navy clocks, furthering our mission to restore the SLATER as accurately as possible.



World War II vets from CAPDESA honor their lost shipmates on DE Day.



Steve Stella plays TAPS.

We've had several special events this month. Our DE-Day commemoration was attended by Congressman **Paul Tonko** and Rensselaer County Executive **Kathy Jimino**. We hosted a reunion and memorial service for one of the most famous of all DEs, the USS ENGLAND DE635. The crew that sank six Japanese submarines was aboard on Tuesday, June 23. More impressive than their stories about their success against submarines were the stories of the horrific Kamikaze hit on May 9th 1945. One shipmate told the story of the ship sailing into Philly expecting an extended repair period, only to find a complete superstructure on the pier with the ENGLAND's name on it. But she never went back to sea. The end of the war and an assessment of damage resulted in her being scrapped at the shipyard.



The replica HALF MOON preparing to lay alongside as part of the Quadricentennial Festivities.

We had quite a bit of excitement on Saturday the 13th when a flotilla of historic ships, part of the Explore New York – Hudson Quadricentennial Celebration, made its way up the river to stop by the SLATER for a few hours. Some of the historic ships included our old friends on the *Halfmoon*, a replica of Henry Hudson's ship, which tied up next to the SLATER for a few hours and attracted a substantial number of visitors; the historic fireboat *John J. Harvey*, which put on a good show shooting its water cannon; the *Clearwater*, the flagship of America's environmental movement, which tied up over in Rensselaer; and finally a new addition – the *Onrust*, a replica of the first Dutch ship built in America, which tied up over at the

Albany Yacht Club. The parking lot was gridlocked for a few hours but it was an exciting day for all. As a nice personal touch, that was the day that the crew was passing around a get-well card for my wife, who recently had a hip replacement. She was quite surprised when the card arrived in the mail signed by the whole crew and Mayor **Jerry Jennings!** Thank you all!

See you next month