



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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The Albany trade off. At least it's fresh water.

I've spent a fair amount of time lately thinking about the design features of CANNON class destroyer escorts. You know, the things they got right and the things that could have been improved. Of course, from my perspective the biggest flaw in the design is the quarter-inch shell plate at the water line. I really wish they could have beefed it up for better ice protection. I think about that every time I hear the ice flows scraping against the hull.

It was perfectly adequate at the time, but nobody expected any DE to last 65 years. On the other hand, I have to say, one thing that they definitely got right was the decision to put the heating coils for the forward supply fan right next to my office.

As I write this it's Monday, December 27th. We had about a foot of snow last night and high winds. I emailed the crew and told everyone to stay home, which broke my heart since Monday is one of our most productive workdays. For me, I knew we were getting low on heating oil, and had scheduled a delivery for Monday. Thus, I went in to face the blizzard alone. The ride in was a nail-biter. When I arrived at the gate, there was about two feet of snow piled up in front of it because of the street plows. With no place to park, I pulled up alongside the mound and put my flashers on. I was prepared with a shovel in my trunk and began shoveling a path to the gate.



The result of the first storm of the season.

About this time, the miracle occurred.

Down the street in the scrap yard next door, my nameless friend and his monster bucket loader were plowing out the scrap yard. He saw my plight, and without hesitating, turned around and headed in my direction. Recognizing this act of generosity, I managed to get the gates unlocked and pushed back against the snow enough for him to get his machine through there. I moved my car out of his way and he went to work.

He spent about ten minutes clearing a way in, a large swath for us to park cars, and another swath for us to get out. I don't know his name, but as many times as he's saved my butt during snowstorms, I sure should.

After that, shoveling my way aboard ship didn't seem like much of a problem.

Shoveled my way up the main deck starboard side, shoveled out a space for the oil delivery and shoveled my way to a port-a-john. Turned on the computer, started the coffee, and I was good to go. The only email I had was from Tanner telling me that I was, "Chicken" for canceling the workday. I probably shouldn't include my response here and I won't. The only downside was two hours later when the coffee hit and I had to face the snow covered port-a-john seat. That was an experience I could have done without.

Being the Grinch that I am, this has been a rough Christmas for me. As I said, our biggest volunteer days, and thus our most productive workdays, are Mondays and Saturdays. So the idea that both Christmas and New Years fall on a Saturday this year is killing me. And, then to have a blizzard on a Monday? Somebody is conspiring against me, not that I don't deserve to be conspired against, with an attitude like mine.

December started happily enough with our annual Volunteer Appreciation Event, which this year was a luncheon held Sunday, December 5th at the Zaloga American Legion Post in Albany. During the appreciation luncheon, volunteers with specific hours and years of service received the President's Volunteer Service Award or the Trustees Award for Outstanding Service. Recipients of the President's award were **Les and Annette Beauchaine, Jack Madden, and Clark Farnsworth**, while **Tom "Stretch" McLaughlin** received both the President's award and the Trustees Award. **Stan Murawski's widow, Linda**, accepted the Trustees Award for Outstanding Service for Stan. Throughout the lunch, we had the pleasure of listening to our very own Navy-trained DJ **Floyd Hunt, Y1/c, Retired**. The wonderful 1950s Christmas music created just the right ambiance! Thank you for coming to the lunch; it was fun to see you and your families. Everyone seemed quite pleased with the selection of the Zaloga Post for the event, and nobody complained about not being on the ship. Kudos to **Tony Esposito** who served as master of ceremonies, showing a side of his personality we had never seen before. Our thanks also to Trustees **Greg Wolanin, Hal Hatfield, Greg Krawczyk, Alan Fox, and Tony** who underwrote the event with their donations. And, a big thanks to education coordinator **Linda Wruck** who organized the event.

The following Tuesday we were back at the Zaloga Post to Commemorate Pearl Harbor Day. Our own Dick Walker was master of ceremonies, assisted by Reverend Charlene Robbins. We were honored to have Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings in attendance, as well as Albany County Executive Mike Breslin, who spoke on the significance of the day and honored the Pearl Harbor Survivors present. They included **Seaman 1st Class Charlie Ebel**, who was aboard the seaplane tender USS CURTIS, **Carpenters Mate 1st Class Robert Grimm**, who was on the destroyer USS CUMMINGS, **Fireman Bill Langston**, who served aboard the Battleship USS WEST VIRGINIA, **Sergeant John Sloboda**, who was with the 18th Fighter Group at Wheeler Field, the first location to be attacked, **Seaman First Class A. J. Krenn** of the WEST VIRGINIA who was on his way to his battle station, the port anti-aircraft director, and was blown over the side when a torpedo hit the ship, and **Steve "Tex" Danish**, who was in the Army at Schofield Barracks. **Steve Stella** was on hand to play TAPS. Following the closing remarks by **Post Commander Mark Blank**, the Legion provided a delicious breakfast for all in attendance.

Ship work is progressing in several main areas. Down in the machinery spaces **Ron Mazure** and **Bill Wetterau** have been working away in B-4 scaling the main propulsion generators. Despite the cold conditions they are doing a magnificent job that includes disassembly of all the seawater coolant piping. Bill has been amazed at all the different sized nuts and bolts that were used to put the system together, both metric and SAE. He is working to make sure that the finally reassembly is a bit more in line with the original assembly. Bill has been hitting three days a week, more than anyone else this time of year. Makes one wonder if he isn't bucking for one of those volunteer awards, but everyone know you have to be at least eighty years old to have a chance on this ship! Forward one compartment in B-3, **Gus Negus, Mike Dingmon, Gary Lubrano** and **Rocky Rockwood** have been painting the number three ship's service generator, and working on repainting the valve covers on the two main propulsion diesels.



Industrial technology student Eric Altman gaining experience fabricating a depth charge trolley.

Topside in the radio room, Joe Breyer and Jerry Jones continue to wrestle with the installation of the TBL transmitter and associated motor generator and controls. Jerry reports that they are making haste slowly on the TBL installation. They have been consulting with **Tom Horsfall** regarding the electronics

and Barry Witte regarding the power requirements, motor controller and running the cable. Joe Breyer brought his welding hood to install the bulkhead mounts for the main contactor box and the filter box, and both of these are now welded in place and painted. Jerry is planning to strip and repaint the filter box and bolt it on the bulkhead. They have the flex coupling between the motor and first generator removable so we can start the motor without turning the generators to get the rotation right. Barry has been spending a lot of time assisting the radiomen with the wiring. One of his students,

Nick Malatesta, has the contactor box stripped and repainted with the contactor installed. Another one of Barry's students, **Eric Altman**, has been gaining experience in metal fabrication, constructing the depth charge trolley for the number six roller loader that we built this past fall.

Another major project is going on outside, on the main deck port side. The main deckhouse along the tour route is rotted out just aft of the galley, so **Doug Tanner** has determined this is the year to fix it, as it's a project that is difficult to do when we are open to the public. The inside of this bulkhead contains the ventilation fan rooms for machinery spaces B-1 and B-2. Anyone familiar with ships knows that plenum chambers never receive the maintenance they deserve, and this is doubly true on SLATER. When Doug opened up the 01 level intakes he found a nightmare of corrosion that he immediately detailed his minions to clean out.



Doug will never think to look for us in here!
Mike McEntaggert and Super Dave get ready to lean out the B-2 vent intakes.



Their future "Mancave," the result of a week's work by Benner and Super Dave.

Tackling a job like this in winter was going to take some special protection, namely a plywood shelter over the main deck area where the crew would be working. Tim Benner and Super Dave Mardon were tasked with the construction of this shelter, and it soon became apparent that they had more in mind than a simple windbreak. Talk soon centered on amenities such as their own sofa, electric heater, coffee pot, and satellite reception for the wide screen plasma TV so they could watch the Superbowl in comfort. The only amenity they didn't need was a beer cooler, since this whole place is a cooler outside. Construction of the "Man Cave," as it came to be called, got off to a great start when the plywood roof was installed, but faltered as soon as Doug came back on the scene and forced his disciples to focus on the job at hand, cleaning out the fan rooms.

As a shelter, the design apparently is deficient, because during this last snow storm the snow had drifted higher inside the man cave than outside of it. Doug and his crew will proceed with the project as soon as they can find the steel that was delivered to the wharf, presently buried under a foot of snow.

Down below on the reefer deck, Gary Sheedy is now making what seems like spectacular progress. In the past month, both restored refrigeration compressors have been installed, as well as the electric motors. All the belts are back in place and Gary is in the process of running the wiring for the motors and controllers. He has led us to believe that most of the ancillary fittings are at home in his basement, restored and ready for installation. Unbelievable progress.





Rocky removing snow from the whaleboat cover as he takes care of the boat in and out of the water.

Around the ship the remaining hearty souls continue in their restoration tasks. Don Miller and Walt Stuart got the muffler room cleaned out in anticipation of a fire department inspection. They also spent most of the month working with **Boats Haggart and Mike McEntaggert** on all the details of mooring the ship such as adding additional chafing gear, double checking fenders, and rigging the circulators.

Larry Williams and Ken Kaskoun checked all the bilge alarms and got the ship buttoned up below the second deck, standard winter precautions. **Gene Jackey, Clark Farnsworth and Chris Fedden** have been repairing sound powered phone storage boxes and the handrails to the accommodation ladder. **Jim Gelston** has been keeping the clocks wound, and after taking a month off, **Smitty** is back to cooking. Over on the Albany side a ghost from the past, **Tom Beeler**, has undertaken repairing and retiling the deck in the shore head, and **Frank Peter** has been busy organizing our Board of Trustees' minute books.

Through an incentive program sponsored by National Grid, our electricity provider, DEHM has recently received replacement lighting fixtures for both the visitor's center (trailer) and the ship. The light fixtures and bulbs are the highest rating for efficiency, and are expected to pay for themselves in about six months. DEHM signed on for the less expensive "self install" option, so Barry changed out the light fixtures in the visitor's center. On the ship, where historic authenticity is paramount, the extreme high efficiency bulbs fit into existing ship's sockets, so no modification to the ship is needed. If not for this mention here, you might not notice, but hopefully we'll be spending less on electricity and more of our hard-earned dollars on restoration and programs.

Rosehn, Erik Collin and I have spent a major portion of our time handling all your Winter Fund donations. Your outpouring of support continues to amaze us, and there is no way we can express our gratitude to you. While we read in the news that charitable giving has been down this year, there seems to be no reduction in your support for the SLATER. The end of the year will see us with \$35,000 in Winter Fund donations, compared to \$30,000 this time last year. In addition we had two windfalls. The State of New York came through with payment for a grant, awarded in 2009 through Senator Neil Breslin, for \$15,000 for curatorial support, and General Electric matched the fall gifts early this year.



With winter upon us, Linda Wruck and her education volunteers can take some quiet time and think about the programs we offer to the public. With a dedicated education team, we're ready to tackle some revisions to our programs. **Jim Kuba** drafted a comprehensive plan for the scouting groups who visit the SLATER. **Herb Marlow and Mark Gardiner** have volunteered to lead the team that will give life to understanding the "How does THAT work?" part of the onboard SLATER experience.

Erik Collin and Katie Kuhl spent the better part of December working together in the wardroom getting the new website ready to go online.

Linda Wruck's "Museum in a Seabag" is our latest education resource that will be available to teachers.

orking together on the laptops, they rewrote a lot of text, made new additions, and added updated photographs of the SLATER, and historical photos from other destroyer escorts. One of the most impressive features of the new website is the panoramic photos of the interior compartments in the Ship Tour sections. These were done by photographer Bruce Ecker who came all the way from California to add the SLATER to his extensive list of historic sites he has photographed. The actual launch date was Friday December 1st, so Bravo ulu to all of you who worked so hard on the site.



New Trustee Ron Zarem has led the Michigan Field Days ever since Dick Briel's retirement from the job.

Ron, who will beat me if I don't mention his service at a storekeeper on the USS BROUGH, has been involved with the SLATER since 1998, and along with Dick Briel, got the Field Day program off the ground. Ron was recently elected to the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum's Board of Trustees. We welcome Ron aboard and know he'll be a great addition to the Board. To contribute please click here to reach the donate button on our homepage.

We are always looking for new applicants who would like to be considered for duty as volunteer tour guides and/or ship restoration workers. The SLATER has volunteers who cross the line between education and restoration; it is a good way to provide new perspective to the tour's content. If you'd like to learn more, please contact **Linda Wruck** at the office.

Finally, I don't talk enough about the Trustees who make up our Board. They deserve a lot of credit, but this has always been a newsletter more for the grunts in the trenches. However, one of those grunts was recently elected to the Board. Over the years, you have all read about the contributions of **Ron Zarem** through his efforts at organizing the Michigan Field Days.

Happy New Year! and See you next month!