

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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It seemed like another non-stop month with one event after another. The first event of the month was the Museum Ships Amateur Radio Weekend. This annual event is sponsored by The Battleship New Jersey Amateur Radio Station. For ten years, the Museum Ships Weekend has brought together radio amateur (ham) operators broadcasting from historic museum



RM1 Joe Breyer on watch.

ships around the world. When telephone lines are disrupted and regular commercial power is off (and even the Internet is down) amateur radio operators throughout the world have demonstrated their unique ability to handle emergency communications using their own radio equipment and power generators to assist government agencies at all levels. Among SLATER's volunteer crewmembers are four licensed radio "ham" operators. This year 78 ships were registered for the event. Many were from the United States, but others that were transmitting included museum ships in Germany, England, Canada, and Portugal. Our own radiomen Joe Breyer RM1, N2LL, Mike Wyles KE2EE, Don Montrym, ET2, W1IBC, Jerry Jones, ET1, K2AYM, and Bob Kibbey, SWL completed last minute details including completing the ship's antenna connections to WWII short wave receivers and getting two RBB and RBC receivers in operation. The event ran for 35 hours with the objective of making radio contact with as many of the 78 participating ships as possible.

This was to have been the first real test of our (new) 800-pound TBL transmitter rescued from USS CLAMP ASR33 in San Francisco Bay by volunteers from USS PAMPANITO, and extensively overhauled, restored and tested by **Tom Horsfall**. First tested in April, it was extensively “shaken down” for 2 months and declared to be “bullet proof” and ready for the Museum Ships radio event. However, just an hour into the contest the antenna current dropped from 5 amps to zero! Big Problem--No output! All control circuits were okay and all meter readings normal, except no carrier. No fuses blown, no overloads or interlocks tripped, high voltage generator was putting out 2000 volts. The backup plan using modern transceivers and voice communication was put into effect while the TBL problem was diagnosed. **That happened at 1830 when they noticed after visual inspection that there was no spacing between plates in the oscillator plate tank capacitor.** To make a long story (pardon the pun) short, it was finally discovered that a lock nut on a spacing adjuster was loose (possibly since WWII). This allowed the plate spacing to gradually decrease over a long period of time (probably years) and finally short-circuit the capacitor. Results: After 30-some man-hours of “failure mode analysis” by several well-qualified technicians with a hundred man-years of experience, the problem was corrected in two technician minutes. TBL is restored to operation as it was at 1000 hours 6 June 2011. Wasn't it the old Brooklyn Dodgers who always said “just wait ‘til next year!” In the process everyone gained a renewed respect for the young men who operated and maintained equipment like this, frequently under battle conditions, during the past wars.



Captain Mike Nevin's Retirement Ceremony.



Veteran Sailors honor their shipmates on DE Day

Ken Kaskoun and the SLATER ceremonial crew had a busy month. On Saturday June 17th we observed our 14th annual DE Day commemoration here in Albany. The Director of New York State Veterans Affairs **Bill Kraus** read the Governor's Proclamation that declared the third Saturday in June to be recognized and celebrated nationwide as Destroyer Escort Day. On this day we pay homage to the Destroyer Escort sailors killed in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War years and to the ten Destroyer Escort ships lost in action. We honored the over 150,000 men served in destroyer escorts during World War II and through the Vietnam War. Though their numbers are dwindling, ten DE veterans were present for the ceremony including **Doc Dachenhauser, John Fautz, Don Justus, Ron Mazure, Stan McMillian, Bob Nolte, Hank Rizzo, Bill Scharoun, Rocky Rockwood, Bill Archibald** came up from Jersey with his sons; and three crew members from the USS THADDEUS PARKER DE367, **Laird Confer, Gary Zlab, and Clarence Parker**. Also present in the color guard were DE vets **Larry Williams, Don Shattuck and Paul Czesak**. These men dropped carnations into the water for each DE lost in action in honor of their lost shipmates. USS SLATER, now being considered for National Landmark status, is the last DE afloat in America. She is a fitting tribute to so many sailors who gave so much for their country in its time of need. **Bill Scharoun** organized the ceremony which was sponsored by the Capital District Chapter of DESA and the USS SLATER Volunteers. The event was commemorated with Taps and a volley from USS SLATER's cannon.



Albany Maritime Ministry's Reverend Bill Hemphill congratulates Dick and Maralyn Walker for their year's of volunteer service.



Summer camp tours have begun.

and Chief Smith traveled to Pennsylvania to represent us at the Annual Reading Air Show. That same weekend we also hosted a retirement ceremony for Captain **Michael Nevins**. Later in the month we hosted a special tour for all volunteers who work aboard the museum destroyer USS CASSIN YOUNG DD793 located at the Boston National Historic Park. It was great to compare notes with a similar group of dedicated preservationists. Speaking of dedicated preservationists, two of our most dedicated volunteers **Dick and Maralyn Walker** were honored by the Port of Albany for their service with the Albany Maritime Ministry. The Ministry is an all-volunteer ecumenical group that strives to meet the spiritual and practical needs of merchant seafarers and fisherman arriving in and around the Port of Albany. Founded in 1996, this ministry, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. **William Hempel** of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, works closely with various Capital District churches, the business community and city, state and federal agencies to provide needed services to visiting seafarers. This was part of the formal commemoration of National Maritime Day which took place aboard USS SLATER at 1630 on Sunday, June 19th. Dick and Maralyn have been active volunteers with Albany Maritime Ministry for more than a dozen years. During that time, they have been the face of the Ministry all along the Hudson from Albany to Catskill doing everything imaginable - going aboard countless vessels in all kinds of weather, driving, scheduling volunteers, keeping records and serving as President of the Board. In addition to all that they have been and done for AMM, they have managed to find time to serve as Deacons at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Berne, volunteers at Good Samaritan Home, Delmar; and active volunteers in the USS SLATER organization.

The Education Department continues to evolve. The Briefing Room is not only a library of reading material, this is where we begin all tours with a 7-minute video to introduce the significance of the Battle of the Atlantic and the Destroyer Escort in World War II. Our tour guides now have laminated maps that illustrate the "Allied Shipping Losses" spanning September 1939 to May 1943. Visitors witness the shift from "Germany and German-occupied Territory" to "Axis and Axis-occupied Territory;" follow the change from "convoy routes, escorted; convoy routes, unescorted" to simply "convoy routes." By April of 1941, air cover zones had become part of the battle plan, increasing their territories by August 1942. We see the defeat of the Axis Powers in North Africa along with an increase in U-boat sinkings. It's all very exciting to follow the Allies with each pulse forward, against the Axis.



Summer camp tours have begun.



Which means the 40's get a workout.

Through the dedication of archives volunteer Frank Peter, the Education Department has a large amount of digitized information pulled directly from SLATER's collections, on the only World War II warship manned by an African-American crew. The Destroyer Escort USS MASON DE529, escorted six convoys across the dangerous waters of the North Atlantic, ensuring the safe arrival of precious cargo into European ports at the battle front. The MASON was nicknamed "Eleanor's Folly," in reference to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's determination to desegregate the armed forces. The First Lady's work paved the way for the successful integration of the military under President Harry S Truman.

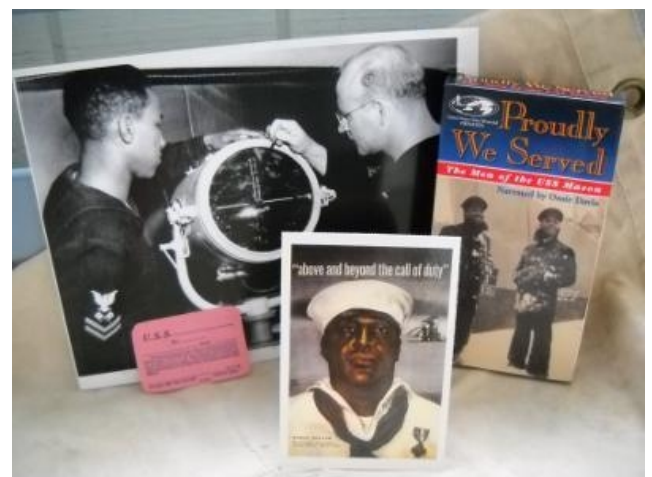


Linda Wruck is developing an educators' kit based on the story of the MASON, teach about the equally significant contributions of black and white sailors in the fight, the course of the Battle of the Atlantic, and Destroyer Escort history. The educators' kit, "Who is an American?" Racism and Segregation in the Military also highlights the first ship, a Destroyer Escort, named in honor of an African-American sailor, Mess Cook First Class Leonard Roy Harmon, killed during the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942. He and Frank O. Slater, our own DE's namesake, were shipmates and both were killed during this battle on the USS SAN FRANCISCO. The connection among the HARMON, the MASON, and the SLATER is a solid platform that demonstrates the very nature of First Lady Roosevelt's goal; Seaman Harmon was a Mess Cook when he was killed in service, but by the time the MASON launched only one year after the Battle of Guadalcanal, it was manned by an African-American crew not limited by race to duties of mess cook. The Destroyer Escort is the turning point of desegregation in the United States Navy. Call it what you will, but Eleanor's Folly was a tremendous success.

Maintenance received another big boost this month from the real Navy. On Tuesday June 21, we again got some help from the Navy Nuclear Power Training Unit in Ballston Spa. In fact, we got more than we bargained for. Our coordinator Chief **Owen Hooper** had set up a work day for an estimated 10-15 machinist mates and electrician trainees who were in between classes, so we laid out work for 10-15 helpers. Well, they must be really bored up there. The first cars started to pull into the lot around 0830. Erik set the first group up on the gangway to scale and paint it. The second group came in and we set them up with life jackets and the paint float, to continue working on the starboard boottop. But cars kept coming and more and more sailors kept reporting aboard. When all was said and done over forty sailors had signed in the log book and were massed on the fantail waiting for assignments.



Sailors from the Nuclear Power Training Unit painting the gangway.



USS MASON Educator's Kit.



NPTU Sailors load depth charges for us.

We scrambled to find something for them to do. First up, **Rich Pavlovic** had them remove a 20mm gun from mount 28 on the fantail for preservation. Then we split them into equal groups. I took one group into B-3 and told them to clean the space like they were getting it ready for inspection. **Erik Collin** took another group into the aft berthing space C-201L and set them up pumping and drying out the shaft alleys. I took a third group into B-4 and set them up where the HUSE crew had been scaling the forward bulkhead. I had them finish scaling, vacuuming and had them paint it out white. I then set up another crew on the lower level vacuuming the bilges and painting the spaces with red primer. Erik brought another group down into B-4 and set them up on the aft bulkhead lower level scaling the fuel oil transfer manifolds and the adjacent bulkheads. By 0930 we had everybody doing something. **The guy who had the biggest challenge and rose to the occasion was Chief Bernie Smith.**

Smitty had agreed to prepare lunch for anticipated fifteen. When forty showed up he really had to punt. He had his macaroni and meat sauce special. Fortunately, thanks to the foresight of one **William Douglas Tanner**, there were several boxes of macaroni and another jar of tomato sauce in the pantry, so Smitty was able to triple the order and cut the watermelon smaller. It all worked out. And in the end we had a freshly painted gangway, two dry shaft alleys, two clean machinery spaces with a lot of nice fresh paint, the fuel oil transfer manifold ready to paint; and, they were probably the only US Sailors who have loaded a depth charge projector in the past thirty years. Well done Sailors.

They have been preparing a new chock that will be needed on the port side. The new hinges are in place and complete. **Gus Negus, Karl Herchenroder, Mike Dingmon and Gary Lubrano** checked out the whaleboat motor. **Rocky Rockwood** is in limbo until the ladder is complete, so he's gone back down to the engineroom cleaning diesels. **Bill Wetterau** and his daughter Alyssa continued their work disassembling, sandblasting and repainting the fuel oil transfer valves in B-4. **Rich Pavlovic** has continued working on the 20mm mounts on the fantail. **"Boats" Haggart, Nelson Potter, Paul Guarnieri** and new volunteer Ed Laduke are working on repairs to the gangway netting following repainting the gangway. Barry Witte and Eric Altman finished the seventh depth charge side projector trolley, and made a copy of the plans for the STEWART. They continue to make progress on the B-3 distribution board.



The local maintenance crew continues working on the relocation of the accommodation ladder back to its original position on the port side amidships. As I write, Dave Mardon and Tim Benner are welding down the repaired chock for the spring wire. Gene Jackey and Clark Farnsworth continue working on modifications to the davit from which the ladder will hang and making modifications to the upper and lower platforms.

Chock Repairs by the shipfitters.1

Ed Zajkowski has been working to obtain the switchboard manuals from Westinghouse, and has come up with a lot of valuable information. **Gary Sheedy** was called upon to repair two of our operational reefers, and continues to make progress on the reefer deck. But for me, the most satisfying project has been the progress on the decks. **Erik Collin** completed repainting the maindeck portside with non-skid and the chippers are now working the fantail. **Chris Fedden, Walt Stuart, Ron Mazure, Don Miller, Bill and Alyssa Wetterau** and a group of Navy NPTU students have all been pecking away at the deck, much to the consternation of **Heather Maron** and **Frank Peter** who are trying to maintain the special collections and archives.

We held our spring Board of Trustees meeting this June 17th, and the one appointment of note is the election of volunteer Steve Long to the Board of Trustees of the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum. Steve, a long time tour guide and our regular master of ceremonies at special events served on the USS BOTETOURT APA136 and the USS SHADWELL LSD15. Steve brings a strong background in non-profit organizations, having chaired several in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. And speaking of fundraising, the long-awaited Hull Preservation Fund letter will be coming to you sometime in July. The July edition of SIGNALS will be devoted to this effort. The design printing and mailing is being donated by one of our own, Gary Dieckman, who owns Executive Printing and Direct Mail, Inc in Elmsford, NY. Gary was an MR and Lithographer on USS GRAND CANYON AD28, and is familiar to the Michigan Crew as he has been a work week participant for several years, and is usually on the paint float supervising the hull painting. Again, it's a reminder of the good fortune this project has enjoyed so far. It seems the right person always walks down the gangway just when we need them the most.

See you next month.