

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

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Fortunately we haven't had much of this white stuff, but winter isn't over yet.

The “winter that wasn’t” is almost over. I was afraid to mention it before now, because I didn’t want to jinx it. We’ve never seen anything like it. I don’t believe we had more than an inch of ice on the river, and it only lasted a couple of weeks. And, no snow here in Albany. I mean none. If there was ever a year we could have kept the ship in Albany and stayed open all winter this was it. But, who knew. Maybe one day they will perfect forecasting, but until then we will play it safe. And, I still expect the snowiest, coldest March on record.



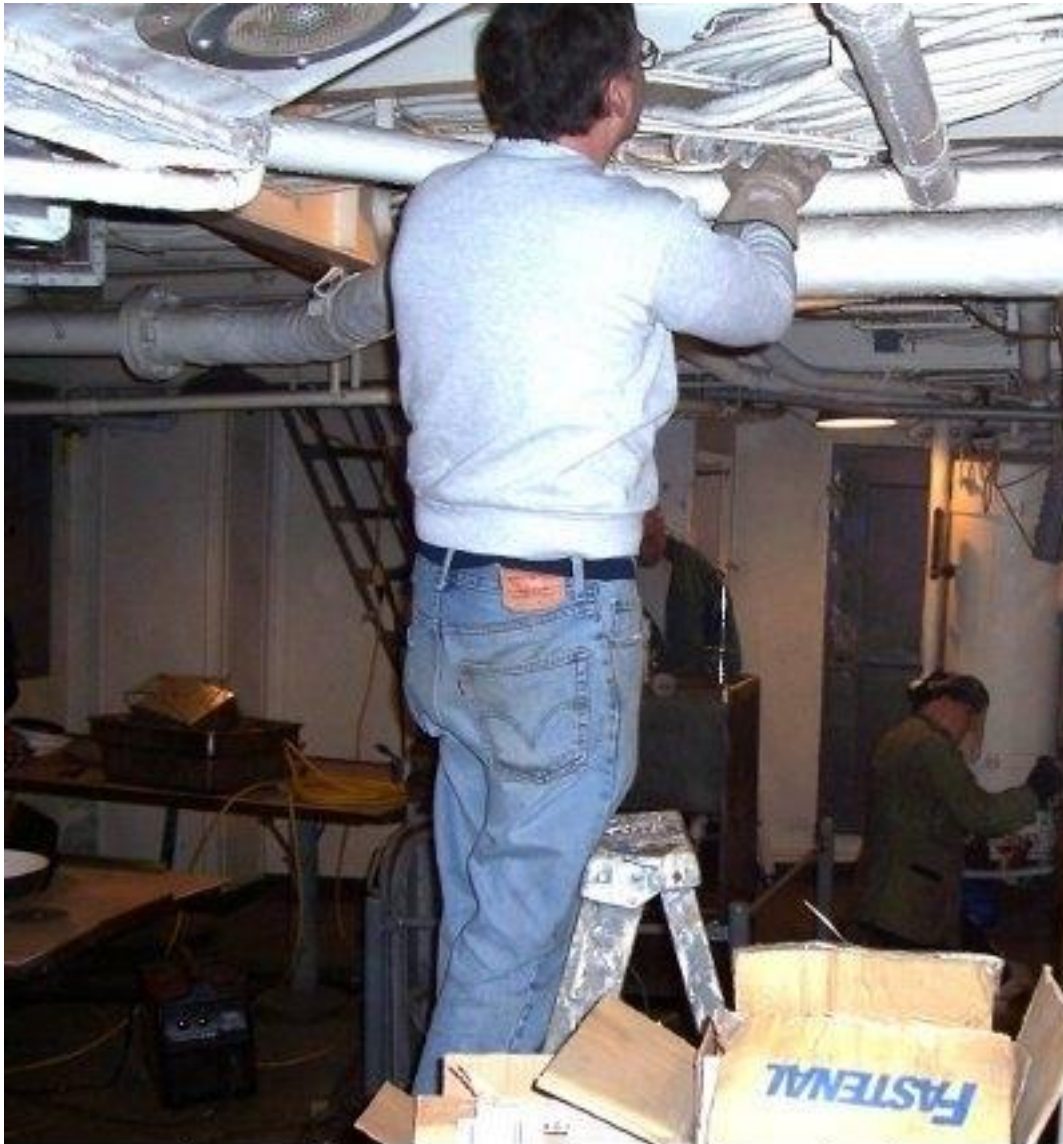
Bob Scian cleaning up the messdeck.

The “cage” or issue room on the starboard side of the messdeck came in for some major work. The entire bulkhead by the ladder was a cob job of tacked together sheet metal. So we opened our pocket book and bought some new steel, cut out the cobbed up piece and replaced the whole thing. We also replaced plywood shelving with some new galvanized material. At one point during this evolution, **Doug Tanner** cast forty years of high stands aside. He had to deal with some gaps that just couldn't be welded because the bulkhead in question was directly over a fuel tank. He was forced to break out a can of Bondo to fill in the gaps. His comment was that he was finally stooped to my standards. Of course, when Doug put the Bondo away his parting comment was, “This is so easy, I may never bother to strike another arc.”

One month to go before opening day and how are we ever going to get this ship cleaned up in time. The messdecks restoration involved a lot more metal work than we originally anticipated, particularly in the area of the scullery and the portside cage. In the scullery we removed two large and heavy sections of ventilation piping and valves that were added after the war. When we removed the sink and counter from the bulkhead, we found the steel terribly deteriorated, and that necessitated replacing a whole section of curved bulkhead. We also replaced all the expanded metal in the space. Then we discovered that for some reason the Greeks had raised the counter about eight inches, so we dropped in back down, and low and behold, it matched the height of the dish machine perfectly. Things are back in place and the space is just awaiting



Haggart, Mardon, Benner and Sheedy making sure Doug gets the scullery sink back in level.



Barry Witte pulling armored cable through the messdeck overhead.

The electricians are replacing the power lines to the forward ventilation fans, removing old armored cable, and generally trying to straighten out the cable runs. Anyone who has ever worked with their arms overhead, loosening paint covered bolts and pulling steel-jacketed cable with a come-a-long can appreciate the effort that went into this work. Ken Kaskoun has spent several weeks trying to locate an annoying short that causes the light in the lower storeroom to flicker and dim on occasion.

In preparation for painting, there isn't a piece of loose gear anywhere on the messdecks. Of course, the adjacent forward berthing space looks like it has puked because all the grimy dust-covered equipment, mess benches and cooking gear is stowed in there. When Smitty serves lunch, there isn't much room left to sit down and eat. A level above, the work by the starboard messdecks hatch is complete. Barry has only to run the permanent wires to the vent controllers to complete the job. All the metal work is complete, the insulation board repaired and the area has been primed. All that needs to be done in the passageway is cleaning, masking and spray painting. Likewise, the pilothouse is in the process of having all the electrical fittings and brightwork masked over in preparation for spray painting as soon as it warms up a little.



RPI Midshipmen Elizabeth Church-Leviton and Kara VanSice cleaning a steering engine room pipe.

The chippers have been chipping down in the electronics shop below the messdeck. That will be an ongoing foul weather project this spring. We'll be pulling them out of there temporarily for cleaning and masking. Down in the engine room, they are supposed to be working on painting main engine number four. However, every time I go down there, they seem to be deeper into the guts of this thing, and I hear language like, "This thing had to be running on just 14 cylinders. No way was this piston running with this valve stuck." I think their "cosmetic" restoration is on number 10 of the engine's 16 cylinders. Across the river, I don't see or hear much from **Rocky**, but I understand he and Dave Jeffries have been continuing the work on the whaleboat in the cold confines of Scarano's boathouse.

A woodworker by trade, Dave tries to split his time between Rocky and **Gary Sheedy**, who was the one who originally brought Dave aboard to be his reefer deck go-fer. Dave remains loyal to Gary, and has spent several days cleaning and shining the cooling coils for Gary's beloved reefers. And **Liz Church Leviton** continues to keep the RPI Midshipmen involved with the restoration of the steering engine room. By the way, Liz will graduate this May and will be assigned to the USS Pearl Harbor LSD 52 out of San Diego. That's the same homeport her husband is assigned to, so congratulations Liz!



Paul Guarnieri, Bob and Thomas Scian painting the hedgehog projectiles.

The wardroom still looks like the hedgehog magazine as that has been the center of the restoration of the hedgehog projectiles. The weather has started causing deterioration of these replicas so Erik has been supervising their preservation, including body filler, extensive sanding, painting and stenciling. Kudos to **Bob Scian** and his son **Thomas** for coming in every Saturday all the way from Monticello. That's about a four-hour round trip, and they even made it on President's Day when Tom was off from school. Thomas is one dedicated kid, and his father is one devoted Dad for bringing him every week. If you want to know where the next generation of shipkeepers is coming from, look to kids like Tom.

As always, our projected planned work exceeded what we could actually accomplish. The repairs to the forward expansion joint over the galley will be deferred for another year. Again, so long as the only leak is directly over the galley sink, that is not a real issue. And tackling that job during the work weeks when the cooks are trying to prepare chow is just not going to happen. Never plan work that interferes with the work of the cook. And the machine shop was another dream that didn't happen. At some point, the port half of the expansion joint has to be replaced, and there are several sections of wasted deckhouse along the port and starboard sides, including some hard to reach areas behind the work bench. It's hoped when we pull out the workbench we can also replace the lathe. The Greek Navy upgraded to a British Harrison lathe. We've got an original DE model South Bend lathe in storage, and it is only awaiting time and opportunity to find its new home.

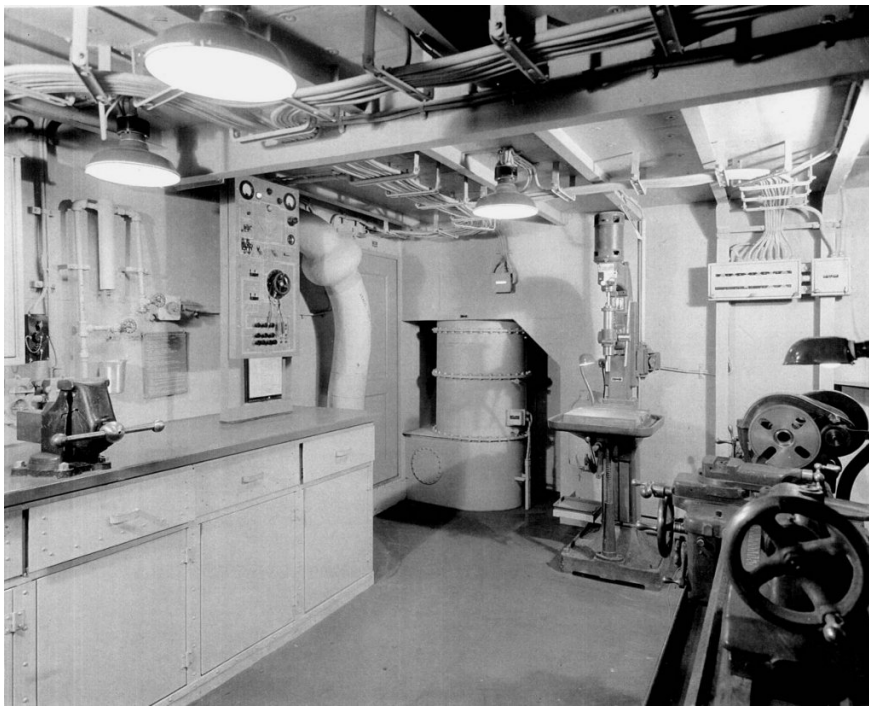


Don Miller priming the portside ladder to the 01 level.

Speaking of the machine shop, you remember last month we advertised for a volunteer to try and straighten the shop and the crew out? Well, believe it or not, we actually found someone willing to take on the challenge. Who but a former Marine would come aboard to try to straighten out a shipload of sloppy Sailors. But, **John Thompson**, a rather imposing combat wounded Vet from Viet Nam, has spent the better part of the month aboard two days a week, cleaning, organizing and straightening, and finding parts and tools for volunteers in need. Despite the best efforts of the crew to intimidate him, John has stood his ground and the transformation he is working is amazing. We gave him an “as built” picture of the machine shop of the CURRIER DE700, taken probably before a single Sailor had ever laid a tool on the work bench and said, “This is what it should look like when you’re done.” I know John must be doing a great job, because several other volunteers have come to me asking if I will release John to work in their space when he finishes the shop. I personally think once he gets it straightened out; with this crew it will take all his Marine endurance to keep it that way.



Former Marine John Thompson's goal is to make the machine shop look as good as...



Why can't my machine shop look like this?

Another unsung hero is our retired Coast Guard storekeeper Dick Walker. Dick and wife Maralyn usually spend their Mondays on the road for us picking up all the last-minute supplies that the restoration crew needs to keep going. As part of our preparation to get SLATER cleaned up for spring, we asked Dick to go through and inventory all our shop vacuum cleaners and buy new HEPA filters for them. Dick did the inventory and it turns out that we have eleven shop vacs scattered about the ship in various compartments. When Dick began to research what filters he needed to purchase he discovered that of the eleven shop vacs, no two used the same filter. Talk about a storekeeper's nightmare. He is in the acquisition and installation phase with the filters as I type this, and thus far has gotten HEPA filters for six of the eleven vacuum cleaners. Two others we are planning to turn into "wet only" vacs, so no filters will be required. That only leaves three to go.

Our long suffering radio gang may have gotten a break. If you have followed the five-year-long saga of the TBL transmitter from San Francisco to New York you know that the latest problem is a burned out armature on the low voltage side of the motor generator, and that side produces three different voltages for the transmitter. Through the wonder of the internet, **Jerry Jones** discovered that the original manufacturer of the unit, Bogue Electric Company, is still in business in New Jersey. Jerry contacted a gentleman named **Richard Lanza** at Bogue and sent him an extensive packet of information about the SLATER project and pictures of the damage to the armature. Richard ran it up the chain and Bogue agreed to look at the armature to see if it was repairable.

Jerry and **Bob Kibbey** promptly crated up the armature loaded it up into Bob's SUV and drove it to the Bogue shop in New Jersey. We're awaiting the diagnosis.

Over on the Albany side, bringing our major donor boards up to date is a daunting task this year thanks to your generosity. Many more of you and your ships have passed over the major donor threshold and are eligible for listing on the board. To update that information, our archivist **Frank Peter** has stepped into the breach and, in conjunction with **Erik Collin** who generated the raw data and **Rosehn Gipe** who is laying out the boards, is coming up with the list of who is on the board and who needs to be added. For the first time he is putting all the data into an Excel spread sheet, something that we should have done years ago. Thanks to Frank's efforts, future annual updates will be much less cumbersome.

Heather Maron and volunteer Jim Kuba will be attending the BSA Twin Rivers Council Pow Wow Institute of Scouting to help promote the overnight camping program and encourage more group tours. By bringing artifacts that scouts can relate to, such as rate badges, uniforms, and signal flags; they hope to make a tangible connection between badge requirements and what the SLATER has to offer such groups. This is the second year that the SLATER has been allowed to have a table at their midway exhibit area, and we hope to continue working with scout groups to tailor tours and programs.



Erik Collin explaining the workings of the three-inch gun to our new interns.

As we gear up for the upcoming season, tour training will begin by welcoming the new guides on board to get familiarized with the ship. Returning guides Julianne Madsen, Vince Knuth, Rob Nielsen, and Dave Pitlyk will be joined by new guides Sarah Foundas, Matthew Wong, and Nic Soares. The new guides proved themselves to be knowledgeable about history, outgoing, and excited for the opportunity. The entire full-time staff is contributing to the new guide training process; Erik and Heather hope to focus on what makes a good tour guide during their March training sessions, and know that this great group will be a strong addition to the already solid foundation of volunteer docents that the SLATER is lucky to retain. The returning volunteer crew includes **Ken Kaskoun, Alan Fox, Herb Marlow, Glenn Harrison, Joe Burke, Bob Dawson, Bill Scharoun, Bob Bull, Russ Ferrer, Jack Madden, Nelson Potter, Paul Guarnieri, Tom Cline, Jim Kuba, Tom McLaughlin, Leo Baehler, Harold Grimm, Larry Williams, Bill Goralski, Grant Hack, Chris Lecce, Steve Long, Patrick O'Conner and Chuck Teal.** If we're really lucky maybe we'll even get **Les Beauchaine** back.



What woman wouldn't want this picture on their night stand?

We can't thank you Winter Fund donors, Hull Fund Donors and Endowment Fund Donors enough. As of March 1, the 2012 Winter Fund Appeal had generated \$68,000 in donations, money that is critical to carrying us over into the spring. I'm almost afraid to point this out, but the combined endowment fund and hull fund totals recently put our net worth over the two million dollar mark. It's like the weather we've enjoyed this winter. I don't want to jinx the weather and I don't want to jinx the stock market. Back in 1998 when we didn't know where our next dollar would come from, I never thought I'd see this day. Thank you all for helping to make our progress possible. Next month we should be writing from back on the Albany side.

Finally, in late breaking news, it was announced today that the Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar will sign the final documents that will designate USS SLATER a National Historic Landmark. This is a great tribute to all the Sailors who donated the money to bring her back from Greece in 1993, the thousands of you who have continued to support her, and the hundreds of volunteers who have made her the superb memorial she is today. Thank you all. **See you next month.**