



# SLATER SIGNALS

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

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**Tour guide Nic Soares and one of the last tours of the season.**

**With Hurricane Sandy's passing, we reset the awnings, put all the equipment back out and reopened for business.** The water only got within three feet of the top of the seawall, and the winds never topped force 6. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those downstate that were less fortunate. The only impact it had on us was we were disappointed that the expected visit by Hugh and Dave Wood from England had to be canceled due to the hurricane.

**Hugh was another Royal Navy Captain-class frigate Vet who wanted to see SLATER with his son.** Hugh was sent to New York in 1942 to join the DE HMS GARLIES and he participated in North Atlantic Convoys and D-Day landings, serving in the black gang. We're hoping to see them next year. Tour-wise it has been a very good month with youth group overnights booked every Friday and Saturday through November 16th. We also experienced a steady flow of Cub Scout and Brownie tours, as we began reaping one of the benefits of being a National Historic Landmark. Some Merit badge requirements include a visit to an NHL, so now a visit to the SLATER can mean a step towards another merit badge for these kids.



**The RPI Gun crew saluting our nation's Veterans.**

The weekend of November 10th was especially busy. In addition to hosting back-to-back overnight encampments, we hosted the Marine Corps Birthday on Saturday, the annual USS SLATER Fort Orange Club Fundraiser Saturday night, and our Veterans Day Ceremony on Sunday Morning. On Saturday at noon the site was once again a sea of red jackets as the flood of Marines descended upon SLATER.



**Tom DeMeo** once again organized a special event in which SLATER was the venue for the recognition of the 237th Marine Corps Birthday Celebration. Tom's first thought was to remember our own **RADM Paul Czesak**, NYNM who remains in long-term care at The Avenue rehabilitation center in Schenectady. Tom then introduced the keynote speaker Lieutenant Colonel **Patrick R. Blanchard** who is presently serving as the Executive Officer, Marine Officer Instructor and Associate Professor of Naval Science at Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York. As always, the ceremony concluded with the presentation of the Birthday Cake in which the oldest Marine present, 92-year-old **Arnold Townsend**, USMC, presented a piece of the cake to the youngest Marine present. Following the presentation, Colonel Blanchard's RPI Midshipmen did the traditional three gun salute with number 3 three-inch gun under the direction of **Erik Collin**.

**That evening we hosted our annual Fort Orange Club Fundraiser for the Hull Fund.** At 1730 the guests began gathering in the West Lounge of the Fort Orange Club, which we had decked out with nautical memorabilia for the occasion. We had some unexpected guests. DESA Ladies Auxiliary President **Phyllis Gruber** and DESA Executive Administrator **Dori Glaser** and her husband **Ed** had scheduled a site visit here in Albany for the 2013 DESA Convention that same weekend. And, **John Cosgrove** and **Georgia Jones** came up from Washington D.C. Heavy h'ors d'oeuvres were the order of the evening with an open bar and delightful company. Chairman **BJ Costello** opened the event with the proud announcement of us becoming the number one tourist attraction in Albany, according to Tripadvisor.com, a position we have managed to hang on to into the last week of November. The big surprise of the evening came when Dori presented BJ with the proceeds from the DESA LA Chapter raffle which came to \$20,000. That combined with the \$30,000 we expect to net from the benefit made it a \$50,000 night after all expenses are paid. We're now well over the \$800,000 mark for the Hull Fund.

**At that point we adjourned to the Presidents Room where BJ introduced our keynote speaker Captain James T. Loeblien, USN, a 1985 Naval Academy graduate who currently serves as the Director of the Navy's U.S. Senate office.** In this position, he is the face of our Navy to the Senate on policy, education and financial issues. Captain Loeblien gave a stirring visual presentation of the challenges and commitments our modern Navy faces on one specific day in March of 2012. The bottom line is that we are stretched pretty thin when we look at all the things we expect our Navy to do, as the commitments seem to increase and the resources diminish. It is a great credit to all our service personnel at what they have accomplished in this era of reduced budgets.



**Bob Dawson circa 1951 aboard USS WALKE.**

**The second part of the program meant the most to me personally.** It was the announcement of the Trustees' Volunteer of the Year Award. As always this was a most difficult selection, because in an organization where so many give so much, how do you single out one individual? But, we have a volunteer who has been with us from day one and a volunteer who meets our other important criteria in that he's over eighty years old. And, as Red Buttons used to say, "A guy who never got a dinner." I'm talking about **Bob Dawson**. At 82 years old, Bob is a "Kid" by our standards.

**Bob graduated from Albany High School in 1948 and entered the US Navy and was assigned to the destroyer USS MASSEY DD778 where he made radarman striker.** Bob was recalled to active duty in August 1950 and assigned to the USS WALKE DD723 in San Diego as a radarman. USS WALKE was assigned duty in Korea and sailed in the first week of January 1951.

WALKE operated with carrier task force TF77 in support of air operations and operated up and down the Korean coastline doing gunfire support for ground forces shore. On June 12th at 0742 hours the WALKE suffered an underwater explosion in one of her aft berthing compartments, killing 26 and wounding 42 of her crew. Bob was in the compartment when the explosion occurred. Bob was wounded but remained with the ship. The Navy insisted it was a mine, but there was considerable speculation that it was a torpedo from a Russian or Chinese submarine. Despite the damage, she was able to make way on one operational propeller and return to Sasebo, Japan for repairs and then to Mare Island Naval shipyard for overhaul. That's a damage control lesson applicable to today's Navy.

**The majority of his working career was with New York Telephone as a Senior Data Communication Consultant working with New York State implementing data communication networks.** On the volunteer side, Bob was a member of the Shaker Road Loudonville Fire Department and a member of the Town of Colonie Fire Protection Committee. Bob was on the wharf when USS SLATER arrived in Albany on October 27, 1997. He and his friend, the late **George Irwin**, began with the restoration crew. Then, Bob volunteered for tour guiding because he felt that's where he could make his greatest contribution to the project. He certainly has.



**Given the podium, Bob couldn't resist the dig at me for the lack of ink the tour guides get in SIGNALS and he is absolutely right.** Bob presented several accounts of how emotionally affected visitors were by SLATER, including the son of a deceased DE Sailor who said to Bob, "Thank you for letting me spend another day with my father." So I put it back on you tour guides. When you have stories like these, email them to me. They are important and need to be heard. This ship is more than paint and machinery. We need to convey that to the rest of the world. It must mean something when Sailors want to come all the way from Europe to see us.

**I followed Bob to the podium.** It has somehow been my misfortune throughout my career that every opportunity that I've been presented with an open bar, I've also had to give a public speech. The need to remain coherent has prevented me from taking full advantage of these opportunities. But only the audience can judge if remaining sober helped me remain coherent. My topic was "The Bottom Line: The Why, What, and How of Drydocking." This was a graphic presentation showing the need for drydocking and what we anticipate happening in the shipyard, using images from other ships that have been through the same process, from the perspective of someone who has never been through the process. Using the numbers from six other similar-sized historic ships, the only conclusion I could draw is that the numbers are all over the place and you really don't know what you've got until you're up on the blocks and they are finished punching holes in your bottom after they have sand blasted. Like "This Old House" it promises to be an adventure. It won't be forgotten that after the program Susan Biggs remarked that in all the years she and Sherry had been coming to the event, she thought this was the best program we'd ever put together.

**We were up early on Sunday morning for our annual Veterans Day Commemoration aboard the ship. Steve Long** was on hand to emcee the event in rather inclement weather. However, we had a good showing of dignitaries including Senator **Neil Breslin**, Assemblymen **Jack McEneny and Bob Reilly**, and Albany County Executive **Dan McCoy**. We had good media coverage including a team from C-Span. Special kudos go to our RPI NROTC gunners, the scouts and leaders of **Boy Scout Troop 29** from Congers, New York, bugler **Steve Stella** and our own USS SLATER Color Guard who stood by when it started to rain.



The hedgehog projector.



**C-Span's Adrienne Hoar interviewing Bob Cross about "Shepherds of the Sea."**

**We may get some national publicity.** The national cable television network C-Span spent a week profiling the city of Albany as part of their "Cities Tour." Reporter **Adrienne Hoar** covered our Veterans Day Ceremony and got great footage of the gun salute. In addition, they came back the following Thursday and filmed the full tour of the ship. Also, they interviewed author **Bob Cross** about his history of Destroyer Escorts

*Shepherds of the Sea* as part of their Booknotes series. We're happy to announce that Bob's book is being reprinted in soft cover and will once again be available from the US Naval Institute in March of 2013. We don't know how much air time SLATER will get, but the program will air on one of the C-Span channels December 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Now that we're closed for the season, the final numbers are in and our 2012 attendance us up 5% over 2011.

**So, by my count I've almost gone three pages without mentioning maintenance.** Don't worry; the other half of the crew hasn't stopped working. Doug Tanner rounded up his crew of Tim Benner and Super Dave Mardon to begin making the all-important and necessary preparations for winter. Following our last overnight on November 16th they set about draining down the fresh water system, blowing it out with compressed air, flushing out the septic system, draining all that down and making sure all the traps and holding tanks had antifreeze in them. In a practically all-hands evolution Doug supervised rigging the large fenders on chain falls and hoisting them up so they won't be damaged by the anticipated ice this winter as we prepare for the move. We were helped by our NPTU Sailors Eric Starbuck, Lakin Quillen, Matt Rodriguez and Charlie Hancock whose presence made it a lot easier on us old guys. By the way, these four have continued doing the dirty work in the bilges of B-4 through the month of November. Sadly, I think their time here is about to end as the real Navy is about to put them back to work learning something more useful, like how to run a reactor. We hope that their exposure to the old Navy hasn't warped their perspective forever.



**NPTU Sailors Lakin Quillen, Charlie Hancock, Matt Rodriguez and Eric Starbuck...**



**...helped raise the fenders.**





**"Boats" Haggart and his crew raised the accommodation ladder.**



**The fruit of our labor shown in the restored flying bridge.**

**Doug also continues to amaze us with his ability to get old friends to do big favors for us.** This month he went back to his old friend **John Flach and Hank Digeser at Flach Crane and Rigging** with a box of donuts. In return they sent a rig down to lift the gangways in preparation for the move. We then rigged a temporary aluminum gangway light enough for us to manhandle. That will provide access to the ship until we leave Albany. Now we're standing by waiting for some survey work to be done on the Rensselaer wharf before we head across the river.

**Larry Williams and Ken Kaskoun have been working on replacing Greek light fixtures in the electronics shop below the messdecks and the forward pump room. Clark Farnsworth, Gene Jackey and Chris Fedden** have been working on a wasted hatch that provides access to the void space under gun three. We did the final touch-up painting on the flying bridge, so it looks great just as we are closing for the season. The engineers winterized the whaleboat engine.

**It has been down in B-3 that we have reached a real milestone.** After months of work, the engineers, **Gus Negus, Karl Herchenroder, Ken Myrick, Gary Lubrano and Mike Dingmon,** coupled with

electricians **George Gollas, Barry Witte and Gary Sheedy,** have managed to generate power with the number three ships service generator. This 200KW GM 8-268A engine is now cooled using the day tank under the engine as a reservoir and heat exchanger by its contact with the skin of the ship. On Saturday November 24<sup>th</sup> all these forces got together to generate power. It was the first time in my life I'd seen a synchroscope in actual operation. Our friend and searchlight expert Will Hevey of Show Lighting in Berlin, Connecticut made his second visit in a month to try to get the starboard 24-inch searchlight operational. To this end they were successful for a short period of time, though problems showed up in the rectifier box in B-3 that are probably just dirty contacts. But, the fact is that the engine ran for about three hours and generated power flawlessly. As the pessimist said, counting the whaleboat, SLATER has ninety cylinders. It's taken us 15 years to get 15 working.



**Brian Goodman, Barry Witte and George Gollas monitor the power generation of the aft distribution board.**



**Gary Sheedy and Will Hevey prepare the starboard searchlight for operation.**

**The success we witnessed was the result of a very long restoration process that included a large number of people, including George Gollas and Brian Goodman.** The confidence we had was the direct result of our collective efforts. It would not have been possible without Brian's help four years ago on the first LSM trip, nor without George's technical research once the tech manual became available. Others who made significant contribution were **Gary Sheedy** and **Barry Witte**, who were among the first volunteers to report aboard in 1997. **Chris Hanley** and his Colonie High Auto class students who assisted with the cosmetic restoration of nearly all the panels, **James Conlon**, who is always willing to lend a hand whenever he is home from VMI, and of course Gus and the engine crew, without whom there would be no restored prime mover to push on all those electrons. The day's events were well documented by **Thomas Scian** on a Youtube video.

**It seems not a month goes by that I don't have some sad news to report.** This month I have more than usual. **Bill Haggart** lost his wife **Dorothy** after a prolonged battle with cancer this month. He extends his thanks to all the SLATER crew who attended the wake. Bill seems to be in good spirits and is back aboard ready to haul up the accommodation ladder and rig fenders for the move. And, for all you old-timers who go back several years, we had a call from Master Chief **Dave Floyd's** wife that he has been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer and is presently in Hospice care at his home in Virginia. Our dedicated archivist/librarian **Franklin Peter** has been diagnosed with colon cancer and is preparing to undergo treatment. We wish him a full and rapid recovery. **Paul Czesak** remains in stable condition in the long-term care wing at The Avenue rehabilitation facility in Schenectady. And, **Tommy Moore** is doing well following his fall off a roof last summer. Surgery on his fractured spine left him two inches shorter, and the most difficult part of his recovery has been the compound fracture of his forearm of which he still has very limited use. But, he's been back to the ship and called twice to remind me not to forget to call him for the move.

**And finally, be warned. Now that we're closed for the season and have no ticket revenue, I'm looking for another source of revenue, so next month will be Winter Fund solicitation time again.** All of you who we have snail mail addresses on will be asked to kick in \$100 bucks to get us through the winter. I would have asked this month, but I wanted to put some more time between the raffle, the Hull Fundraiser and now the Winter Fund. As the tour guides explain to the visitors when they lead tours past the ship's office, "Our Captain spends most of his time doing something a real Captain never had to do, begging for money." I'm amazed at how many of you know what's coming and have sent in your 2012-13 Winter Fund donations already. You're very well-trained. And don't worry; I'll be donating, too. I think I've sold my soul for a ship.

**See you next month.**