



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Vol. 16 No. 1, January 2013



Winter on the Hudson.

Erik Collin enjoys this time of the year. Erik is responsible for posting all the Winter Fund donations to our database, preparing the deposits and typing all the thank you letters. Then he brings me the donation letters to sign, fold, lick and seal. None of this would seem particularly enjoyable, but Erik has turned it into sport. He delights in waiting until I'm down to my last two letters, believing I'm just about finished, and then he brings me another stack. His timing is impeccable. I believe he has me under surveillance. But it's a nice problem to have.

So I'm sitting here signing another huge pile of Winter Fund thank you letters, and I get to thinking. Turn the clock back to 1993. Can you imagine

me sitting with a group of Wall Street investors in suits and explaining our business plan?

It goes like this.

A bunch of really old guys are going to get together and pool our money. We've got this old ship over in Greece. None of us have actually seen it, but we hear it's in pretty good shape. Well, it's kind of a fixer-upper. I mean it's totally gutted on the inside, but we're pretty sure we can find all the parts to put it back together. It's got all the guns!

We've got a deal with this Ukrainian tugboat Captain. He's going to cut us a good price to tow it across from Greece, because he'll be picking up a couple destroyers to tow back to Greece. He doesn't want to make the trip over empty. We understand Ukrainian's like their vodka, but that shouldn't be a problem with all the modern electronics, they should be able to find their way over.



It needs a little work.

When she gets here we're not sure where we're going to put her, but something will work out.

We can't afford to pay people, so once it gets here, we're going to ask for volunteers to help restore it. While they are working on it, we're going to weave their stories into a newsletter and send it out to all our potential supporters. It will be kind of like Huck Finn painting the fence. People will start to identify with these guys and want to be a part of this effort. Since a lot of them will live too far away to physically help, they'll support us by

sending donations. When we get the ship cleaned up, we'll open it up for tours and sell tickets and souvenirs. We'll open the ship one area at a time as the volunteers get it fixed up.

At the same time, we'll develop educational programs including guided tours, youth group overnight camping, an extensive website, and historical newsletter. We'll become a center for collecting Destroyer Escort memorabilia, documents, photographs and oral histories. We'll enlist Navy volunteers to be tour guides who can speak from the heart about their personal experiences aboard these ships. We'll stress the patriotism and sacrifices made by our greatest generation, and the difficult conditions they encountered living aboard these ships.

We know we have to close for four months a year, and we won't have any operating income. So we'll plan an annual fund drive at the end of the year when we close for the season. We'll call it the Winter Fund and use the tagline, "Help keep a volunteer warm this winter." That way the donations come in when we need them the most, and at the time of the year when we have the resources to process all the donations. And that way the volunteers can keep working on the ship all winter.

I think that's about it. That's a reasonable business plan, don't you think?

That was 1993, and frankly, I think I'd have been laughed out of the room. Though apparently by the time the 2008 crash rolled around, Wall Street was investing in much shakier propositions than SLATER. It's now 2013. In August we will celebrate twenty years of SLATER being back home. How have we done? Thanks to the efforts of **Larry Sowinski** who gave us temporary shelter at the INTREPID and then to Albany Mayor **Jerry Jennings** and Port Commissioner **Bob Cross**, we have a

permanent home. And we can't forget **Michele Vennard** and **Gordon Lattey** who first listened to **Marty Davis's** pitch, looked at the ship and pronounced the project doable, and all the support we got from the New York State Department of Military and Naval Affairs in getting set up.

Thanks to the efforts of all the volunteers in Manhattan, Albany and from all over the country, I'm sitting on one of the best restored ships in the country. All those missing parts? We've found everything that a CANNON-class DE would have had aboard in 1945 with the exception of the evaporators and the donkey boilers that the Greeks removed. I can't think of anything else we are missing, from wardroom china to dummy ammo. Okay, a few more depth charge arbors would be nice. We've got extensive educational programs in place, one of the best Historic Navy websites in the country. Our volunteers gave 17,000 hour last year.



Tommy Moore back on light duty.



Barry Witte restoring electrical boxes with his students.

And thanks to our nationwide network of over 3,000 donors the endowment fund is growing every day. When the bills are paid at the end of every month we don't owe anybody a dime. The Hull Fund is approaching our initial goal, so we're getting closer to a shipyard every day. We average 15,000 visitors a year; bring \$2.5 million to the Albany economy, and spent two months last season as Tripadvisor.com's number one tourist attraction in Albany. We have received our Absolute Charter from the NYS Department of Education and been designated a National Historic Landmark.

It's no small fact that the project leadership changed this past year when Sam Saylor and Frank Lasch made way for BJ Costello and Tony Esposito, who have taken the reins without missing a beat. Way back in the day, **Marty Davis** used the phrase "snowball's chance in hell" to describe our chances for success, and he was just talking about getting the ship over here. If I were an investor, I think that's what I would have thought the odds of getting this far were. Knock on wood, but it's a good day. Nobody's bleeding, no water is coming in and nothing is on fire. And Erik just brought me another stack of thank you letters to sign. It hardly seems enough considering your faith in this project.

As I write this in late January we are about half way through our four month winter overhaul. Is the work half done? I can only look around and hope. We thought we were going to get off easy weather-wise, but then the cold settled in the second week of January and it's been tough going, considering that our biggest project involves being outside. Not a lot of snow, but awfully cold.



Doug, Chuck Teal and Super Dave cut out a lot of metal.



Tanner fits in new steel.

This winter's main project is the repair of the galley expansion joint, and the project keeps getting bigger as more rotted metal is discovered. It's a contractor's dream, but not a volunteer's dream. On Saturdays **Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Super Dave Mardon and Chuck Teal** have all had a hand in grinding and cutting away wasted metal. Then on Mondays, Super Dave is back with **Earl Herchenroder, Ron Mazure and Gene Jackey** to keep beating at it. Then Tuesdays and Fridays **Bill Wetterau** and **Bill Siebert** take their turn. Tanner got fed up working in the wind and constructed another one of his traditional winter Man Caves, a wooden lattice covered with a plastic tarp. Fire up the kerosene heater and it's downright comfortable in there. We've cut away an eight-inch section of the port galley bulkhead along the deck, so essentially the space is open to the weather. As I write, they are cutting more metal along the forward bulkhead under the sink, and found a hole in the deck that is clean through to the engine room. Much like dentistry, hopefully we've just about got all the bad stuff cut out and we can start filling in with new plate. Then it's just a matter of punching 400 holes in the new rubber gaskets, getting the spacing perfect for each one, and bolting in the new rubber. Piece of cake, if Doug doesn't go back to Kansas. By the way, we're indebted to **Ken Maguire** whose father served in USS HAYTER for donating all new hardware for the expansion joint job.



Farrell, Hancock and Wilkerson.

Our present group of Navy volunteers finished their SLATER tour of duty at the end of this month. MM3 **Micah Farrell** and MM3 **James Wilkerson** have started their nuclear power training. The holdover from the fall group, EM3 **Charlie Hancock**, has headed out to the fleet. They worked two days a week under some pretty arduous conditions cleaning and painting in the bilges. We moved them from B-4 to B-3, since B-3 has an electric heater and is a little more comfortable, though not by much. They were disappointed that it was too cold to paint all the bilge sections they had

cleaned. Our regular engineers have been working alongside them. **Rocky Rockwood** has been cleaning up main engine number three. **Gus Negus, Karl Herchenroder, Ken Myrick, Gary Lubrano** and **Mike Dingmon** have been alternately making the repairs to the emergency diesel generator in B-4, working on the cooling for the number three ship's service generator in B-3 and working on the restoration of number four main engine. They've also been doing preservation on the fuel and water tanks. **Barry Witte** has been restoring the electrical switch boxes in B-4.



Joe Breyer working on the TBL armature.

The radio gang is back at it. Joe Breyer, Jerry Jones, Mike Wyles and Bob Kibbey unpacked the armature from the wooden packing case and moved it to the workbench. The shaft ends were covered with Cosmoline with fabric tape over the threaded portions of the shaft and the tape was rock hard, but it came off fairly well by heating it with a heat gun and soaking it with mineral spirits. Removing the Cosmoline was, as expected, difficult. Joe tried paint thinner and a paint brush with no success. Then he soaked a rag with thinner and rubbed it with very slow progress. Then he tried kerosene, denatured alcohol, WD-40, Xylene, a heat gun, and finally lacquer thinner which did the job. By looking at the "new" condition of the slip rings and

commutator, they had concluded the unit was new and unused. This is not the case. When the shaft ends were clean, it was obvious that the key-way has been used, and the shaft ends on which the flex couplers mount are pretty well chewed up. Then they meggered the unit and it meggered okay. Finally, Jerry found ball bearings on E-Bay so they will be replaced. The saga continues.



Thomas Scian trying to keep the ship tidy while all the work is going on.

The chippers, Don Miller and Walt Stuart, have been down below the messdecks scaling the electronics storeroom. Just forward of them **Gary Sheedy** is sandblasting and sanding the inside of the reefer deck coolers. He's hung up waiting for walnut shells to arrive to put a nice patina on the cooling coils. **Erik Collin** and **Thomas Scian** have been restringing bunks in the CPO Mess and forward berthing to prep us for the overnight campers in the spring. Erik also has the wardroom table

covered with MK14 gunsights that he is cleaning up. **Thomas's Dad, Bob**, who continues to drive all the way from Monticello every Saturday, is striking for Boatswain's Mate. He has teamed up

with **Bill Haggart, Nelson Potter** and **Paul Guarnieri** to do all the nasty work on deck in the cold including keeping the mooring lines and wires tight, and keeping the chaffing gear in good shape. Nelson has also been busy restoring our wooden Jacob's ladder and our life rings. We got a good day's work from **Rachel Tenney, Chris Evanchuck** and **Matt Montena**, three high school students who moved a lot of valves and water tight door parts from aft steering to B-2 which has become our general storeroom. They also hauled a lot of the concrete that had been chipped out of the galley to the dumpster. **Dick and Maralyn Walker** keep the crew supplied with small stores, **Smitty** keeps the crew fed, **Jim Gelston** keeps the clocks wound, and **Bob Callendar** keeps track of all the hours.

Guy Huse and Gary Dieckman made another run to Norfolk to salvage parts off the TAMAROA. They had a productive two days. Some of the material they removed included a large ball of marlin for Boats, four compartment fans, twenty 278 head gaskets, a digital photoelectric tachometer, three Triplet 630 meters, two boxes of motor and generator brushes and large fuses, brush holders, air filters and a complete P-60 fire pump. The trip back was kind of stressing, because of the poor road conditions, all the over-cautious drivers, and the massive amounts of salt on the roads. Snow started around the Virginia / Maryland border and they finally got out of it somewhere north of New York City. All the stuff was off-loaded and stowed aboard ship, but this is where we've really been missing the services of our Marine storekeeper John Thompson. John has been helping a friend remodel a house over the past month, so our level of organization continues to deteriorate in his absence. Our continued thanks to **Harry Jaeger** and **Tim Mullane** for their continued support.

None of this work would be going on if it weren't for you and your donations. We can't thank you enough for your generosity and your faith in this crew. We'll keep taking good care of SLATER to honor you and your shipmates.



Paul and Stan Suzdak.

We lost another good man this month, Stan Suzdak. Stan was a gunner's mate who served in USS KEY DE348. He used to come to the HUSE work weeks with his grandson Paul. Stan's specialty was the mechanics of the 40mm gun mounts. He, working with Paul and Doug Streiter did several bearing replacement jobs over the years. Stan approached his work with a wry sense of humor and a twinkle in his eye. I received word from Paul that Stan passed away in the afternoon on Jan 29, 2013, peacefully in his apartment in Boynton Beach, Florida. Paul said that Grandpa really enjoyed being at the

SLATER, helping with the restoration and also working with the USS HUSE crew. I was looking forward to seeing them both this spring.



Clark Farnsworth.

Finally, just to show that you can't keep a good man down, I was up in my office one Monday and I heard a terrible round of loud cussing emanating from the main deck passage. The gist of all the foul language was that nobody ever puts anything back where it belongs, and you can never find a tool when you need it, and how is anybody supposed to get anything done when nobody puts anything away? There's nothing new about that complaint, but it was the complainer who got my attention. It turned out to be none other than Chief **Clark Farnsworth**, who was looking for the welding stinger. He and **Chris Fedden** have been fabricating pieces for the galley restoration in the machine shop. I had to wrack my brain to remember who the last person to use the stinger was, put myself in his shoes and retrace his probable steps, which led me to the pile of tools on the galley range and the welding stinger. Keep in

mind that Clark turned 91 on January 10th, and is still frustrated when someone gets between him and an honest day's work. You can't keep a good man down

See you next month.

