



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Our chief interpreter Heather Maron makes friends wherever she goes.

Season 16 in Albany is off and running. From April 14th through the 16th, staff member **Heather Maron** attended the Museum Association of New York's "Museums In Conversation" conference, which took place in Syracuse this year. Among the several sessions she attended, one in particular served to reinforce that what we do aboard SLATER is successful; entitled, "Testing the Museum," attendees were able to interact with local high school students as they provided insight in regard to what makes a historic site visit successful for them as a demographic. What Heather learned was that these students did not want touch screens, cell phone tours, or any technology at all. This is a stark contrast to what many museum professionals feel is the future of our historic sites and institutions. These students honestly shared that they want to be entirely immersed in an experience, and appreciated their visit more if they were led around by a tour guide who was willing to interact with them and answer their questions. More importantly, the younger students wanted to leave feeling like they had stepped back in time and taken a momentary break from their technology-laden responsibilities at

school. This proves that by allowing visitors to cross our gangway and transport back to the 1940s, SLATER is providing the experience that students crave.

Among the various sessions that Heather attended, it was the one entitled "Landing the Plane: The Anarchist Guide to Community Engagement" that caused her to really analyze our daily operations at the SLATER and how we could be doing more in regard to the concept of community engagement. The session was led by **Franklin D. Vagnone**, Executive Director of the Historic House Trust of New York City and **Deborah Ryan**, a professor of architecture and urban planning at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. They encouraged the audience of museum professionals to really challenge the concept of a traditional house museum or traditional exhibit space, and by doing so make it more relevant and engaging to not only your target demographic but to the local community as well. We look forward to seeing how Heather uses what she's learned during this season!

This year, in addition to our returning interns and volunteer guides, we welcome several new faces to the education division of our crew. **Daniel Kastanis**, a University at Albany history major brings aboard his nautical knowledge which he learned aboard his family's sailboat. When quizzed on identifying port from starboard during his initial interview, Dan was able to put his experience to the test. Our second new intern this season, **Dylan Bruhns**, is also a University at Albany student and has already proven himself to be an engaging speaker with a genuine appreciation for the history we're preserving.

Our roster of new volunteers includes some familiar faces that have finally agreed to help Heather out on a more regular basis. Radioman **Stan Levandowski** had been working in the Radio Room with great success before applying his ship knowledge on tours, and has even committed to making the lengthy trip to the SLATER every Thursday to help bolster the volunteer corps. Former Chief IC electrician **Don Cushman** has also been added to the Thursday crew, after helping out on an as-needed basis last season. Other fresh faces include **Charles Poltenson** who works with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and **Rod Doty** who is a former submarine sonarman and now volunteers with the Naval History & Heritage Command as a historian and social media consultant.

As always, we want to heartily welcome back our returning interns and volunteers: Ken Kaskoun, Alan Fox, Floyd Hunt, Bill Scharoun, Bob Dawson, Tom McLaughlin, Bob Bull, Jack Madden, Nelson Potter, Paul Guarnieri, Grant Hack, Jim Kuba, Tom Cline, Chuck Teal, Chuck Boone, Julianne Madsen, Dave Pitlyk, and Vince Knuth. Although they don't often get as much print recognition as the restoration projects, the education crew deserves just as much praise for bringing the history of the SLATER to life for the public on a daily basis.

During the conference, Heather picked up the bit of trivia that most museum professionals or supporters get with a positive museum experience at a young age. That means that for every elementary-aged child who lights up while demonstrating the 40mm gun functions, we are fostering the future museum volunteers, financial supporters, and possibly even executive directors. While it was often thought that children under a certain age were too young to reap the benefits of visiting a historic site or exhibition, it is now thought that just the trip itself is enough to make an impact. It may be worth mentioning here that my own career path was started by a visit to the US Naval Academy's Museum of Marine Engineering in Isherwood Hall when I was a child. I was enthralled with those giant intricately-detailed Gibbs and Cox Builders models. That museum experience has shaped my whole life. Who knows how many young minds our tour guides are affecting.



All the way from England, Hugh and Dave Wood with Dick Walker on the right.



Our first week open to the public was a busy time.

The season got off to a great start as the kids were all on spring break when we opened on **Wednesday April 3rd**. We also had our first two overnight encampments of the season this month. One of the most appreciative visitors we had this month was **Hugh Wood** who came all the way from England to see the ship with his son **Dave**. They had originally been scheduled to come last fall, but the dates of their trip coincided with the arrival of Hurricane Sandy so they decided it was best to postpone. Hugh was a diesel mechanic aboard the EVARTS-class HMS GARLIES K-475 and is the latest of about ten Royal Navy Vets who have made the trek from England under their lottery program. Much like our Honor Flights, the Lottery Program enables British Veterans to visit the places they served. We flew the White Ensign in Hugh's honor, but I really believe that if I could have provided him with his rum ration, that would have been more appreciated.

With the warm weather, we're back to topside maintenance. Mondays, the sound of needle scalers once again fills the air. **Don Miller, Ron Mazure, Earl Herchenroder, Walt Stuart and Mark Gardiner** have all put in time scaling decks. The two biggest eyesores we have are the fo'c'sle and 01 level forward. Our gang has started on the fo'c'sle and some deck spots aft that took a beating over the winter. We're saving the 01 level for the Michigan gang.





Don Miller and Angelo Bracco repair the gangway net.



The rest of the deck gang rig the fantail awning.

Boats' Haggart and his deck gang are becoming a force to be reckoned with. Joined by **Walt Stuart, Paul Guarnieri, and Bob Scian**, they have kept busy adjusting mooring lines, rigging chaffing gear; they got the fantail awning rigged, the accommodation ladder over the side, and are preparing to turn the whaleboat for Rocky. **Angelo Bracco** spent a couple days at the sewing machine repairing the gangway safety net and that is back in place.



More "cosmetic" restoration on main engine number four.

Gus Negus, Ken Myrick, Gary Lubrano and Mike Dingmon have continued working on the restoration of number four main engine. As part of the "cosmetic" restoration they rolled over number four on compressed air and found two cylinders had valves that were hanging up. They are in the process of pulling two of the heads, working over the valves and getting them back together. Bilge work has come to a standstill in the absence of any new trainees from the Nuclear Power training unit. But **Guy Huse and Gary Dieckman** made another run to the ZUNI in Norfolk and brought back a carload of injectors, rocker arms and valve parts for the 278s.

Up in Radio there's some new blood. Dewey Henry, Ron Markisis and Stan Levandowski have joined Joe Breyer, Jerry Jones, Mike Wyles and Bob Kibbey in our efforts to get the TBL back online. All three are experienced HAM operators and shipboard radiomen. The motor generator is all back together and they are now in the process of buying the shielded armored cable they need to connect the MG set to the transmitter. They're also looking to get a TCS back online this year. In addition, **Chris Hanley's** students are fabricating some shelving to straighten out the port forward corner of the radio room. Since this area is out of sight, it tends to become a junk collector, so Jerry and the gang are working to turn it into useable operating space and clear out the clutter.

Barry has continued his restoration of electrical boxes and replacement of phenolic circuit labels. In addition he has been restoring a vintage motor controller box that will house the modern controller for the aft septic tank. The installation of this controller was a temporary job done about eight years ago, and Barry is now in the process of doing a correct and historically accurate installation. We also have Larry Williams back and he's been working down in the Electronics Shop completing the electrical installation, the installation of shelves and working on the storage cabinets.

Just forward of Larry, Gary Sheedy completed restoration of the starboard chill box and promptly locked it up so nobody would start using it as a storeroom again. He has continued restoration of the original wood gratings and is in the process of securing all the cable straps and repainting the deck. The polished cooling coils look amazing. There is no detail that isn't perfect. There can be no doubt that the reefers will be the most perfectly restored space aboard USS SLATER and the best reefer flat in the whole historic fleet.



After the Coasties from the USCGC KATHERINE WALKER scraped the bottom of the whaleboat, Bill Wetterau teamed up with Rocky to get it ready for launching. Together they proceeded to repaint the interior and exterior of the boat. In the process, they discovered that the rudder was severely dry-rotted. **"Boats" Haggart** and his crew lowered the rudder to the main deck where Rocky and Bill started digging out the rot. It didn't take them long to discover that a complete rebuild was going to be required. We contacted our woodworking expert, **Steve Dull** over in Connecticut, who did such a fine job with the bridge deck grating last year. He agreed to take on the project, so as I type we're making plans with **George Christophersen** to pick up the rudder and take it over to Connecticut. In the mean time, Rocky is waiting for the crew to drop the whaleboat and lift it backwards so he can finish the work on the outboard side.

The "Brain Trust" studies the damage to the whale-boat rudder.

Topside, the shipfitters are back on the great chock project. After being side tracked by more urgent priorities for the past two years, they are now preparing to install the chocks that were donated by **Schoellhorn-Albrecht** in St. Louis. In addition, **Clark Farnsworth** and **Chris Fedden** have been fabricating new lifeline stanchions to replace three that rotted out up on the fo'cs'c'le.



Mardon and Sheedy having fun with the septic pump.

One of the last jobs to get the ship ready for visitors was the aft septic tank. The fresh water and sewer systems had been pressurized and tested; the forward head and grinder pump were working fine. But the high water alarm wasn't working on the aft head. The kind of job you want to do before anybody has a chance to actually put anything by water in the tank. It turned out that in the fall when Doug secured the septic system for the winter, he carefully put duct tape over the circuit breaker so no one would turn it on and labeled it "Septic Pump. When **Gary Sheedy** went to test the high

water alarm he went to the breaker panel, read the tape that said "Septic Pump" and turned on the breaker above it assuming that was the label for the pump. Of course, the pump did not come on with the resulting minor flood.



More NYS State Police diver training at USS SLATER.

Barry Witte sounded the alarm when he found water on the deck and all hands rushed aft. The reality wasn't as bad as it sounded. Water was overflowing the septic tank and coming through the overhead around the commode above. The situation was straightened out a short time later and now the system is fully functional. But, as my first Chief always said, "Don't worry about water coming in from above. It's the water coming in from below that you need to worry about." Another project the shipfitters are investigating is moving some ballast around. We've had ballast water in tank C-14W for about ten years to offset the list created when the Greeks removed

the donkey boilers and the evaporator. We're now planning to move the water forward to a void adjacent to bulkhead 125 so we can see what the effect has been on the steel in C-14W. With regards to checking the condition of the hull, on Tuesday April 23rd we again welcomed the New York State Police dive unit. About ten divers practiced on a rather chilly Tuesday taking underwater video of the hull. We were advised not to try to get underway until we get that ding in the port screw fixed.

On Monday the 22nd Smitty took the surplus in the mess fund and bought the crew \$9 a pound ribeye steaks. I'm talking "cut them with a fork" ribeyes. He served them with corn, boiled potatoes and salad. It was a truly epicurean lunch. I hope Smitty wasn't expecting applause. Of course, the crew showed their appreciation in the only way they know how. When Smitty came down the ladder, Angelo looked up from his plate and said, "This is great Smitty. It's amazing what you can do with horsemeat." Of course this led to a 20-minute discussion as the crew expounded on their various experiences with horsemeat while serving their country.

These "Government Jobs" are getting out of control. Ever since "Super" Dave bought his old Army Jeep a year ago, we have to keep an eye on him to make sure he's not sandblasting and welding Jeep parts. Recently, he wanted to borrow Doug's hand impact driver to take some nuts off his Jeep. Doug gave Dave careful instruction to make sure he had it set right so the nut turns in the right direction to come off. I'm course Dave asked the inevitable question, "How do I know that?" Doug patiently explained that it was marked on the tool. Dave asked again, "Show me." Well, Doug hadn't used the impact driver for a long time, and he couldn't find the mark. Dave couldn't see the mark. Benner came to help and he couldn't find the mark and finally John Thompson, our Marine, grabs the



Gus Negus and Walt Stuart were part of the crew helping out Clark with his 101-year-old cabin cruiser.

impact driver glances at it and says, "You guys all blind? It's right here!" Of course the fact that "The Marine" figured it out for the Sailors was highly embarrassing to all present and that story was never supposed to get out of the shop, so that's why it's repeated here. And, if I didn't have enough trouble with Dave and his Jeep parts, I go down to the paint shop and there's **Jerry Jones** sandblasting a couple parts I don't recognize. I asked, "What part of the ship are these from?" The answer, "My '66 Chrysler that I'm restoring."

But the biggest "Government Job" was off site at the Schenectady Yacht Club. Just to point out how these guys are shipmates on and off the ship, each year Clark Farnsworth puts out the call for volunteers to help him prepare his 101-year-old cabin cruiser for launching. This year he had to pull the engine out to get at some rotted planking under the engine mounting. When he put out the call for volunteers, ten of the crew showed

up to help him including **Dave Mardon, "Boats" Haggart, Gus Negus, Jim Gelston, Walt Stuart, Karl Herchenroder, Mike Dingmon, Larry Williams, Don Shattuck, Gary Lubrano and Gene Jackey.** They got the boat uncovered and the engine moved. An amazing group of guys.

See you next month.