



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

USS Slater DE-766

PO Box 1926

Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123

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Our opening month kept our tour guides busy. School was out at the beginning of April for Easter and Spring Break, so we were pleased to welcome many families and students for the first nice days of spring. Despite a few chilly days, and even the occasional April snow flurry, the days were sunny more often than not.



Our former Board President, Frank Lasch (second from left), was aboard on opening day.

Our opening day included two special visits. Included in Alan Fox's group was the family of the late **Joseph G. Kaufmann**, who served in the Coast Guard as a motormac aboard USS RAMSDEN DE-382, in WWII. After their father's death, the family arranged for Joe's personal war memorabilia to be donated to the Museum. Despite the chaos going on in special collections with the restoration work, Dave Pitlyk had all their father's memorabilia out for them to revisit.

A second special guest was our former Board President and

Trustee Emeritus, Frank Lasch. It was Frank's birthday, and he insisted on being brought back to USS SLATER to celebrate. We will be forever indebted to Frank for the

ten years he served as our first Albany Board President, and putting SLATER on the sound financial footing that continues to this day. A very pleasant surprise on opening day.



Tour guide Chief Art Dott leading a tour of NJROTC students.

Also during the month of April, Shanna Hopson completed her new tour guide training, and passed her evaluation with flying colors. SLATER continues to serve as a focal point for the Albany community, as evidenced by a visit from the Albany High Army Junior ROTC. Having just formed this year, the ship was their choice for their first group outing. We also welcomed a Navy JROTC from North Rockland

High. The Vipers, a little league baseball team from Clifton Park, came by in the middle of the month to volunteer some time to help with spring cleaning. They helped sweep the decks and clean up our green space next to the trailer. It was wonderful to see kids learning the value of volunteering at such a young age.



Across the Atlantic in England, our shipmates from the Captain's Class Frigate Association held their annual reunion this past month.

One of the adults who came with that group enjoyed his experience so much he decided to become a regular volunteer. Mark DeSanctis has begun his training, and is excited at the prospect of becoming a tour guide. We also welcome our first Brit, **Will Trevor**, whose enthusiasm in studying the Battle of the Atlantic led him to SLATER. Toward the end of the

month, **James Braun**, a student at Siena College, began his work here as an intern for college credit. His grandfather served aboard a destroyer escort and, despite his late start, we are sure he will make a great guide.

Our overnight program began during the third week of April, and has seen steady bookings from the start. Tom McLaughlin continues to sit these programs out this season, due to physical limitations. However, our interns and other volunteers, including **Tom Cline** and **Charlie Poltenson**, have stepped up to the challenge and have done a great job with the program. We've hosted Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and an Army JROTC group from Washingtonville High School. Our biggest challenge in the education department continues to be the recruitment of volunteers. If you know anyone with the requisite interest and free time to donate, do not hesitate to refer them to our Interpretation Coordinator, **David Pitlyk**.



Chief Clark Farnsworth receiving his award from the American Welding Society for his lifetime of service.

We held a special ceremony recognizing our eldest active volunteer. The local chapter of the American Welding Society recognized **Clark Farnsworth** for his lifetime of service to his country, and his deep-rooted passion for his craft. At 93 years old, Chief Farnsworth's naval career began as an aviation metalsmith at Norfolk Naval Air Station in World War II.

Following that assignment, he reported aboard the aircraft carrier USS LEYTE CV-32 until his discharge from active duty after World War II. He remained in the Naval Reserves and served a total of 39 years, retiring with the rank of Chief Hull Maintenance Technician.

The crew turned out in force to honor this man who has become a legend to us. Following his active duty Navy service, he went to work for General Electric Corporation in their Waterford, New York plant, working as a welder until his retirement. He has been an active member of the Capital District Chief Petty Officers Association for over 20 years.



The Slater Crew turn out in force to honor Clark.

When USS SLATER first came to Albany, Clark was one of the first volunteers to report on board with the statement, "I'm not here to sit around and drink coffee. I'm here to work." And, work he has, for the past 18 years. A weekly volunteer, he has done welding repairs all over the ship, and been an essential part of our maintenance crew. He dons his dress uniform for ceremonial occasions, and has been a member of our color guard ever since reporting aboard, as well.

In addition to his volunteer service aboard the USS SLATER, Clark has been a member of the Schenectady Yacht Club, where he has been the Club's primary welder for the past forty years. He also owns and maintains a vintage 1911 cabin cruiser at the Club. For many years, he was also a boating safety instructor. And, he remains an active member of the USS LEYTE Former Crewmembers Association, serving as their President for many years. With his welding hood and stinger, Clark Farnsworth has left a true mark on New York's Capital Region.

We were also onored this month when the members of our local Masonic Lodge commemorated the heroism of the "Four Chaplains" aboard USS SLATER, in a well-attended event organized by RADM Marty Leukhardt, USN (ret). The ceremony honored four United States Army chaplains who gave their lives to save other civilian and military personnel, as the troop ship SS DORCHESTER sank on February 3, 1943. They were Methodist minister George L. Fox, Reform-Rabbi Alexander D. Goode (Ph.D.), Roman Catholic priest John P. Washington, and Reverend Clark V. Poling.



Our local Masonic Lodge remembered the sacrifice of the "Four Chaplains" in a commemoration on April 23rd.

During the early morning hours of February 3, 1943, at 12:55 a.m., the vessel was torpedoed by the German submarine U-223, off Newfoundland in the North Atlantic. The chaplains sought to calm the men and organize an orderly evacuation of the ship, and helped guide wounded men to safety. As life jackets were passed out to the men, the supply ran out before each man had one. The chaplains removed their own life jackets and gave them to others. They helped as many men as they could into lifeboats, and then linked arms and, saying prayers and singing hymns, went down with the ship. Our thanks to Marty and volunteers **Jerry Jones** and **Steve Long**, who helped out with the ceremony.



Super Dave Mardon and new volunteer Danny Statile show off the plate they made for gun three.

We've received onboard two new maintenance volunteers into our ranks. Doug Tanner talked Dick Brumley, a retired teamster, into joining the crew. Dick was a second class airdale, and rode the aircraft carriers BENNINGTON and YORKTOWN. He's joined the deck gang, and has been working with the bosun's mates learning a new trade. Danny Statile is a retired welder/pipefitter and former charter boat captain, who has joined the shipfitters.

He worked for Doug Tanner years ago, so he's used to Doug's ways, and is doing a good job working with Super Dave to keep the jobs going when Doug is out of town. Danny's father served aboard the destroyer escort USS FOWLER DE-222 during World War II. Danny has kept the gun three job moving along on those days when Doug Tanner couldn't be present. Working with Dave Mardon, Gene Jackey, and Tim Benner, they are approaching the job from two directions. First is restoring watertight integrity to the electrical stuffing tubes in the center of the gun itself. The second is addressing the holes in the deck in the crawlspace below. All the repairs to the gun have to be done with minimal welding, to avoid damage to the train roller path.

The engineers reached a real milestone this month. Utilizing the one 5” sea chest that we opened up in the shipyard last year, they cranked up the number 3 ship’s service generator in B-3 for the first time in over a year. It was great to see smoke coming out of the stack again and cooling water discharging overboard. The engine ran fine, but there still seem to be some issues with the cooling system, so it remains a work in progress.



Earl Herchenroder and Bill Holt got the starboard bulwark repainted following the davit repair.



The whole deck crew turned out to rig the new life raft.

Barry Witte has continued to make progress on the firemain. With the help of **RPI Midshipmen** and his students in the industrial technology class at Colonie High School, he has moved the firemain restoration into the aft motor room B-4. He enlisted the help of shipfitters **Doug Tanner, Dave Mardon, and Danny Statile** to fabricate a new through bulkhead fitting at frame 99. They are now working on the valves, and taking the pipe sections apart one piece at a time for cleaning and painting.

Gary Sheedy continues his work in the steering gear compartment and the shipfitter shop. Assisted by **Ron Mazure, Bill Wetterau, Ray Galdo, and Earl Herchenroder**, they continue to make progress scaling and reworking all the electrical wiring. To the casual observer, there doesn’t seem to be a lot of progress from week to week. But the kind of quality Gary demands takes time, and Gary isn’t one to cut corners.



The Coast Guard was back, now that we have a power hook up for them, and held morning colors.

Gary Sheedy and Barry Witte also completed the installation of the power connection box for visiting Coast Guard Cutters. After a year of planning and negotiating, the skipper of the USCGC WIRE delivered an impressive plug in box with a disconnect switch and will enable the 65’ icebreaking tugs to lay alongside and draw power when they are visiting Albany.

Barry and Gary had previously welded in a stuffing tube and run a power cable from the distribution board in B-4. As soon as the box arrived electrician Barry demonstrated his welding skills and got the box mounted, an act which immediately caused **Super Dave** to file a grievance on behalf of the brotherhood of shipfitter volunteers. That was easily settled as the shipfitters have more work than they can handle anyway. Our thanks to Coasties Chief **Jason Cross** and **Rob Childress** for their perseverance in dealing with the bureaucracy to make this happen.



Remembering Marty Newman, USS RHODES DE-384.

We lost two shipmates this month. For those of you who remember the 2000-2005 period, you may remember one of our regulars, **Andy Desorbo**. Andy was a draftsman who was retired from GE, and had served as a gunner's mate aboard the carrier USS HORNET CV-12. Andy worked alongside **Dave Floyd**, **Bob Lawrence**, and **Frank Beeler**, taking care of the gun mounts, and did a lot of the initial work to free up gun three.

And we lost Marty Newman, of the SOLDESA Chapter in New York City. Marty was a former Coast Guard motormac who served in USS RHODES DE-384. He was a regular during the years SLATER was tied up in Manhattan, 1993-97. The flag flew at half mast in their honor. We're losing them way too quickly.

See you next month.