



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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Sailors from the Naval Operational Support Center Schenectady cleaning bunk frames.

August began with Art Dott bringing about forty Sailors from the Naval Operational Support Center Schenectady aboard, cleaning bunk frames.

They spent the afternoon of August 1st in the heat, cleaning the new aluminum bunk frames that we salvaged from USS BOULDER. These will go in C-203L, to replace the steel troopship bunk frames that are presently there. The steel frames will be available to any other

historic ship that needs them sometime next spring. Following the afternoon of work, the group enjoyed a barbecue on the observation deck.



The Coast Guard Birthday celebration.

On Sunday, August 2nd, we celebrated the 225th anniversary of the founding of the U.S. Coast Guard. The history of the United States Coast Guard goes back to the Revenue Cutter Service, which was founded on 4 August 1790 as part of the Department of the Treasury. The event gave us a chance to recognize the support we've gotten from the Coast Guard and our former-Coastie volunteers who live by the motto, "Treat us right or we'll paint it white."

Erik Collin was back to supervise the USCGC WIRE crew, who served as the gun crew for our gun salute. I want to give special thanks to **Dick Walker** and **Charlie Poltenson** for their efforts in organizing the event.



Kids everywhere.

Maybe it has something to do with the 70th anniversary of VJ-Day, but we've had an incredible month for visitors. Day camps and walk-ins have kept our staff and volunteer tour guides jumping. We've had time periods when we've had over 100 visitors aboard at once. It's always a challenge to keep the groups moving, and the guides from running into each other, but our crew has it down to the point where they can move large numbers through the ship without sacrificing quality.



Newly promoted Captain David Fowler has his new shoulder boards installed by his son and daughters.

In the middle of a hectic Friday, we hosted the promotion ceremony for Captain David Fowler, Commanding Officer of the Nuclear Power Training Unit at Ballston Spa, on our fantail. Captain Fowler graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1994, and his range of at-sea assignments include service in USS O'Bannon (DD 987), USS California (CGN 36) USS McFaul (DDG 74), USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), and Executive Officer in USS Bainbridge (DDG 96).

He assumed command of NPTU Ballston Spa last February. It's moments like that when we feel that SLATER still serves the active Navy. We owe a debt of gratitude to (SK1) **Dick Walker**, who happened by and coordinated the event, while all the other staff and volunteers were engaged giving tours.

We have some changes coming to our interpretation department. On September 9th, our Interpretation Coordinator **David Pitlyk** will be leaving to work at the Bennington Battlefield State Historic Site. Why he would want a position on land is beyond us, but apparently the State of New York made him an offer he can't refuse. David has been working with us off and on for the last nine years. He took over for **Heather Maron**, when her father made her an offer she couldn't refuse at the beginning of this season. Back in 2006, when David was a student at UAlbany, **Eric Rivet** recognized his unique abilities and hired him as an intern. David probably had no idea at the time that he wasn't just taking on a job; he was taking on a way of life. After hundreds of tours and overnights, he became full-time staff at the beginning of 2015. David was never in the Navy or Coast Guard, but having spent enough time at the ship, he has accumulated his fair share of sea stories.

Expecting the unexpected is one of the first lessons you learn here. David looks back on one sleepy Sunday shift in particular. After a morning that saw only a handful of visitors, around 1500 the sound of diesel bus engines began to fill the parking lot. An unscheduled tour of about 80 had just arrived, and few of the visitors spoke much English. With his dedicated Sunday crew, he was able to see them through the ship. Thanks to the way David handled that surprise, the same tour company has since returned this season with more scheduled tours. David has done great work over the years. He brought a love of history and education to the position that was matched only by his love of coffee. We hope to see him as a volunteer in the future.

Shanna Hopson, one of our new hires for the 2015 season will be taking the interpretation helm. David has been working to train her for the position for most of August. Shanna is a teacher from Montana who came to Albany with her engineer boyfriend Michael, who was recruited by GE. She is very much a lead-by-example kind of person and not afraid to get her hands dirty. The SLATER is lucky to have her, and we are looking forward to having her here as full-time staff. And, you can bet we're working to recruit Michael for the SLATER volunteer crew.

We're also saying farewell to one of our most dedicated tour guides, Nelson Potter. Nelson made LT(jg) in the Coast Guard, and commanded a couple of LORAN stations in Alaska. He went to work for New York State and was Director of Marine Safety. He is skilled at marlinspike seamanship, and during the winter when his tour guide skills weren't needed, he turned out a series of rope mats, cargo nets and fenders. You could count on Nelson being here every Saturday and staying as long as we needed him. He and his wife are moving to a senior living community in Virginia. He will be missed, but an intrepid videographer captured Nelson's entire tour and put it on Youtube, so he's still there.



The final coat of paint.

The maintenance crew has made some significant progress this August. Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Dave Mardon, Danny Statile, and Earl Herchenroder pretty much wrapped up the reconstruction of the radio direction finder platform. Over the course of the month, all the new steel was hoisted up, tacked into place, and seal-welded. The replica antenna was completed, hoisted up, and bolted into place. A new volunteer, **Bruce Selneck**, spent a week with us while he was in town, caring for a friend's horse farm.



Doug and Dave are happy the job is over.

He got two coats of Corroseal and two coats of primer on the platform inside and out. That put **Thomas Scian** and Earl in good shape to get the whole thing painted out with haze gray. All that remains to be done is bolt in the bottom inspection plate,

and all that unsightly scaffolding can come down. Considering it took two years to complete the davit pedestal project, the fact that they completed the RDF platform rebuild in just four months is a remarkable achievement for our shipfitters. New volunteer **Matt Clifford** has proved himself a skilled welder, repairing two stanchions, a wasted 40mm gun tub, and blanking several pipe vents on the fantail that were not original to the ship.



B-3 Genset test run.

The unsung engineers, Karl Herchenroder, Gary Lubrano, Mike Dingmon, and Ken Myrick have spent the month replumbing the fuel line, from the day tank in the muffler room to the day tanks in the machinery spaces. **Barry Witte** repaired and reinstalled the breaker in the B-3 main distribution board; so, the ship's service generator is ready to go. Barry continues to use the ship as a training ground for student engineers, patiently teaching good

safety habits and the use of tools. One of the things **Gus Negus** did so well was to restore gauges. Barry has been training SUNY Binghamton junior **Justin Bopp**, a mechanical engineering major, to restore gauges while he was home this summer. He's done some magnificent work on the gauges in B-4. We'll need to get **Gary Sheedy** to run the copper lines to them, but other than that, it has been all Justin's effort.



Matt Clifford aloft removing the forestay



Where'd this come from--the broken forestay.

Thomas Scian was the first to find a cable lying across the flying bridge. On closer inspection, it turned out that the mainmast's forestay had rotted away near the top of the mast and fallen to the flying bridge below. Amazingly, none of the porcelain insulators were broken. Matt Clifford volunteered to don his safety harness go up and remove the top section from the mast.

He also inspected the other stays and shrouds for anything else that may be getting ready to come down. The broken forestay was taken to All-Lifts, who are in the process of making a replacement. Matt's inspection didn't reveal any other immediate problems.



Thomas Scian side cleaning.

This led to a whole discussion about the condition of the mast and how to ultimately address it. We've been focused on the bottom for so long, we haven't been looking up. Once again we turned to "my friend **Ed Zajkowski**" for help with data about the mast. With his usual thorough efficiency, Ed produced all the WWII blueprints and data for a CANNON- class mast. Compared with the original blueprints, it's amazing how many

changes were made to the mast. Based on the information Ed provided, **Doug Tanner** took UT thickness readings on the mast. He then drilled a hole at the base of the mast, and went in with a flexible bore scope. Doug reported surface rust, but no significant deterioration. We know that at some point down the road, all the stays and shrouds should be replaced, and the whole mast blasted and painted. The discussion is now beginning on how that will be funded and accomplished.



Barry and his students track down a ground.

The experience with the mast led to stress testing all the lifelines. Doug Tanner set up ,**Boats Haggart, Bill Holt,** and **Walt Stuart** with all the equipment to stress test all the lifelines to 600 pounds. Having made up most of the swedged connections, Boats was a little apprehensive about whether his work would pass the test, but not surprisingly, none of the lifelines parted under load.

The deck gang also made the rounds, tightening all the mooring lines and the mooring wires. The routine deck work of topside washdown, watching chaffing gear, taking the awning down, and putting it back up after gun salutes continues. **Gary Sheedy** spent the month fabricating the vent for the smoke generator, so that should appear as an appendage on the fantail soon. Chipping progress in aft steering has been limited by the heat. **Ken Powers** is back with us. He is working on the forward 01 level 20mm guns, and trying to restore a wasted magazine drum. Sailmaker **Angelo Bracco** hemmed four pair of khaki pants for the executive director, and took a lot of heat from the crew for that.

Back in June SLATER was featured on an episode of Mid Hudson Cable's series, Salute the Vets, with Jim Riley. We found that the episode has been put online.

A reminder that the fall work week will be held aboard starting Sunday, October 4 going through Friday, October 9. If you'd like to bear a hand in doing some chipping, cleaning and painting, we can always use workers. To sign up contact "Michigan" Dick Walker at 616-676-1392.



Passing the torch as Rocky teaches Bill Wetterau the art of wooden boat maintenance.

Larry Williams, Ken Kaskoun, and Ken Myrick continue to exercise the whaleboat every Monday. We provided a public service one Wednesday, when a uniformed policeman roared in and asked if we had a boat available because there was a suicidal jumper on the Dunn Bridge. I got the diesel started, and with the policeman as bow hook and Jonathan Palmer at the tiller, we arrived on scene fifteen minutes before any other boats showed up.

We withdrew when the regular emergency responders arrived and went back to work. The incident ended happily several hours later, when the jumper was talked down.

Finally, in a rare stroke of genius, we held our annual volunteer appreciation lasagna dinner on Saturday, August 27, before cold weather set in. We had a great turnout of volunteers, wives, and significant others. The weather was perfect on the river. I call this a stroke of genius, because we usually don't get around to organizing this event until the end of September. Then, we wonder why everybody is freezing cold and it's too dark to take a decent picture. The volunteers showered us with food, and **Chief Smith** and **Chief Dott** cooked up wonderful lasagna. There weren't many leftovers. The event was a chance to thank **Nelson Potter** for his years of dedicated service, say goodbye to **David Pitlyk**, and introduce Shanna. You can bet we'll hold this event at the end of August every year from now on. **Don't forget the donate button on our homepage www.ussslater.org**

See you next month.



Our volunteer appreciation night as we bid farewell to Nelson Potter.