



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Ship's Superintendent

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum
USS Slater DE-766
PO Box 1926
Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123
Vol. 7 no. 11 November 2004

It's November 9th, and it's forty-five degrees in the ship's office. Time for the winter fund appeal. So, if you're not in tears by the time you finish reading this, I haven't done my job. I'm too cheap to turn the heat on. The first big evolution of the month was bringing the whaleboat aboard. We pulled her on Saturday the 23rd of October. This was the first time we were without the help of several key volunteers, notably **Hack Charbonneau, Frank Beeler, Bob Lawrence and Dave Floyd**. This was the first year we were actually able to get the boat underway and motor around from the port quarter to the falls on the starboard side. **Roy Gunther** brought the boat around for the last run of the season. We had a good crew turn out including all the shipfitters, **Tim Benner, Doug Tanner, Chuck Teal, Rocky Rockwood, Chris Fedden, Gene Jackey, Barry Witte, Stan Murawski, Ron Mazure, Chazz Furman, Will Sigadel and Erik Collin**.



Using the windlass to bring the whaleboat aboard.



This is the last one left. Let's not drop it.

Years ago, I read an account of how the old four piper bosun's used to handle the boats by fair leading the falls forward to the anchor windlass, because they had so few men. Being familiar with the double drum boat winches in the FLETCHERS AND GEARINGS, I remember thinking,

"What an ungodly complicated nightmare that must have been." For once, I was prophetic. Here we were again, rigging the falls forward to the capstan and taking turns around like we did last year. The boat never seems to come out of the water evenly, and every year we are faced with the problem of holding one fall still while we take in on the other. This is not an easy task when two tons of boat is hanging off the falls, and both of them are wrapped around the same capstan. I vaguely remember spending a day in nautical science class learning about how to make and use the "rattail stopper," but my memory of the subject was quite vague and I left it to **Doug Tanner** to put a hitch on the fall we wanted to hold. All the old bosuns I questioned on how to hold one fall and raise the other said, "Hell, just tell the 25 sailors on the aft fall to hold fast, and tell the 25 sailors on the forward fall to heave!"



Heave Ho!



Ready to swing in.

Every boatswain's mate I have ever known has always said, "**Make sure you have three wraps around the winch.**" That makes it damn hard to surge one while holding the other, and the falls keep fouling each other on the drum. Army guy **Chuck Teal** had the idea of moving the double fairlead block to the pad eye on the hawse pipe cathead, and that gave us a more horizontal lead to the windlass and that seemed to help keep the lines from binding. The other answer turned out to be two wraps on the windlass, and the third wrap around a bitt. That made it a whole lot easier to hold one

and slack the other when the time became necessary. And finally, it's important to remember to swing the boat in while it is still eight inches from being two blocked. Otherwise the aft davit guy won't clear the rudder head. Swing her in most of the way, two block her, swing into the chocks, and drop her down. If you're a retired Chief Boats, this may make sense. If it doesn't make sense, I don't give a damn, because it makes sense to me now. I only hope it still makes sense when I'm rereading this next October when I'm trying to figure out how to do it again. Maybe pictures will help. Once we had the boat secure, **Stan Murawski** got out his pressure washer and pressure washed the bottom to remove all the marine growth and grunge while it was still soft. Roy and Rocky got the gear out of the boat and winterized the engine in short order.



Into the stowed position.



Stan Murawski washing to bottom.

Which makes us stop in awe and admiration. Doing this evolution twice a year in the flat calm Hudson, and taking an hour to do it, makes one realize just how tough and skilled the whaleboat crews had to be in years gone by. Our deepest admiration goes out to any of you who ever had to launch a whaleboat at sea from a pitching deck, leave the safety of the ship to recover a pilot, survivors, wreckage, or a man overboard, and then come back alongside the crushing hull, hook up the Raymond release hooks and hoist her back aboard. I can't imagine an evolution at sea more dangerous that didn't involve the enemy actually shooting back at you. Must have been a lot of bruised knuckles and worse.

With the boat safely aboard I felt it was safe to leave the SLATER and make my annual junket to the Historic Naval Ships Association meeting. This year the host ship was the Battleship WISCONSIN in Norfolk. The conference was actually the "The Seventh International Maritime Heritage Conference," with over 400 attendees from all over the world, representing all aspects of maritime preservation. I had two primary reasons for going. One was to give a presentation on our 26' motor whaleboat, and the second was to accept an award for Dick Smith from the Association, recognizing his volunteer efforts over the years. Paul Czesak agreed to accompany me and provide transportation in his pick up truck, and at 0630 on the morning of October 27th, we cast off.



Glad I only have to paint a little DE.

Norfolk, but had heard horror stories about the place for years.

I've spent a fair amount of time in Portsmouth, stripping inactive ships, but never spent any time in Norfolk proper. I was amazed. I knew that the place was becoming a popular destination for reunion groups, but given the stories I have heard, I couldn't understand why. Now I saw first hand. I have never seen a downtown that has worked so hard to pull itself together, change its image, and become a tourist Mecca. Our hotel was right on Granby Street, and the place was beautiful. And you can't find a "Dogs and Sailors Keep off the Grass" sign anywhere, even in the

museums. The whole downtown and waterfront area has been redeveloped into a historic destination that really gives one a sense of safety and security in an environment where there is plenty to do. Warm sunny days and great foliage didn't hurt the setting. Dominating the whole waterfront is the WISCONSIN herself and the Nauticus Center. The ship, still in Navy custody as a mobilization asset, is so beautifully maintained that you get the sense that the only one who can afford to maintain a capital ship properly is Uncle Sam.

Paul and I attended sessions on "The Teaching of Maritime and Naval History" by Tim Runyan, restoration seminars on getting the AMERICAN VICTORY underway in Tampa, the Battleship ALABAMA cofferdam project, and saving the fleet tug ZUNI/TAMAROA, a session by Paul Cora on the dry-docking of the Coast Guard Cutter TANEY in Baltimore, and seminars on ship preservation in Russia and England. Our own session on the 26' motor whaleboat

"Common workboat, uncommon survivor" was moderated by **Kim Nielson** of the Naval Historical Center. I was indebted to **Paul Czesak** who helped me put together my first PowerPoint presentation on the restoration and operation of SLATER's whaleboat, and **Roy Gunther** who provided me with a draft of an article he had prepared for publication in "Wooden Boat Magazine." It turns out that the Navy built 26,000 of these boats between 1928 and the late 1950s before turning to fiberglass hulls. All the experts were in one room including **Joe Lombardi** and **Capt Dave Scheu** of the battleship NORTH CAROLINA, and by the time we'd counted heads, we'd identified six wooden whaleboats remaining in this country in various stages of restoration. No one seemed to argue that SLATER's is the most authentically restored, except for having a Westerbeke engine instead of a Buda. And nobody else is crazy enough to try and preserve the technology of actually using the radial davits to raise and lower their whaleboat. Maybe the reason they built 26,000 is because they dropped so many of them!

For me, the most productive session had the extraordinarily unexciting title "Annual Reports and Donors." This session was hosted by **Bill Galvani** of the Naval Undersea Museum in Keyport and went into depth about the importance and substance of a museum's annual report. They handed out and discussed the American Association of Fundraising Counsel's "Donor Bill of Rights" detailing museum's responsibilities to its donors. They also did a seminar on growing and managing your donor base. So don't be surprised if the first quarter 2005 TRIM BUT DEADLY is expanded to include an annual financial report and summary of our 2004 operations. And they say I don't pay attention. I'm also indebted to **Gloria Carvalho** of NAVSEA who picked up all the handouts on "Attracting People to Your Facility" an important session that I wasn't able to attend.



Please come home with me.

As part of the Conference, there were planned excursions to the Nauticus Museum, the Mariner's Museum in Newport News, the Battleship WISCONSIN, and a cruise in Hampton Roads. It might be worthwhile at this point to mention something about the reputation I have established among my professional peers. Deserved or not, somehow, early on in this career, I became known as a bit of a scrounger, leaving no stone unturned in the quest for parts for my ship. I think that's fair. But why was I approached by a security guard at the Mariner's Museum who told me that they had been warned to keep an eye on me? I don't think that's fair. Just because they had a beautifully restored hedgehog projectile, "K" Gun and Mark 6 depth charge on display. I couldn't have gotten them on the bus anyway. Well, maybe the hedgehog. The Hampton Roads cruise boat didn't have anything we needed. Hell, where are you gonna put a bar and disco lights on a DE. The banquet flatware was a pretty close match to our wardroom silver, but there were too many people watching me. The hotel towels were plain white with no logo, so they would have been suitable in the aft head, but I heard they count that stuff when you check out. Since the WISCONSIN is under dehumidification, I couldn't get inside, and the 16" projectile was of no use on SLATER. I have enough fire hose and signal lamps. However, did you know that the gun mount stands for the saluting battery is a modified 20mm stand? That information may come in handy one day.



Upon leaving WISCONSIN I was rendered the traditional honors I always receive when leaving other Historic Naval Ships.

Yes, I would have been quite content to leave Norfolk with many rekindled friendships, a lot of increased knowledge, and Dick Smith's award, until I got to the Battleship Wisconsin display at Nauticus. There they had a display on the Battle of the Atlantic. And part of that display was a sonar console. And that sonar console was a

QGB console. All World War II destroyers carried a "Q" series sonar, and many DE's carried a QGB. And in twenty five years of stripping ships, scrounging in scrap yards and diving in dumpsters, that QGB set was the only "Q" series sonar I have ever seen in my life. It was love at first sight. It was too big to fit under my jacket. There was no dolly available. Security was too tight. The only hope to pursue my new found love will be to write a letter. Someday, hopefully, Nauticus will tire of their QGB. Real museums change out their exhibits on a regular basis. Until then, I will be hoping. And waiting. Hopefully, one day, a QGB console will grace the SLATER's upper sound hut.

Thus, we returned to SLATER empty handed this trip. Returned to the cold north. All the leaves had fallen from the trees. The crew is preparing for winter. The chippers are making **Gary Sheedy** happy and chipping away on the reefer deck portside. The electricians have just about completed rewiring the lighting and alarm systems in the anchor windlass room. **Gus Negus** and **Karl Herchenroder** continue the beautiful restoration job they are doing on the number 3 ship's service generator. **Pat Perrella** has stowed and covered the museum artifacts for the winter, and **Gene Jackey** is chipping up tile in the laundry. **Chris Fedden** has the anchor windlass room ready to paint. He and **Ken Kaskoun** moved **Les Yarbrough's** sewing machine to the CPO passage so Les won't be alone freezing in the aft section of the ship this winter. The ship fitters pulled up the accommodation ladder, drained the sewer line and the waterlines. On the ship, we're back to bottled water and the Portajohn. They hard piped the water to the shore head and wrapped the new line with heat trace and insulation so those in the trailer will have a bathroom this winter and be free of the Portajohn. And we bought our first tank of oil at \$1.95 a gallon.

Therefore, once again, I appeal to you for your help in making it through another winter. There aren't many projects of this size and this young that can boast an endowment of a half million dollars, another \$200,000 in their dry-dock fund, and no debt on the project. But we want to keep it that way, so as we have in the past, we look to you for help this winter. For our part, we have a new more aggressive attitude about bringing people in. With more aggressive marketing, our attendance has been up 25% this year. The overnight camping program promises to be a good source of revenue next year, as the word gets out and happy campers leave the ship. **Les and Annette Beauchaine** can't do it by themselves selling dogtags at the mall every Saturday. We need your help. And we continue to knock on the doors of the larger corporations, foundations, and government agencies to try and get our message across. That message goes like this:



"During World War II over one hundred thousand young Navy and Coast Guard sailors manned 563 Destroyer Escorts". An incredible feat of training and mass production. They battled Nazi U-Boats on the North Atlantic protecting convoys of men and material. In the Pacific they stood in line to defend naval task forces from Japanese submarines and Kamikaze air attacks. Today, only one of these ships remains afloat in the United States, the USS Slater. Floating on the Hudson River in Albany, New York, the USS Slater has undergone an extensive ten-year restoration that has returned the ship to her former glory. The ship functions as a floating classroom educating children and

Please Give to the SLATER Winter Fund.

the general public on the service, sacrifices and core values of the "Greatest Generation." Over the past ten years thousands of destroyer escort veterans, and their families, have donated over a million dollars to preserve a ship, the USS SLATER. It is now time to ask the question, when they pass on, will their dream die too?"

Our answer is of course an emphatic "No." This ship has been saved to stay. Which, of course, is leading up to my Winter Fund Appeal. During this time of the year, we count on you to keep us from dipping into our savings. That's for the dry-docking. This is that time of the year when we have no ticket income, but are working hard to keep the restoration going full bore. This winter we want to install the new stoves in the galley, finish the anchor windlass room and passageway, the reefer machinery space, and restore the laundry. So now we ask you, if you can afford it, please kick in to the winter fund.

And again, we need you GE SLATER volunteers and donors to identify yourselves. There's free money to be had for the SLATER if you folks speak up! Approved gifts from eligible GE participants will be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis. If you have given ANY monetary donation to the SLATER this calendar year, you must register your gift. There are two ways: online at www.gefoundation.com and click on matching gifts; by phone with the Customer Service Center at 800-305-0669. To register online you will need your SSO I.D. and password.



And please don't let the SLATER crew down.

Remember, our official organization name is Destroyer Escort Historical Museum. Then,

we will go online to verify that your gift was received. We must receive gifts from a minimum of ten GE donors totaling a minimum of \$1000 each calendar year in order to remain eligible. Employees, retirees, and surviving spouses of retirees are eligible to participate. And not only GE, but other corporations, as well. If your corporation has a matching gift program, please notify us. If you're not sure, call your retirement office and ask. Many corporations will match your gift dollar for dollar; some even double their match.

Are you in tears yet? Our electric bills now run over eleven hundred a month. We just paid a five grand quarterly insurance bill. Heating oil runs about five hundred a month, and we always need moreaint. So I appeal to you, if you are in a position to help us out, please send in an extra hundred bucks to the winter fund. If you can give more, please do. If you can't afford to give at all, we understand. My own hundred is already in, and several of our crew still beat me to the draw. If you can afford it, and your spouse says it's okay, I hope you can do the same. You'll find a little envelope enclosed in this mailing to help you out.

Thanks for everything, past, present and future. And see you next month.