

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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As summer wanes, it's routine maintenance and moored as before for the crew of the SLATER. The welders are working on repairing the 20mm ready service lockers, the electricians are working on compartment fans and battle lanterns, the gunners are working on number 1 three inch and 40mm gun 42, and the deck force painted out the fantails and is moving forward along the portside with the chipping. **Gary Sheedy** is redoing all the expanded metal in the electrical storeroom off the reefer deck, and showing considerable talent with steel fabrication. **Tommy Moore** has been using his new paint float to scale and paint the portside between the camels. The signalmen have rigged retrievers on the outboard halyards, and keep repairing signal flags, so we don't have to buy new ones.

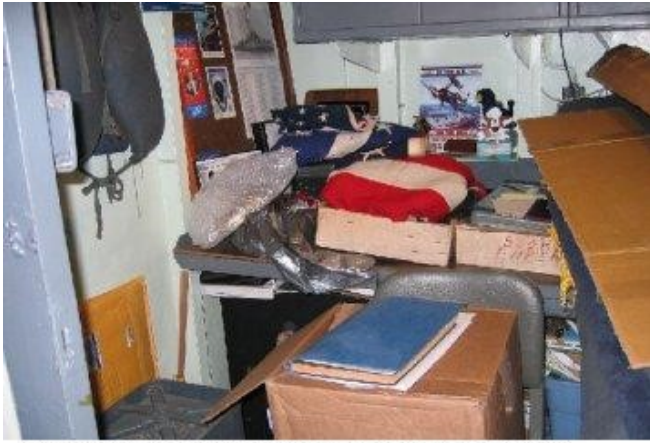


The fantail recently received a fresh coat of paint after a thorough chipping job.



Chris Fedden and his chipping tools work their way forward to continue the never ending job.

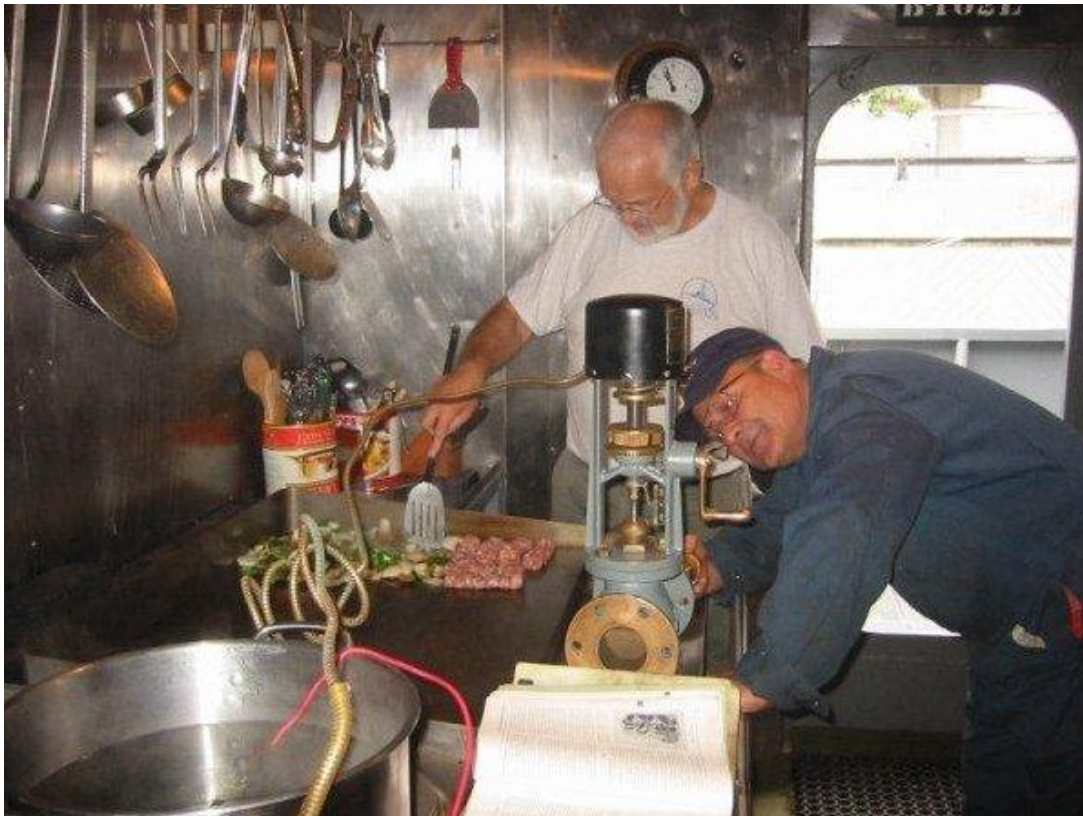
Gordon Lattey has been working long distance with **Cliff Woltz** to make the fiddle boards for the wardroom table. Gordon has also been buying white Navy blankets and pea coats off Ebay to outfit the forward crews quarters. He got the forward peacoat locker all set up. Sometimes it's hard to separate artifacts from ships gear. We issue dungarees to the crew, and one afternoon, as **Chris Fedden** was saying goodbye, I noticed he had a peacoat over his shoulder. I said, "Chris, where'd you get that." He replied, "In the peacoat locker forward. It's full of them." I said, "Who said you could take it?" and Chris replied, "Everybody." I said "Better put it back and check with Gordon. He's been paying a lot of money for those to put on display." **Pat Perrella** has been almost buried under a deluge of great artifacts .



Donated artifacts pile up quickly while Pat is away.

They came from various DEs, including a beautiful .30 caliber carbine donated by **Hack Charbonneau**. She also received a white blanket from the USS FORMOE donated by **Les Beauchaine**, that is the only Navy blanket we've ever seen with satin binding. The Navy must have recognized that Les was special from the start. By the way, we continue to owe **Annette** and **Les** thanks for their work at Crossgates. Their increased sales are the brightest spot on our monthly financial statement. And finally the volunteer tour guides have been taking up the slack now that school has started and we've lost most of our student help.

Another couple of guys who are making real progress are Gus Negus and Karl Herchenroder on the emergency diesel generator. If you've been following that saga, they used the parts we removed from the USS KITTIWAKE in Virginia to replace the whole front-end gear train and blower. When they first started the engine, it went on the first crank, no ether. They thought they had it made, but then the engine was running too hot. They figured, correctly, that they had leaks in the cooling system, so they redid all the flange gaskets. They brought the cooling pressure back to where it needed to be but the engine still ran hot. They checked the heat exchanger for blockage, but that wasn't the problem. Then they figured that the sixty-year-old thermostatic control valve was bad so they spent two weeks rehabilitating a replacement that they had taken off the KITTIWAKE. It looked beautiful, worked fine, but then they went to install it, it didn't fit. Now they're making modifications to the plumbing to try and get it to fit. We continue to make great progress in small increments.



Never a dull moment in the galley! Stan Murawski cooks lunch while Guss Negus tests a refurbished temperature actuated valve for the emergency generator cooling system.

We are in the process of losing another one of our most dedicated volunteers. Roy Gunther, retired Supply Corps Commander is moving to Florida from Averill Park. Roy's involvement with the SLATER goes back to 1998, when we were down at Shed One at the Port of Albany, before we opened to the public. The SLATER got hit with the first serious theft we've ever had aboard. At night, while the ship was unattended, thieves broke in and stole, among other items, the magnetic compass out of the pilothouse. At the time, we were crushed because we had no replacement. It must have been a slow news day, because the story of the theft made the newspaper. A retired supply corps commander, Roy came forth to donate a compass he had salvaged from a wrecked ship. Roy's compass still occupies its space in the pilothouse binnacle.

Roy looked around and decided we were worth helping in other ways. He was intimately involved with setting up the camels the first couple of years and was my partner down on the river before **Tommy Moore** came along. He involved himself on all levels, volunteering as a tour guide, doing maintenance, and ultimately serving as Board Treasurer and doing our budget for several years. However, Roy's first love has always been woodworking and using his hands, as opposed to the administration he is so good at. The first big project Roy tackled was the restoration of the ship's office back in the winter of '98-99. At the time, we had no administrative center for the ship, so Roy created one for us. He chipped out the compartment, reworked the Greek furniture to look like Navy standard, and even went out and bought the file cabinets for the space. As I sit here typing, I am working on a computer table that Roy built eight years ago. He was also one of the only people in the crew willing to tackle spray painting, and I remember the two of us feeling mutually pretty sick after he finished spray-painting the CPO mess and the second deck passageway forward. He put his woodworking skills to work when he restored the chartroom and had to fabricate the chart table complete with drawers from scratch. You'd swear it was original equipment. He played a major role in the restoration of officers' country and the wardroom, refinishing all the desks, medicine cabinets and lockers so they looked like new, and making sure all the proper hardware was in place. Sadly, after putting long hours into the officers' head, the space has been utilized for artifact storage ever since, so no one sees it.



Roy Gunther and "Rocky" Rockwood take a ride down in the annual summer ritual of lowering the whaleboat.

The following winter Roy's next project was tackling the Captain's cabin. He had to wait until the radiomen finished the radio room, because those guys had all their radio gear piled in the captain's cabin. Roy went at the CO's stateroom with painstaking detail. The result has been a delight to visitors ever since, as everyone wants to see where to head honcho lived. Just about the time he finished up the captain's cabin, we got the State Senate Member Item Grant to restore the whaleboat. Roy spent a lot of time that spring freeing up the davits and rerigging all the lifting gear so we would be able to bring the whaleboat back aboard. He figured out the initial method of fairleading the falls to the anchor windlass, without the aid of any Chief Boats to tell him how it had been done.

About this time we reached another important plateau in the project. An unassuming fellow named **Larry "Rocky" Rockwood** joined the crew. Rocky was a former sonar man of the USS COONER DE172. Not knowing what to do with a sonar man, we set Rocky to work repainting the amidships repair locker. When it came time to work on the whaleboat, it turned out Rocky had spent many years working in boatyards in Maine, and had more than a fair amount of expertise in wooden boat building and maintenance. As always seems to happen for the SLATER, the right guy came along just when we needed him. He and Roy formed a team that, over the next several years, took a rotted wooden hulk that you could not have given away, into a showpiece that any active duty DE skipper would have been proud of. In July 2000 work actually started on the whaleboat. Roy Gunther met with Scarano Boat Building, and they worked up a plan to rebuild the boat. The plan was to get the hull watertight at Scarano, repaint it, and do as much exterior work as the funding allowed.

We then planned to float the boat, tow it to the SLATER, hoist it into the davits and do the interior work ourselves. The inside repairs were started and the boat was inverted so all the seams could be caulked and sanded. Through the summer down at Scarano Boat Building, Roy Gunther and Larry Rockwood continued the work in the heat. It received a topcoat of gray on the hull and was made seaworthy once more. Rocky was putting in five days a week. He could pull and replace caulk twice as fast as any two of our other volunteers. The boat would never be in the shape it's in without him. He did most of the tedious time-consuming stuff, leaving the Scarano crew to utilize their time on the finish carpentry. It was a great day when **Clark Farnsworth** towed the boat back and we hoisted it aboard.

Roy located an engine and transmission for the boat and arranged for its purchase and shipment. The following year, we towed the boat back to Scarano's for the engine installation. Rocky and Roy spent another winter and spring putting in time. The day the boat motored back under her own power with Roy at the helm was one of the proudest days we've ever had on the SLATER. The boat has since been the object of many adventures for the crew, but none so exciting as the annual evolution of hoisting the boat aboard in the fall and lowering it in the spring. Roy did a lot of research as to how to do this, without 25 able-bodied seamen on each fall. We had eighty-year-old men, each of whom had a different idea on how to go about the job. Now, each year since, Rocky and Roy painted out the starboard side of the boat, and then we lowered the boat, reversed it in the falls, and brought it back aboard so they could caulk and paint the portside. This past spring their dedication again came to the fore. Over the winter the weight of the Albany snow on the canvas covering the boat broke the stem off the rudder. It was rotted through out. Rocky spent a lot of time salvaging and cleaning the hardware from the old rudder and Roy spent several weeks in procuring the lumber, taking measurements and making patterns from the old rotted rudder and fabricating the rudder.

In addition to volunteering his time to cut and laminate the rudder Roy donated the cost of the lumber. Meanwhile, as soon as the weather turned decent, Rocky spent four days a week caulking, sanding and painting. He donates the materials he needs, including dozens of sanding disks, tubes of caulking, brushes and the like, because you can never find a decent paint brush aboard the SLATER. After the boat is launched, it's still his baby as he continues to make routine checks of the pumps and the engine. This year he discovered there was little or no water coming through the exhaust. He worked with Gus Negus to identify the problem as a bad pump impeller, and Rocky provided us with a brand new impeller to replace it. Maintaining a sixty-year-old boat in operating condition is almost as much of a challenge as maintaining a sixty-year-old DE as a stationary exhibit. A lot of people have contributed to the restoration and handling of the whaleboat, such as **Hack Charbonneau, Larry LaChance, Clark Farnsworth, Beth Spain, Bill and Barry Camp**, and about fifty others. But without Rocky and Roy, it would still be a hulk in storage at Scarano's. For his part, Roy Gunther has been a major contributor to all areas of the SLATER project since its inception, and with his move to Florida, he will be deeply missed.



Barry Witte explains how degaussing works on a Destroyer Escort to the film crew from Germany.

In the legends that won't die department, we received a call from Ariane Hess from World of Wonder Productions in Munich, Germany. They are producing a documentary about the "Philadelphia Experiment" for their German TV show. That's the legend that the USS ELDRIDGE disappeared from Philadelphia and reappeared in Norfolk. They wanted to film aboard the USS SLATER, and discuss the preservation of the SLATER as part of their story. They spent the better part of three days with us doing interviews, and photographing various parts of the ship including the USS TINSMAN Reunion Memorial Service. It was great working with them, and we should get a lot of publicity on German TV. And in case you're still wondering, it never happened.



Kira says "Goodbye" to some of her old "Boyfriends", Tom mcLaughlin, Jack Madden, Al Van Derzee and Bill Scharoun.

One of our favorite alumni tour guides, Kira Zaikowski was married back on July 30th. She still feels so attached to the ship that she wanted to have wedding photos taken on the SLATER with some of her shipmates. She wrote, " I am certainly able to say that I have some of the most unique wedding photos of any bride! When we arrived on our limo bus from the church at downtown St. Mary's, a short distance away, I was so touched to see some volunteers who had come especially to see to us. We took our photos, still sweating (the church had no air conditioning either). Even more great was seeing the SLATER volunteers and snapping a shot with them...I definitely teared up when Al Van Derzee said to Jack Madden, "Well, it looks like we have lost our girlfriend now." But they were tears of happiness and I was so glad to include you all, and the ship, in one of the most important days of my and Seamus life together." Mark you calendars now! We are co-sponsoring a special performance of "Father Joe: A Hero's Journey" on November 9 at 7:30 p.m. at the American Legion Zaloga Post on Everett Road. This is the story of LCDR Joseph T. O'Callahan, chaplain aboard the USS FRANKLIN when it was hit by Japanese kamikaze planes in March 1945. Master storyteller Jay O'Callahan will give a performance of the story that he wrote about his uncle, Father O'Callahan. Jay re-enacts the terrifying moments aboard the FRANKLIN and includes his personal reminiscences of his uncle. This is not to be missed! Tickets are \$10 in advance and are available at the SLATER office.



Tim Benner and Doug Tanner use the whale-boat for a hull repair platform.



Joe Breyer works on attaching new deck mounts for a refurbished 20mm ammo box.

The reunions have continued with visits by the USS Garfield Thomas DE193, CORT DIV 20 & 22, USS Tinsman DE 589, USS Cushing DD 797, USS George A. Johnson DE583, USS Whitehurst DE 634, USS Hanna DE 449, and USS Bright DE747. The USS Howard D. Crow made the front page of the Albany paper thanks to **Harold Muth** with the story of their sinking of U-869 on Feb. 11, 1945. They didn't get credit for "kill" at the time, even though the crew swore they got a U-boat. No wreckage, no credit. However, a group of sport divers were obsessed with the wreck of a U-boat they located. What they found resulted in the best selling book "Shadow Divers," published last year and their research rewrote the history of the CROW. German records put the location of the U-869 far away from the CROW attack, but U-869's hulk was found at almost the exact spot the CROW had made an attack. Holes found in the wreck led to one conclusion, an attack from a surface ship. Exhaustive searches found the log of the Crow detailing its Feb. 11 attack. The coordinates of that attack put it less than five miles from where the U-869 was discovered. The Coasties who manned the USS HOWARD D. CROW finally got credit for the sub they were so sure they had sunk sixty years ago. You can change history if you persist.

See you next month!