

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

USS Slater DE-766

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As our 25th summer slips away, projects continue all over the ship. On the collections side of the museum, donations continue to come in from families of DE veterans. This month, **Susan Morris** donated documents related to her father's service aboard USS RINEHART (DE-196). A photograph of German POWs, captured by USS PRIDE (DE-323), was received from **Roger Miller**. Documents related to USS CHASE (APD-54) will also be added to our individual ship collections. In WWII, 563 destroyer escorts were built, including those built during the Cold War. It's our mission to represent them all.

Our collections website is still steaming along. More ship collections have been uploaded that include War Diaries, Deck Logs, and Action Reports that have been donated to us or that we can source from the National Archives. If you want to see and learn more about these collections be sure to check it out through our website, usslater.org/online-exhibitions.



Benner, Doug, and Jim work on the starboard 40 mm drainage.

With the help of our interns, John's never-ending work of cataloging and packing away artifacts continues in the museum space. Our college interns, **Gio, Tyler, Aung, and Viktor** have been learning how to handle and photograph our expansive collection. Their help has been invaluable.

A weekly Deck Log series, tracing SLATER through her wartime service, is also ongoing. John utilizes SLATER's Deck Log and summarizes each week in real time. He accompanies the log entries with photographs and videos of destroyer escorts to further demonstrate the importance of SLATER and her sister ships. You can find this series on our

YouTube channel. John also appears in a monthly livestream with the folks at the **Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park**, along with **Ken Stano**, to talk museum ships. You can catch our next livestream on Wednesday, September 7th. Stay tuned to our Facebook page for a reminder. This month's episode featured the group discussing Taffy 3 and the Battle off Samar. You can find this video on our YouTube Channel as well.

Speaking of Buffalo, in a show of support for our friends at the other end of the state, Barry Witte arranged to have himself, Gary Sheedy and Grant Eastman go to Buffalo for a weekend and assist with electrical evaluation and repairs aboard **USS THE SULLIVANS**. Their mission was to clean, inspect, and safely bring back the ship's 1943 electrical system that had been fully submerged by water and oil after the flooding incident the ship went through several months ago. They explained step-by-step to the local volunteers what they were going to do, while using our



Barry, Grant, and Gary travelled to Buffalo to help THE SULLIVANS restore power aboard the destroyer.



Larry Williams exercising the whaleboat.

high level of safety protocols. Our team was assisted by a great showing of local volunteers willing to learn and help out.

Gradually, the team removed the original breakers, labeled them, and placed them in bins. One by one, they were disassembled for cleaning. There were multiple issues to overcome, foremost was black oil and water contamination. Over 30 breakers from the aft distribution board were taken apart and scrubbed with toothbrushes and degreaser and dried. Once cleaned, the breakers were dried, reassembled, and tested. It was very satisfying to have our crew share their experience with another historic ship.

For you techies up in the radio shack, Steve Syrotynski and Chuck Chandler have

been repairing the power supplies for the RBB and RBC receivers. Both should be back and working within the next week or two. Chuck has continued to evaluate the higher frequency reception on the RAL-7 receiver. After a few sessions of testing, Steve and Chuck concluded that a more careful adjustment of the regeneration control is necessary to achieve the expected sensitivity. Comparisons today showed the RAL-7 receiving with sensitivity comparable to a modern receiver in the 14-to-15-Megahertz range. This should help us to make more radio contacts, as the solar cycle leads to increased propagation in the upper frequencies.



Jim and Mike in the engine room.

Down in the aft engine room, our engineering gang Mike Dingmon, James Miles, Jim Skewes, Jim Niemynski, and Charles Desrosiers continued their maintenance efforts. They leaned on Doug Tanner for help repacking and lapping valves on the B-4 emergency diesel day tank

sight glass. Always thorough, Doug went as far as to test his valves at 30 psi with air and soap solution in open and closed position. They passed Doug's test.



Fresh coat of paint in the bilge.

August marked the first time the bilge has seen new "paint" in a long time. James finished coating his first section in B-3 with Rustoleum Rusty Metal Primer. James plans to continue down the rows, scraping and cleaning. We keep a safety watch while James and Charles are under the deck plates. Cleaning this last row will be entirely confined space work. If you want to know where your money goes, Mike decided it was time to change out the lube oil on the B-3 8-cylinder ship's service generator. Dick Walker picked up fifteen gallons of oil for a total of \$280. Maintaining a ship isn't cheap.

Doug Tanner's gang, Danny Statile, Warren Brozio, Tim Benner, Super Dave Mardon, Earl Herchenroder, Chuck Teal, Chuck Tanner, and Gene Jackey continued to make steady progress on several projects. Having completed the starboard side pilothouse door, Danny completed the modifications to the port door. The gang hauled it up to the 02 level and made modifications and adjustments to the dogs and swedges. This has required lifting and mounting the door and setting it back on the sawhorses about four times.

The leaking foc's'cle hatch is still on the sawhorses in the work area, waiting for the fabrication of new hinges and dogs. The new project that they are getting into is improving drainage on the 40mm guns. Water collects in the gun well between the shell chutes, where the wiring comes into the guns from the junction box below and is rotting



Charles working on chipping paint around the aft 40 mm.



Thomas priming under the depth charge rack.

out the stuffing tubes. They are working to add drains to the gun well into the junction boxes, and to have the rainwater eventually drain to the deck.

Walt Stuart continues to keep the topsides tidy and maintain all the ropework and rigging. **Ron Prest, Thomas Scian, Bill Wetterau, Charles Desrosiers, and Bill Holt** continued the endless cycle of chipping and painting. **Bill Wetterau's** project has been the gun 33 tub deck. **Charles** has been scaling the deck of the aft 40mm gun. **Ron** has been working on the starboard "K" gun roller loaders. **Bill Holt** works behind them, priming and painting.

Henry Bourgeois will be MIA for awhile as he has started college at

Geneseo. His father, **Richard**, plans to continue without his helper. They made a day trip to see the Battleship, MASSACHUSETTS, where the sight of their SLATER hats got them the insider's tour. Henry left the 40mm replica rounds in good shape, with no additional repairs needed. Richard is continuing work on the gaskets for the gun 32 train and elevation indicators.

On the MK-14 gunsight simulation, Richard has found a source for the LED bulbs and holders. He has a design concept to take power into the sight from the air compressor, so he can bypass the rare and historical original bulbs to light up the reticle. He plans is to continue this work solo, have a light-up sight on gun 25 in a few weeks, and to add some talking points for the guides about our new display.



Gary Sheedy continues his work restoring the after steering compartment.

We were honored to host Captain Douglas Menikheim, USN, retired, and his friend Bob Stone, a retired Navy helicopter rescue pilot who was stationed at Virginia Beach from 1968 – 1971. Captain Menikheim served 28 years in the Navy, during which time he served aboard five ships. USS SPROSTON (DD-577) from 1961 – 1963; USS PEACOCK (MSC-198) as a Lt. and commanding officer from 1964 – 1966; USS BRADLEY (DE-1041) as the executive officer from 1969 – 1971; USS CLAUDE JONES (DE-1033) as a Lt. Cmdr. and commanding officer from 1971 – 1973; USS JOHN YOUNG (DD-973) as a Cdr. from commissioning in May



Douglas Menikheim, Bob Stone, and tour guide Carl Camurati in the wardroom.

1978 – 1979. He retired in 1984 as a Captain. **John** followed tour guide extraordinaire **Carl Camurati**, as he brought the pair through the ship for a day-long tour. Many sea stories were told!

We had two notable passings this month. Edwin Brown Black passed away on August 15, 2022, at the age of 98 years old. Ed and his wife Dot were devoted supporters of our effort. Upon graduation from high school, Ed joined the Navy, and after training was assigned to the USS RICH DE-695 as a radioman. Ed boarded the USS RICH in New Orleans, on her Commission Day on 1 October 1943. In Londonderry, Ireland, in May 1944, the USS RICH was ordered to participate in the Normandy invasion. On June 6th, she joined the other ships in this historic invasion along the shores of Normandy.



It takes the whole crew to fix the leaks in the deck above the work bench.

On June 8th, while attempting to assist USS GLENNON (DD-620), RICH was sunk after she hit three mines and suffered severe casualties. After suffering multiple life-threatening injuries, himself, Ed was hospitalized in England. Once stable enough to be transferred, Ed returned to the States for an extended hospital stay. On April 1945, Ed was discharged from a hospital in Charleston, SC. When sharing his Navy experiences, Ed would humbly exclaim, “I’m a survivor, not a hero.” Ed made several return visits to the Normandy beaches and wrote a book about his experiences which we hold in our museum collection.



Doug and Super Dave are still working on the watertight doors.

We also lost former USS SLATER crewmember and former Trustee Don C. Norris, on August 15th at the age of 95. He is survived by his wife Vivian, who he married in 1964, and two sons, Matt and Todd. Don graduated from Warren High School in 1944, and from Radio School at the United States Naval Training Station, in Sampson, N.Y., after basic training there. During World War II,

Don served as a Radioman 3rd Class in the Pacific Theater on the USS OLMSTEAD (APA-188), USS SLATER, and USS CATES (DE-763).

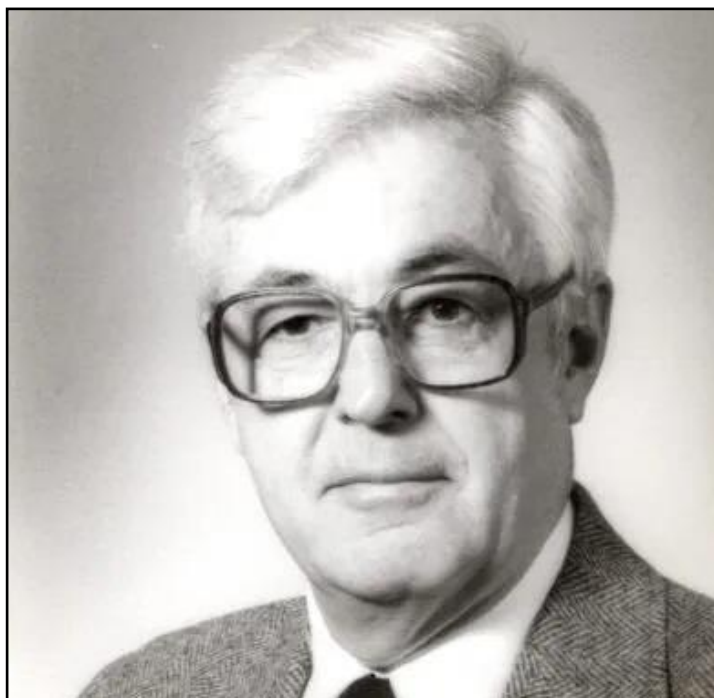
Don was very active with the USS SLATER when she arrived in Albany. He was a participant in all of our work weeks. He was on the board of trustees for the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum in Albany, N.Y. and participated in her restoration into his 80's. He was also the secretary for American Society of Marine Artists, and active with Destroyer Escorts Sailors Association. Don was also active with Altoona Chapter of Sea Cadets, and was President of the Navy League from 1999 to 2000.



The Adirondack Battalion of the Sea Cadets served as our color guard for Coast Guard Birthday.

The U.S. Coast Guard celebrated their 232nd birthday on the 4th, but we celebrated on the 6th so more people could join us on a Saturday. Shanna planned the event with our favorite Coasties, Dick Walker, Charlie Poltenson, and Grant Hack. Board Trustee Steve Long served as our 'Master of Ceremonies'

and Ken Kaskoun worked with the Adirondack Battalion of the Sea Cadets, who served as our color guard. Kudos to them in full uniform on the 90 degree day. Dick Walker shared with us the history of the U.S. Coast Guard and the story of the Coast Guard manned, WWII destroyer escort, USS LEOPOLD (DE-319). An officer from the Coast Guard Auxiliary shared the history of that organization and the important work that the Coast Guard still performs present day. We were treated with beautiful renditions of the National Anthem and God Bless America by the Pitch Hitters Quartet from Racing City Chorus. These four men have really stepped up for us over the last year, and our ceremonies are so much better when they are included! We had over 70 people in attendance for this birthday celebration,



Don Norris

which wouldn't be complete without the cake!

Throughout the month we had over 2,000 visitors, even through the high heat and humidity. We hosted four local summer camps, three office outings, two seniors' centers, and an overnight to top it all off. (Bonus points if you sung the 12 Days of Christmas tune for that last sentence). Even **Cathy Wheat** was impressed with our overnights. She came in to straighten up and the berthing compartments were already clean and tidy. The **JROTC from North Rockland High School** are a great bunch of kids and we enjoy each year when they come to stay before school starts.

If you're looking for an in-depth story of the history of the **USS KIRK**, you're in luck. This month, intern **Gio** shares the "epic moment" of the evacuation of Saigon at the end of the Vietnam War. **USS KIRK** found herself in charge of hundreds of refugees fleeing the country. Gio spoke with veterans who were aboard **KIRK** at the time of the evacuation, and



Gio on the depth charges with his tour group.



WWII Vet, Bill Scharoun, cut the cake for Coast Guard Day.

they gave him vivid accounts of what they went through, including the decision to start tipping helicopters over the side of the ship. Despite being designed for warfare, it seems that **KIRK** was even better at saving lives. Listen to the whole story on Episode 18 of **DE Classified**. You can find it on our website or wherever you get your podcasts.

Finally, I would not want to accuse anyone of being a hoarder, but **Doug Tanner** emailed me a photo of the ticket stub from his first visit in 1999. Back then, the ship was in such bad shape, the ticket wasn't collected so people could return for a second visit. The goal being to "Come back and see our progress." Of course, **Doug** offered to become a volunteer, so he never needed to use his ticket for a



2022 Volunteer Appreciation Dinner - Thank you to all our volunteers and interns who give so much of themselves to this project. Some of them have been with us for the last 25 years!

second visit. I still remember his first meeting on the messdeck deck. I'm sure glad he didn't decide to stay home that day.

We have over sixty volunteers and their spouses aboard for our annual volunteer appreciation dinner. The weather was perfect for outdoor dining, as **Smitty** and **Art Dott** prepared a delicious lasagna dinner, **Shanna** brought side dishes and beverages, and **Jo Ann** and her mom **Mary Beth Mulligan** contributed dessert. I gave the same speech I've given for the past 25 years to thank our volunteers for their service, and I don't think I've gotten it right yet. Words can't express my appreciation for these dedicated people who have enabled USS SLATER to excel in the community of historic ships. Thank you for all you do and have done. And thanks to you, our donors, who for the past 25 years have allowed our volunteers, staff, and visitors to work and play aboard this treasure.

See you next month,
Tim