# SLATER SIGNALS

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

**Destroyer Escort Historical Museum**
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**Our Program Manager, Shanna Schuster, really stepped up to the plate, and took charge of getting the ship ready for the public when USS SLATER returned home from the shipyard.** She organized the volunteers and interns, and they took charge of getting the ship cleaned, exhibits set up, gangways set, technology running, and spreading the word to our eager visitors that we were opening to the public.

**Cathy Wheat, Shanna**, and a handful of our college interns spent the last days before opening getting the ship clean. That means they dusted, vacuumed, and disinfected everything on the tour route. I mean everything; pipes, overheads, railings, ladders, light switches, fans, ledges, door frames, door handles, tables, chairs, and hatches. We ensured every light bulb was working, every brass fixture in the pilot house was polished, and all the guns were able to be trained and elevated.

**In the Officer's staterooms, beds were made, and artifacts displayed.** Charts, pictures, and typewriters were in their proper place. The Captain's uniform and photos of his family

***Interns, Christian and John are getting ready to make the beds in Officer's Country.***

***Mike Marko leading his tour out of forward berthing. Our first tour of 2020!***

were all set up. Beds were made in forward berthing, blankets folded, pillows cases put on and set, bunk straps attached, mattress covers cleaned, and life jackets hung. The wardroom table was set, refrigerators were cleaned, fans stowed, Covid-19 protocols set up, hand sanitizing station with signage placed, and the briefing room setup.

**The three heads were cleaned, restocked, and disinfected.** Press releases were sent out, tour guides notified, cashiers were trained on the new cash register and credit card machine, and a final topside washdown was done. Before we knew it, the ship was ready to go.

***Gary and Barry, wiring in the recognition light panel.***

**All this in addition to running errands, making bank deposits, gathering mail, restocking office supplies, and stocking up on disinfectant.** Shanna also restocked the volunteer's cold drinks, loaded the new mini fridge in the ship's store, and answered a lot of phone calls generated by all the publicity the move created. While all this was going on, she found time to completely redesign and launch our new USS SLATER website. If you haven't visited the website since summer, you need to check out all the improvements she has made.

***Bill and Paul made up the retriever for the port halyards.***

**Over the course of the month, the maintenance crew has gotten back into the swing of things. Doug Tanner and his shipfitters** have been primarily occupied with trying to figure out how to deal with the gangway safety nets, which have too much sag, as well as replacing the deteriorated gutter on the street side of the trailer. They are also thinking about what to do about the depth charges that are filled with damp gypsum and concrete that is rotting from the inside out.

**"Boats" Haggart** and his crew got all the mooring wires rigged, the mooring ropes doubled, and are now working to get all the signal halyards properly spliced with snap hooks,

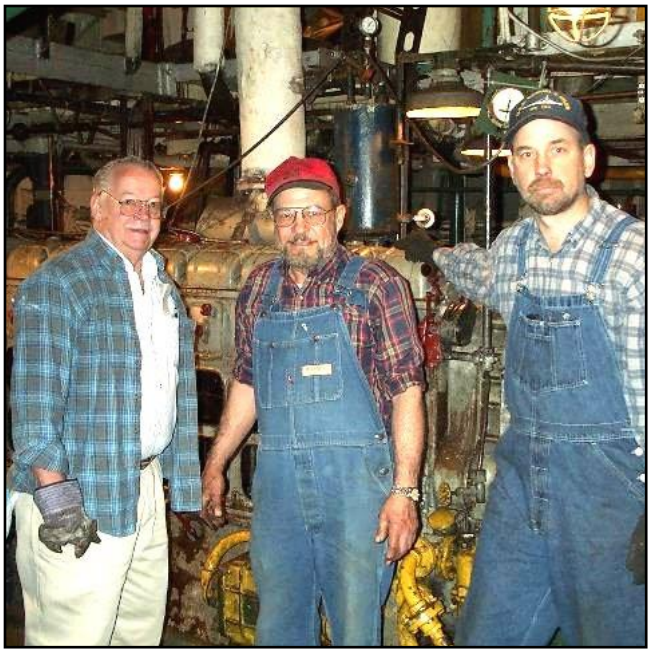
*Doug, Dave, and Benner unloading a depth charge prior to opening. Damp concrete is rotting them out from the inside.*

rings, and the retrievers. **Gary Sheedy** spent the month wiring in and connecting all of the electrical cables that the shipyard ran down the mast and left coiled on the signal bridge for Gary to deal with in Albany. **Barry Witte** has been completing his running light control panel and wiring in the eighteen light fixtures that make up the fighting light system. Again, our thanks go to The Electroswitch Company for providing the switches, and to **Jan Coons,** who made the donation to purchase the switches in honor of her father, **Harold Ward.**

**We were excited to have long time SLATER supporter, Geoffrey Bullard, donate a Hamilton Model 22 Chronometer for our chartroom.** The ship presently has three large model 24 chronometers that are on loan from the Maritime Commission. In doing historical research, we determined that destroyer escorts carried two of the smaller model 22 type. Geoffrey is on track to keeping us more historically correct. A former Naval Officer himself, Geoffrey served as gunnery officer on the old repair ship, USS TUTILIA (ARG-4), a converted Liberty ship. Clocks have always been a hobby of Geoffrey's, and he has donated many clocks to the SLATER over the years.

**I also have the sad news to report that on Saturday, September 19th, another USS SLATER World War II crewmember crossed the bar.** We lost Ship's Cook First Class, **Floyd Eugene Martin.** His ship's flag flew at half mast, in his honor. Rest in Peace Floyd. So few of you remain. We have the watch. We also lost one of our most dedicated volunteers in August, **Robin Larner.** Robin originally started coming to the USS HUSE work weeks with her Dad, Jim, who served in USS DAY (DE-225). She had such a good time, that after Jim passed, Robin continued to be a regular, with her pal **Jan Schweiger.** Robin's contribution to our effort will be deeply missed.

*Floyd Martin in WWII.*



*Karl Herchenroder, Tom Schriner and Tim Markham in the early stage of the 8-cylinder restoration*

**A story that really didn't get told last month is the great contribution our engineers made to the trip to and from the shipyard.** The trip home was the first time in the restored Slater's history that one of our own engines ran with such a high level of reliability. **Mike Dingmon** warmed it up before leaving drydock. After the yard floated us and allowed us to check for leaks, Mike restarted the engine, and we had the load shifted within 5 minutes. The engine ran for the next 22 hours, well after we arrived in Albany, until we could get the Albany shore power cable rigged. The engine could have run much longer. Its operation was very stable, with temperatures, pressures, and coolant levels all holding steady. A rotating team of **Mike**, **Steve Klauck, Grant Hack**, **Alex Titcomb, Barry Witte, Brendan Lutz, George Gollas,** and **Jack Carbone** stood watches throughout the day and night to monitor the engine. The engine and this team provided continuous electric power throughout the entire trip, so the rest of the crew could have lights, cooling, cooked meals, and all the other comforts of a ship underway. We were able to keep the air tanks full, so we could exchange whistle salutes with other boats and well-wishers ashore. We even used a searchlight to spell out "Go Navy, Beat Army" as we passed West Point.

**It is worth taking a look at the history of this engine's restoration.** The 268A-3 is one of four electric power generators that are original to the ship. It is the one designated as the emergency diesel generator, originally intended to run if all other power was unavailable. This engine was first run, in Albany, in 2002. It was first run to power the ship in a dockside test. Later that year, during our semi-annual trip across the Hudson River to and from the Port of Rensselaer, SLATER was underway with electric power for the first

*2002, the first start up of the emergency diesel generator.*

time since returning from Greece.

*2004 Electricians Mike Clark and Barry Witte during our cross river move*

**One of our great benefactors in the early days was Herb Dahlhaus**. Herb was the Port Engineer for the **Gibson and Cushman Dredging Company**. They had purchased three 3-268A's for $2,750 each from Boston Metals for use in their dredges, all from destroyer escorts, names forgotten, that were scrapped. The equipment served Gibson and Cushman for thirty years. When the company was sold, the new company scrapped a dredge and no longer needed the 3-268A parts. Herb remembered the SLATER and asked Mr. **James Haney**, the new boss, if he would donate the 3-268A parts no longer needed to the USS SLATER, and he agreed.

**Herb picked up two overloaded pickup truck loads.** The donation included two 600-psi water-cooled air compressor starters, heat exchangers, pistons, rings, injectors, and gaskets. Everything the SLATER crew would need to keep their engines running for years to come. Two loads were trucked to Albany, where the grateful SLATER engineers inventoried and stowed all the parts aboard for future use. These destroyer escort parts have come full circle, salvaged from destroyer escorts scrapped long ago, and have now resurfaced to help preserve one of the last surviving destroyer escorts.

*Mike starting the test run of the emergency diesel generator.*

**A major setback occurred in late 2004, when an internal component failed and destroyed the engine's auxiliary drive system. Gus** led a team to James River in April 2005, to salvage a similar engine on the USS KITTIWAKE. Gus' team consisted of **Karl Herchenroder, Joe Breyer, Paul Czesak, Barry Witte, Ed Zajkowski, Stan Murawski, Tim Rizzuto**, foundation member **Bill Hickman,** and **Matt Colehour**. With those parts, the volunteers rebuilt the engine in 2005. We have run the engine sporadically since then, while the

engineering team shifted its focus to the eight-cylinder machine in B3. Another ship that contributed mightily to SLATER's restoration was USS SPHINX (ARL-24) Awaiting disposal in the James River, we were given access to the dozen 3-268A generators that she had to drive her machine shops.

*2005, the parts run on the KITTIWAKE*

**The engine that powered the ship for the 2020 return had its cooling system modified to an air-cooled system.** This was done to avoid having an open sea water line through the hull below the waterline, which is a dangerous risk in the freezing Albany winters. There have always been problems with this modification. There has been more than one reason for this. On the trip down to the shipyard in July 2020, the engine overheated and had to be shut down, after transferring load to B3's 8-cylinder generator. Mike and Barry studied the problem and came up with a temporary solution that was installed during the yard period. The initial attempt to bring the ship home on 21 August provided an opportunity to test the solution and train the engineering crew on operation. The engine ran well, and things looked promising. Other than a hole in the hull, it was a good day for the engineers. The next week, on the actual return trip, the engine proved its reliability.

*Gary Sheedy on switchboard watch on the way to the shipyard.*

**Now back in Albany, Mike will make a more permanent change to the cooling system that has proved itself.** SLATER may be one of only a few historic ships having its own internal capability to generate electric power, with two separate generators. With the continued support of our generous donors and our very talented group of volunteers, USS SLATER is well positioned to maintain our ever-improving state of restoration into the foreseeable future.

**Of course, all this leads to the question, why don't we make the main engines operational and get the ship underway?** That is the question that has

*Three of the key men who made engines run, Karl Herchenroder, Gus Negus and Gary Lubrano*

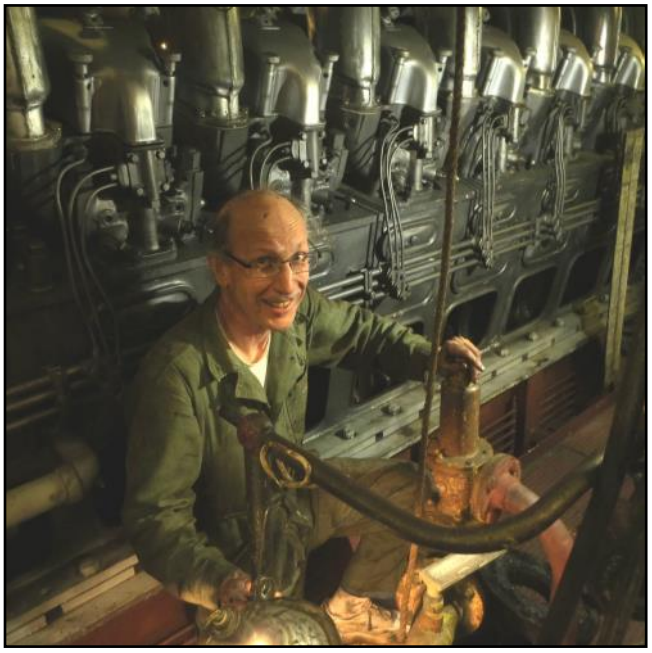
come up most often since this overhaul began. The short answer is yes, we could, but why?

**The ship has been financially successful as a static museum ship.** At the present time, thanks to our 2,500 individual members and donors, we are able to maintain USS SLATER (A/T AETOS) as one of the finest examples of maritime preservation in the world, and continue to build our endowment fund. That financial stability would no doubt be jeopardized should we try to make the vessel operational. It would probably take about 15 million dollars to get her seaworthy again. Currently, we do not have the funding. Also, it is our policy to avoid doing anything to the ship that would preclude the next generation from making her seaworthy if they so desire to accept that challenge.

**Environmental considerations play a major factor.** All the USS SLATER's fuel oil tanks and the main engine oil sumps are "Skin Tanks," meaning the actual hull forms part of the tanks. All the tanks were cleaned and degassed in the shipyard overhaul of 2014. Since the ship does not have a double bottom, it would be too risky to reintroduce oil to the tanks, for fear of a leak. This is a risk hard to justify in today's environmental climate.

**In addition, all the cooling water inlets and outlets,** (25 total) for the diesel engine cooling, were plated over when the ship was in Greece. This was an insurance requirement for towing the ship across the Atlantic, so we now have no way to cool the engines. Also, when the Greeks walked off the ship in 1991, it was assumed she was going for scrap, so no preservation measures were taken to protect the machinery. The water was never drained from the engines. Since coming to America, the machinery has been through 25 years of hard winters. It has to been assumed that there is freeze damage to the machinery. Also, parts to restore the machinery are becoming more difficult and expensive to find.

*Some things never change. A Navy volunteer cleaning the B-3 deckplates.*



*Gary Dieckman checks out an engine sump.*

**Since the ship came to Albany in 1997, our engineers have activated the emergency diesel generator, a Cleveland 3-268A 100 kW battery start genset.** That engine had three cracked cylinder liners, and was in very bad condition, but is now operational. The cooling system was modified with the use of a truck radiator.

**In 2012 and 2013, the engineers successfully overhauled and ran number 2 ships service generator, a Cleveland 8-268A 200 kW air start genset.** This engine was in much better condition than the emergency diesel generator and has been run many times under load. These generators kept AC power on the ship for the trip to and from the yard.

**During the 2014 overhaul, all of the blanks on the sea chests were renewed with heavier steel, except for the B-3 ship's service generator.** That sea chest was opened up, so that the engine could be cooled in the traditional way. Fuel for the two operational generators is stored in the 275-gallon heating oil tank, in the muffler room, and gravity fed to day tanks mounted on the bulkheads in B-3 and B-4.

**However, the number of local volunteer engineers who are interested in the project has dwindled from six to one.** Age has taken its toll on our volunteers, and new engineers are not stepping up to the plate.

**When the US Navy donates a ship as a museum, the contracts specifically state that the vessel can never be made operational or navigated.** In the case of SLATER, as a direct donation from the Government of Greece to the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum, through the State Department, we do not have that restriction. We are the only large combat ship on display in America that could legally be made operational. However, we would have to comply with all the Coast Guard safety and environmental regulations.

*2007, The 8-cylinder tear down.*

**The main propulsion machinery is almost completely intact.** The only equipment that was removed by the Greeks was the two auxiliary boilers that made steam for heating, cooking, and the laundry, and the evaporator that made fresh water. All of the missing equipment was located in B-2. This would not impact our ability to get under way.

*Fresh water pumps before restoration.*

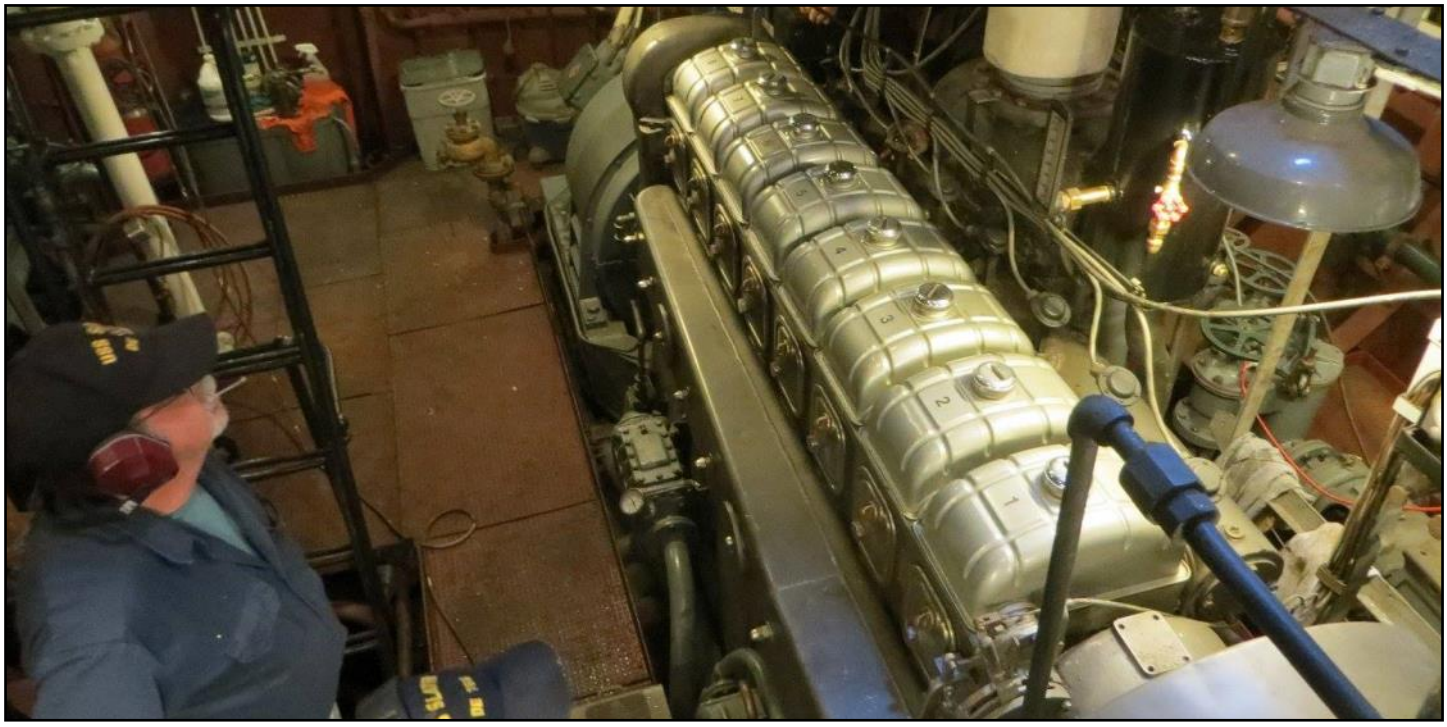
**With regards to opening the sea valves, so the machinery could be made operational, there are a total of 25 openings below the waterline for cooling machinery.** The ship would have to go into a dry dock to remove the blanking plates, and then the valves and piping would have to be overhauled.

**There is one serious concern about efforts to activate propulsion machinery aboard the SLATER.** That is the issue of the sea chests freezing. As you know, we are in fresh water here in Albany, and it gets very cold. In fact, it got so cold that the water in the shaft alleys used to freeze solid. One year, the sump pump down there was frozen in through March. We are very reluctant to remove any of these blanks, as once we introduce fresh water into the machinery space piping, the possibility of freezing exists. Since we can't afford to keep heat on the machinery spaces, we run the risk of ice bursting a line, and having a very unpleasant surprise when the spring thaw comes.

*A look at the fresh water pumps after restoration.*

**This is not paranoia. This actually happened to the cruiser, LITTLE ROCK, in Buffalo, many years ago.** Several marine surveyors and operators have warned us that this is a concern, if we cannot keep the machinery spaces heated during the winter months.

**As a precaution, during the shipyard overhaul, two water tight boxes were welded around the propeller shafts. This is where the shafts leave the stern tubs to keep the shaft tunnel dry, and prevent corrosion to the tunnel and leakage in the shaft alleys.** You can see that operating machinery results in a



***The engineers did a successful test run of the B-3 ship's service generator.***

condition that the museum professionals call "consumptive use of an artifact."

**Over the years, various proposals have been put forth for the installation of a smaller, modern, automated, propulsion system in the aft fuel tanks or magazines.** For the present time, such modification have not been considered, as getting the ship underway is not judged to be as high a priority as long term hull preservation.

**So for now, we'll satisfy ourselves with being the best stationary museum ship we can be.** We'll leave it to the next generation to figure out whether or not they want to tackle the main propulsion issue. But we won't do anything to the ship that would preclude them from doing it, if they want to take on that challenge.

**Again, a sincere thank you to everyone who supported us through our shipyard journey and a challenging 2020.** We are open to the public this fall and are doing everything in our control to keep the tours safe, informative, and entertaining. If you find yourself in the Albany area we'd love to meet you or see you again. The ship will be open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 AM to 4 PM, through 29 November, the Sunday after Thanksgiving. We will also be open Monday 12 October for Columbus Day.

See you next month,

*Tim*

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**on our homepage, www.ussslater.org**
**and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.**