

# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

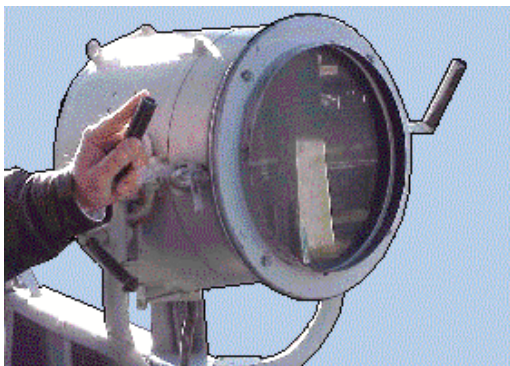
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**My fans tell me that last month's edition of SIGNALS will be a tough act to follow, but here goes.**

**August was a month full of special activities, beginning with our celebration of the 229<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard Birthday on August 4<sup>th</sup>. Dick Walker and Charlie Poltenson organized the event.**

They take pride in the fact that, since the United States Navy was disbanded for

several years after the Revolutionary War, the Coast Guard is American's oldest continuous seagoing service.

The day has special meaning for us for two reasons. The



Our Coasties wanted to repaint the ship for the Coast Guard birthday celebration, but we politely said no.

Coast Guard manned thirty EDSALL-class destroyer escorts during World War II, and crewed another twelve that served on ocean station duty during the Korean War. In addition, several of our long-time volunteers, including **Doug Tanner, Dick Walker, Grant Hack, and Gene Jackey**, are all former Coasties.



We had a good turnout from the Coast Guard Saugerties Station.



Mark Lasch spoke of his father's accomplishments as part of the Honor-a- Vet ceremony.

**The following Monday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, Albany County's "Honor a Vet" program recognized the late Frank Lasch here at USS SLATER.** Frank was an attorney and former destroyer officer, who served in USS ROBERT L. WILSON and USS PARSONS. He was a major influence on the USS SLATER and in my life. Frank came on board as President in 1998 and, with a firm hand on the helm, put the project on the road to financial stability. He successfully lobbied for \$200,000 in member items from the New York State Legislature back in 2000. At his own expense, he flew out to the Destroyer Escort Commanding Officers Association Convention in San Diego. He raised \$90,000 from DECO, thanks to a challenge grant issued by **Nash Broaddus**. He then organized a reunion of these former Commanding Officers in Albany in 2001.

**Frank was instrumental in the creation of our growing endowment fund.** Always the fiscal conservative, without Frank's efforts, we would be living hand-to-mouth. Never a micromanager, Frank created the environment of financial stability that has made my job tenable. I came to Albany on a one-year leave of absence. It was thanks to Frank's leadership that I decided to stay on.

**One of Frank's greatest accomplishments was bringing our current Board leaders, BJ Costello and Tony Esposito, aboard.** Both of these fine gentlemen have also been major donors personally to the project, leading by example. Frank resigned in 2011 for health reasons, but we should never forget what he did for the USS SLATER. She is truly his legacy.

**We stayed busy with tours in August. We had a Vacation Bible School visit us from Union Baptist Church here in Albany, as they were focusing on "Preparing for Battle."** They had two Sailors join the tour, and speak to them about the importance of having faith while in service. They compared being prepared for battle in the Navy with being prepared for battle spiritually, and then they all took a tour of the ship. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, we toured with students from **Pai's Taekwondo**. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, we welcomed **Trail to Eagle Scouts**--this was their 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive year visiting! Thanks for the continued support! The **NJROTC from North Rockland High School** filled forward berthing and chiefs' quarters for their overnight on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The students were one of the most well-behaved, respectful, and time-efficient groups we've ever had.

**We also had some out-of-the-ordinary events this month.** As a member of **Bugles Across America**, 13-year-old **Aidan Peterson** came aboard and played as we hoisted colors for the day. We played backdrop for an engagement photoshoot, and venue for the filming of a children's show on YouTube called **A & C New York**. We'll get a link to you on our Facebook page as soon as the editing is done.



It was a busy month for tours, as Christian explains the practice loading machine.



We had a fine tour honoring Frank Lasch at Albany County's Honor-a-Vet ceremony.

**On the maintenance side, on Thursday August 1<sup>st</sup>, Bonadio, the auditing firm that we work with, sent eleven volunteers aboard for a workday.** As it was a tour day and we were open to the public, the areas that they could work on were limited. In anticipation of the event we had done a lot of needle scaling and priming on the decks off of the regular tour route. So the surface preparation was done for them. The hardworking crew cut in and rolled out nonskid deck blue on the whole starboard side of the maindeck. They also painted out the fantail, the gun 25 tub deck, and cut in the 01 level deck forward of the stack, so it was ready to be rolled out. For a bunch of deskbound accountants, they really knew how to "turn to" with paint brushes.

**On Saturday, 17 August 2019, we had seventy Chief Petty**



Chief Art Dott serving up Smitty's famous lasagna for our volunteer appreciation night.



Did you know you can purchase dogtags at the USS SLATER? Gary Sheedy is seen here servicing the machine.

**Officers and CPO Selects from Ballston Spa aboard for their annual volunteer and heritage day.** While we're apparently not allowed to use the word "initiation" any more, the event is part of the process of turning First Class CPO selects into "Genuine" Chiefs. **Barry Witte** coordinated the event with Chief **Matt Larson**, and they did a great job of getting things organized. The many tasks they performed included removing waste oil and water from the bilges below the generators in B-3

and B-4, removing the lower train drive gear from gun 33 for reassembly, and repairing a hole in the deck of the interior passageway. They also scaled, painted, and vacuumed in B-1. In addition, they worked on the smoke generator replica and steering gear compartment vents, repainted the SL antenna wave guides, and tested our submersible pumps. It was a most productive day for all of us, and we look forward to having them back next year.

**Our local gang has kept busy. Dave Wasson and Chuck Teal** have continued the replacement of wasted metal on the port breakwater. The deck gang has supported this project, moving the work float around. **Angelo Bracco** finished up a couple of replacement 3" breech covers, before going in for a knee replacement. As soon as he was gone, I regretted not bringing him the call colors, one last time, for rehemming. **Doug Tanner** has continued wrestling with the bearing replacement on gun 32. The gang is also continuing the reinstallation of the



CPO Selects assisted with the disassembly of the gun 33 train gear.



CPO Selects fold the colors as part of their volunteer weekend aboard .

train gear drive on gun 33. Our engineers did a test run of the B-3 ship's service generator. And **Barry Witte** and **Ed Zajkowski** continued their work of planning and fabricating parts for the shipyard overhaul.

**We thanked all of our volunteers and interns for their dedication at our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, served with the traditional lasagna made by Chiefs Smitty and Art Dott.** Everyone else pitched in with side dishes, desserts, and drinks. We had a wonderful evening, chatting and celebrating another summer in the books. We said goodbye to our Sunday Duty Officer, **Evan Sanders**, as he

fulfills his dream of teaching history in a classroom of his own. We'll miss him and his humorous tours!

**Our flag flew at half-staff twice this month, for two SLATER former crewmembers.** In July, former crew member **Dan Drummond's** family contacted us for the first time about planning a visit for Dan. That got our number of surviving former crew members back up to nine. No one had been communicating to the SLATER crewmembers since **Cliff Woltz's** passing, except for SLATER SIGNALS and the quarterly, TRIM BUT DEADLY. Inspired, I drafted a letter to all the former crewmembers and widows,



Shanna Schuster assisted with the filming of the children's show on YouTube called A & C New York.



The volunteers from Bonadio take a break.

bringing them up to date on their surviving shipmates. Within a week of sending the letter, I learned that **Virgil Vonder Haar** passed away in St. Louis. A couple weeks later I was contacted by the Laber family that Electrician's Mate **Earl D. Laber**, 93, had passed away August 12, in Newport, Vermont. Both had visited the ship. And then I received a note from **Spencer Ley** that his mother **Helen**, widow of EM **Arthur Ley**, had passed away in December. It's the hardest part of this business, watching the passing of The Greatest Generation. Our condolences go out to all three families.

**Looking ahead to September, our interns will be back to classes, school groups are booking, overnights pick up again, and our Speakers Bureau is getting back into area libraries!** The historic **Fireboat John J. Harvey** will tie up alongside us, and



Navy CPO Selects engaged in side cleaning.

the **DESA Convention** will be in town. We're also looking forward to our Fall Work Week. Library presentations will include the Poughkeepsie Library at 1030 on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library at 1030 on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Then both the Ballston Community Library and the Watervliet Library will offer presentations at 1830 on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**And it's not too late to sign up for the Fall Work Week, which runs from September 29 through October 4.** If you can come for all or part of the week, drop me a note at [tim@usslater.org](mailto:tim@usslater.org). Preregistration is required, so I'll be glad to send you the application and invitation.

**Finally, the search for a replacement for Rosehn continues.** We're looking for someone who can match her competence and integrity. She has had very little response to her job postings so far, and she thinks she may have found part of the answer. It seems that several job posting sites do not permit the use of the word "Escort" in a job description. While this suggests that we may be missing out on a more lucrative business opportunity, we'll stick with our mission statement of maintaining and interpreting our historic naval ship. If you have a strong accounting and business background, and are interested in being a part of our type of "Escorting" please submit your resume to the address at the top of the newsletter.



Navy CPO Selects engaged in bilge cleaning.

**Don't forget the donate button on our homepage [www.usslater.org](http://www.usslater.org) and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.**

**See you next month!**