

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER'S Volunteers

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VOLUNTEERS: The most common phrase aboard the ship these days is “ When the weather warms up, I’m gonna...” (pick one) “Change the masthead light”, “Dive in and check the stern tube”, or “Grease the relative bearing”. Things are definitely looking up and warming up. The promised diesel generator arrived thanks to the NYS Office of Emergency Management. The NY National Guard provided a wrecker truck with a crane to hoist the unit aboard. We had to rewire it from 240 volts to 480 volts, but then we were ready to go. On Saturday, March 14, power flowed into the switchboards for the first time since the ship left Manhattan. They even sent the Generator with a full tank of diesel. It is great not to have to run all those extension chords from the Honda generators all over the ship. It’s also great to finally be able to brew a pot of coffee. It’s getting too comfortable.

The priorities for the electrical gang are getting the LP air compressors back in operation for the deck force, getting the welding machines on line for the shipfitters, restoring lighting throughout the ship, eliminating all open electrical boxes, electrical hazards and removing unnecessary wiring that has been added over time.

The Interior Communications gang is working on installation of the original exterior 1MC speakers. As of this writing they are all in place, and new cabling is being run to them. Bob Calender is amazing all of us at his ability to undo bolts frozen by fifty years of paint and rust. When the work on the speakers is complete, Ray Windle has promised to come up from Plano and get the amplifier going.

The engineers are continuing work to activate the emergency diesel generator in the aft Motor room. This past week they filled the crankcase with fresh lube oil. They are trying to locate a kind sole to donate three deep draw 12 volt batteries. They are also trying to come up with a cooling system whereby we can take suction from above the waterline. Nobody is in favor of fooling with the sea chests without a working bilge pump aboard. We even if we had a working bilge pump we’re not going to open up anything below the waterline.

The deck force has been scaling the port gun tubs and the breakwater with chipping hammers and scrapers. They are anxiously awaiting the start of the compressor. They completed work on the breakwater and the gun 42 tub, and are about 50% finished with gun 42. It’s tough to apply Coroseal rust treatment when it’s frozen solid.

By the way, Tom Beeler got through the month without spilling any blood on the deck or any other type of lost time injury. Maybe the hard-hat helps.

State Historic Register: On March 20 the SLATER was officially listed on the New York Register of Historic Places. Listing on the National Register should come shortly. We are indebted to all the people who worked hard to get us this honor.

Accessions: We received over six tons of material that we have had in storage in Portsmouth, VA. The material arrived by truck on March 18. Included were the SA air search radar antenna, the SA and SL radar consoles, a horizontal plotting table for CIC; the troughs, seats, urinals and washroom mirrors for the heads; 120 bunk frames and chains; six new MK 14 gunsights, spare 40mm ring sights; all the accessories for the port depth charge rack; steam kettles and the Hobart dough mixer for the galley; the steam sterilizer for sickbay; a sonar stack for upper sound room; the TDE, TAJ, RCK and RAL radios for radio central; and the last two sky lookout chairs we need for the bridge. The material is presently being stored in Shed 1 at the Port of Albany with the material we received from Suisun Bay, California. Our thanks go to Les Beauchaine (who made the mistake of answering the phone that morning) and David Martino of Federal Terminals who provided us with a fork lift and operator to help unload the truck.

Funding: We have several grant applications in the mill for exterior repainting before the ship moves to the Snow Dock. You can never say how these will go. Ray Windle donated money to repaint the mast. We have applied for a business incentive grant to repaint the forward superstructure from the Albany Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce. We also have grants going in to restore the second deck forward and repaint the hull above the waterline. Your local board members have had many meetings with State Legislators to try to obtain some funding for SLATER'S restoration. We are optimistic, but right now funding is very tight.

The Snow Dock mooring is progressing well. The Albany Department of General Services has installed the bollards. Hal Hatfield donated the fabrication and Philip Clemente of Bonded Concrete donated the cement. Our National Representative John Cosgrove has been using his Washington Maritime Administration connections to help us find a barge. Marty Davis has a lead on a 167' tank barge that Elkoff Marine is willing to donate, so everything is coming together. We are now looking at a move between May 1 to May 15 to have more time pier-side for painting the superstructure from a bucket truck. We are still looking for a donated bucket truck loan, crane service and a welder-fitter.

Compartment Cleaners: There is a definite need aboard for more people to help with housekeeping to help us get ready for opening. If you have a fetish for keeping things tidy, we have a place for you.

Tour Guides: If leading school children around a DE is something you aspire to, the Preliminary Tour Guide Training Manual is ready for distribution. We will hold an organization meeting aboard the SLATER on Saturday 11 April at 1:30 PM for you civilians, 3 bells for all you sailors and 1330 for you other military types. If you're interested in volunteering for this aspect of the program, please call Annette Beauchaine at 465-2856. We'll start getting the information out to you. We hope to be up and running in early May, and when we are in full operation we will need to have at least two tour guides aboard all the time we are open to the public.

Uniforms: Remember, as we get closer to opening to the public we want to start looking like WWII sailors. Start scrounging around for an old set of blue jeans, a light blue work shirt, a navy sweater and an OD foul weather or army field jacket. OD jump suits are also good period dress. We'll supply the paint spots and grease stains so we look like authentic WWII DE sailors, not spit and polish battleship sailors.

Tim's Schedule: Tim Rizzuto is on the ship Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sunday afternoons. He is in the office at Mercer Management, 330 Broadway Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. He is trying, with varying success, to take Thursdays off.

Trim But Deadly Newsletter: If you haven't joined the DEHF Foundation you're missing out on a great newsletter. Vic Buck does a great job editing it. It's glossy with pictures and is a whole lot better than this. This quarter features the story of the USS BOWERS DE637 at Okinawa.

Events: There are several meetings upcoming that may be of interest to SLATER volunteers. Marty Davis is planning a second organizational meeting for the Albany DESA chapter at 10:30 am at the Downtown Ramada on Saturday, April 25. The SLATER will also be open for touring by DESA members before and after the meeting. The Tin Can Sailors are planning a regional Bull Session Saturday April 18th at the Albany Maritriott. The contact is John Ives at 518/458-8444. And the US Merchant Marine Academy Alumni Association is planning a dinner Thursday April 23rd at the Woodlin Club in Glenville. For information contact Tony Dudes at 518/385-3582 (w) or 372-2624 (h).

If you've been around Sundays you know that Sunday is a special day on the SLATER. Claire Osterreich always brings pastries and makes coffee. Our wives keep wondering why we're not so hungry for Sunday supper when we get home. She and Roger have adopted the Pilothouse brass as their special project.

If you haven't been down to the ship and all this activity sounds intriguing, give us a call, or drop by and see us. We're hard at work Wednesdays 9-4, Saturdays 9-4 and Sundays 1-4. We hope to see you aboard.