

# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

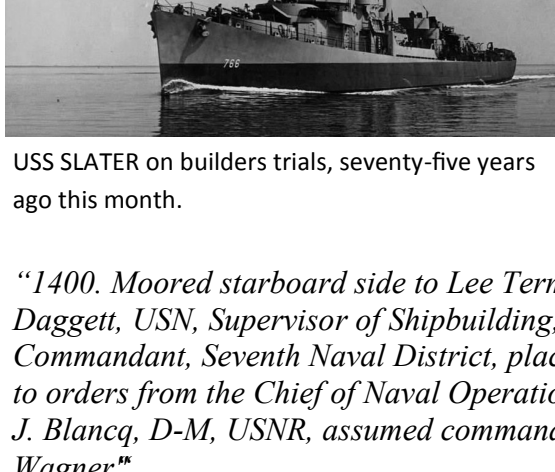
USS Slater DE-766

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USS SLATER on builders trials, seventy-five years ago this month.

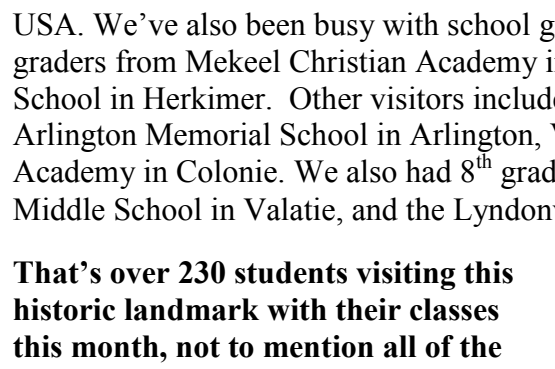
## The first of May marked the 75th anniversary of the commissioning of USS SLATER.

Commissioning is the ceremony by which a ship is placed in active duty with its country's military forces.

Unfortunately, no photographs have been found of the ceremony aboard USS SLATER.

## Taken from the Log Book of USS SLATER, May 1, 1944:

"1400. Moored starboard side to Lee Terminal, Tampa, Florida. Captain R. B. Dagggett, USN, Supervisor of Shipbuilding, USN, Tampa, representing the Commandant, Seventh Naval District, placed the ship in commission pursuant to orders from the Chief of Naval Operations. Lieutenant Commander Marcel J. Blancq, D-M, USNR, assumed command of the ship. Signed Colton P. Wagner"

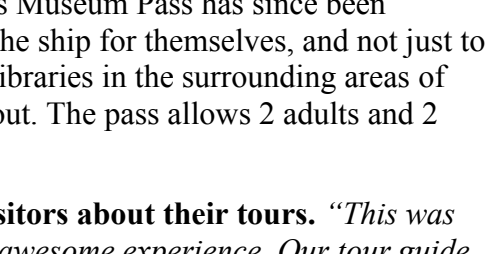


Tour Guide Chris Soulia explains the functions of the wardroom.

USA. We've also been busy with school groups this month. We've had 5th graders from Mekeel Christian Academy in Scotia, and the West Canada School in Herkimer. Other visitors included the 6th and 7th graders from Arlington Memorial School in Arlington, Vermont, and Christian Brothers Academy in Colonie. We also had 8th graders from both the Ichabod Crane Middle School in Valatie, and the Lyndonville Central School in Lyndonville.

## That's over 230 students visiting this historic landmark with their classes this month, not to mention all of the students that visited with their families over weekends and on school breaks.

We also had youth aboard for the three overnights this month. The Washingtonville AJROTC, Cub Scout Pack 55 from Gloversville, and Cub Scout Pack 211 from here in Albany stayed aboard SLATER for a fun night, learning how to live in the Navy. On 11 May we welcomed the officers from USS HISSEM (DER-400) aboard for an in-depth tour. The officers were celebrating the 55th Anniversary of their time aboard HISSEM, where they participated in Operation Deep Freeze.

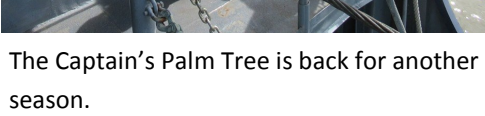


Intern Evan explains the 20mm guns.

## On the 16th, USS SLATER Volunteer Tour Guide Charles Starks ventured to Dorset Village, Vermont, for a speaking engagement at their library.

The event was well-attended. The library's Museum Pass has since been checked out, bringing new visitors to see the ship for themselves, and not just to hear Charles tell stories about it. A lot of libraries in the surrounding areas of SLATER have passes available for checkout. The pass allows 2 adults and 2 children free admission to the ship.

## We've been hearing great news from visitors about their tours. "This was an awesome experience. Our tour guide, Art (Dott), was so knowledgeable and his passion about the ship really shined. This is one spot not to be missed."



The Captain's Palm Tree is back for another season.

New intern, John even got in on the action.

"The Slater is a must see place. Our guide John was quite knowledgeable and his passion for preserving the history of the Slater was quite evident. Do yourself and your family a favor and get out and visit the Slater. We are fortunate to have her and the dedicated volunteers that take care of her."

## Coming up in June we will have less rain and more sunshine, we hope. Bob Wheelock will be at the Gloversville Library on the 12th, for a presentation at 1730. Destroyer Escort Day is on Saturday the 15th, and we will have our ceremony aboard SLATER at 0900. All are welcome to attend!

## For the fifth year, the members of our local Scottish Rite Masonic Lodge commemorated the heroism of the "Four Chaplains," in a degree held aboard USS SLATER.

The weather was perfect. The "Four Chaplains," also sometimes referred to as the "Immortal Chaplains" or the "Dorchester Chaplains," were four United States Army chaplains who gave their lives to save other civilian and military personnel, as the troop ship, SS Dorchester, sank on February 3, 1943, during World War II.



The Masons of the Ancient Order of the Scottish Rite remembered the sacrifice of the Four Chaplains.

## SS Dorchester left New York on January 23, 1943, en route to Greenland, carrying the four chaplains and approximately 900 others, as part of a convoy of three ships.

Most of the military personnel were not told the ship's ultimate destination. The convoy was escorted by Coast Guard Cutters Tampa, Esplanada, and Comanche. During the early morning hours of February 3, 1943, at 12:55 a.m., the vessel was torpedoed by the German submarine U-223, off of Newfoundland, in the North Atlantic. The ship was left dark and sinking.

## The chaplains sought to calm the men and organize an orderly evacuation of the ship, and helped guide wounded men to safety.

As life jackets were passed out to the men, the supply ran out before each man had one. The chaplains removed their own life jackets and gave them to others. They helped as many men as they could into lifeboats, and then linked arms and, saying prayers and singing hymns, went down with the ship. Only 230 of the 904 men aboard the ship were rescued. Life jackets offered little protection from hypothermia, which killed most men in the water. Our thanks to RADM Marty Leukhardt, who organized the event.



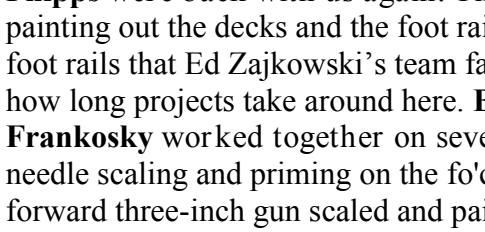
The USS HUSE Association volunteers take a break during our spring work week.

## Twenty-two members of the USS HUSE former crewmembers' association and guests arrived on May 19th to begin a week of work.

The annual event has been organized by George Amandola since 2002, and has grown to represent many more ships than the HUSE. Several volunteers who used to come with the Michigan Chapter now sign up with the HUSE crew. Blair Sandri, who served in USS FORRESTAL CVA-59, cooked for the crew, with his assistants Doug Zehr and

## Ed Kaldowski. Blair did a great job for us, especially considering that we shanghaied him from Ed Zajkowski's crew. Thank you, Blair! George took over the responsibility of messdecks MAA and compartment cleaner himself, as well as making countless runs for paint, food, and hardware.

## We had Bill Meehan of the HUSE back, taking care of the paint locker. He managed to keep the alkyd paint, the Latex paint, and the Epoxy paint straight, and never got any confused. He also cleaned all of the brushes he could salvage, and surveyed the brushes for disposal. Sharon Roberts and Gaye Phipps were back with us again. This year, they drew the assignment of painting out the decks and the foot rails in the 20mm gun tubs. These are the foot rails that Ed Zajkowski's team fabricated last year, so you get a sense of how long projects take around here. Brandon Easley, Gail Esker, and Ron Frankosky worked together on several assignments. They spent two days needle scaling and priming on the fo's's'le. They got the whole area around the forward three-inch gun scaled and painted out with two coats of primer, before moving on the 20mm gun tubs.



How did we get volunteered for this detail? Jan Schweiger, John Meeker and Joe Stout under tub 25.

## Jan Schweiger, John Meeker, and Joe Stout (USS MADDUX DD-731) drew the worst assignment. There was a tub area under the amidships' gun 25 that I don't think had been addressed since the ship came over from Greece in 1993. It's a crawlspace, with about three feet of headroom. Their assignment was to hand scale, prime, and paint it. I think Jan's agility was an inspiration for the two guys who came in all the way from Seattle for this abuse. They did a remarkable job, and the area looks brand new, like we just

came out of the shipyard. I promised them all that when they come for the fall work week, they can pick their job, or just sit and drink coffee, if they so choose. And, I'm saying it here, so they have it in writing.

## Joe Delfoe (USS DOUGLAS A. MUNRO DE-433) and his son Jaye (That's Chief Delfoe to you) were tasked with scaling, priming, and painting the 20mm ready service magazines throughout the ship. Paul Suzdak, Sue and Doug Strieter, Robin Lamer, and Gary Dieckman were initially tasked with painting the underside of the 40mm gun director 42. It had been chipped out last fall, but we'd never gotten topcoat on the area. Well, they expanded the scope of the project four-fold, and scaled, primed, and painted all three MK-51 director tubs with fresh, Epoxy haze gray.



Robin Lamer and Sue Strieter painting out the port 40mm director tub.

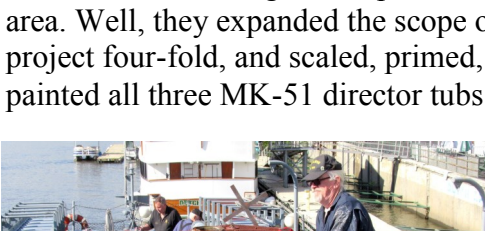
## With an assist from Gary Dieckman and Ron Frankosky, Guy Huse got most of the aft three-inch gun sightsetter assembly put back together.

This included lifting the 300-pound counter-weight back into position on top of the gun. Both elevation and azimuth are now working. The final jobs remaining on it include scaling, painting, and remounting the telescope brackets. The gun is presently jammed in train, so that repair will be the next big ordnance job. Finally, Chief Ed Wakeman (USS

## EDSON) spent the week in the machine shop, overhauling needle scalars. He salvaged about eight and scrapped out four. That was a big help to us.

## Joe Delfoe arranged for a major donation. Through some connections in his hometown, he arranged for the donation of three defibrillators by Mark Peters, a distributor for Cardiac Science Corporation. This is an expensive donation valued at \$6,000 and will greatly improve our ability to respond to medical emergencies aboard the ship.

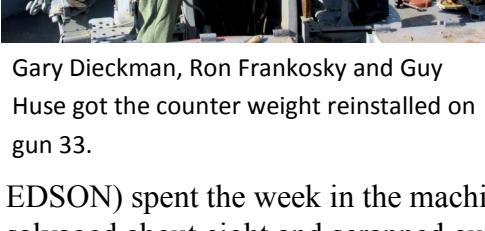
## Two important events occurred during the workweek. One was the birth of Bill Meehan's seventh great grandchild. Congratulations to Bill and his family. The other great event was the 70th birthday of our new crewmember, John Meeker. John, along with Joe Stout, had been previously attending the work parties with the Michigan group. Since the Michigan folks will no longer be fielding annual work parties, we are very happy they decided to join us. In addition, they travel the farthest to be at the SLATER. They live and travel from Seattle, Washington. The next SLATER Work Week is scheduled for September 29th to October 4th. Anyone interested in joining the crew should email Tim Rizzuto at tim@usslater.org.



Ed Zajkowski checking wasted metal on the stack in preparation for our shipyard visit.

## Our regular crew has continued to make progress on several projects. These include sealing leaks in the sonar hut, replacing wasted metal around the aft engine room supply fan intake, restoration in the forward engine room, and continuing deck scaling on the fo's's'le. Ed Zajkowski and Barry Witte are working on the shipyard planning progress. Barry is focused on the process of fabricating parts that will be mounted on the mast next year.

## We have the loss of another shipmate to report this month. Tom "Stretch" McLaughlin was one of our longest-serving tour guides, and a staple on the overnight program for many years. Tom served as a radarman aboard the carrier USS MIDWAY and the heavy cruiser USS SALEM, both ships preserved as memorials. Tom was one of our most committed volunteers, and had great rapport with the visitors. His ashes will be scattered off the fantail in June. Our thoughts and prayers also go out to ET/1 Jerry Jones, recovering from heart surgery, and SK/1 Dick Walker, recovering from a knee replacement.

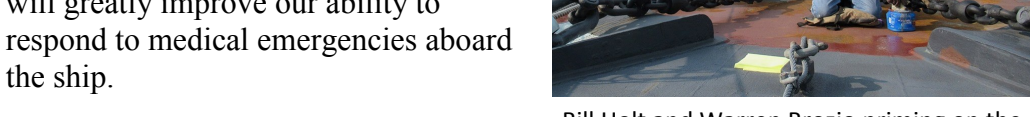


Gary Sheedy in Vietnam.

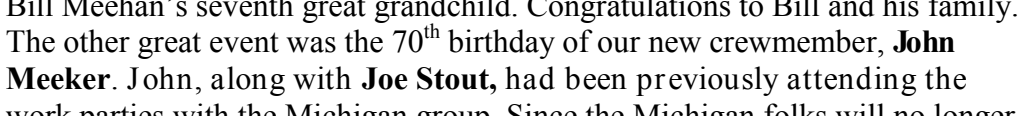
## Finally, one of our senior volunteers was honored this month. Gary Sheedy was nominated to make a Patriot Flight to Washington D.C., with a planeload of other veterans. Gary served in Vietnam, attached to the Riverine Patrol forces, as an electrician's mate aboard the repair ship USS SATYR ARL-23, which was tasked with maintaining the patrol boats. Cathy Wheat accompanied Gary as his chaperone, to keep him out of trouble.

## To say the least, Gary was surprised by all the pomp and fanfare that the veterans received on their journey. It started with the send-off at Christian Brothers Academy, where the cadets were there at 0515 to greet everyone. For the ride over to Albany airport, police, fire trucks, and Patriot Guard Riders provided an escort. At the airport, there were volunteers to greet everyone and to say "Thank you" to the veterans. There was also the Albany High School Band, a youth singing group, and several dignitaries. When they landed at BWI Airport, fire trucks showered the plane. Once in the airport, there were more volunteers to greet everyone, along with a contingent of active duty Sailors. On the ride to DC, two police cars, with their lights and sirens making everyone pull over, escorted the buses.

## At the WWII Memorial, not only were they greeted by a reenactor doing General Patton, but also by the real former Senator Bob Dole, a hero of the Italian Campaign in WWII. For dinner, they went to the Golden Corral, and from there it was off to the airport. Back in Albany, the veterans were again greeted by volunteers, as well as by Rosehn and Barry. The veterans received mail call; Gary received a thank you from grade school boy, and from an Admiral who is a friend of Tim Benner. It was a well-deserved honor, to one of our most dedicated volunteers.



Gary Sheedy and Cathy Wheat on the Patriot Flight in Washington D.C.



You know it's going to be a good day when Doug, Ed and Barry are all smiling.

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!