

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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It is hard to know where to begin. Your response to our recent mailing, requesting support for our “Match the Maritime Heritage Grant,” has been outstanding. In my twenty-two years here, I have never seen such a wealth of donations. There is no way we can adequately express our thanks to you, except to do all we can to keep USS SLATER the outstanding exhibit she has become.

And your outpouring of support could not have come at a more critical time. There has never been a time when your donations are more vital to USS SLATER’s financial survival than now. Normally, half of our income comes from ticket sales, and half comes from your donations. For the foreseeable future, all our income will be coming from your donations.



*Stay with us, we have had to postpone our shipyard trip.
We hope to re-schedule for later in 2020.*



*Doug asked his friends at Global Terminals if they had a portable pump we could borrow for our trip down river.
Chuck Furman arranged for them to buy us a new one.*

We had planned to head to the shipyard on Sunday, 29 March. Rick Meyerrose completed the tow survey. **Rob Goldman** had submitted the tow plan, and the Coast Guard approved it. **Doug Tanner** had arranged for crane service to lift the gangways. **Boats Haggart** was standing by to cast off lines, and Jo Ann was all set to write the first check to Caddell’s shipyard. On 16 March, after phone calls with **Ed Zajkowski, Barry Witte, and BJ Costello** we decided to postpone everything.

We had no idea how the coronavirus would affect the shipyard's ability to do work, or how it would affect our crew. A less than ideal scenario would have been for us to go down there, get sick, become quarantined, and not be able to supervise the work. Or worse, have the ship, or the yard, quarantined. So, we postponed the work. I can't tell you what a sense of relief I felt when the decision was made.

We are hoping to go down in June, but right now, all bets are off. In compliance with Governor Cuomo's stay at home order; we have suspended volunteer activity aboard the ship until the order is lifted. The question I asked the crew was, "If you caught coronavirus from someone down on the ship, and got pneumonia and died, would your last thought be, "Why didn't Rizzuto close the ship down?" So, I closed the ship down.



The Deck Crew brought up the coco mats.

This has to be similar to the feeling people had who lived through the winter and spring of 1942. A time when the world we knew seemed to be falling apart. All of Europe was in Nazi hands. England was getting kicked around in North Africa. The Suez Canal was in jeopardy. U-boats were sinking ships within sight of the East Coast. Our battleships were sitting at the bottom of Pearl Harbor. Hong Kong, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, and the Philippines all fell to the Japanese, and it looked like Australia would be next. All the comfortable patterns of life were tossed into the air, and the nation shifted to a wartime condition.



Tommy and Doug discussed the repair of the deck grating.

But maybe this isn't such a good analogy. While our grandfathers lined up at the recruiting stations to fight, and our grandmothers went to work in the defense plants and shipyards, we're ordered to stay at home and make social distancing our number one priority. And we hoard toilet paper and N-95 masks. It is unlike anything we have ever experienced. You can't see it, you can't hear it, and you can't fight it.

Your donations are safe. The money for the shipyard has been going into a special money market account that is protected from the dramatic downturn of the stock market. It will be there for us as soon as we need it. But who could have predicted this?

Our last volunteer day was 16 March. We did get a little work done before the shutdown. On Monday, 2 March, we had seventeen volunteers aboard. By the afternoon, it was almost spring like. Most of the activity centered on the pilothouse and the flying bridge. **Andy Sheffer** and **Earl Herchenroder** just about finished replacing the section of the director tub, which had been cut out to facilitate replacement of the stuffing tubes. **Steve Klauck** worked on the windshield wiper controls. We also moved the clock to facilitate installing of a missing windshield wiper control.



How's your supply?

The following Saturday, twenty-one volunteers were aboard. Spring was in the air, so **Doug Tanner, Dave Mardon, Earl Herchenroder,** and **Chuck Teal** began making preparations to bring fresh water back aboard. **Boats, Warren, Bill,** and **Paul** rigged the sewer hose, rolled up the coco mats, and swept down the main deck. I was sure that would mean another snowstorm. And we did get another snowstorm, but work had been suspended by the time it happened.



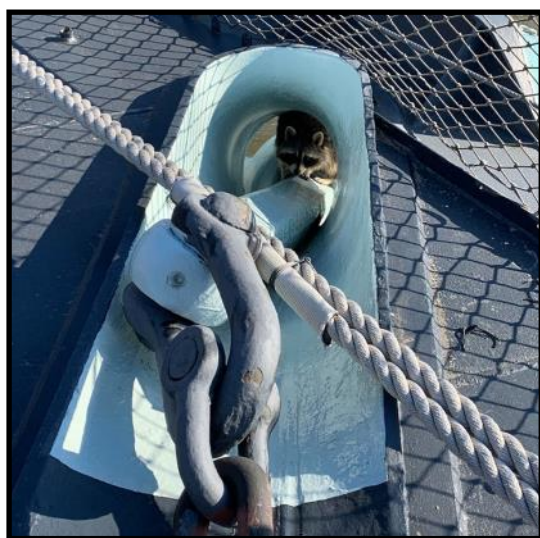
Gary and Steve work on the wiring to the windshield wipers in the Pilothouse.

Andy finished welding out the steel patch on the MK-52 gun director tub, that was cut out to replace the stuffing tubes, and we hit a milestone on the mast. After months of cutting pieces off, and fabricating parts to be installed in the shipyard, the first pieces of WWII replica gear were welded onto the mast. The new parts were the brackets that will serve as guides for the bullhorn control rod. **Tanner** made SOS for breakfast, and **Cathy Wheat** baked breaded chicken breast and ziti for lunch, so the crew was well fed.

On Monday, 9 March, we had another crew of twenty volunteers aboard. The shipfitter's rigged the fresh water hose, and brought the fresh water system back on line. Just a perfect spring day to be on the river. It was warm enough for **Jack Carbone** to continue painting out the summary plot table. Both **Angelo Bracco** and **Walt Stuart** were back aboard. **Thomas Scian** did some poking around, and found out that the bottom of the gun 23 ready service lockers was totally rotted out. He emptied out the locker for future repair. That was supposed to be **Andy's** next project. We had a stowaway, in the form of a raccoon, which scared **Jo Ann** out of her wits when it ran by the galley. It looked like he was considering going down the hawsepipe, like many of you probably did, to get ashore. He changed his mind and went aft to the gangway, with a little coercion.

On Saturday, 14 March, we had twenty-one volunteers aboard. With two weeks until our anticipated departure for the shipyard, work continued in the pilothouse, CIC, and the muffler room. Doug and Earl wrapped up the installation of the new oil fired water heater. Also in preparation for the trip, the Coast Guard require us to have a gasoline pump aboard for dewatering and fire fighting. Doug asked **Chuck Furman** down at **Global Terminals** if we could borrow one, and he arranged for a donation from Global so we could buy one. We fired it up and rested it that morning. The deck gang stowed the mast parts in the gun three tub, so they'd be handy while at the yard. **Barry's** recognition light panel was starting to look like a recognition light panel. And **Smitty** was back from vacation, and turned out meatloaf and mashed potatoes for chow.

Our resident radioman, Steve Syrotynski, took our seven Motorola portable radios home to get them working. He's also making good progress on our RAO-2 radio receiver at home. He brought it back to life, and let it "bake" for a while. He found the alignment was perfect, and is planning to replace the volume control, and worked on the open wire antenna connection. Steve also replaced the power cord. In addition, he added the coax adaptor that was meant to go with that model as well, and has been listing to a station in Toronto, 740am, that plays 1940's big band music on Sunday nights.



We had a visitor on the hawsepipe.



The first pieces of WWII replica gear getting welded onto the mast. These are the brackets that will serve as guides for the bullhorn control rod.



Barry and his recognition lights panel.



Jack Carbone spraying the plotting table.

On Monday the 16th, eighteen volunteers reported aboard to continue ship's work. While I was wondering what all these guys are going to do when the ship was away, phone calls from **Ed Zajkowski** and **Barry Witte** convinced me that there was no way we should proceed with this pandemic going on. In the space of fifteen minutes, I checked with our Chairman **BJ Costello**, talked to **Joe Eckhardt** at the shipyard, called **Rob Goldman** with the tugs, told **Doug Tanner** to cancel the gangway crane lift, and put the whole thing on hold. We also suspended our volunteer workdays for the foreseeable future.

The Governor has ordered all nonessential activity to cease. We've curtailed our activity to a minimum. I do security checks on the ship four days a week. This works out well, because it gets me up for senior shopping hours at the supermarket, at 0600, and I can usually score a pack of toilet paper if I am there for the opening.

Off site, Barry Witte and Jack Carbone continue to refine the Mast work packages, but at a much slower rate, now that the yard is not immediately pending. Also, Barry has used the WW2 Fighting Light prints to set up the VFL control panel's fuse blocks, and ordered the material to use in the laser cutter. We are still awaiting word from Electroswitch, as to whether we will be able to get switches from them. Barry also worked with **Hal Hatfield** and **Mike Arnold** to fabricate the new ladder for the mast.

I pick up mail two days a week. Jo Ann comes in Tuesdays and Thursdays to prepare thank you letters, post donations, bring her accounting program up to date, and pay bills. **Shanna** is in on Wednesdays to sign checks that **Jo Ann** mails on Thursdays, so we're all practicing our social distancing, wondering how long this will go on.

Like many across the country Shanna is trying to figure out how to work from home. The biggest struggle being sharing the kitchen table (desk) with someone else also trying to get work done. We'll put this marriage to the test! If you remember from July Signals in 2018, the marriage was only supposed to last a week, so they're holding pretty strong! Shanna is answering the dozens of emails coming in wondering how to see the ship when she travels down the river, and has to let them down. She is still booking tours, scheduling and re-scheduling speaker engagements at local libraries and senior living centers. She has completed three interviews via video conference or phone calls for new tour guide interns.



Eva says "Stay home!"

I've always said that the future of this ship depends on the kids and grandkids of the DE Sailors. And now it looks like the future of USS SLATER is in the hands of healthcare providers around the world. I would like to offer of thanks to them, and two in particular. They are both daughters of DE Sailors and supporters of USS SLATER, and are on the frontline of the COVID-19 battle. **Eva Gruber Fox** is a nurse at Lehigh Valley Hospital. Her father **Tom Gruber**, served in USS BROUGH (DE-148) and was one of the original SLATER volunteers in Manhattan. Her Mom, **Phyllis**, also volunteered and is President of the DESA Ladies Auxiliary. Dr. **Bernadette Fersch** is on the frontline, fighting the virus in Chicago. Her Dad, **John Fersch**, served in USS CHAMBERS (DER-391) and was aboard to visit last summer. I single these two out as representatives of all our supporters who are in the medical community battling this crisis.

I can't tell you when volunteer days will start again. I can't tell you when we are going to the shipyard. I can't tell you when we will reopen to the public. All I can offer is stay safe, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter and please keep those donations coming, so we can be here when this crisis passes. We thank you all for your help and support in these difficult times.

See you next month,

Tim



Dr. Fersch in USS SLATER's sickbay, last fall. She's ready with your covid-19 test.

Don't forget the donate button on our homepage, www.ussslater.org and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.