

SLATER SIGNALS

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

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum
USS Slater DE-766
PO Box 1926
Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123
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I've never been big on birthdays. I don't remember anyone else's (except my wife's) so I don't expect anyone to remember mine. I stopped celebrating mine while I was a cadet at Maritime College. My recollection was that to celebrate, all your buddies would take you into the shower and beat the crap out of you. It's in keeping with the military concept of a party; work parties, blanket parties, and other fun activities. I lost my enthusiasm for birthday parties and it never returned. Anyway, I was quite pleasantly surprised when I got a birthday card from my sister with a check for fifty-six dollars. This was exciting.

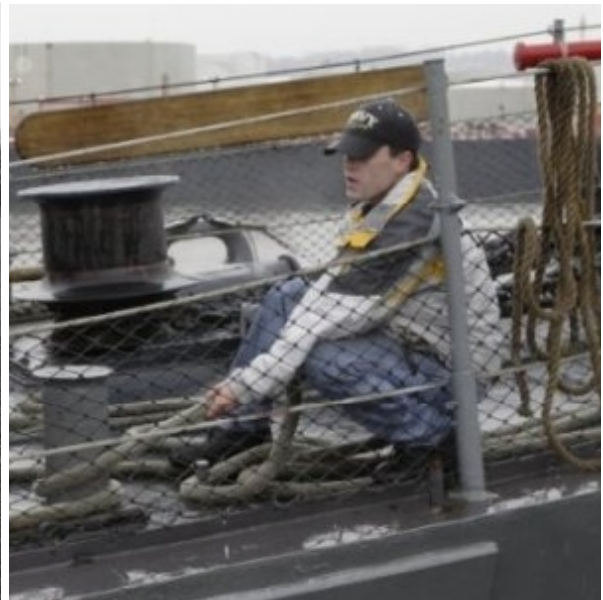
Did I ever mention how money is handled in our house? I give my paycheck to my wife. Then I pay the bills and she gives me my allowance. Kind of like the stevedore who was accused of pilfering cargo. When asked if he had anything on his person that didn't belong to him, he replied, "Yes sir. My paycheck. That belongs to my wife!" So here I was with fifty-six dollars that my wife didn't know about. This was great! I started making plans about all the fun I could have with fifty-six dollars. Then I looked at the check more closely. The check wasn't made out to me. It was made out to my favorite charity, the USS SLATER Winterfund.



So I want to take this opportunity to thank my sister, and the hundreds of you who have sent in your Winter Fund checks to help the SLATER make it through another Albany winter. Now safely moored in Rensselaer, the cold has set in, but that hasn't stopped the crew. Restoration continues to progress. We wrapped up the season with a great November. The weather held out through Thanksgiving weekend and we ran overnight encampments right up to

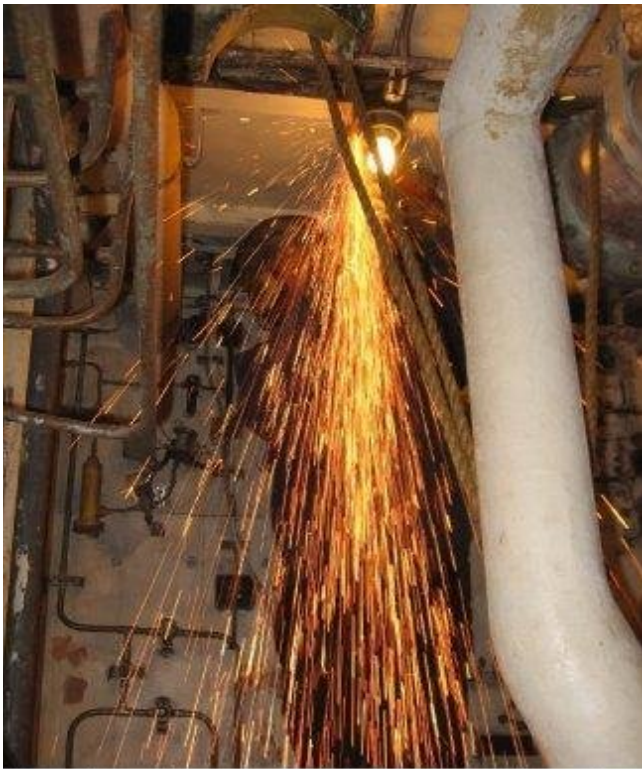
the weekend before Thanksgiving. Up here, most recreational river activities shut down in October. But because we're so tough, and so desperate, we stay open to the bitter end. Some years we wonder why. Some years it pays off. This year it paid off.

Then, in keeping with the way the rest of November went, the move went like clockwork, if you don't mind a little rain. Chris Gardella from Port Albany Ventures said he could move us the Monday after Thanksgiving. He was true to his word. **Bob Cross** provided **Ricky** and the Water Department crane at 0800. After ten years it's all getting pretty routine. It was about forty degrees, with drizzle alternating to rain, but there was no wind. I can deal with anything but wind.



The two tugs were the old Bushy boats, CHEYENNE and CROW, so we had both the big ones this year. The CROW made up to the starboard bow at 1030, and the CHEYENNE arrived at 1100. We let go the wires, singled up, cut the shore tie, and they eased us into the stream. Denny Donovan chose not to turn us, and we made the mile run down river stern first. They eased us into the Rensselaer Dock about thirty minutes later, and lines began going across. It took about another thirty minutes before we had the gangway line up right and we released the tugs. Gus Negus wandered back to the fantail wanting to know who won the anchor pool. Then it was another three hours of doubling up, rigging wires and setting the gangway. **Ken Kaskoun, Bob Callender, and Karl Herchenroder** rigged the shore power, but we were at the dock about an hour before the National Grid truck showed up to turn the power on. **Doug Tanner** immediately dropped what he was doing and set to work making chili and hot dogs on the messdeck. A well-fed crew is a happy crew.

The only disappointment was for the engineers. The previous Saturday, they turned their attention from the eight-cylinder ship's service generator they had been working on, back to the emergency diesel generator to get it ready for the trip across. Our PMS program failed us, and they found all the batteries were in need of replacement. Gus and Karl made a speed run to Sears to purchase three replacements, and by the end of the day, had the engine up and running. It was purring like a kitten.



Gary Sheedy grinds off some rough spots on the reefer deck.



Gus Negus checks the fit on an engine-room electrical box.

The following Monday, in preparation for the trip across, they started the engine and warmed it up waiting for the duty electrician to shift the load. Unfortunately, none of our most qualified electricians was able to make the move. **Barry Witte** and **Gary Sheedy** were at their real jobs and **Larry Williams** had to go to a funeral. No one else was confident in his ability to shift the load without the possibility of getting into trouble. So sadly, Gus and Karl secured the engine before we left the Albany dock, and we made the run without heat, lights and hot coffee. Gus's only comment was, "You can bet that next time we move I will be qualified to put the generator on line." As a former submarine sailor, the expletives have been omitted.

A big plus was communications. For years we have had no decent communications between the fo'c's'le, fantail, tugs and me. This year **Erik Collin** approached Board member, radio expert and former USS FIEBERLING sailor **Ray Windle** about solving the problem. Ray researched available radio sets, and donated a set of six Motorola MTS 2000 hand held radios, a base station and charger. That greatly facilitated communication during the move, and keeps us in close contact with Rosehn and Eric on the Albany side during the winter. However, my fantasy of using my radio to direct the movement of the ship from the bridge was short lived. The reality is that we're totally in the hands of the tug guys, and they like to be down on deck where the action is. So, my job is to stick as close to them as I can, and direct the crew accordingly. So even with my radio, I spent the move circling the main deck on the heels of the tug guys.



Camels are rigged by the river crew....



then lifted and stored by the shore crew.

Tuesday we gave the crew a rest and called them out again on Wednesday to pull the camels. I've been through this before with you. There are sixteen of these monsters, each weighing seven tons wet, rafted together to hold us off the wall into deep water. They have to come out in the fall, and get put back in the spring so the ice doesn't carry them away. The job has none of the glamour of moving the ship, but the crew never hesitates to turn to for this operation. Hard hats and life jackets are required. We started to muster at 0730. **Tommy Moore** immediately set to work using the outgoing tide to drift the north group of camels south to the lifting point. One by one, tag lines are tied on; each camel is unshackled from the raft, floated around under the crane. The lifting chain is shackled to the camel, and it's hoisted away. As water gushes out, Doug directed Jimmy as to where to swing the camel. Each one was set on the pier, and then **Tim Benner** would unhook the lifting cable and Jimmy would swing around for the next pick. When we got rolling, we must have been making a lift every ten minutes, because we had them all out by 11:30. I think that was a record. By noon, we had all the gear picked up and were headed back to the ship, where once again, Doug cooked a hot lunch for everyone who stayed. My thanks to the camel crew on the floats, **Tommy Moore, Eric Rivet, Larry Williams;** and on shore **Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Clark Farnsworth, Chris Fedden, and Tom McLaughlin and Richard Andrian.**

The following Saturday, it turned cold and windy. That was the day "Boats" Haggart, Doug Tanner and a gang that included the RPI Midshipmen spent the day adjusting lines, running out the spring wires, putting on the chaffing gear, the gangway netting and rigging the circulators. All the guns have been covered with the canvas covers **Les Yarbrough** made for us last summer. We're snuggled in for the winter. **Stan Murawski** baked up chicken for all of us. He said he ran into a bargain he couldn't turn down, which led to a discussion of how many times he drove past that farm to run over enough chickens to feed all of us. Someone said it was the best roadkill he'd ever eaten. Proof that we don't treat our cooks any better than they do in the real Navy.



A rusted hatch and deck in the forward passageway will be replaced...



by Doug "where's the butter" Tanner seen here making sure the alignment is correct.

After going through the process of moving the ship and hauling the camels for the tenth year, there was good news on the grant front. We received a \$300,000 matching grant towards building the permanent year round mooring in Albany. Governor **Eliot Spitzer** announced the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grants that were to be awarded for local communities and organizations across New York State to assist with waterfront revitalization projects, historic preservation efforts, expanding open space, and increasing access to public lands. **Bob Cross had lobbied Parks and Recreation Commissioner Carol Ash for the support of the SLATER.** He was successful in getting the Commissioner to visit the SLATER and gave her the tour so she could see first-hand what the volunteers and your donations have accomplished. The EPF grants administered through OPRHP have been the primary source of grant funding since the SLATER's arrival in 1997. To date we have received grants totaling \$509,710 through the EPF program. We estimate that the total cost to design, permit and build a permanent year round mooring for the SLATER in Albany may be as high as \$700,000. We have submitted an additional grant application under a New York State Department of State Waterfront Revitalization Program to help us cover the remaining costs. We'll see if you get lucky twice. If not, we may do the project in phases as funding permits.



Film producer Shohei Kotaki with tour guide Alan Guard and translator Shin Fukumori in the Wardroom.

We had an interesting visit by Japanese Film producer Shohei Kotaki and his Associate Shin Fukumori. They are doing research on a WWII project and they wanted to talk first-hand with some of our veterans on their experiences on destroyer escorts. **Erik Collin** handled protocol and **Eric Rivet** set up interviews with **Les Beauchaine** of the USS FORMOE, **Bill Scharoun** of the USS OSMUS, **Jerry Greene** of the WYFELS, **Alan Guard** who was an officer on the ULVERT M MOORE and **Ray Lammers** who was aboard the APD TATUM when she was hit by a bomb at Okinawa.

Sho and Shin expressed their feeling that Japanese children in particular have no sense of history, and thus are denied the opportunity to learn from the past, and that is why they are motivated to make this movie. That desire to educate is something we all had in common.

The crew continues on their winter projects. The chippers, **Earl Herchenroder, Chris Fedden, Peter Jez** and **Don Miller** have been chipping away in the forward crew's head. **Tanner, Benner, Farnsworth** and **Teal** are looking at replacing a lot of wasted bulkhead, and the installation of the trough, sinks and a working commode, and tying everything into the sewer pump aft. The electricians are working on the restoration of the main switchboard in the aft motor room. The engineers are continuing the cosmetic restoration in the aft engine room and aft motor room and continue tweaking the ship's service generator. Gus just mounted a clock in B-4 at the log desk, which made him very happy. They are also all taking Barry Witte's class on "How to shift the load.



Tom Moore built a new table for the chartroom in which Erik Collin installed a chronometer well.



Next door in CIC Paul Guarnieri cleans up the SL wave guide.

Finally, it's official. We received our official rejection letter for the Save America's Treasures Grant despite our letter writing campaign. A list of the awardees can be found on the National Park Service website. In looking over the list, in most cases only one grant was awarded per state, and on quick glance it looked like the biggest grant was a half million. This means the \$600,000 we were asking for was about as much as we could have hoped for. One gets the feeling that this program receives very little funding compared to the needs that are out there, but we will reapply for the Save America's Treasures Grant in 2008. I would also note that on Wednesday, the day I received the SAT notification letter, I also learned that an anticipated \$4,000 member item from Senator Breslin was rescinded, that Tin Can Sailors would not be able to make their \$5,000 grant due to funding shortfalls, and our application for a Tourism Cares Grant was rejected. I've had better mornings.

On the plus side, we recently received a stock donation valued at \$10,000 to the Endowment Fund from Betty Jane Lowers in honor of her husband Ben who served on the USS SOLAR, a \$5,000 donation from the Malesardi Family Foundation thanks to Doris Fischer and Robert Malesardi, and volunteer Andy Desorbo donated 40 shares of WR Grace stock with the value matched by GE under their matching gifts program. Sizeable numbers of Winter Fund donations are now coming in. Another plus is that Rosehn compiled our final attendance figures for 2007 and we totaled out at 14,349, up 28% from 2006, so that is encouraging. So you see what's going on. These guys will be working all winter. So think about that Winter Fund envelope you got in the mail. We can't do it without you. Thanks for shipping over and see you next issue.

See you next month.