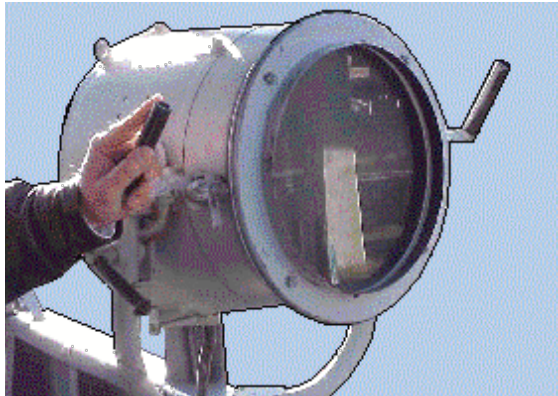


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## SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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**This spring I put my long johns away three times thinking "I won't need these anymore" and before the day was out, wished I was wearing them again.**

**The big clean up ended, the SL radar is in place, the mast is being painted and we got the ship moved and open to the public. Erik Collin** repainted all the decks. The aft passageway is back together. On the Albany side, kudos to tour guide **Glenn Harrison** for volunteering to repaint the Ship's Store with **Rosehn** and **Eric**. The only disappointment was the weather. We had a manlift on the pier that **Doug Tanner** used to replace a broken antenna support. We had **Kevin Sage** aboard painting in the aft passageway, so we had everything we needed to repaint all those difficult-to-reach areas on the starboard side. Everything but a break in the weather. We had one decent painting day the first two weeks in April, and that was the day we moved. Imron epoxy paint likes to be put on above 45 degrees, preferably when it's not raining.



**Camels are lifted over the side of the dock - being careful not to drop them!**



**And then lower into the river. Note the emergency rescue boat in the background.**

**The camels went in on Monday, March 26<sup>th</sup>. Bob Cross** provided the crane, and **Tommy Moore** and **Eric Rivet** went over the side while **Doug** and **Tim Benner** directed the crew topside. It's all routine

now. We had all the camels reassembled by noon and were cleaned up and back aboard the ship by one. By Tuesday March 27<sup>th</sup>, the scaffolding contractor **Safway** had done the framework up the mast. Because of the weather and other commitments they couldn't get back to put the scaffolding around the radar platforms until the afternoon of Thursday, April 5<sup>th</sup>. In two and a half hours, lead rigger and former Marine **Bob Thomas** and two helpers, assisted by Eric Rivet and myself, got the two upper levels completed and ready for Doug to work on the day after Easter. The original plan had been to put it up the first week of April. That plan went to Hell with the weather turning too inclement to climb. That kept the ship from moving and opening April 4<sup>th</sup> as we had hoped. We resigned ourselves to a second week in Rensselaer. Doug rescheduled his calendar and took three days off from work to install the radar platform April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. He called his friends at **Flach Crane** to have the crane on site Wednesday morning. If anything went wrong, we'd have to scrub the project or be three weeks in Rensselaer.

**Monday, April 9<sup>th</sup> dawned cold and blustery.** Over the course of my career I've known maybe five guys who had the strength, fearlessness and skill needed to climb the mast and weld up the radar platform without pay. And I don't think the other four would have been willing to do it in the weather conditions we had. Temps in the low forties (after it warmed up) and twenty knot winds. It was finish the project and get out of Rensselaer, or scrub the radar project for the season. **Supporting Doug during this project was Gene Jackey.** Doug and Gene have two things in common. The ability to work aloft and they are both ex-Coast Guard. To let the world know that this was a Coast Guard project, the first thing they did Monday morning was haul a huge Coast Guard flag to the top of the mast and fly it from the mast head. They yelled down, "If any of those Navy guys don't like it, they can climb up here and take it down!" Nobody took the challenge. Down on the ground it was Tim Benner and **Clark Farnsworth.**

What can I say about Doug Tanner? The final stage of getting the SL radar installed involved the actual work at the top of the mast.

**The first step of the project was grinding off the old radar platform that had been installed by the Greek Navy to support commercial radar in the seventies.** All the old weld where the original SL platform had been had to be ground off. Doug didn't want to take a torch up the mast, so all cutting was done with a grinder and electric saber saw. The quality of the welding on the old platform caused every one who had ever been up there and stood on it to say a little prayer of thanks.



**The SL radar dome is lifted on to it's new platform as Doug Tanner waits to bolt it in place.**



The crane could more than reach the top of the mast.

**Then came the lift.** We hauled the radar platform, which weighs about 200 pounds up to the 01 level. Doug had two lifting eyes installed. From top to bottom he had a chain fall, then a come-a-long, then another chain fall. We hooked the platform to the first chain fall and started the lift. That got us as high as the top of the gun director platform on the flying bridge. Then Doug hooked on to the come-a-long. That lift took the platform even with the yardarm. It was at that stage, with the platform swaying in the twenty-knot wind, as Doug was attaching it to the upper chain fall, that I momentarily questioned the importance of having an authentic SL radar antenna on the SLATER. Most of the times I have had doubts about my career choice have occurred during moments when there have been heavy metallic objects hanging over my head and good friends dangling precariously aloft.

**Jerry Jones made the comment that if this had been done in a Navy yard, there would be a crane big enough to pick up a locomotive thirty men, and**

**it would have taken a week.** But ultimately, there would have been two guys like Gene and Doug with a welding stinger harnessed to the masthead. In our case, Doug didn't need the crane big enough to lift a locomotive. His lifting plan worked fine, and by Monday afternoon he had the platform tacked in place. Tuesday, if anything, the wind was worse. Doug and Gene went aloft and installed the leg braces and welded the whole thing up. That took all day. Doug's final warning to me was, "If it's this windy tomorrow, the crane won't be able to make the pick."

**Wednesday was sunny and flat calm.** A massive crane donated by Flach Crane and Rigging arrived on schedule and set to work. By this time, Doug had worn out all his other helpers and he was stuck with me as the only one willing to go aloft with him. As no good deed goes unpunished, history will record that Rizzuto waited until it was warm and sunny to climb the mast so he could work on his tan while Doug bolted down the radar. The crew from Flach were very professional. They rigged straps to our precious antenna, picked up and by the time they had hoisted it and swung



Doug bolts the dome to the platform.

around to the platform they were only about six inches off from a perfect line up. Doug guided the antenna into place and we began bolting it down. This final part of the operation only took about thirty minutes. The SL antenna had completed its 3,000-mile journey and was in place at the SLATER's masthead.

**I don't even think Doug had gotten off the mast before I was on the phone to Chris Gardella at Port Albany Ventures telling him that our pierside work was complete and we were ready to move any time he could get a tug to us.** His initial news was not encouraging. He didn't think he would have a hole in their schedule until after April 16<sup>th</sup>. He did say to check back daily. Friday became a possibility that didn't work out. It was probably just as well, because sailors have always been superstitious about sailing on a Friday, and this was Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> to boot. The weather was lousy anyway. Then Chris called and said Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> looked like it might work. The weather forecast was for a bad nor'easter with a lot of snow to come in Sunday, so it looked like if we didn't get out of Rensselaer on Saturday, we might be stuck there another week. Moving Saturday was a dream come true, because that's the day we have the most volunteers.



**The fo'c's'le crew hard at work. Most of them, anyway.**

**I sent the following email to the crew; "I have been informed by Port Albany Ventures that they plan to move us at 1000, weather permitting.**

As this will be a Saturday, we may not have access to crane service to lift the gangways. If that is the case, in Albany, access departing the ship will be by extension ladder to the camels and up the seawall by ladder. Thus, anyone handling lines must be able to get off the ship in this manner. Line handlers will be divided into two groups of 8, the crew on the fo'c's'le under Erik Collin's direction and the crew on the fantail under Doug Tanner's direction. The remainder of the crew will be engineers under **Gus Negus's** direction,

electricians under **Barry Witte's** direction, and a utility group of six people under the direction of **Paul Czesak**, who will stand by on the 01 level for incidental jobs that come up. Anyone not actually engaged in work should stand by on the 01 level to keep the main deck clear for passage. Our limit is thirty crew, based on the number of serviceable life jackets available. As always, the move will be for working crew only. Please make an effort to wear a Navy style work uniform, with watch cap, white or ball cap. It looks so much better for the photographers. Thanks as always for your continued help and support."

**At 0800 Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, the crew showed up in various forms of mufti and we began the now familiar routine of getting ready to shift berths. Water**

line was broken down, coiled and stowed. Life jackets were broken out of storage, wires taken off and lines singled up. **Karl Herchenroder** and Gus Negus came aboard and got the emergency diesel started. This was very important, because the crew has gotten used to having hot coffee for the voyage across the river, and Paul Czesak brought in Polish casserole for lunch, and he needed to be able to keep it hot. Barry Witte and **Larry Williams** shifted electric load to the generator and cut the shore tie. "All ashore" was piped and the gangway came in. We made up the EMPIRE to the stern, and the CHEYENNE as the assist tug with **Denny Donovan** aboard. Aboard the SLATER we had Chris Gardella himself riding, as well as his son and guests. We knew we were in good hands.



**The trip back to Albany is always highly anticipated!**

**The winds that morning had been forecast at 10 to 15 miles per hour from the northwest, and there was a fairly stiff breeze blowing out of the west when we cast off the last line.** Denny lashed the CROW amidships and began pulling us off the wall. It was a bit of a struggle, but we cleared it



**The shore crew manhandles the gangway into place.**

with no problem and headed slowly north towards the middle of the channel. Amazingly, a short time after clearing the Rensselaer wall, the wind subsided and everything got calm and sunny. We went by the Albany Yacht Club, where they were putting in their replacement docks after last year's flooding destroyed their old docking system. The arrival in Albany was without any problems as we passed the DUTCH APPLE, which had beaten us back by a day. Bob Cross came through for us and had **Ricky** and the crane on the Snow Dock waiting for us when we arrived. We waved off the CHEYENNE as soon as we had six lines ashore, but held on to the EMPIRE to adjust us while we put on the spring wires to make sure the gangway line up was correct. Ricky set both gangways without difficulty, and then we set about doubling up the lines, rigging the shore power, and putting on the additional wires fore and aft. Getting everything secure took the rest of the afternoon

because the forecast was for a bad nor'easter to come in that Sunday. That Saturday was the only good weather window we had for moving the ship in two weeks.

**While all that was going on, Eric Rivet took a crew ashore and erected Claire Oesterreich's canopy on the Observation Deck.** Barry took another crew that included **Chuck Longshore** and his family to offload a U-Haul trailer that Barry brought back the day before from Philadelphia. Did I mention that operation? While all this was going on aboard the SLATER, it was the spring open house week at the Naval Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility in Philly, the week for parts stripping.

**Gordon Lattey, Bill Siebert, Greg Krawczyk and Greg and Tim Wolanin** went down on Monday to scope things out. The big finds were a DRT analyzer for Erik Collin's CIC restoration and a bench grinder for Gus in the engine room. Wednesday, Barry Witte took a crew down and hit the destroyer tender PUGET SOUND on Thursday and Friday. He returned with a trailer load of machine tools, hardware and fittings that will primarily benefit the guys in the engine room crew. He brought back a much needed cargo net to rig under the gangway and stools for CIC.



**Just after moving the river rose over six feet. The ship end of the gangway should be lower than shore.**

**On Sunday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, we all enjoyed our last Sunday off for a long time.** It is snowing like crazy just to prove that winter had the last laugh and it was a beauty. The big nor'easter brought flooding the likes of which we hadn't seen since last June. But the SLATER was well secured and rode out the flooding with no problems. But if Chris hadn't had gotten us the Saturday before the storm, we would have lost another week of the season. For two weeks Rosehn had been answering phones and explaining our late opening to would-be visitors. Finally on Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, we opened for tours. That following weekend we hosted our first overnight campers of the season. Then our first reunion, the USS FRAGMENT

crew. Before you know it, the Michigan and the HUSE workweeks will be upon us. The season has begun.

**See you next month.**



Hihj Water.