

## SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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**Another summer season is half over.** We received a nice plug in our local **Metroland Magazine**. In the 2007 'Best of the Capital Region' edition, they created the category of 'Best Floating Museum' and gave us the nod with the write up "During World War II, this Cannon-class destroyer escort battled Nazi gunboats and Japanese submarines. After decades of hard duty in foreign waters, in 1997 the Slater made its way up the Hudson to Albany, where the restoration that had begun in Manhattan in 1993 continued. The only original DE still afloat in the US, the Slater has been restored from a rustbucket to a see-worthy museum, thanks to a heroic grass-roots effort mostly performed by naval veterans. Tours of the ship provide a vivid sense of the onboard lives and military operations of its 216-man crew." We're grateful for the plug and the recognition and it looks like after ten years in this town, we may be on our way to becoming an Albany institution.



**Les Beauchaine explains the Wardroom table setting to the PBS tour kids.**

**In another PR event, our local public television station sent down Sharon Wolin, Sony Stark and a film crew to film a day aboard the USS SLATER.** The spot will be part of a documentary series they are producing called "It's an Age Thing," about the contributions our senior citizens are making to our community. Of course, we're loathe to admit to having any "Senior Citizens" in this crew, but a few of the kids agreed to be interviewed anyway. They shot about three hours of footage for a seven-minute piece, but we're all looking forward to it. **Les Beauchaine** and **Joe Burke** agreed to be filmed giving a school tour, made a little more difficult by the rain. Monday is a day you can't escape the din of the needle guns on board, and I think the film crew assumed that the rain would end the chipping. But not to be stopped, **Earl** and **Don** rigged tarps over the deck and kept right on going. The best part was the interview with **Clark Farnsworth**. Not that there is ever any dissension within the ranks here, but he came in on a Monday morning ready to spit nails about the condition that the

shop had been left in over the weekend. He was so hot you didn't want to get within a fifty-yard radius. But then when they got him on camera, he sat back, smiled and said, "I enjoy every minute I spend aboard the SLATER!" And we've got that on tape! Be watching for it on WMHT.

**The SLATER tour guides are having a busy summer.** Rain and somewhat cooler temperatures have been bringing a lot of visitors aboard over the last few weeks. We had well over 100 visitors on July 4<sup>th</sup>, and it's been just as busy every day since. We're also happy to welcome a new student guide to the ship this month, SUNY Albany sophomore **Kelly Lassonde**. She hopes to work for a military museum when she finishes school. Let's hope a summer aboard the SLATER doesn't change her mind. My personal thanks to the whole gang who are rarely mentioned but keep the public coming back.

**The maintenance gang continues on.** The welders have finished the work replacing rotted metal on the radio direction finder platform at the base of the mast and are moving on to two other projects. The work at the base of the mast was complicated by the fact that it put a major shipfitting project smack in the middle of the tour route, and the only day the shipfitters were available to work was on Saturday, our busiest tour day in our busiest month. Needless to say, work progressed slowly due to the need to stop work every time a tour went by. It was kind of like a construction project on a busy interstate. **Clark Farnsworth** and **Gene Jackey** are now welding up the depth charge roller loader racks that were built by students at Colonie High School. And **Bill Siebert**, **Doug Tanner**, **Tim Benner** and **Chuck Teal** are working on installing the watertight door at bulkhead 99 on the starboard side between B-3 and B-4. They are planning to have the work completed by the DESA Convention in September to allow easier access for the veterans who want to see the machinery spaces. That should also make life a lot easier for our engineers who spend a lot of time climbing up and over moving parts

between spaces. Those guys aren't as young as they used to be. **Gus Negus** and **Karl Herchenroder** have spent the last six months looking for a water to water heat exchanger to replace a failed unit on the GM 8-268A ships service generator set in the aft engine room. Well, I should qualify that with: free or really cheap. After following up on several "hot" leads that didn't pan out, they are now trying to repair the old unit with JB Weld paste. We'll see how good it is.

**Rocky** is continuing to work on the whaleboat, still at Scarano's. Since we were under no time pressure, we told them we had no problem with deferring our work for more critical jobs. We would like to have the boat back for the DESA Convention, but we'll see how it goes. Meanwhile, Bosun **Bill Haggart** has brought his grandson **Jeff** aboard, and Jeff has been a big help to "Ole Boats." They have kept the mooring lines tight and are working on repainting blocks and maintaining the whaleboat



**Bill Siebert grinding an angle iron to be used for engine room door bracing.**



rigging. His running mate **Nelson Potter** finished replacing all the halyards and reworking the retrievers. And if you know what I just said, you need to come down and volunteer as the "Duty Signalman." **Rich Pavlovik** has 20mm gun 25 all torn down and is doing a thorough restoration job. "Major" **Les Yarbrough** has been at the sewing machine two days a week, and has almost completed all the canvas covers for the 20mm guns.



**A younger radioman Jerry Jones.**

functioning radar display.

**We had two SA (air search) radar PPI scopes, so it was decided to take the one in the worst condition and remove the innards and install a computer monitor to create the display with a computer program.** Then they moved on to bigger and better ideas like making the gyro compass repeater, pitlog and dead reckoning tracer work. Since the concept of computers had been introduced why not make all that stuff computer controlled? And better yet, why not hook everything together, write a sequencing program to run real world scenarios to simulate a fully functioning CIC that would be the envy of.... of.... well, everyone?!! Then in January, right after the concept had been developed, Jerry went home, fell down his basement stairs and broke his leg, putting a kink in the grand plans. For the next few months it was up to Erik to get the show going. Since he is also the guy that processes all your Winter Fund donations (thank you!) and membership renewals along with trying to keep the ship clean and other assorted projects, he was unable to work on the project fulltime, so it moved slowly at first. He started with sound, a digital voice recorder hooked into a spare 21MC intercom box so we can flip a switch and get a sonar report from a real live sonarman. This is something tour guides can activate to show visitors what a sonar report might sound like. Plans are to install more recorders to

**Electronically, Radioman Joe Breyer hit a real milestone.** He actually got the power supply for the TCS working, so we can finally have one authentic piece of WWII gear on the air. Now if he can just overcome the problem of being in the "black hole" created by the Dunn Bridge approaches around us, he'll be a happy radioman. A deck above him, **Erik Collin** has been making steady progress in CIC. Early last winter Erik and **Jerry Jones** were lounging around the Combat Information Center (CIC) admiring our new SL (surface search) radar and contemplating the possibility that it might someday be made functional. Since we don't have the combination of talent and manpower to make that happen, the conversation turned to other instruments and gizmos in CIC that might be made to glow, turn or make noise. The easiest thing to do, they agreed, would be to make various lights glow. Since that was settled quickly, they then agreed that some sound would be nice - maybe voices emanating from a communications box. Jerry had been playing with an \$11 digital voice recorder that could record and playback 20 seconds of sound. It looked like another quick and easy task so conversation turned to something a bit harder but with much more of a "wow" factor a

simulate other reports. Then it was on to visuals. While Erik was a computer programmer before joining the SLATER crew, he had very little knowledge of graphics programming. A search for a freely available radar program was disappointing; there are lots of modern radar simulators but no WWII simulators. In desperation Erik spread the word around nearby Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute that we needed a graphics programmer.

**An RPI Junior, Zach Barth, responded with his expertise in game programming with emphasis on interfacing it with the real world.** Exactly what we were looking for. Zach came to visit the ship, was very impressed and quickly agreed to put together a radar display. He spent a good part of the day in the Ward Room poring over radar manuals to get an idea of what the display should look like. Within a week or two he had a working computer program generating a radar display on our SA unit. He spent the next few weeks working on software that would allow us to write scenarios that we could show on the radar display. It was simple, fast and worked beautifully.

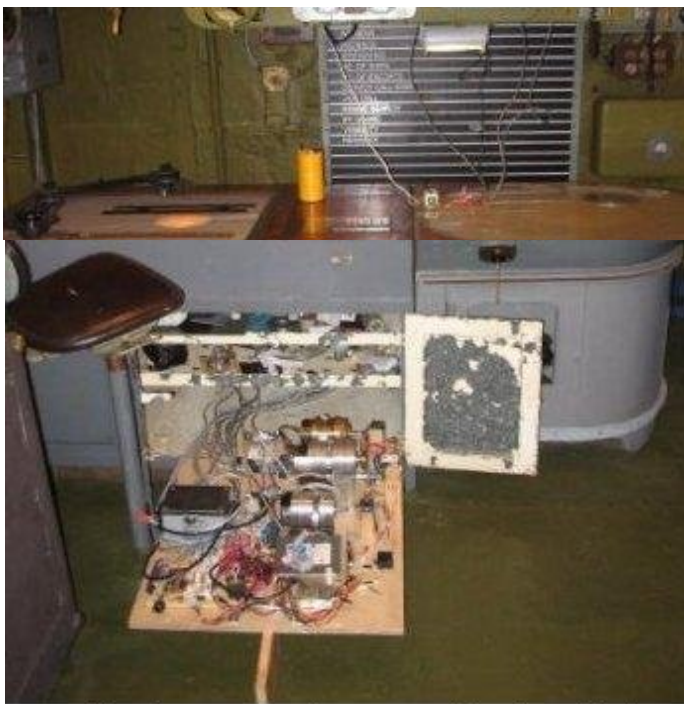
**While Zach was working his magic Erik was busy trying to understand how the gyrocompass, pitometer and DRT worked.** No easy task that was to be. But, we had a few manuals (though nothing on the pitlog) that turned out to be invaluable. After poking around the IC room where the gyro and pitlog are located and trying to find a way to hook some kind of computer control into them he, uhm.... gave up. "Too many very sensitive and rare radio tubes, too many cut wires, too many missing parts, too many Greek modifications and no pitlog manual." It was a sad time until Roy Warner showed up and suggested that since everything in the IC room communicated with the gear in CIC by using synchro motors, that would be the way to do it. Click! The lights came back on and Erik set off to learn everything there was to know about synchro generators and motors. Erik spent the winter in CIC working with synchros and tinkering with the dead reckoning analyzer - the box that takes course and speed inputs, mixes them together and sends them as output to the motor and gear mechanism that drives the plotter. The analyzer has a number of moving parts that were badly in need of repair and adjustment. So badly in need that it caused the plotter to do very strange things when it was working at all. After much head banging (I'll point out the dents in the bulkheads if you like) and cursing (pretty good cursing for a civilian at that) Erik managed to get the analyzer and plotter working under the control of a couple synchros.

**The hardware heart of this project is located under the tracer table on a two foot by two foot piece of plywood.** Three synchro generators are bolted down and wired into the gyro, pitlog and analyzer. The generators are turned by hobby servos like the kind found in model airplanes and by stepper motors. These controls are wired into a microcontroller which in turn are connected to Zach's software control program. Zach also put together a control board



**The SA radar with its simulated display. Looks like four ships at 045 degrees.**





**CIC with the automation control unit pulled out from under the plotting table.**

that will allow tour guides to turn the system on and off and pause the running simulation to answer questions or explain what's happening to visitors. The control board also contains a sound distribution system that powers speakers located in voice tubes, radios and a communications box to allow us to have voices originating from various places around the room. There are also two subwoofers located in dark corners for use with gunfire and explosion sound effects.

**Along the way Eric Rivet came across radios logs from the capture of U-505.** He realized right away that those logs would allow us to create a realistic simulation of that event right in our CIC. We set to work creating a script of the event and coded it into the simulator. The result was actually pretty bad. For this display to be realistic for visitors our crew are either going to

have to take acting lessons or we need to find some younger people to do our voice tracks. I think we'll go for the youngsters! At this point there are a few finishing touches to put on the hardware aspect of the control systems and a few software updates to get the whole thing working. Step into CIC today and you'll see lights in the fathometer, radio, fire control systems, pitlog, gyro, DRT, radar units and

(from an earlier time) two light boards. As a simulation runs sound will come from all around the compartment; the DRT, gyro and pitlog will all work in unison along with the SA radar displaying a birds' eye view of what's happening; the plotter will be tracing our course as we move and we will be able to relive battles that took place sixty years ago from the point of view of the men that were attempting to make sense of what was happening.

**The really nice thing about all this is really the computer sequencer that controls it all. We can easily program any movement of our ship or any other ship into it.** We can have voices and other sound effects come from any number of locations while in the background all the navigation instruments are reflecting the movement of the ship. And we can switch from one scenario to another with a push of a button. And what of Jerry Jones you ask? After a few months his leg healed just fine. Then his wife broke her leg so we've hardly seen the guy since December. Then after they had both recovered, a backlog of home improvements caught up with him. Somewhere along the way he got in the project of remodeling his kitchen, and that has tied him up until recently, when he got back to the ship. He was awestruck when he listened to the CIC display, complete with vibrating gunfire. He said we were finally on par with Disney. What Erik has accomplished will be the highlight of the tour.



**Bosun Bill Haggart, Coastie Gene Jackey and Bill Coyle working on lunch cooked by Chief Smith.**





**We have several big events lined up including the DESA Convention the first week of September, the Port Festival and a memorial service for the SAMUEL B. ROBERTS October 13<sup>th</sup>, the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our arrival and Navy Day on October 27<sup>th</sup>, and the Annual USS SLATER Night at the Fort Orange Club and a military vehicle exhibit scheduled for Veterans Day weekend November 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.**

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't thank all of you who have responded to our call to write letters of support for our Save America's Treasures Grant application for funding to help dry-dock the SLATER. Hopefully alerting the Department of the Interior and your congressional representatives to what we have put into this project so far and our need to get to the shipyard will finally get their attention. But be warned, if we do succeed in getting the grant, that's just the start. All these Federal grants are matching grants, and we'll be coming to you again, along with a host of local businesses and foundations to put us over the top. But at least we will have something on the table.

See you next month