

# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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The goal we had set for ourselves this spring was to be open the first Wednesday in April. Eric Rivet had scheduled his tour guide refresher training, and Erik Collin worked the crew to get the mess from the winter work all cleaned up. As you read in the last issue, on Monday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, we put the camels in the water. Port Albany Ventures had the tug CHEYENNE back on line following an overhaul, but understandably, the paying jobs had to come first. Everything fell into place for the last day of March, Monday the 31<sup>st</sup>. The tugs were available and set for noon when the tide changed. We mustered the crew at 0800 and made preparations for getting underway. The crew got ready to take the wires off and single up, but something in my gut told me to hold off. That something was a strong southerly wind. Instead of slacking, it intensified as the morning went on. At 0800 there were no white caps on the river. By 1100 there were plenty of whitecaps. I believe in worst-case scenarios and with a strong south wind, if things went bad, the worst case would be



**USS SLATER returning to Albany for another summer season.**

that we would hit the Dunn Bridge. I figured if that happened, I'd get bigger headlines than our former governor. So at 1130, for the first time in eleven years, I was the one who called **Chris Gardella** down at Port Albany Ventures and told them to stand down, that this wasn't the day. I went down to the CPO

mess and announced my decision to the crew. They responded with the expected disparaging remarks about my manhood. Then the crew had another cup of coffee and went back to cleaning up the ship.



**Peter Jez and Paul Czesak help cast off.**



**Former Coasties Lou Sussman and Doug Tanner helping tie her up.**

**Thus, the first Wednesday in April came and went with us on the Rensselaer side of the river.**

"Maybe Thursday" turned into "Possibly Friday," rolling into "Sunday noon looks good." Erik and I got to the ship around 0800, and it was a perfect day, with a slight breeze out of the east. The first thing I did was grab the binoculars and scan down river to Port Albany's dock, where I saw three tugs moored. That's always a good sign. Sunday was a good day for us because it gave all the working stiffes who are still holding down paying jobs a chance to participate, i.e., the younger guys who do the most work. It also enabled us to have a good turn out from the RPI Midshipmen contingent. The word was muster at 1000. I knew we wouldn't have a crane available to lift the gangways, so access off the ship would be down extension ladders onto the camels and off again on the Albany side. That definitely limited the numbers on the ship, but we still had more than enough on board, with plenty of line handlers on shore.

**At 1130 the EMPIRE made her way upriver and we cabled her to the transom.** Shortly thereafter the CHEYENNE made up to the portside. We posed for a group picture while waiting for the last man to board, **Doug Tanner**, who had been to church and took me at my word when I said noon. The wires came off, lines were singled, the load shifted to the ship's generator, the shore tie and phone lines came in, the last lines came off, colors were shifted and we were underway. The CHEYENNE pulled us off the pier and we headed north. There was a fairly strong current running as we eased into the channel. As we made the thirty-minute trip north, the crew prepared the lines for the landing on the Albany side. Erik, **John Whalen** and the midshipmen handled the fo'c's'le and Doug took care of things on the fantail. The approach to the Albany side was smooth to a point, but the current made the final approach tricky with a close encounter with the DUTCH APPLE at the wharf. But when we got in position, the line handling was better than average this year, and it didn't take long to get her lined up, doubled up and the wires in place. Our "R" Boats veteran, submarine quartermaster **John Kolinchick** was so impressed with Doug's rigging ability that he called Doug "Boats." Now, a Boatswain's Mate once told me that deep down inside every sailor wanted to be a bosun's mate, but then **Doug Tanner** isn't every sailor. Doug appeared deeply offended by the remark and reminded everyone in earshot that he wasn't a damn bosun's mate, he was a Hull Technician. And don't you forget it. As usual, the electricians seemed

to think it was a contest as to whether they could beat the line handlers and get the shore tie connected before the mooring lines were doubled and the wires on. Gus and Karl secured the diesel, and by 1600 we locked the SLATER for the night and disembarked onto the camels, pulling the ladder up behind us.



The crew waiting for Tanner to arrive.



Erik Collin's fo'c's'le crew.

**The next issue was the gangways.** This was the first time we didn't have the water department crane available, so we fell into the back up plan. **Doug Tanner** contacted his old friends at both **Gould Erectors** and **Mullins Crane Service**. Both were willing to donate the service, but Gould wasn't available until Wednesday morning and Mullin's had a crane available on Tuesday afternoon. Since the press had already gone out that we would be open Wednesday the 9<sup>th</sup>, we accepted Mullins' generosity. Tuesday afternoon Doug supervised setting the gangways in place and adjusting mooring lines with the help of Bosun **Bill Haggart**. Bill was just in from Florida and called Sunday to see where the ship was, missing movement by two hours. But he was back on duty to help Doug out. The following morning at 1000, the SLATER opened for the season.

**The final issue was fresh water and sewerage.** The following Saturday, **Tim Benner** and **Chuck Teal** worked all day to prove that they didn't need Tanner around as they repaired all the leaks, pressure tested the fresh water system and brought the water aboard. **Boats Haggart** rigged the sewer line and made up those connections. **Barry Witte** activated the sewer pump. They were a bit miffed when they discovered **Ray Windle's** radios. If you recall, Ray donated six state-of-the-art handhelds, which were invaluable during the move. They would have been a big help to a couple guys pressurizing and testing the water system, but they didn't get the word. When they found them by accident, they accused management of making their lives more difficult, but found them extremely useful so they could communicate information about the next coffee break. But at the end of the day, we had running water aboard.

**The ordnance department completed the winter with draftees Gus Negus, John Whalen and Karl Herchenroder successfully completing the replacement of the train bearings on gun one. Rich Pavlovik** is back from warmer climes continuing the restoration of 20mm mount 23. And we've started a major restoration of the depth charge projectors in an effort to get a couple in firing condition for the upcoming movie production. New volunteers **Bob Rawls** and **Mike Murphy** from the Watervliet Arsenal removed several arbors that were rusted or welded in place and then began an examination of the projectors to check their condition for firing. We had copies of the O.P., which gave them the information they needed for inspecting the breech mechanism. We are working with **Bob Pfiel** of the Arsenal to see if we can have them mag particle tested.

**Barry Witte and Gordon Lattey led a group of volunteers to the James River Reserve Fleet for the final spring strip trip.** They were assisted by a group of sailors from the carrier USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT CVN71, in an arrangement Barry worked out with their Chief Engineer Commander **Larry Scruggs**. Chief **James McPherson**, and sailors DCFN **John Pike**, DCFA **Crystal Latham**, DCFN **James Justin**, FR **Roxanne Raley**, DCFN **Mark Hazzard** and DCFA **Matt Bailey** worked three days with Barry, Gordon and **Adam Shaker** to remove and offload over 2500 pounds of parts and materials for use in the SLATER's restoration. The junior enlisted sailors were hard working and energetic, and Chief McPherson proved himself a dynamic "take charge" leader in the best "Old Navy" tradition, who managed to keep the others motivated and productive throughout the three-day evolution. The parts ranged from mess benches to light fixtures, to old style lockers and spools of armored cable. One of the most surprising finds was ceramic soap dishes and holders that Latham and Raley found. Three of them have already been cleaned up and put on display. Once again, our sincere appreciation to all the ROOSEVELT sailors who helped us this spring.



**The biggest Field Day crew to date!**

**The Michigan crew started arriving aboard on April 26, just in time to miss two weeks of the most perfect weather we've ever seen in Albany.** This was their 20<sup>th</sup> field day, and a total of 43 were on board when their Sunday dinner was served. This was a true multigenerational experience with five sons, eight grandsons and one great-grandson amid those making this the largest field day to date. The seeds of DE history have been planted in the next generation. Those present for the week's activity were: **John Adriani, Roy Brandon, Tom Burrows, Dow Clark, Laird Confer, Gary Deickman, Bob Donlon, Harry Eugster, Jacob Eugster, Kurt Eugster, Gary Headworth, Guy Huse, Joe Jeffries, Emmett Landrum, Mike Marko, Joshua Mauer, Jared Mauer, Scott McFadden, Ron Mazure, Rush Mellinger, Ken Morgan, Jim Parker, Joe Parker, Zachary Parker, Jim Ray, Brandon Reese, Dick Roy, Tom Schrinier, John Schrinier, Charles Schrinier, Neal Schrinier, Josh Snyder, Larry Stiles, Bill Svihovec, Ed Vallad, Charlie Vesterman, Dick Walker, Butch Warrender, Bill Wasko, Peter White, Ed Zajkowski, Mike Zarem** and the organizer of it all, **Ron Zarem**.



**Tom Schriener in the galley.**



**Messcook Ron Zarem serving chow to Dick Walker.**



**TV Fox 23's Kathryn Hauser did her morning show from the Slater.**

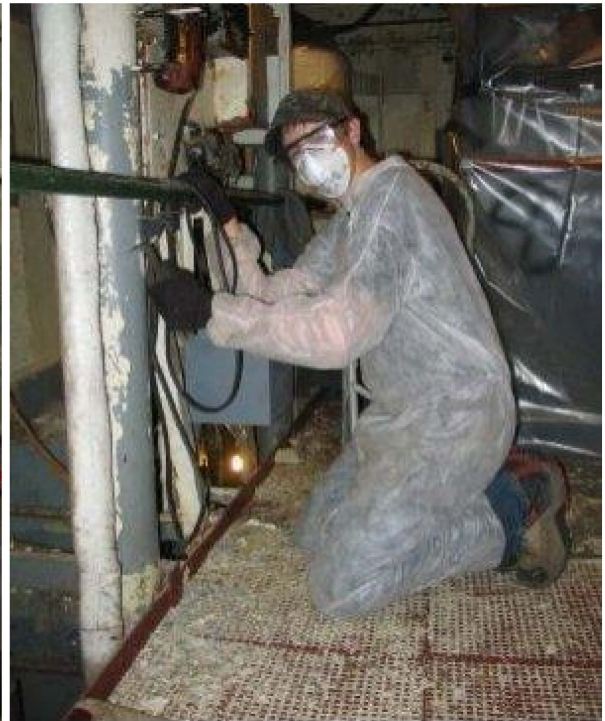


**Laird Confer's grandkids at work, Jared Maurer and Brandon Reese.**

**Michigan has a bizarre tradition.** Unlike all the local volunteers who just wish I'd stay the hell out of their way, the Michigan crew still seems to think my position deserves some level of respect, and have developed a perverse competition to see who can be "Tim's Favorite." This year, due to the high numbers and the absence of **John Bartko**, who successfully "bought" the award for several years, competition was stiffer than ever. The leading contender was Chief Cook **Tom Schriener**. I'll admit the relationship between myself and **Tom** has been somewhat strained ever since one of the finest welder/mechanics I know traded his welding hood for a spatula. But I'm over that. The fact that the whole field day would have been cancelled if he didn't show up to cook made the award his to lose. This despite his repeated threats to throw me out of the chow line on Sunday night for his traditional turkey dinner.



**Josh Maurer hard at work chipping the top of a B4 fresh air duct while...**



**Josh Snyder works just below him on assorted pipes.**



**Scott McFadden repairing fiberglass insulation in the aft motor room.**



**Joe Parker plumbing up the showers in the Forward Crew's head.**

**Tom** seemed determined to lose the title, as he adopted the attitude of the regulars. Monday morning, before I'd even had my first cup of coffee, he was on my case about the hot water not working. Fortunately we had **Jim** and **Joe Parker** aboard, and it didn't take them long to get the hot water heater back on line. They saved me from the wrath of not only Schriner, but every one else who might have wanted to take a shower. Between that and their work in the forward head, they shot up the list. Tuesday it was the galley vent fan. I'd barely crossed the brow when Schriner was complaining about that. But my pals **Ed Zajkowski**, **Butch Warrender** and **Guy Huse** were on hand to do a total rebuild of the unit in two days, including changing the bearings. That put them close to the head of the class.



Ed Vallad repairing the firemain in the DE Museum space.



Guy Huse and Butch Warrender pulling apart the galley exhaust fan.



Two of the BROUGH boys, Mike Marko and John Adriani cleaning "K" guns.



Ken Morgan and Joe Jeffries welding in the forward passageway.

**Wednesday Tom was on about the hot water again.** A quick check showed he just hadn't let the water run long enough before sounding GQ in my ear. While he was cooking, others were working. There was **Dow Clark** who remained in the competition by crawling into the B-4 bilge to paint the section under the fire pump so we can finally reinstall the pump, and then went into the starboard shaft alley. Above him in B-4, **Mike Zarem, Scott McFadden** and their team reinsulated and scaled the entire overhead of the motor room. Working overhead with debris falling on your face for four days is just as bad as being in the bilges. And then there were **Bill Wasko** and **Gary Dieckman**, and their crew which included the youngsters who completed all the painting projects despite three days of rain. And Gary is a machinery repairman who was willing to wield a paintbrush for the good of the ship. That kept him in the running. **Roy Brandon** was up there because after ten years of trying to get out of the galley, he ended up back in the galley. And then there was **Jim Ray**, who got 16 staples in his head after tripping on a hatch and almost got the award when the crew's attorney, **Dick Roy**, advised me that the award might help mitigate Jim's potential lawsuit.



**But when it came to picking a favorite, sometimes we have to look beyond the dirty work of preserving this ship and look at the bigger picture, our**

**mission of passing this history on to future generations.** Ultimately, that's what all this work is for. And the man who made the greatest contribution to that goal was **Laird Confer**. Beyond the work he did with the welding crew, he brought four grandsons to learn first hand of our heritage, and they all worked as hard as he did. The steady work that all the "kids" did helping the "old timers" chipping and painting, cooking and cleaning and running for tools was an inspiration to all of us. They are the future of the SLATER.

**High above it all were Gary Headworth and Michigan Dick Walker hiding in the MK52 Director.**

**See you next month.**