

# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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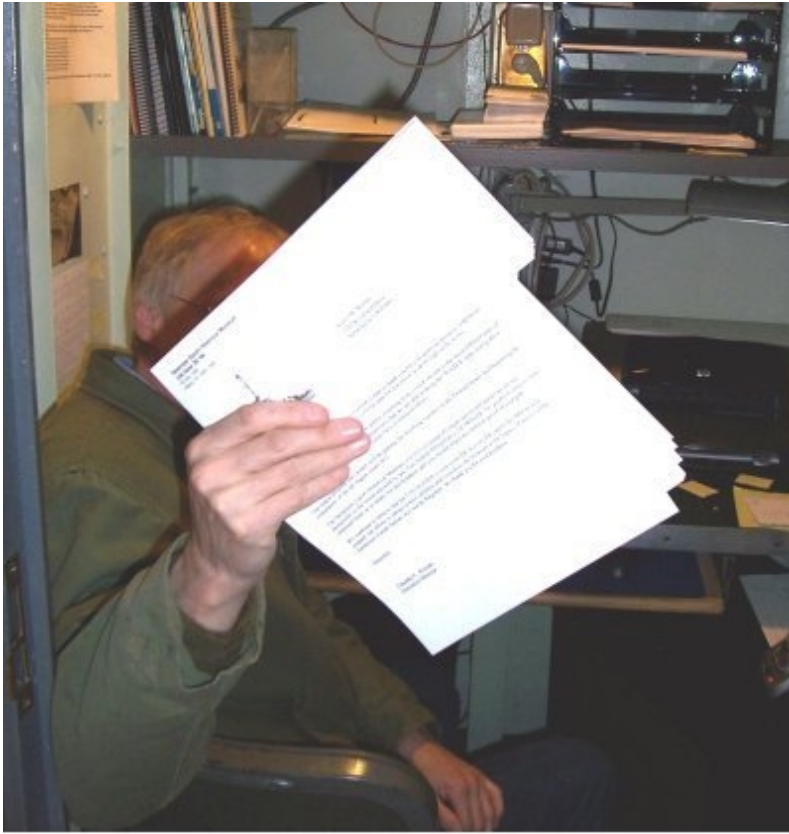
**Ice covered the decks as we haven't had four days above freezing all January.**

**There is no way to get around it; it's been a tough winter so far.** Between the ice storms, snow storms and heavy ice on the river, we haven't gotten much break from the cold. Last Saturday morning it was four degrees above zero when we came in. Cold enough that even someone as hardened as **Doug Tanner** decided it was time to make an appointment with a psychiatrist to try and find out why he got out of his warm bed on a Saturday morning. At breakfast the crew decided that group counseling might be a more effective solution and I was instructed to contact the volunteer center to see if they had a retired psychiatrist who would be willing to join the crew. Apparently these sessions aren't going well because a week later

the Saturday morning temperature was minus five. **Tim Benner** came down from Glens Falls to warm up. That's one of those local jokes.

**Ice makes things interesting.** Like the list. We came in one morning to find we were at three degrees to starboard. Now, the first thing I do every morning is check the draft marks, so I rechecked the draft marks. Conditions normal. Checked all the machinery space bilges, tanks, shaft alleys. Everything normal. We finally decided that it was the high tide putting pressure on the lines through the bullnose that was pulling her over. The tide went down, and she came back to two degrees. We mounted a level in the pilothouse so we could keep close track of the change, something more precise than the clinometer. What doesn't help is that back in Souda Bay the Greeks pulled off the two auxiliary boilers and the evaporator from B-2, removing a lot of portside weight. Add to that the fact that we haven't had the whaleboat aboard for two years, and now that it's back, that's two tons high up to starboard. Then we added the SL antenna, so that's another thousand pounds high up on the mast, so we always carry a little starboard list. Then, one Sunday morning, I got a call from Mike and Bill on the KATHLEEN TURECAMO, the Moran harbor tug that ties up across the river. They were quite concerned that the list had increased. I said "Mike, does it look like more than three degrees?" He said that was about it,

but it was enough to make me get out of my nice warm house on a Sunday morning to check. All conditions were normal, the way we like to find them.



**Erik presenting me with another batch of Winter Fund thank you letters to sign. We wouldn't make it without you!**

**This is probably as good a time as any to express how grateful we are to all of you who have donated to our Winter Fund Drive to help keep the place warm this winter.** The furnace runs pretty continuously on these cold days. Thus far, donations have been keeping pace with last year's drive, so it's heartening to know you still have faith in us. Thanks also to all of you who have added such thoughtful and encouraging notes with your donations. My favorite was the note we received from **Joe Breyer**, who sent his donation with the stipulation that none of his money be used to keep **Tim Benner** warm. We made him work outside for two Saturdays.

**Super Dave Mardon was continuing to live up to his super reputation.** The day after the first big snow storm, he showed up with his pickup truck and a snow plow to take care of our parking lot. That made life a lot easier. In past years we have always been dependent on the charity of **Gary Grimmel's** crew

at Rensselaer Iron and Steel or Rensselaer County, but this year it looked like we had an in-house volunteer snow plower. Then Super Dave bailed and went to Florida, leaving us to our own devices again. However, it wasn't bad. **C. D. Perry Construction** is using the pier area as a layout yard for a power plant that they are building nearby, and they have stepped into the breach and done a great job of snow removal for us with a giant Volvo front end loader. Kind of made Super Dave's pickup plow look puny. But he's back and on the job.



**The identical Herchenroder twins, Karl and Earl working in the pump room below the forward head. Karl has the moustache.....this week.**



**Tim Benner and "Super Dave" Mardon fabricating fittings for the forward head in the machine shop. What a team!**



**Tanner is back on the forward head job.** With his trusty disciples **Tim Benner** and **Chuck Teal**, they are, hopefully, in the final phases of the project. They have secured the trough, created a deck drain for it and completed the mounting for the commode. Sinks, showers, hot water heater and the urinal are all complete. The stainless steel septic tank is in place. What remains is installing the grinder pump in the septic tank, tying in all the sewer drains to the forward and aft septic tanks, doping and tightening all the joints on the sewer line, and making the electrical runs and connections. **Stan Murawski** is standing by to insulate the space, and then we will repaint it in March. In the meantime, Stan is busy in the aft head renewing the bulkhead and overhead insulation in there. In his spare time, he's been taking care of lunch for the Saturday crew. Hopefully the forward head will be ready for the first overnight campers in mid-April.



**Barry Witte and Gordon Lattey prepping the power panel for the septic tank that will service the forward head.**

**The electricians have been continuing to make improvements to the fire and flood alarm systems, working on restoration of the IC alarms in the aft motor room, working in the IC room and working on additional power circuits that will be needed in the forward crew's head.** The sewerage grinder pump and hot water heater take more power than we have up there, so they are in the process of mounting a breaker panel and running 440 volt power to the equipment room below the head. Barry Witte continues to use the SLATER as an educational platform, as he has been assisted by two high school students, James Conlon of La Salle Institute and Joe Tassarotti of Colonie High School.

**Education of a different sort for the learning disabled also takes place aboard the SLATER.** Throughout the winter, a group of volunteers from Wildwood School here in Albany have continued to provide us with fresh water in the CPO mess for coffee. There is no running water here in at the pier in Rensselaer, so the kids who keep filling and returning our empty water jugs week after week are a godsend. These guys can't move without their coffee. In addition, Kevin Schweitzer from Saratoga Bridges DayHab Programs keeps the messdecks and CPO mess swept and swabbed to help keep the place shipshape as the work goes on around them.



**Don Miller and Bill Siebert repairing the catwalks in the aft diesel room.**



**RPI NROTC Midshipmen Ray Osborne and Liz Church reassembling fire and bilge valves.**

**The aft machinery spaces have been happening spaces.** Mondays and Saturdays there is usually a crowd down there. The big project has been repairs to the catwalks and railings on the upper level of B-3 as we work towards getting that space safe for the visiting public. **Bill Siebert** and **Gene Jackey** have taken the lead on that job. **Karl Herchenroder, Earl Herchenroder, Chris Fedden, Don Miller** and Gene picked one of the coldest Mondays we had to lift all the spare parts we had been accumulating in B-3 out the portside hatch, haul them forward and restow them in the forward engine room. This helps clear the way for the chippers to start scaling in B-3, assuming we can find some chippers to start scaling in B-3. **Gus Negus, Mike Dingmon** and **Gary Lubrano** also changed out the raw water pump on the emergency diesel generator that gave us so much trouble on the trip across in December, and then they took the time to suck all the oily water out of the bilges that resulted from the leaky seals on the pump. **Gary Sheedy** managed to acquire a 35 kilowatt electric heater for B-3. They ought to be able to use that space for a sauna when they get it wired in. In the meantime, Gary continues to wile away his Saturdays polishing brightwork on the reefer deck. He's now working on the condensers, and should be putting the rigging together to remount them in the overhead in the next couple of months. It's getting to the point where you need sun glasses when you go down there.



**Our own MM2 John Whalen reenlisting into the "Real Navy" for another six years, sworn in by RADM Paul Czesak, NYNM.**



**Gary Sheedy working on refrigeration piping on the reefer deck.**

**Erik Collin, Glenn Harrison and Paul Guarnieri are making improvements to the CIC display that was such a hit with the public last summer.** Erik replaced a burned out synchro motor in the Dead Reckoning Tracer (DRT) simulator and is working on improvements to the sound system and software. They moved the status board to its original location and are refinishing the wooden DRT top. Many of the smaller jack boxes and switch boxes are being stripped and refinished.

**Not many people want to go out on deck this time of the year, but "Boats" Haggart is keeping an eye on the mooring lines.** He made new gripes for the whaleboat and has been overhauling our block and tackle. Rocky Rockwood is always there after every snow storm to clear the snow off the whaleboat cover and tighten the lines to keep the cover tight. He also restored the logdesk for the guys in B-4. We thought tour guide Glenn Harrison would dash off to Florida, but he's still hanging in with us, so we put him to work refinishing woodwork. He's done a beautiful job on the SLATER name board that Charles Miner so lovingly made so many years ago.

**And now, from the "You Never Know Where it's Going to Lead" file.** Over the summer one of our visitors was **Stuart Scace** off the USS CROMWELL from Pittsfield, Massachusetts. When he got home he emailed us informing us he that owns a plastics company and wanting to know what he could do for us. We were preoccupied with movie making at the time, so our response was a simple, "We'll get back to you." Once the chaos of the movie was over, we started wondering what a plastics company could possibly do for a WWII Destroyer Escort. Our head scratching led nowhere. Then, while wandering around the deck, Erik Collin had one of those "aha!!!" moments. The Japanese film crew had fabricated simple exterior depth charge pistol parts for the movie. Erik thought maybe if we loaned our one and only depth charge pistol to Stuart he could make a casting of the exterior parts and produce 120 authentic reproductions to replace the steel plates covering the holes where the original pistols used to be for our collection of sixty MK6 and MK9 charges.



Stuart thought that would be a great project, jumped in his car and drove the sixty miles to Albany to collect measurements and photos of the real thing. He explained the best way to proceed would be to feed measurements into a CAD program and have the computer create the molds. The pieces would be injection molded using 40% fiberglass polyurethane engineering plastic with the depth indicator markings machine engraved. The result would be painted to simulate the original brass. We told him to take his time since we wouldn't need the parts until April when we open to the public.



**Replica pistols mounted on fantail charges. The improvement to the charges is amazing.**

**Within a couple weeks, pictures of the finished pieces began showing up in our e-mail with the question, "What would be a good day next week to deliver them?"** Needless to say, we were astounded that a winter-long project had been completed in just a few weeks! Knowing a good thing when we see it, we started feeding him additional projects as quickly as we could come up with them. His next project would be to fabricate in brass the three pieces of the original pistol we were missing. A few weeks later Stuart showed up with the newly-fabricated pistol parts along with a depth setting wrench his machine shop had produced. Our inert depth charges now look totally authentic.

**The new end pieces are a truly fantastic addition to our depth charge display.** There is simply no comparison between a flat steel plate and the new authentic looking parts. With the new fantail rack and Barry Witte's high school class working on new roller loaders, we are well on our way to a truly authentic fantail depth charge display. **For any other Historic Naval Ships with depth charges, Stuart is offering to make additional pieces available to anyone that would like to have them for the low, low introductory price of only \$35 per set, including mounting hardware.** Be the first on your block to outfit your warship with genuine faux depth charge pistols!



**The STEWART afloat and back on an even keel. Photo sent by John McMichael.**

**Finally, good news from John McMichael on the STEWART in Galveston.** Following the chaos of Hurricane Ike, John has STEWART back on an even keel. John wrote that contractors dug a big hole, filled it with water, floated the ship so she got back on an even keel and then pumped the water out. They did have the complication of a 32 foot work boat that got lodged under STEWART. But I understand that John is thinking about leaving the water in the basin with the ship afloat, just to keep us from being able to say that SLATER is the "Last DE afloat in America!" We'll see what develops, but STEWART looks really has come a long way.

**See you next month.**