



# 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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Recently we've been giving a lot of credit to all the out of town help we've been getting, the "Reserves" so to speak. But, let's talk about the regulars this month, those guys who are beating their heads against the bulkhead every week to make this ship the best she can be. For a change, Monday, November 2, was a beautiful day. The Monday crew showed in force and went about their unpaid duties. **Erik Collin** is always aboard by the time I get here at 0730, working on posting and acknowledging the contributions. Our archivist **Franklin Peter** always beats me, too. He sets up in the logroom. Most recently he has been reviewing and organizing correspondence we received from **Marty Davis** concerning the early history of the organization. When I get in, my first job is making the coffee and cleaning up the CPO mess. If I ever get hit by a bus, at least I know they'll wonder, "Whatever happened to that guy that used to make the coffee for us?"



Gary Sheedy discovered a nightmare, water soaked fiberglass insulation below the false deck in the reefers. He is attacking the problem.



Bill Siebert and Frank Peter encourage Rich Pavlovic on Rich's 20mm restoration work.

Shortly after I arrive, CSCS **Bernie Smith** pulls his SUV up to the gangway to unload chow.

Today, despite a sinus infection that would have kept most people home, he is in the galley cooking up the beef stroganoff for the noon meal. **Bob Callender**, **Don Shattuck** and **Gene Jackey** usually show up about the same time. Gene sets up on the workbench outside the machine shop and is soon at work fabricating the racks that hold the 40mm clips in the 01 level gun tubs. Several were wasted away and Gene is doing a great job making replacements.

The chippers are at work on the fo'c's'le deck. **Chris Fedden** and **Ron Mazure** are now back in the number one three-inch gun tubs, taking everything down to bare metal. Down below them, outside the

CPO mess, **Angelo Bracco** is at his sewing machine rehemming the call colors, which took a real beating this last week in the wind. Only have to get four more weeks out of them, and I promised that I'd order a new set next spring. In addition to being an aircrew survival technician, Angelo is our HAZMAT expert, and has just completed a check of the machinery spaces looking for potential problems. Cancer-fighter **Jim Gelston** arrives to wind all the clocks. His job is a little more complicated today because it's the day after going back to standard time, so all the clocks have to be set back. Way back aft **Larry Williams** and **Ken Kaskoun** install an electric heater in the passageway outside the laundry that Katie Kuhl uses for a curatorial workspace. This will help keep her warm this winter and allow her to continue her conservation efforts.



**Rocky Rockwood restoring the starting air flasks in the aft engine room, B-3.**



**New volunteer Alexandra Scavelli scaling B-3 CO2 cylinders.**

As has been the norm recently, there seem to be more people engaged in work in the machinery spaces than anywhere else. The engineers have gotten much more aggressive about shanghaiing any deckhands who, in their opinion, are unattached or don't seem to have enough to do. Most recently I found our dedicated whaleboat man, **Rocky Rockwood**, cleaning up old brass valves and making them look like new. I asked him if they were out of the whaleboat and he replied it was off the high-pressure air system for Gus. I pried storekeeper **Don Miller** out of the engineroom to finish up the insulation work in the forward head and make a scrap metal run with **Dick Walker**. I practically had to get **Gus Negus** and **Karl Herchenroder** to sign a release chit. And you should have heard them whine when I had to pull **Gary Lubrano** out of there to help Clark with his welding. They couldn't believe I couldn't find one of my idlers to help Clark.



**Veteran Gunner's mate and tour guide Jim Kuba leading the last school tour of the season.**

I have been accused of being really pretty cold-blooded with regards to the volunteers. Not much makes me feel guilty. We've taken to quoting that line from "Ben Hur" in the hold of the galley when the guy with the whip tells the oarsmen, "We let you live to serve this ship." But **Clark Farnsworth** makes me feel guilty. Now in his 87<sup>th</sup> year, our senior welder fitter fractured a vertebra in his neck this spring. When he came back aboard, we promised nothing but bench work, where he could be comfortable. Then we took him up to the infamous fo'c's'le watertight door

and said, "Weld up the parts you feel you can reach comfortably." We even gave him a folding chair to

sit in. Did I mention that part about being a compulsive liar? There actually wasn't much you could reach from the comfort of a folding chair. So about an hour after lunch I walked up forward and there's this poor old man lying on the deck, welding out the underside of the doorframe with **Mardon** and **Gary Lubrano** watching him.



**Dave Mardon has been spending most of his time cutting, welding & grinding at the new forward door.**

**Ten years ago Clark used to have an old mattress that he'd carry around for jobs like this so he wouldn't have to lay on the cold steel deck.** That disappeared a few years back when we promised Clark we'd stop giving him jobs where he'd have to bend like a pretzel. Today, he declined the use of the mattress, because he said he'd never be able to get back up, jokes about rigging a block and tackle notwithstanding. But we're a sympathetic bunch. When Smitty piped "Chow call" for lunch, **Super Dave** carefully helped Clark stand upright with the encouragement, "Christ Clark, by the time you get on your feet it will be supper."

**The week of Veterans Day was a big week for us on the SLATER.** On Tuesday the 10<sup>th</sup> of November we celebrated the 234<sup>th</sup> birthday of the United States Marine Corps. This was our second such event, sponsored by our local chapter of the Marine Corps

League. The weather was perfect and the event was well-attended, easily twice the size of the first event last year. Local dignitaries who attended were Congressman **Paul Tonko**, Albany County Executive **Mike Breslin**, and Rensselaer County Executive **Kathy Jimino**. The quarterdeck was so crowded that the dignitaries had no room to sit, and the Marines paraded forth their birthday cake. In their tradition, guest of honor **Paul Czesak** received the first piece of cake, who passed it on to the oldest Marine present, who passed it on to the youngest Marine present. What a job the Marines do of keeping their traditions alive.

**Wednesday, Veterans Day was a busy day aboard the SLATER, one of the best attended four days we have had since summer.** Visitors came aboard as a way of thanking and remembering our Veterans. That day we had a wonderful two-page article in the local Legislative Gazette, the weekly newspaper of New York State Government. The article was well-researched and written by reporter **Priya Ravindran** with photographs by **Charles Scirbona**. Following the local Veterans Day parade, Following the Albany Veterans' Day Parade the Snow Dock took on the appearance of a debarkation port. Around noon on the 11th, DEHM Trustee **Greg Wolanin** in his World War II scout car. Other vehicles belonging to the Hudson Mohawk Military Vehicle Collectors Club followed, thus initiating our second military vehicle show. The biggest piece of Army ordnance was the 155MM "Long Tom" field gun, towed by an M-4 Tractor owned by **Jack and Cindy Pollard**. It was quite impressive alongside the USS SLATER.

**We held our own Veterans Day Ceremony on Saturday and, despite the fact that it poured rain, it was a well-attended event.** Dignitaries present were Assemblyman **Tim Gordon**, **Kathy Jimino** and the whole Madden clan, Assistant Commissioner of Veterans Affairs **Bill Kraus**, and West Pointer



**The Marines have landed as they make the USS SLATER part of their birthday tradition.**



**2009 USS SLATER Trustee Award recipients Clark Farnsworth and Jack Madden.**

**Mike Breslin** wearing a Navy ballcap, since he lost a bet on the Army-Navy game. Volunteer **Steve Long** was master of ceremonies. This was the Ceremony where Trustee **Greg Krawczyk** presented the annual Trustees' Awards for Outstanding Service for 2009 on behalf of the entire Board. We tried to keep it a surprise until the morning of the ceremony. We presented two awards, one for restoration and one for education.

**This year the education award went to Jack Madden:** Jack has been a tour guide aboard the SLATER since 1998. A former PT boat gunner's mate who served in MTB Squadron 15 in the Mediterranean, Jack became an accountant after the war. The father of Rensselaer County Executive **Kathy Jimino**, Jack has proved to be one of our most able and dependable tour guides, and has done many outreach programs for civic groups. Jack averages one day a week, and is always there for us on holidays and when we are shorthanded. Despite service on two destroyers and a DE, Jack's heart remains with the "Boats." Jack also volunteers by giving tours of the PT Boats at Battleship Cove every summer. The restoration award went to **Clark Farnsworth**, a former aviation metalsmith and the chief damage control man who served aboard the carrier USS LEYTE CV-32, Clark remains our oldest active volunteer. He is a regular every Monday, still doing

the welding and fitting work he has been doing ever since SLATER came to Albany. He still maintains his own yacht and is active with the Schenectady Yacht Club, The Capital District Chief Petty Officers Association and his church. Clark remains an inspiration to all of us on the crew, who hope if we make it to his age, we are capable of doing half of what he is able to do.



RPI Midshipman fired the Veterans Day gun salute on the aft 3" 50.



They also learned the concept of "you shoot it, you clean it."

Saturday had dawned with a "Noreaster", the remnants of Ida, bringing us a cold rain well into the evening. Hudson Mohawk Military Vehicle Collectors Club members had been invited to camp aboard the SLATER Saturday night. Because of the weather only the organizers of the event, **John Nichols** and **Charlene Ryan** and their grandson Brandon took advantage of the offer to spend the night. After a supper featuring Charlene's soul warming potato and ham casserole, **Paul Czesak** gave a PowerPoint presentation of the Battle of the Atlantic. Sunday morning **Senior Chief Smith** (Smitty) lit off the galley equipment at 0630 to prepare a breakfast of his special version of SOS, omelets, and eggs to order as well as unlimited coffee and orange juice. Breakfast doesn't get any better than this! At noon 20 members of the Club held their fall meeting in the Chiefs Mess.



SLATER team work as the whaleboat came aboard smoothly at the end of the season.



Jack Madden has a way of impressing people. Jack and his daughter Kathy admire a SLATER model that visitor Jim Elchek built for Jack to show his appreciation.

The most satisfying part of this job is watching the crew come together to accomplish a major evolution. Hauling the boat out of the water this year was an example of that. The evolution went flawlessly. We seemed to have all the right people in the right places, and finally have learned enough from our past mistakes that it only took us about thirty minutes from hooking up the falls to chocking her up in the cradle. Pretty poor compared to what you guys used to do, but a record for us. Whatever **Barry** and **Benner** were doing on the fo'c's'le, the falls didn't jam together once.

**It's a lot of effort to take the boat in and out of the water.** Rocky puts his heart and soul into maintaining her. Unfortunately, once she's in the water, she doesn't get much use. Insurance regulations prohibit us from using it to carry passengers. We have no dedicated coxswain, and everybody else is so busy working that we never take the time to enjoy the pleasure the boat could give us. **Larry Williams** and **Gus Negus** traditionally take her out for a quick spin on Mondays, but then it's back to work. So the debate goes on about whether it is worth the effort. Hoisting the boat with radial davits the old fashioned way entails a certain amount of inherent risk, like setting sails on a square-rigger. And like setting sails, it's technology that is being lost. Case in point is how long it's taken us to recapture the technology and figure it out. But, like having working active sonar, a TBL transmitter, and original diesel generator that makes power, or working release gear on the depth charge track, it keeps the technology from another era alive.

**A historian once likened a stationary ship exhibit to seeing a Stradivarius in a museum case.** You see the physical aspects of the violin; but that experience gives you no idea of what this instrument is for or what it is capable of. If part of the mission is to preserve the technology of the era as well as the ship, I think it is well worth the effort. And who knows, a volunteer coxswain may be waiting in the wings. Our efforts are certainly appreciated by those who were there. We recently received this letter and praise:

"Gentlemen:

Attached is a USS ROCHE Association check in the amount of \$2,000 as a donation to the SLATER Endowment Fund.

By a unanimous vote of our membership, we are dissolving the USS ROCHE Association effective as soon as some bookkeeping is completed. Suffering from the same plight as other organizations, our membership is down to 20 and the passing of time has taken a severe toll on what these shipmates can do. Several are very ill, others are in nursing facilities and among others, minds have drifted and enthusiasm has waned.

The bylaws of our association state that funds remaining at the association's dissolution must be given to a "Navy oriented" organization(s).

**There is no other "Navy oriented" organization that has the talent, motivation, first hand knowledge and subjectivity to perpetuate the gallant history of the destroyer escort as does yours. Among several possible organizations to receive a donation, none is as popular as the USS SLATER. All DE sailors are indebted to your efforts and amazing results.**

Our membership is delighted to send you this check. For our records please acknowledge this contribution.

Cordially,

Michael Friel

Secretary Treasurer

USS ROCHE Association"

**If only those who have not served felt the same way about your service and our efforts to educate the public about your history and the core values that enabled you to make those sacrifices.** The following letter is typical of the response we receive from our corporate and private foundations, those who have benefited so greatly from your sacrifices so long ago. I'll paraphrase a bit:

"Thank you for your recent correspondence.

We are very active in civic and community initiatives throughout our markets. As is the case with many corporations, however, we must closely scrutinize our contributions and have had to closely focus our giving. Our philanthropic focus areas include youth and education, AIDS/HIV, woman's issues (specifically breast health, heart disease, stroke and domestic violence), and the arts. We are proud of all that we are doing to serve our community in these critical areas.

We receive many worthy requests such as yours each month. Unfortunately, however, we cannot do all that we wish to do. We trust that you will understand our position and wish you success with your future endeavors."

**We get a lot of letters like that.** In a sense I've failed to communicate what is really going on here to the modern corporate world. Does not perpetuating the core values of the generation that built, sailed, and fought these ships qualify as education? It's enough to make you think about throwing in the towel, tying an anchor to your ankle and jumping overboard. And then you get a letter like the one from the USS ROCHE Association, and we realize how important it is to keep trying.

**And that is the lead in to our twelfth annual Winter Fund appeal.**



**When you walk these decks and see so much great work going on by so many dedicated volunteers, you get the sense that this project has to succeed.** The visitors who first saw the ship in Manhattan in the early nineties are astounded by the work that has been accomplished. When you look around the ship, all over you see the accomplishments of the past work season. The three-inch practice loading machine, the bathythermograph, and all the depth charge projectors, racks and depth charges look factory fresh. The Hedgehog projector is well on its way to full restoration. Other projects in the works include all the davits for handling the depth charges on the projectors. The work the engineers are performing in the aft machinery spaces is nothing short of astounding.

**But it takes a constant stream of cash.** That's why the only people that maintain and operate warships are governments and pirates. Financially, it's a losing proposition. Operating as a tourist attraction, there is no way that the ticket and souvenir sales can cover our total maintenance and operating costs. The remainder must come from grants and your donations. As one of my old friends, retired Commander **Frank Dengler** used to say, "If our government has a third world nation that's giving us trouble, we give them a destroyer. If that doesn't bankrupt them, we give them a cruiser." Such is the cost of maintaining warships.



**So we must appeal to you, again, to help us get through the winter and pay our bills so we don't have to dip into our savings.** The electric bills are \$1,500 a month and nothing has gotten cheaper. We're doing everything we can do to raise more money and keep our expenses down. Our actual traffic has been up 20% this year, but foundation and corporate grants have been way down, and we still don't get any operating funds from any government agencies.

**So I'll try and make it short and sweet, help keep a volunteer warm this winter.** These volunteers are busting their butts to make sure this ship is afloat for years. Please show your support for the job they have done this past year and will continue to do this coming year by being as generous as you can to the Winter Fund Drive.

**And in a leap of technology, you can now donate online with your credit card or through Paypal by going to our website at [www.ussslater.org](http://www.ussslater.org) homepage.** This is an amazing step forward for a guy who has lived most of his life by the creed, "If they didn't have it in 1945, I don't need it now." Click on

the "Donate" button, at the bottom of the page.

**If you prefer the old mail way you can print out the donation form right from the website. The only way I know to lead is by example, so my wife and I have already "sweetened the pot" by making a hundred dollar donation to the Winter Fund.** However, I was not the first to donate as many of you anticipated our need and have beaten me to the donation jar. We hope that you will get in line behind all of us to insure that the USS SLATER will be here for your children, your grandchildren and great grandchildren so that the proud history of these sailors and their ships serving the United States Navy will not be forgotten.

**Finally, we have some additions to last month's Binnacle list.** In addition to **Stan Murawski** and **Earl Herchenroder**, we've been missing the services of "Tour Guide Extraordinaire" **Al Van Derzee**, as well as tour guides **Bob Donlon** and **Bob Bull**. We don't expect to see them before the end of this season, but hope they will be "Back in battery" for duty next spring. Best wishes to all of you. We miss you.

**Please give as generously as you can to the Winter Fund Drive**