



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Vol. 12 No. 4, April 2009

In the wake of what I wrote last month, I start writing the month's edition with great trepidation, as I certainly don't want to sound boring but since nothing is on fire, there's no water coming in, and no one is bleeding (at this moment), all is peaceful and dull. In other words, "moored as before." All conditions normal. I want to express my thanks to all of you who wrote and called to reassure me that this publication is not dull and repetitive. The point of what I wrote last month was more to have fun with an old friend, and to those of you who are wondering, yes, **Ed Zajkowski** is still my friend, and thank you for asking. I'll know for sure next week when he shows up with the Michigan Field Day group.

Now back in Albany and open to the public, we've embarked on our summer work program. It's always tough when we first open to the public. Having had the ship all to ourselves all winter, sometimes it's hard to start sharing the ship again with the public, those people that pay the bills. Having spent the winter in construction site mode, we have to shift our thinking to remember that we market ourselves as one of the finest restored ships in the country. Every effort has to be made to act professional to maintain that 1945 time capsule image and not disrupt the visitor experience. The staff and volunteers play multiple roles. They are hosts to all the visitors, who are much like guests invited aboard our "yacht." In our haste to make maintenance progress, sometimes it's tough to make time for the visitors and to be patient with their basic questions. Shipyards and museums don't have much in common, and the grinding and scaling that it takes to maintain the SLATER certainly conflicts with what the normal visitor expects in a museum or theme park. The story of the history of the SLATER, how DE sailors lived and served is central to our visitor experience.

Breathing life into that experience, Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Chuck Teal, Dave Mardon and the rest of the shipfitters completed the installation of the grinder pump in the septic tank forward and made the final hook ups of the drain and discharge piping. The head itself is now complete with the exception of the installation of the commode, the completion of the insulation by **Stan Murawski** and repainting the space. Doug took his welding gang up to the whaleboat for a couple of days to pull the headblock off the forward davit for overhaul. He couldn't have done it without the help of a port-a-power jack loaned to Doug by his friends at **Frohlich's Automotive** in Voorheesville. Gene Jackey has been doing the actual overhaul work on the blocks.



Doug Tanner and Super Dave work to disassemble the forward davit head block



...with tender loving care!

Gary Sheedy reached a major milestone on the reefer deck. With little fanfare, he hoisted the second bronze condenser back into its brackets in the overhead and is now working on the motor controllers. The space continues to progress as Gary painstakingly restores each piece of brass and copper one piece at a time. As a commercial refrigeration technician, Gary spends a lot of time during the workweek in motels. He usually carries part of the reefer deck with him and works on his hobby as hotel rooms become his workshop. He's done a lot of homework for SLATER over the past couple of years. The engineers have continued repairs to the catwalks in the aft diesel room, B-3, as we work to make that area accessible to the public. Back in B-4 **Chris Fedden** and **Larry "Rocky" Rockwood** worked on scaling the main motors in B-4 in preparation for painting. But we know Rocky is anxious to get out of the engineroom and back to his whaleboat.

In conjunction with Michele Vennard and the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau, we hosted a group of travel writers as part of this years I Love New York / Upstate Discovery Tour. Several NYC-based, writers, freelance and publication based came to Albany to find our city's hidden gems. We rigged the wardroom for visitors and hosted the writers to a continental breakfast. Prior to their departure for Cooperstown, Gordon Lattey and Nelson Potter led the group on a tour of the ship to open their eyes to a part of American history they probably never expected to find in Albany.



The USS ZEAL AM-131 Memorial Service.

To give you an idea of the range of activities we've seen, on April 7th we held a commissioning ceremony for Luke Milavec, a former Marine who was commissioned as an Ensign. We had our first overnight encampment of the season on May 18th when we hosted Boy Scout Troop 49 from Oakland, NJ. On the 24th we hosted a regional meeting of the Company of Military Historians. April 24th was also an overnight encampment by Girl Scouts of Northeastern New York. On the 26th, we were visited by the Corvair Auto Club and on the 30th we hosted the memorial service for the minesweeper USS ZEAL AM131 Reunion. During

spring break we were visited by tours from a variety of children's vacation camps. And school tours came in April from as far away as Bennington, Vermont and Ilion, New York.

The guides have also had a busy couple of weeks. In fact, April was one of the best opening months we've had in several years. The ship has had several large school groups aboard, and we'll start having summer camps here in the next few weeks. Many of these groups have also taken advantage of the extra classes taught by the ship's education staff. So far, **Eric Rivet** has taught kids short classes on Morse code, navigation, and signal flags and semaphore. We've also had two overnights so far this season with two more scheduled in May. The guides have been busy off the ship as well. **Glenn Harrison** recently gave a presentation on the SLATER for an AARP group at the Troy Veterans Hall. We're hoping his talk will get the group down for a tour.



Our new replica 40mm clips.

Stuart Scace, of depth charge pistol replica fame, has come through for us again with another special project.

This time he is working on filling the ammo racks in the 40mm gun tubs with replica 40mm ammo. He is fabricating the shell casing and projectile, painting them and delivering them in batches of fifty, that's enough to fill twelve clips with two rounds left over. He didn't even blink when he heard the racks could hold 860 rounds. We didn't ask for that many - we would be happy to fill two of the three gun tubs. We also managed to get a hold of a hedgehog fuse, courtesy of **Mike Brueckman**, that had been turned into a cutaway to show the inner workings of the fuse mechanism. Mike is looking for a 5"/25

round and offered the fuse in trade if we could locate such a round. As DEs didn't use any 5"/25s, we had to settle for borrowing the fuse. The fuse was quickly passed on to Stuart, who went right to work designing replica fuses for our hedgehog display. I'm not sure if it's **Erik Collin** who is passing these projects on to Stuart, but the SLATER sure has been getting a lot of weapons parts lately. This leads me to wonder if someone somewhere has plans for sending us into battle.

The staff guides have also been working outside of their rates assisting in these projects. **Ron Bailey** has been painting, clipping and installing the new 40mm shells donated by **Stuart Scace**. **Pete Woznack** has been a big help with installing the new depth charge detonator pieces and with loading the charges into roller loaders. **Natasha Herchenroder** has completed stenciling the bearing marks inside the 3" gun tubs, a project that we've wanted to do for years. She has now moved on to stenciling mount numbers onto helmets with the help of Ron, Pete and **Heather Maron**.

Katie Kuhl has completed the first phase of her plan for the DE Museum in C-203L. She has removed all of the bunks from the space and moved them into the depth charge magazine she worked so hard to empty. Now she's working with exhibit designers from the New York State Museum to develop a plan for making the most of the museum space. She is also keeping herself busy with applying for grants to fund the museum improvements and to establish a long term preservation strategy for the artifacts you've donated to us over the years.



The Volunteers of the USS HUSE Crew during their Spring 2009 Field Day Week.

The last week of the month heralded the arrival of the USS HUSE crew for their annual work week aboard the SLATER. George Amandola led a crew that included Ernie Aeschilman, Don Bean, Wally Brigslid, Derwint Cartmel, Joe Coletti, Gene Hermanson, Mal Holderness, Guy Huse, John Lamunyan, Robin Larner, Jim Larner, Bill Meehan, Tom Petron, Roland Robbins, Jeff Robbins, Jaye Robbins, Lew Shelton, Doug Streiter, Stan Sudzak and his Grandson Paul Sudzak. Group leader George is still looking for someone to relieve him in the galley, but it didn't happen again this year. The absence of the HUSE's old supply officer meant that George also had to do all the commissary accounting. He did have a fair amount of galley support in the form of Joe Coletti, Tom Petron and Robin Larner. Wally did a great job in keeping the messdecks, berthing spaces and heads clean. Roland Robbins and Bill Meehan handled the paint locker, mixing paint and keeping the brushes clean.



Mal Holderness working on Gun 43.

First to arrive on the scene was Doug Streiter, who spent last year in the machinery spaces running piping for the sewer line and spent the Saturday he arrived wondering why we hadn't finished it. He teamed up with his shipmate Don Bean and our own Super Dave Mardon and the two spent the week making up the final connections on the septic tanks forward and aft, and pressure checking the piping.

Stan Sudzak and his grandson Paul had their mission scoped out even before they got here. Stan was a former

gunner's mate off the USS KEY who spent the last two years on the forties, overhauling the elevation gear on the starboard mount and scaling the portside mount. The aft centerline mount, gun 40, was the only mount left in bad condition. Stan was chomping at the bit to get at it. He and Paul spent the week

along with **Mal Holderness** using needle guns and air chisels to take the gun down to bare metal. By the end of the week they had about 80% of the gun scaled down.



Robin Larner, Lew Shelton and Jim Larner prepping depth charges.

Ernie Aeschilman, Derwint Cartmel, Gene Hermanson, John Lamunyan, Jim Larner, Bill Mehan, Roland Robbins, Jeff Robbins, and Lew Shelton tackled the starboard roller loaders. The first step was removal of the fragile replica depth charge depth setting pistols. Then Monday morning they, with the help of our regulars, **Don Miller, Earl Herchenroder, Gene Jackey and Gary Lubrano**, unloaded the ten 300-pound depth charges on the starboard side. One group went to work sanding and prepping all the depth charges with corroseal and then primer. The other crew tackled the roller loaders, scaling all the nooks and crannies and revealing a lot more corrosion around the bases than we anticipated. We began to wonder what was holding up the weight of the three depth charges, or 900 pounds.

Down in the aft motor room, Guy Huse worked with our regulars Larry Williams and Ken Kaskoun to reinstall the brushes in the number four main motor which were removed several years ago for cleaning. He is planning to stay through the Michigan week and is lining up the reassembly of the B-4 fire and flushing pump for next week's project.

Robin Larner and Jaye Robbins tackled another eyesore. For the past four years every time Education Coordinator Eric Rivet looked out his window in the trailer his gaze landed on the stack of rusty 40mm ammunition cans on the 01 level. This, as well as the rusting aft mast disturbed him to the point where he began to concoct a plan to make them disappear. His plan started to dovetail with the fact that collections manager **Katie Kuhl** was cleaning out the depth charge magazine aft, below the museum compartment. The plan almost came to fruition, except for the plot being discovered in process, and the fact that Katie had other plans for her newly cleaned out magazine. Storage space is at a premium on SLATER, and much like the physics of a vacuum, any empty space is filled as soon as it is emptied. As compensation to Eric, I made a promise that the ugly ammo cans would be painted. It fell to Robin and Jaye to keep that promise and get the cans sanded, primed and painted. Robin also repainted the inside of the starboard 20mm gun tub before moving aft to help the crew on the depth charges.

The last of the HUSE group left this Friday, May 1st. The Michigan gang will start coming in tomorrow including my good friend **Ed Zajkowski**, to pick up where the HUSE crew left off. We'll see if I have any good friends after they leave.

See you next month



Ernie Aeschilman cleaning in B-3.