



# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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The bunks in the aft crew's quarters had not even cooled off from the HUSE Crew Field Week when the Michigan Chapter of DESA piled aboard and began stowing their gear, beginning their 22<sup>nd</sup> trip to the SLATER. They had their largest crew yet, with every person being a Chapter member or family of, making up the 45 aboard during the week. This included 8 sons and 10 grandsons of their Chapter's sailors. Sunday night is always a special treat with chief cook **Tom Schriener**. Each year for his first meal he cooks the crew turkey dinner with all the trimmings, including homemade apple pie topped with homemade ice cream. Tom made sure I was invited, so I took my place in the chow line, only to be handed a brown paper bag with a peanut butter sandwich (no jelly) and a warning that that's what I could expect for the rest of the week unless I gave some consideration to giving the cook a little recognition. It seems Tom hadn't forgotten those little potshots I took at him a year ago for giving up welding in favor of cooking. In the perverse competition to see who can be "Tim's favorite," Tom was hoping that threatening me with peanut butter might give him a leg up on the competition. He fed me well all week, but it wasn't enough.



The spring 2009 45 man Michigan Crew including 8 sons and 10 grandsons of their Chapter's sailors. The kids made a major contribution. Photo by Richard Andrian.

This year's crew included John Adriani, Roy Brandon, Tom Burrows, Dow Clark, Laird Confer and his grandsons Josh Mauer, Jared Mauer and Tim Ososkie, Gary Deickman, Bob Donlon, Gary Headworth, Guy Huse, Emmett Landrum and his son Jeff, Tim Markham and his son Andrew, Mike Marko, Ron Mazure, Scott McFadden, Rush Mellinger, Ron Orszag, Jim Parker and his grandson Zachary, Jim Ray, Dick Roy, Tom Schriener and his sons Joe, John and Mark and his grandsons Alex, Charles, Neal and Ryan, Larry Stiles, Bill Svihovec, Ed Vallad and his grandson Dan Lozon, Charlie Vesterman, Dick Walker, Bill Wasko, Ed Zajkowski, Ron Zarem and his sons Dave, Mark and Mike.



Part of the galley crew including Andrew Markham, Joe Schriener and chief cook Tom Schriener



Charlie Vesterman try's to break director 41 loose in train.

The crew was broken into teams. Tom ran the galley with his sons and **Larry Stiles**. The gunners picked up where the Sudzaks left off and went to work scaling and priming 40mm gun 40. The fire control crew went to work on the MK-51 directors and got all three freed up in train and elevation. **Dick Walker** and **Gary Headworth** spent the week working over the electrical boxes in the MK-52 Director tub. The topside painting crew scaled, primed and painted the aft stub mast, the flagbags and the forward davit. The work on the flagbags involved a good deal of metalwork replacing wasted steel at the bottom of the bags. The hull painting crew was made up of **Gary Deickman** supervising all of Laird Confer's grandsons. They scaled and painted the hull and boottop on the port quarter. **Laird Confer**, **Tim Markham** and **Roy Brandon** replaced wasted metal on the legs of the starboard roller loaders. **Ron Zarem** and **Bill Wasco** led a crew that completed painting the roller loaders and reloading all 22 MK 9 depth charges. With the new pistols made by **Stuart Scace**, they look amazing. However, the dirtiest job was undertaken by our traditional dirty jobs crew, **Dow Clark** and **Ed Zajkowski**, who tackled the bilge down below the paint locker up forward. We discovered that this area was very corroded this past winter, and Ed Z has a commitment to hull preservation. They were assisted by **Tom Burrows** and **Tim Markham's** son **Andrew**. They pulled out can after can of rust, then corrosealed and primed the bilge and painted the bulkhead and overhead white. It looks like new construction.





Gary Dieckman supervising the Laird Clan painting over the side.



No OSHA violations here working on the flagbags.

**This leads to my favorite.** There is some obscure rule that says a first timer can't be my favorite. As much as I owe it to Tom for feeding me so well, I would have to give it to **Andrew Markham**. Not because he spent three days doing the filthiest work aboard, but because any young man who has to spend three days in a bilge with two crotchety old men deserves some kind of special recognition. At least Laird's grandkids had each other for company. Andrew was on his own. Ed Z wrote me about Andrew. He said, "**I have nothing but praise for Andrew. He never bitched, never asked to get out of the job, had to be reminded to take a break and really learned something about real life and its obstacles. He worked with two "older" guys who had aches and pains, who did complain sometime. Andrew experienced something he will remember his whole life. I hated the job, but this young man alongside me made it worthwhile. He did what few other volunteers have the guts to do!!!! No matter what area I gave him or what job to do from scraping to hauling out scum from filthy bilge pockets, he did it without a whimper. He is also completely qualified on the needlegun!! And, as always, Dow carried us by giving 110%, setting a work ethic hard to follow. What a team!**" But since Andrew is a first timer, he's out. So that leaves those grandsons who returned once again to work on difficult chores, which included painting of the hull. So to **Josh Mauer, Jared Mauer and Tim Ososkie** as well as **Tim Parker's** grandson **Zachary**, congratulations guys, you are "Tim's Favorites."



**Nobody worked harder than Andrew Markham in the bilge.**



**The Zarem clan spray painting depth charges.**

**The combination of the two weeks of Field Days left the ship in great shape.** The Michigan crew chow fund produced a profit, which we turned back over to the Endowment Fund. This year the group voted to return our week's profits to the newly established Dry Dock Fund. Their food profit raised over \$1,000.00 in their week's stay as many men donated money to the Dry Dock Fund before they left for home.



**Michigan Dick Walker documenting conditions on the MK-52 Director platform.**



**Working on the port roller loaders.**

**I had barely recovered from the Field Days when another long shot came to fruition.** We had read in the LSM Association Newsletter "Alligator Alley" that the LSM-45 was about to be used for target practice. In a sad turn of events, the LSM veterans had raised money to bring the LSM-45 back from Greece several years ago. The ship was built at Brown Shipyard Company, Houston, and commissioned on 31 July 1944, with LT. Charles D. Freight USNR in command. She saw service in the Philippines. Her career then paralleled SLATER's in many ways. She was decommissioned on 27 March 1947 at Green Cove Springs and transferred to Greece in 1958 as the HS Ipopliarkhos Grigoropoulos (L-161). Returned to the United States to be refurbished as a floating Museum, she was



displayed in Omaha for several years before being moved to Jacksonville, N.C., as part of the Museum of the Marine. The effort to include the ship in the museum failed and the ship is scheduled to be used as a target.



**LSM-45 salvage crew, Brian Goodman, Mike Malone, Gordon Lattey, SgtMaj Joe Houle, Chris Dennis, Dave Mardon and Tim Rizzuto. Barry Witte took the picture.**

**Based on the little information we had, Trustee Captain Greg Krawczyk made contact with Museum of the Marine Director of Operations SgtMaj Joe Houle. SgtMaj Houle went to museum director Colonel Bill Ayers, and they gave us the green light to make removals. Volunteer Fred Lehman, formerly an engineer with the Army, had been taking care of the ship and had visited the SLATER. Both Greg Krawczyk and Guy Huse made trips to the LSM-45 to reconnoiter the site and take photos. When it came time to put the trip together, Barry Witte, Gordon Lattey, Dave Mardon, Bill Siebert and myself agreed to go, and Barry enlisted the help of three of his former students. Being the frugal SOB that I am, (I believe "Cheap" is the**

operative word here) as well as living under **Rosehn Gipe's** watchful eye, all volunteers have always had to cover their expenses. This trip meant so much to Barry that he covered the airfare and hotel expenses for his three former students. They were worth their weight in gold.



**Chris Dennis and Mike Malone hoisting out a transformer.**



**Brian Goodman stripping the switchboard.**

**The reason this trip was so important to Barry was that as our primary electrical officer, electrical spares are important to him.** Normally, when we strip ships at government facilities, they have power aboard, so we cannot cut out electrical parts. LSM-45 had no power, and we were given a blank check to take anything electrical. Barry made the most of it. Working with **Brian Goodman**, an electrical engineering student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, he and Barry spent their time disassembling and packing away the LSM's entire switchboard. LSMs were AC ships, so everything was compatible. The other two of Barry's former students, **Mike Malone** and **Chris Dennis**, spent their time with Bill Siebert aggressively removing a wide variety of components, including the

ones most difficult physically. Aside from the entire electrical distribution board, the haul included two diesel heat exchangers, a diesel starter, numerous light switches, motor controllers, pumps, canvas pipe bunks, engineroom deck plates, a lighting transformer, an AC dough mixer, engineroom meters and gauges, two twin 40mm receivers, and elevation springs and locking pins from the 20mm guns. Most important to me were a number of original Navy lifelines and turnbuckles to complete the lifelines on the SLATER with proper Navy gear. That will give Bosun **Bill Haggart** something to work on.



**Malone's tank deck grill was delicious.**

**This ship itself was located at a rural isolated pier on the Marine Base at Camp LeJeune.** The second morning we worked the ship was Sunday.

Despite assurances that base security never came out there, **Bill Siebert** and I arrived a few minutes after Barry, to find the retired commander and his cohorts trying to explain our presence to two base MP's who had happened by. I got out of the car to throw my weight into the debate, which was not going in our favor, despite our having the keys to the ship in our possession. I began searching through printed copies of all our emails looking for the magic email that would prove we were legitimate.

Meanwhile, Barry attempted in vain to reach **Colonel Ayres** on the phone, with no success. Finally, in desperation, Barry explained that **Sergeant Major**

**Houle** was out of town at a funeral, but we would attempt to reach him by cell phone. That did it. At the mention of SgtMaj Houle's name, the MP's backed off, and said, "Well, if you have the keys and know the Sergeant Major, it must be okay." I don't know much about the Marines, but now I know that a Sergeant Major apparently carries more weight than a Colonel in the USMC.

**On our last day we flew a 48 star flag over the LSM-45 and gave it to SgtMaj Houle to give to the LSM Association.** We also had what will probably be the last hot meal served aboard LSM-45. Mike Malone cobbled together a grill out of a galley serving pan and a fan guard and cooked up charcoal broiled hamburgers and hot dogs on our last day, a much appreciated hot meal on a cold rainy day. I can't say enough about Mike, Dennis and Brian. Their youth and strength made them responsible for about two thirds of the total tonnage we pulled of the ship. We took about a ton and a half of gear, parts that will keep SLATER functioning for years to come. In a sense this was heart breaking for us, because we know all the effort that has gone into saving the LSM-45. It's a crime that no one has the interest to save her. Our hearts go out to all the vets who put so much time and effort into the project. Also, there's that sense of how SLATER has been blessed, because there but for the grace of God could go our ship. I really hate stripping ships, because I want to save them all. I guess that's the way a lot of people feel about lost puppies. We hope the LSM Veterans will take some satisfaction in knowing parts of the '45 will live on aboard SLATER.

**We had barely gotten the rental truck unloaded and returned and it was time for our Memorial Day Ceremonies.** Paul Czesak and Bill Kraus put on a splendid event on Memorial Day afternoon, but that was a bit overshadowed by a special event that followed on Tuesday. Our Friends **Jack and Cindy Pollard** of the Homefront Café in Altamont had arranged to have three Congressional Medal of Honor Recipients gather in Altamont, including **John Finn**, who was getting ready to celebrate his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Flying in from his home in California, retired Navy Lt. Finn, who still prefers to be referred to as "Chief," made his second visit to the SLATER, joined by New York's only living medal



honoree **Francis Currey**. The Selkirk man and retired Army Sergeant was honored for bravery during the Battle of the Bulge. Finn went into the Navy in 1927 and received his medal for helping repel Japanese fighters during the attack on Pearl Harbor even though he was severely wounded.



Congressional Medal of Honor recipient John Finn faces the Albany media on the fantail.



Congressional Medal of Honor recipient John Finn and Francis Currey with members of the Capital District Chief Petty Officer's in the Slater's wardroom.

A reception aboard the SLATER was arranged by the Pollards and the Capital District Chief Petty Officer's Association. Among the attendees were New York State Department of Veteran's Affairs Commissioner **Jim McDonough** and NYS Office of General Services Commissioner **John Egan**, as well as the Pollards and a strong contingent of our local CPOs. Everyone was amazed by Finn, who left his wheel chair at the gangway and walked the length of the ship to a reception in the wardroom. Still sharp as a tack, he kept everyone entertained with stories of the Pearl Harbor attack and his Navy career. Watching Finn was an inspiration to all and led me to revise my expectations for our volunteers. If you're eighty, we can now expect another twenty years out of you. If you're older or younger, do the math accordingly.

**John Finn wasn't the only one who traveled a long way to see us in May.** On Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup> our Japanese Friends **Sho Kotaki** and **Kanjiro Sakura** journeyed all the way from Tokyo to host a screening of the completed film "Battle under the Orion" at the Palace Theater. They had invited all of the production crew, cast extras and SLATER volunteers who were involved in making the film last August to a private, one-time screening. **Michele Vennard** of the Palace Theater Board and Manager **Chris Gould** went out of their way to make this an extraordinary event for the Japanese and all involved. As the private screening predated the actual Tokyo premier, they wanted to do it with as little press and fanfare as possible. It is producers Kotaki, Sakura and New York producer **Masashi Miyama's** way of saying "Thank you" to everyone involved in the production from the American side.

**The event was also timed to coincide with the 24<sup>th</sup> Reunion of the USS SLATER crewmembers;** ten of the original crew were in town for the event as were a large contingent of their children and grandchildren. The most touching part of the movie premiere was that when these men were introduced, the entire audience rose to give them a spontaneous standing ovation. Essentially the movie is a superbly done submarine movie, with the SLATER standing in as the submarine's nemesis. The subtitles made the film easy to follow, and the special effects were extraordinary. All agreed that the Japanese were true to their word, and that they created a balanced, sensitive and touching story of the final days of the war. All who saw the film were moved by it. It was especially impressive to see the footage of the Mexican DE HURST, underway. We do not yet know if it will be released in America, so I will not give the ending away. Stay tuned here for information on whether the film will be released in the US or its availability on DVD.



The screening was also a great way to thank all our volunteers who have worked so hard giving the tours and doing the restoration that made the SLATER worthy of the film. Always the advocate for his fellow tour guides, tour guide extraordinaire and recipient of the Capital District Chief's Assn. Slater volunteer of the year award, **Dr. Al Vanderzee** accosted me during the premier of Battle Under the Orion to make the point that it's about time that the volunteers who brought in the money got some recognition. Al is probably right, and I'm considering crafting Al's hints for dealing with small children into a self help document for the rest of our guides that will be published in a future edition of SIGNALS. We couldn't do it without you.

**See you next month**

**Slater WWII Exec Harold Poulsen being interviewed by Japanese media at the screening of "Battle Under the Orion." Photo by Ann Morrow of Metroland**



**The original Slater crew and Families gather for their 24th annual reunion. They will be back next year for their 25th. Photo by Richard Andrian.**