

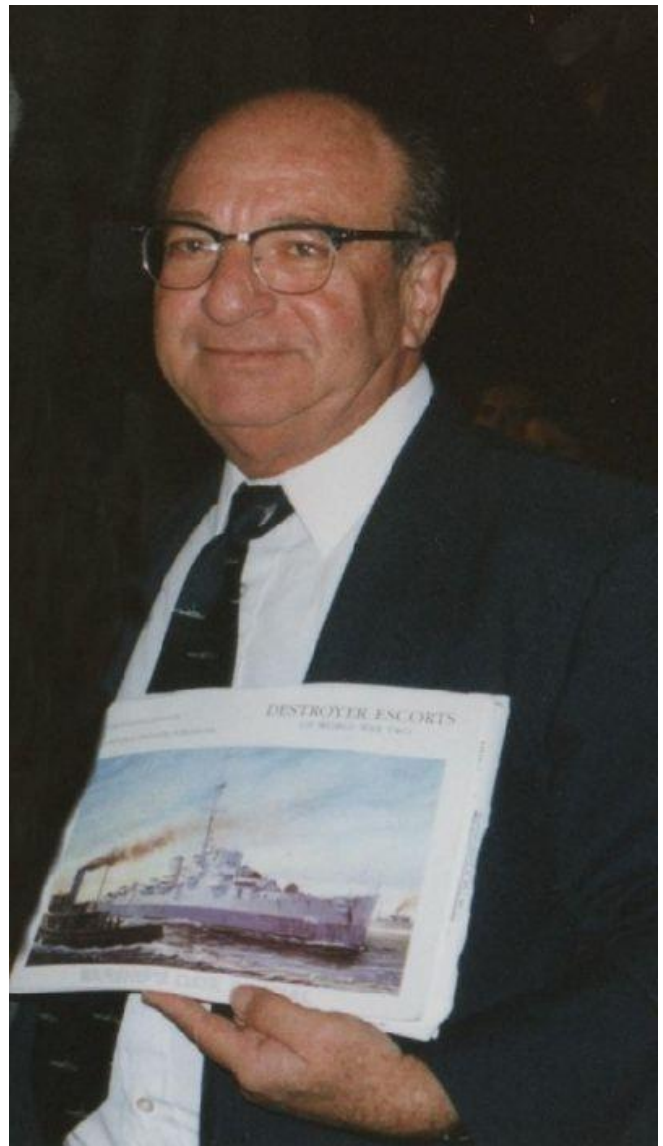
# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Executive Director

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The SLATER's ensign flew at half mast on Wednesday, June 28th, to mark the passing of Trustee Emeritus Dr. Martin Davis. He passed away the day before, on Tuesday July 27, 2010. An hour before his death, our DESA parliamentarian had been working on the revised DESA by-laws with Sam Saylor. To say his death was unexpected is truly an understatement. For those of you new to the project, Marty was one of the key individuals responsible for bringing the SLATER back from Greece. He principally dealt with all the bureaucratic requirements to transfer the ship. Marty enlisted in the Coast Guard on his 17th birthday in November of 1944, and served as a pharmacist's mate aboard the Coast Guard-manned USS PETTIT DE253 until her decommissioning at Green Cove Springs. Following his retirement from a long career in public education, he became DESA's long time parliamentarian and director of historic projects for DESA's Board of Directors.



Dr. Martin Davis

In this capacity over the years, he did a great deal of research, presented many historic programs, wrote books, developed videos, and created a strong relationship with the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum.

**Marty definitely changed my life, because it is doubtful that the SLATER project would have happened without him, and then my wife and I would not be in Albany now. It goes back to the DESA convention in Buffalo in 1992, long before I met Marty, when the DESA membership charged their officers with finding a DE and establishing a museum. As the Director of Historic Projects, Marty took the lead.**

**Our paths were to cross in an unusual way.** As Acting Director of the USS KIDD in Baton Rouge, my first encounter with DEs came in 1987 on a trip to Galveston. There I saw two ships, the beautifully restored sailing barque Elyssa, and the much neglected USS STEWART DE238. The beautiful Elyssa with her shining brass and varnished spars didn't do a thing for me, but when I saw STEWART rusting away, it was love at first sight. **That interest in STEWART eventually caused me to get in contact with DESA, and Marty Davis.** It was explained to me that DESA had held a convention in Houston and a memorial service aboard the STEWART in 1984. DESA had approached the Galveston folks about getting involved with the STEWART's preservation back then, but there hadn't been much response, and now DESA was out to find their own DE.

**I don't know how Marty first became aware of the SLATER's availability in Greece.** I do know that he traveled to Uruguay in 1988 with retired Admiral **Sheldon Kinney** to try to save Sheldon's old ship the USS BRONSTEIN, which had seen a great deal of action with the Atlantic hunter killer groups. They arrived too late to save BRONSTEIN, which was already being cut up. They then set their sights on USS BARON DE166, but they couldn't get her out before hurricane season, and she fell to the scrapers torch in 1990. On the same trip they visited Ex-USS McANN, restored and on display in Rio, a beautiful exhibit that inspired them in their efforts to save a DE for DESA. Somehow they heard about SLATER and shifted their sights on Greece.

**Marty and his co-conspirator, Sam Saylor, visited the USS KIDD in Baton Rouge in the early nineties to see how we did things down there.** While visiting, they related their plan to bring an old destroyer escort back over from Greece. They even went so far as to ask if we would be interested in mooring their ship alongside the KIDD in Baton Rouge. By that time I'd been in the historic ship business about fifteen years, and I'd heard all kinds of crazy plans to preserve ships. I wrote those two guys off as two more lunatics. I knew they didn't have a snowball's chance in hell.



Marty Davis, Sam Saylor and Mayor Jennings welcome the SLATER to Albany on October 27th 1997.



The Arrival of HNS AETOS at the Intrepid Sea Air Space Museum in 1993.

**The red tape required to save a ship from the Navy is unbelievable.** Talk about bringing one in from overseas, and you triple the problem. Marty and Sam were undaunted. Sam tackled raising the money and Marty tackled the bureaucrats. Marty arranged for the donation from the Greeks, at no cost. He arranged for the hull and tow survey. Somehow he got the Greeks to drydock the SLATER and do the work necessary to tow the ship at no cost to DESA. He arranged for a Ukrainian tug to tow the SLATER at a cut rate since they were coming over anyway to tow two ADAMS-class guided missile destroyers back to Greece. Along the way he got the US State Department to buy into it all. He worked to create the DEHF as a not-for-profit educational corporation. As DESA was a "last man" organization at the time, he saw the need to create an organization that anyone could join to support the ship in perpetuity.

**Then he had to find a home for the SLATER.** Marty and Sam talked to us in Baton Rouge. They talked about bringing it to Providence, Rhode Island. They had an engineering study done at Patriots Point, South Carolina that they paid big money for. It was finally thanks to the vision of **Larry Sowinski** at the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum, that the SLATER was given a berth in Manhattan, close to Marty's home, where he could keep an eye on her.

**When the great day came and the SLATER arrived in New York, no one expected her to look as bad as she did.** Marty used to delight in telling people the story of how he couldn't believe that HNS AETOS was the ship he had worked so hard to acquire. He knew that her Greek pennant number was "01", and he was relieved when he looked over the side and saw they had sent a ship with the number "10." He knew they must have sent the wrong ship.

**He asked me to come up and do a survey of the ship. I came up to Manhattan the October after the ship arrived.** The ship had been pretty much gutted inside, except for the machinery spaces, and I went compartment by compartment listing all the parts she would need to make her complete again. I developed a task list and a material list to do a 1945 restoration. She gave new meaning to the word scow. But I guess I look at neglected destroyers the way most people look at lost puppies. I want to adopt them all. Marty sensed that and tried to get me to leave the KIDD and move to New York. My response was two weeks was enough. You couldn't pay me enough to live in New York City.

**But a lot of people live in New York and loved that ship.** The SOLDESA Chapter, CONNDESA, and members of the Garden State chapter took SLATER under their wing and cared for her for four years doing an incredible amount of work. Guys like **Lou Yacullo, Teddy Prager, Phil Prainito, William Smith, Bill Humienny, George Craig, Earl Gillette, Tom Gruber, and Buck Buchanan** to name just a few, and a host of others did the lion's share of the chipping and the ripout of Greek modifications. And we must not forget the ladies who were right on board with their men.

**I knew where a lot of the parts they needed were located, from all my years of scrounging for KENNEDY and KIDD, so I spent the next four years as a volunteer helping them to locate the parts they needed.** Then I started to have a personal stake in making sure the restoration went correctly, and parts went where they were supposed to go. Marty certainly encouraged my input.

**In the spring of 1997, the Intrepid management decided that the USS Slater did not fit into their scheme of things and told the volunteers they would need to find a new home.** Marty swung into action again and almost had a deal to move the ship to New London, Connecticut with a free berth down at the riverfront and a City grant to help get the project started. The project had progressed to the point where the city electrician was calling me in Baton Rouge to see what kind of electrical plug we wanted to hook up on the ship. Marty and I even went up to New London and testified before a City council meeting together. Everything was falling into place when the local newspaper wrote an editorial asking why the City was considering bringing this "Rustbucket" to New London when they couldn't take care of the properties that they already had to maintain. That killed the SLATER berthing in New London. I wish they could see the "Rustbucket" today.

**About that time some of the Manhattan volunteers wrote to Governor Pataki seeking help in finding a permanent home for the USS Slater.** The letter was forwarded to the Division of Military and Naval Affairs and ended up on the desk of **Kevin Lynch**. He contacted **Mayor Jennings** and asked about bringing the SLATER to Albany. The City kept an open mind and a group went to Manhattan and toured the ship. Their tour guide was none other than **Marty Davis**, and he must have done his best sales job ever because the group came back to Albany and reported that the SLATER was a do-able project and would be great for waterfront development. Marty made several trips back and forth to Albany over the spring, summer and fall of 1997. Meetings were set up with all the agencies including the Corps of Engineers, the New York State Department of State, Division of Inland Waters, the City and County of Albany, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Capitalize Albany, the Downtown Albany BID and others. When the SLATER arrived, mooring her was an issue, and Marty miraculously made the 16 wooden camels appear. Of course, we spent the next twelve years filling them with Styrofoam, but they served the purpose. He obtained the dogtag machine and got us set up at Crossgates Mall, an enterprise that enabled **Les and Annette Beauchaine** and their helpers to make us thousands of dollars over the years.

**Marty and Sam made another run on me at this point.** When they decided to move her to Albany, they again asked me if I'd come work for them. My wife and I talked about it, and I said, "I'll give you a year to get things off on the right foot." That was October '97. That one year leave of absence is now 13 years.

**Marty stayed active for several years until health reasons caused him to retire from the DEHM board two years ago.** In recognition of the role he played in helping to establish the museum, he was voted a Trustee Emeritus by the DEHM Board of Trustees. I never realized the mountain of paperwork he had dealt with to save the SLATER until last summer when he donated all his archives to the museum.

I don't know how he had the fortitude to stay with it. **Frank Peter** is in the process of putting all the letters in chronological order so the history of how the SLATER was acquired will be understood by anyone who cares to take the time to read the story. And, as we say in the trade, acquiring the ship is the easy part. Once you have her, the problems are just beginning.

**No discussion of Marty would be complete without mention of his devoted wife Shain.** Shain remains one of the most patient and caring people I know. Marty always had an air of the absent-minded professor about him, more ideas in his head than he could keep track of, and it was Shain who was there to be to keep him centered, grounded and focused. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Shain and the whole Davis family.

**A major part of Marty's legacy are the educational programs that now exist on the SLATER today.** As a team, we do things like redesign webpage information, create and test new public and school programs, and engage visitors in the onshore activities that demonstrate the life of a sailor. The tour guides give outstanding educational, informative, as well as entertaining tours. In the very hot, humid, and stormy month of July, more than 1,900 visitors came to see us. We owe a great debt to all our tour guides who persevered during the hot South Pacific-like weather.



**Education programs on the observation deck include semaphore signaling...**

**By the spring of 2011, the SLATER will have new programs available for testing within schools and other organizations.** Education Coordinator **Linda Wruck** has met with classroom teachers who are scheduled to give the material a spin beginning in the fall 2010 school year. She also visited Beverwyck Assisted Living to present a new history trunk, *In Service on the Home Front*. If anyone is aware of educators or program coordinators who would like to apply to be a test school or organization, please have them contact Linda to request the application materials.



The Arrival of HNS AETOS at the Intrepid Sea Air Space Museum in 1993.

**Jim Kuba** and **Greg Wolanin** donated the critical trunks for the purpose of storing and shipping the trunk program. **Gordon Lattey** donated many, many original objects from the World War II period that complete the trunk and it's been fun to assemble the Kellogg's PEP Model Warplane Series from cardboard cutouts. For girls, we included the Shirley Temple paper doll cutouts, while adults will enjoy the music of the 1940s; at first glance, it may seem insignificant to present this type of information in a history trunk along with the stuff on armament, Hitler, and Hirohito, but these are just some of the reasons the boys offered when asked why they fight, leaving behind the comfort of home, "To fight for mom, apple pie and that girl back home." A project that normally requires \$10,000 and one year to develop, has taken 2 months and roughly \$200, thanks to the tremendous generosity of SLATER supporters! The newest donation to the visitor programming on deck is from **Dick and Maralyn Walker**. The Walkers donated a flag pole so we will have an onshore 50-star flag accompanied by information on flag etiquette and interesting facts of Old Glory's robust history! To all donors, thank you, thank you so very much!

**Other classroom activity onboard the SLATER is *School's In!*** This month we attended class on the workings of the Radio Room. **Jerry Jones** and **Joe Breyer** led the class and we now are more aware of the difference between ground waves and sky waves, as well as how transmitters and receivers actually function. The idea behind *School's In!* is to provide the Guides with in-depth explanations not only behind the mechanics of a stop along the tour route, but to also gain perspective on the daily living conditions for a sailor as he manned his station's watch rotation. Many misconceptions were corrected. Everyone is welcome to attend, so please do watch for future classes coming soon! August's class will feature detailed information about the hedgehog projector.

**The activity on the shoreside Visitor's Deck has increased significantly.** This is due to the 20-minute waiting period between new tours. Guests try their hand at semaphore communication or the sound-powered phones, lounge at the Victory Garden, or become a Bluejacket learning to tie knots. The new waiting period allows us to regulate the size of each group, gives Guides a chance to actually sit down and eat lunch at the same time, and gives visitors more time to check out the Ship's Store.



**Gus Negus and Mike Dingmon serve as boat engineers and Larry Williams as coxswain as they check out the whaleboat.**

**Meanwhile, we remain moored as before, but always moving forward.** The shipfitters have completed the whole forward head and are just waiting for the installation of the high water alarm to christen it. They have moved on to completing fabrication of number six roller loader with the parts fabricated by **Barry Witte's** students and Colonie High School. The engineers are continuing to repaint the lower level of B-3.

**The chippers have been working on the fo'c's'le.** And **Boat's Haggart** has been grabbing anyone he can to help install the Navy-style lifeline turnbuckles we salvaged off the LSM-45. The whaleboat is in the water and operational. And we are making plans for the fall field day, the last week in September. **Tom Horsfall's** meticulously restored transmitter has arrived in Albany, and plans are to restore it during the field day week. If you're interested in participating, give me a call.

**Here's some important information for our 3,000 members.** With Sam's retirement from the membership business, there will be some changes in how we handle your memberships. These were necessitated by a need to simplify the process. Sam's retirement leaves us short one full-time employee who wasn't costing us anything. So rather than hire someone to take his place we are making the process easier. The hand-typed laminated membership cards and stickers will be a thing of the past. The new membership card will be computer generated, non-laminated and a new card will be issued every year. The card style and letterhead have changed to be consistent with the letterhead we generate here in Albany. For you Life Members, your old cards remain valid and won't need to be replaced. The first batch of renewals has already gone out. There may be some glitches, so bear with us as we learn the ropes and try to keep all of you as happy as Sam did.

**The strength of this project is and always has been our people.** And that means you. As one generation of ship preservationists passes on, there always seem to be new people who step up to the plate to carry on the work that men like Marty Davis started. That is what will carry the SLATER forward.

**See you next month.**