



# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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Lowering the whaleboat in Rensselaer.

The month of March is the month we have to put everything back together for opening day and do the big clean up. Some things get back together in time. Some things don't. We just learn to roll with it. The pattern of lousy weather has continued all month long. Usually we count on a couple of nice warm days to do touch up painting while alongside the wharf in Rensselaer, but we hardly got a break this year.

**One guy who forced a break was Rocky.** As we did last year, we dropped the whaleboat on to the pier in Rensselaer so Rocky could sand and paint the outboard side. We dropped the boat on Monday March 14<sup>th</sup> so Rocky had two weeks to work on it. During that window, I think he had about three good days. Somehow, by enlisting the help of "**Boats**" **Haggart** Rocky managed to get the starboard side of the boat sanded, caulked and painted. I think it was snowing when he applied the final coat of paint, but he managed to get it done. On Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> we hauled the boat back aboard so we would be ready to sail as soon as the tugs were available.



**Barry Witte checks out the TBL motor generator as Mike Wyles and Joe Breyer stand by.**

**Up in the radio room the work has continued unabated, though they will be far from ready on opening day. Jerry Jones** has been putting in three days a week on the installation of the TBL transmitter. Assisted by **Joe Breyer** and new volunteers **Bob Kibby** and **Mike Wyles**, they have been making significant progress. The motor for the generator set has been tested and is running smoothly. Between them they ran 14 armored cables to the transmitter and have to make over sixty individual connections. And on top of that, they have to make the connections to the right terminal strips. This isn't one of our usual cosmetic jobs. It's supposed to work. Jerry spent two days in solitude figuring what went where before the actual work started. It took four of us to remove the 200-pound master oscillator deck to gain access to the terminal strips. Then they went to work cutting back the armor and making connections. As I type, the oscillator is still on the bench and the gang is still making connections, but they are talking about which antenna they plan to use.

**Out on deck, Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Dave Mardon, Gene Jackey, Chuck Teal and Chris Fedden** have been working away at the fan room and deckhouse repairs. The patches are all fitted in and the final welding is in progress. Inside the shop, **Clark Farnsworth** has been fabricating the flapper valves for the deck drains. They are close, but that won't be done for opening day.

Down in B-4, **Bill Wetterau and Ron Mazure** finished scaling the main motors, and also did the propeller shaft guard. We called in Kevin Sage to spray paint them out with machinery gray. Bill has done a great job restoring the piping and valves down there.





**The Crew from NPTU.**

**We received some great help from the Navy Nuclear Power Training Unit in Ballston Spa.** We asked them for some clean up help, and fifty sailors who were in-between classes volunteered to come down and help us out the day before move day. Led by Chief Owen Hooper and CWO4 Rick Croft they split into several teams. The majority worked in B-3 and B-4 cleaning and painting. Several motors and pumps got primed and painted; they did a lot of vacuuming and bilge cleaning, and helped Bill Wetterau disassemble fuel oil transfer valves for restoration.

**Topside, they removed and stowed all the canvas covers that protected all the guns for the winter weather.** A group of electricians removed and replaced a damaged 440-volt power cable in the overhead of compartment C-202L. Two groups cleaned the aft berthing compartments, and another gang worked in the maindeck passageway, removing all the damage control equipment, cleaning it and the passageway, and then restowing it. Finally, they went into the machine shop, removed every piece of gear in there, vacuumed the whole space and restowed everything. Our thanks to all these sailors and to Smitty who provided them with lasagna for lunch.

**Erik Collin and Linda Wruck have been working their way through the ship cleaning and resetting displays.** Once again, the bunks are all made up in forward berthing and the CPO compartment. The wardroom table cloth has been dry-cleaned and the table reset. Throughout the ship the displays have been improved with additional detail and personal touches. Decks and bulkheads have been swept, swabbed and cleaned.

**I started bumping Chris Gardella over at DMC about the tow on March 18<sup>th</sup>.** The river had crested; snow was melting slowly, so conditions were perfect for getting across early. Unfortunately, the HERBERT had dinged up a prop and shaft and was in the yard. That meant that all the other tugs were down south covering for the HERBERT and the EMPIRE was the only boat available that week. I sat tight and called Chris the following Monday, the 28<sup>th</sup>. At that point he said that Wednesday was looking pretty good because he anticipated having a second boat in Albany for crew change. In a week of bad weather the forecast for Wednesday was perfect. Chris had wanted to get an early start, so the crew mustered at 0800 Wednesday morning and began to pull off wires. We split the crew in two, old timers aft, youngsters forward. Up on the fo'c's'le **Erik Collin** handed RPI midshipman **Brian Schuessler** the radio and put him in charge so he could gain the experience, along with midshipman **Liz Church**. On the fantail it was **Doug Tanner**, **"Boats" Haggart**, and **Walt Stuart** running the show. The high point of the morning aft was when "Boats" Haggart told **Chris Lecce** to fake down a line. Chris did it perfectly with no instruction, and "Boats" said, "Boy, you're good. You'll catch on to the deck work real quick. Chris's response was something like, "I hope so. I'm a retired Chief Firecontrolman."



**Forward line handlers.**





The crew on the fantail make up the tug **EMPIRE** to the transom.



Will Tryon performs strap surgery to lower a fender.

At 0900 we saw the **EMPIRE** coming up river. At that point I realized I still had no electrician so I detailed Tanner to disconnect the shore tie. Down below **Gary Lubrano** was the only engineer, and he was getting ready to start the diesel. Without someone to shift the load, I told him there was no point in running the engine, so he secured all the valves. We made the announcement for all hands to come topside, killed the power and went cold and dark. The **EMPIRE** arrived and we quickly made her up aft as the pusher tug, our engine. We hauled in the gangway and stood by. We stood by for about 45 minutes waiting for the **CHEYENNE**. She was running late because it was crew change day. **Ken Kaskoun** arrived so I finally had an electrician. Just about the time I got to thinking I should have Gary crank up the diesel so I could have a hot cup of coffee, the **CHEYENNE** left the dock and headed up river. Once we saw her coming we singled up and made her up to the port side amidships.



Coming alongside in Albany



Jim Kuba and Linda Wruck spread the word about the SLATER at the district Boy Scout Powwow.



New tour guides undergoing orientation on the messdecks.

**And as of March 1st, Alan Fox officially retired from his day job.** Though Alan has been with SLATER for years, giving tours on Saturdays and serving on the Board, he is now joining the regular Wednesday crew of volunteer tour guides, ready to meet the school groups, families, or anyone who is simply dropping in, or has a scheduled visit to the ship.

**For those of you who live locally, SLATER Trustee Bob Cross will be presenting a lecture at the Albany Institute of History and Art on Sunday, May 1, 2011 at 1400.** This will be a free lecture and book signing as Bob discusses the research that went into his recent history of destroyer escorts, *"Shepherds of the Sea: Destroyer Escorts in World War II."* Bob will recount his interviews with 91 sailors and officers who served aboard 56 destroyer escorts in World War II. They reveal many never-before-told details of life at sea during wartime and, along with information found in secretly-kept war diaries and previously unpublished personal photographs, add important dimensions to the official record. Unseasoned teenage recruits when they first went to sea, these sailors were led by inexperienced college boys more accustomed to yachts than warships. The lecture is free and open to the public. Call (518) 463-4478 for more information.

**We owe a great debt of gratitude to a naval researcher in Washington D. C., Chris Wright.** The longtime editor of Warship International Magazine, Chris is an expert at ferreting information out of the National Archives. When Chris visited SLATER last fall with **Ed Zajkowski, John Alden and Dave McComb**, we apparently impressed Chris enough that he has been donating his knowledge to help us locate pictures of DEs that we don't have in our files. This will be a great help for future editions of *Trim But Deadly*. That's a bunch more volunteer hours that didn't make into the volunteer log book.

**I'm sorry to report that Gus Negus is still on the binnacle list.** Our Chief Engineer was back in the hospital with pneumonia, but I understand he is back home and doing well. Also, tour guide **Floyd Hunt** was hospitalized and will miss opening day. We wish Floyd a speedy recovery. However, this has been offset to a certain extent by the fact that both Herchenroder brothers, Karl and Earl are back with us. And the snow birds are gradually returning to the nest. We've certainly missed them all.

**If there are projects that didn't get completed for opening day, blame Katie Kuhl.** Our long time museum collections manager has left our employ for a new life in New Orleans that has something to do with our former education coordinator **Eric Rivet**. To move her belongings, Katie purchased a trailer in January. That trailer needed a lot of work, and the SLATER crew was more than willing to help her get the trailer ready for her journey south. In fact, I believe that more volunteer hours went into repairing that trailer during the month of March than went into the ship, a testament to Katie's powers of persuasion.





**Katie Kuhl (left) has turned the "Special Collection" management over to Heather Maron.**

**Katie started with us part-time, and we quickly saw that she was the kind of person who can't remain idle on the job.** If you don't give her enough to keep her busy, she will find things that need doing. To take advantage of her energy, we created a full-time position for Katie as our store manager and to organize our collection of museum artifacts. Katie has a thorough knowledge of proper collections management procedures and the desire to make sure that all items are properly accounted for.

Katie combines an absolute sense of integrity with dependability, energy and a vision to see what needs to be done and the dedication to do it. As our Sunday duty officer, she was responsible for running our museum unsupervised, seeing to it that the facility was properly opened, cleaned and closed, running the cash register, supervising up to ten staff and volunteers, greeting visitors, assigning docents to tours and dealing with emergencies. She had the ability to see everything that needs to be done to make an organization function smoothly, coupled with the ambition to do it.

**Katie's shoes will be filled by the capable Heather Maron who has been with us part-time since March of 2009.** Heather has completed her degree in public history and has done museum internships. She spent the winter working with Katie two days a week to insure a smooth transition. We know the collection will continue to be in good hands.

**Finally, our local newspaper, the Albany Times Union is running their "Best of the Capital Region" poll.** For the first time our USS SLATER is listed in the Museum Category. To vote for us online go to your computer and vote for the "Best of the Capital Region." They are also asking the question "Best way to spend \$19.1 million in lottery winnings (after taxes, of course)." I think spending \$3 million for a shipyard overhaul of the SLATER would be a fine idea. The online voting for "Best Of" ends at 5 p.m. Friday, April 22. The deadline for print ballots, available at the Times Union in Colonie, is 5 p.m. Friday, April 15.

**See you next month**