

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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It normally takes me at least a week to put SIGNALS together from the time I first sit down at the computer to the time Erik gets it up online. And, a lot can happen in that week of processing. In a perfect world, as I wrap up the November edition, I'm telling you about the move back to Rensselaer. Not yet, but maybe by the time this goes up on line we'll have pictures for you.

November is that month where so many years we had said to ourselves, "Why the hell are we still open?" By this time all the other riverfront attractions, The Albany Aquaducks, The Dutch Apple Cruise Boat, the Captain JP and the Riverfront Barge Bar and Grill have all shut down for the season. But not us. We're tough and we hang in to the bitter end. And, this was the year that it paid off. Despite the scare of that late October snow storm, November turned out to be a wonderfully mild month with lots of good days, good for painting and good for visitors.



Bringing up the accommodation ladder.



RPI Midshipmen Dan Siegel and Katherine Boy help cover all the guns for the winter.

The deck crew finished chipping and priming the main deck starboard side, so in the past two years they have done the main deck in its entirety. We made the decision not to put the top coat of deck blue on the last third of the starboard side, because winter will ravage it and it will look hideous in the spring. We'll let it go with primer for now and topcoat in the spring so it will look great for opening day. We put the whaleboat up for the season. Our experienced boat builder **Larry Rockwood** has suggested that every third or fourth year, we have the boat hauled at Scarano's Boatyard and stored inside so he can work on it over the winter replacing any dry rotted members that were newly discovered. So, on a warm sunny Monday, **Larry Williams, Gus Negus** and **Mike Dingmon** motored out of the berth for the last time and took the boat south a mile to the yard, where it has been hauled, moved into the boat shed and cradled for the winter. The big loss will be to the engineers since Rocky will be working on the boat all winter instead of helping them restore engines.

The engineers are prepping for the move. They have the batteries charged and have made several test runs with the emergency diesel generator to make sure they are ready to provide electricity, lights and hot coffee for the trip across the river. **Rosehn Gipe** made all her arrangements, and she has the electrical power turned on at the Rensselaer berth, the dumpster and most important, the port-a-john in place. All we need are a crane to lift the gangways, two tugs and a nice calm day. The shipfitters busied themselves with their winter preparations. They drained down the entire fresh water and septic system, blew all the systems out with compressed air, and then flushed them with antifreeze. During the process, Super **Dave Mardon** pulled the classic submariner's mistake of flushing a commode with the compressed air on the water line. Fortunately all he got was a face full of clean water and antifreeze.

Another one of the new challenges we face in getting ready for winter is lifting the fenders. The big rubber floating fenders on the mooring monopiles cost about \$30,000 each and we have been advised that they might not stand up well to heavy ice. So last year, **Doug Tanner** devised a way of hoisting them with chain falls so they are out of the water in the winter. Of course this has to be done from the deck of a boat, so last year that tied up the tug for an extra hour. This year Doug planned to lift the fenders while the ship was in place, so we could rig and life the fenders working from the deck of SLATER. In the “not all my ideas are good ideas” category, I suggested that we could lift the forward fender with the anchor windlass. Nobody seemed to disagree; so we rigged snatch blocks from the monopole and fair led two 1” nylon lines to the anchor windlass. As a back up, we rigged the chain falls to hold the load in place once we were finished.



Walt Stuart and Gene Jackey take tension on the anchor windlass.



Won't somebody please hold my safety line?

Rigging the slings, chain falls and snatch blocks to hoist these fenders is an adventure in itself. This year, the preparations went without incident except for someone forgetting to tie down the aluminum extension ladder when they were working on the aft monopole. Tanner left the boys unsupervised to go make lunch and apparently at the moment they all had their backs turned the ladder went over the side. Tanner blamed Benner. Benner said he was in the machine shop so he blamed Super Dave. Dave just takes the rap. It seemed like an easy matter to get a grappling hook and fish it out, so grappling hook number 1 went down and promptly caught on something too heavy to lift. The line was tied to the back of **Dick Walker's** pickup truck, and he put enough tension on the line to snap it. Super Dave went down on the paint float and grappling hook number two went down. It immediately snagged an object too heavy to be the ladder. We called for more muscle. That meant the engineers **Gary Lubrano** and **Mike Dingmon**. Five of us pulled from the gangway while Dave pulled from the paint float, and up came the biggest tire we have ever seen. Dave did manage to unsnag the grappling hook, and we decided to purchase a new extension ladder.



Dave, that's not the extension ladder.

When lift day came, they took up on the anchor windlass and two issues immediately became apparent; 1) those fenders weighed a lot more than the whaleboat, and 2) the electric brake on the windlass wasn't holding the load. Those of you familiar with deck work know about the way a line can jump on a windlass when it's under too much tension, or the unhappy sounds nylon makes when it's saying, "You're gonna be sorry." Fortunately **"Boats" Haggart** was on hand with his trusty stoppers to hold the load while we made a couple attempts at straightening out the line on the windlass before we aborted the attempt, took everything apart and went back to the time consuming, backbreaking, but a much safer method of lifting with the chain falls.

Bear in mind that this is only our second time dealing with this challenge, so we're still working out the kinks. Next year I think I'll invest in a couple of two-ton electric hoists, as well as the new extension ladder.



Newlyweds Midshipman Liz Church and Ensign Max Leviton.

The leader of our RPI NROTC volunteers made SLATER a special part of her life. In what I believe is our first wedding aboard SLATER, on Friday November 4th Midshipman **Elizabeth Church** and Ensign **Max Leviton** were married on the foc's'le. The event kind of had the feel of those hurried romances of World War II. Max was getting ready to deploy on USS NEW ORLEANS LPD-18 out of San Diego.

They decided it was time to tie the knot before he left, got the license, invited the relatives in for a small civil ceremony but as late as Thursday, had not decided on a location. Then Liz had the inspiration to do it aboard SLATER. She called Rosehn, who set it up, as it was the least we could do for one of our most dedicated volunteers. Liz, who has spent more time bilge crawling than anyone aboard cleaned up wonderfully and made a beautiful bride. We waived the “no alcohol” rule for this moment to wish the couple a bright and promising future. We’re glad we could be there to share this part of their lives.

On November 10th, SLATER was once again invaded by a sea of red jackets as the Marine Corps League celebrated the 236th birthday of the founding of the Corps. **Tom DeMeo** coordinated a wonderful event that saw great participation and included the oldest Marine present giving a piece of birthday cake to the youngest Marine present. You’ve got to hand it to the Marines. They don’t have any identity problems. They know who they are and are proud of it.



States Marine Corps.

A salute to the 236th Birthday of the United

Veterans Day, 11/11/11 was very special to us this year. The day began with a commemoration aboard SLATER at 0830 organized by Paul Czesak. Trustee Steve Long was master of ceremonies and opened the ceremony by parading the colors and introducing Earl Flatt who gave the invocation. The Governor's proclamation was presented by Mark Streb of the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs, Assemblyman Jack McEneny and retiring County Executive Mike Breslin read remarks honoring our veterans. The RPI Midshipmen were on hand as our gun crew to fire the honor salute and Mark Stella played Taps to close the ceremony. We opened for tours to a busy day that was capped by two events at the Fort Orange Club.





**Our Veterans Day Observance aboard
USS SLATER.**



RPI Midshipmen serving as our gun crew.

The Trustees of the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum met at the Fort Orange Club at 1600 to conduct their quarterly meeting and make official the leadership change that has been in the works for the past several months. Sam Saylor officially stepped down as Chairman and Bartley “BJ” Costello stepped into the Chairman’s role. **Frank Lasch** retired as Board President to be replaced by the former Treasurer **Tony Esposito**. **Greg Wolanin** became the new Vice President, **Hal Hatfield** took over the role of Treasurer and **Greg Krawczyk** assumed the position as Secretary. Both Sam and Frank will remain as voting members of the Board. Reports were given, old business taken care of, and Steve Long proposed making SLATER a site for a naturalization ceremony sometime in the near future. A letter has been sent to Congressman **Paul Tonko** to that effect. Business concluded, the Trustees adjourned to the West Lounge where our 11/11/11 One Date--One Ship Fundraiser commenced.

The event was organized by the Executive Director of the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Michele Vennard, Gordon Lattey and DEHM secretary Greg Krawczyk. It was designed to increase awareness and help the Hull Preservation Fund, as well as reinstitute the idea of an annual event that had been started several years ago by **Doris Fischer, Paul Czesak and Geoffrey Bullard.** Following an hour of socializing, awards were presented to Frank Lasch and Sam Saylor for their years of dedicated service. **BJ Costello** paid tribute to Frank not only for his years of service but for the mentoring he provided. As health reasons prevented Sam from attending, Trustee **John Cosgrove**, former president of the National Press Club and a yeoman of USS GENDREAU DE639 came up from Washington to accept the award on Sam’s behalf. John talked about the early days of SLATER and the struggles to obtain the ship and establish the museum and the importance of recognizing the DE ship and Sailor. Then, **Gordon Lattey** took the podium and gave a compelling talk on the contributions of the destroyer escorts to our nation’s history and the need for the community to embrace USS SLATER. The event raised over \$25,000 for the Hull Fund and we anticipate that it will become an annual tradition.

We had two very nice pieces of press released this month. Rick Ianello and Paul Bray of the Albany Guardian Society made SLATER the centerpiece of the December edition of their quarterly newsletter “Capital Commons Quarterly.” There is a detailed article on SLATER with images of the volunteers throughout the magazine. Hopefully we’ll reach a new local audience and get some new volunteers out of the magazine. And, **Dave Colamaria** of the Naval Historical Foundation put together a wonderful piece on the SLATER’s restoration to illustrate the effort that goes into maintaining any historic naval ship. That article can be found online at <http://www.navyhistory.org/2011/12/maintaining-museum-ship/>



The last tours of the season.

Heather Maron completed our application for two state grants, \$145,000 for restoration assistance and \$800,000 to continue construction on the ice deflection portion of the permanent mooring. We don't know how our applications will fare in these difficult economic times, but as they say in lotto, "To have a chance you gotta buy a ticket." Early this year, we received an Albany Arts Council Grant to support our public. The Traveling Classroom outreach series offers curricula to match the teacher's school year agenda. Herb Marlow, Max Domicich, and Linda visited the New Scotland Elementary School to present Symbols of Citizenship to Mrs. Gravel's third-grade class. They spoke about the meaning of symbols, patriotism, and veterans through the various components of the American flag. They also examined the Pledge of Allegiance, and the meaning of the verse. The classroom split into two groups, The Stars and The Stripes. Each group participated in making the 13 symbolic folds of the flag while Mrs. Gravel read aloud the meaning of each fold. The students were sharp as ever. This program is geared for grades 2-4. December is already booking up, so if you are an Albany City School teacher, call now and we can schedule you for one of the many free in-school programs for grades PreK-8 in January, February, or March, 2012. To schedule, call 431-1943.



Our "Old Navy" mingled with the "New Navy" at the Schenectady County Military Affairs Council "To Honor and Serve" breakfast.

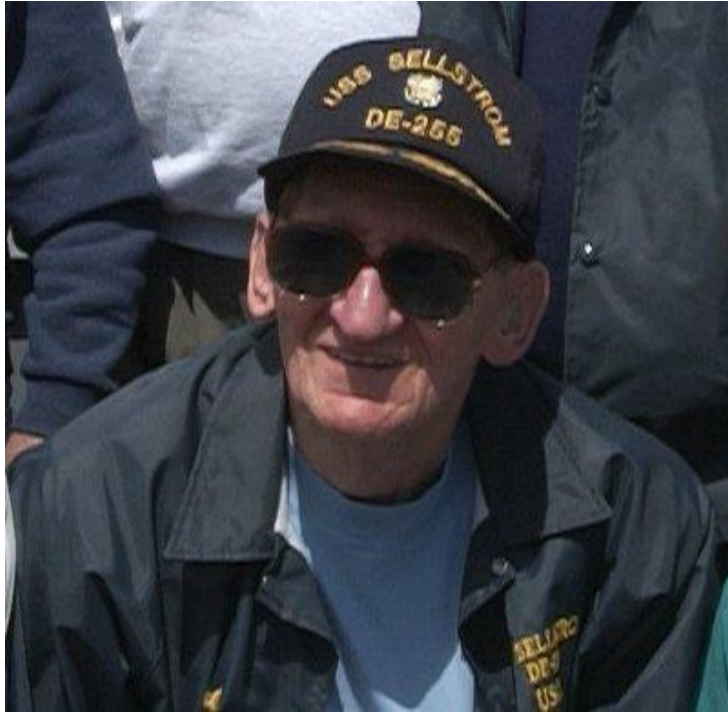
Several of our volunteers attended the Schenectady County Military Affairs Council "To Honor and Serve" breakfast at Stratton Air Base, and mingled with the active military. Back on the ship, with the good weather came a busy month, starting with a tour by the SUNY OASIS group put together by Chief Jack Ryan on the first of the month. The overnight camping crew was busy as we had Cub Scouts from Glenmont, the Vanguard Composite Squadron Civil Air Patrol, St. Peter Armenian Church, Cub Scouts from Poughkeepsie and Cub Scouts from Walden, New York. The weather stayed warm and the attendance stayed strong right through the last Sunday we were open, November 27th.

The following Monday the process of securing for the winter began. The observation deck awning came down and was stowed. All the furniture and display items were moved inside the classroom. The donor boards and interpretative graphics all came down and were stowed inside. Aboard ship the process of covering all the guns, bedding and display items began. **We ended the tour season with the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at the Zaloga Post in Albany. Sixty-five attended the dinner with music by DJ Floyd Hunt YN1.** The event was generously sponsored by the **SLATER Board of Trustees**. The crew was introduced to the new Board President Tony Esposito and our new Chairman BJ Costello. Both have hit the deck on the run, working on the challenge of raising money for the Hull Fund and developing a more proactive Board. During the dinner, Tony presented the Trustees Awards to two people who have done wonderful things for SLATER. Each year the Trustees of the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum honor two volunteers for their service to USS SLATER. As you can imagine, selecting these honorees from among all the dedicated volunteers is a most difficult task and a choice we don't envy them having to make.



The Destroyer Escort Historical Museum Trustees honored tour guide William M. Scharoun. Bill Scharoun has been guiding tours aboard USS SLATER since 1999 when he was 76 years old. Bill is one of our remaining World War II Veterans. You do the math about his age now. During the Second World War he served eight years in the Navy aboard the Destroyer Escort USS OSMUS DE701 and later aboard the Destroyer USS LEARY DD879. He attained the rank of Gunner's Mate First Class.

He has been aboard guiding groups through the SLATER almost every Thursday since he reported aboard with his buddies Bob Dawson and Joe Burke. It was really hard to pick one from this group because they are all outstanding, but Bill brings that unique perspective to his tours that only a sailor who served on a DE in the Pacific can give. Bill has also taken up the slack holding the CAPDESA group together. When Bob Donlon was no longer able to perform his secretarial duties, Bill stepped up to the plate and organized our annual DE Day commemoration last June. We applaud Bill for his service to the SLATER and his service to the Nation.



The Trustees posthumously honored Richard J. Breil, United States Coast Guard. Dick served aboard the Destroyer Escort USS SELLSTROM DE255, which served in both the Atlantic and Pacific during World War II. Dick served aboard SELLSTROM from January 1944 to June 1945 as a Motor Machinists Mate, making second class. Before and after his service he worked for Whitehead and Kales, steel fabrication firm that prefabricated destroyer escort sections for Defoe shipyard. He retired from there as a sales engineer. He became involved with the Destroyer Escort Sailors Association and became president of the Michigan Chapter. Working with Ron Zarem, he organized the first work week aboard SLATER in 1998 when the crew had no running water, showers and heat. He attended the work parties until May of 2004 when for reasons of health he could no longer make the trip. Under Dick's leadership the work parties grew from six to almost fifty volunteers at a time. Our only wish is that we had made this award sooner so he could be with us to receive it.

We're holding off on the Winter Fund solicitation for another month to give you a chance to forget that I just had my hand out soliciting Hull Fund donations. And some people say I'm my own worst enemy. And, next month we'll look at the year in review and talk about the projects we're planning over the winter. Until then, I'll be on deck with my binoculars looking for a couple tugboats.

See you next month from the other side.