



# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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**Mike Wyles and Stan Levandowski on watch in the radio shack.**

**June started with the annual museum ships radio weekend.** Once a year “hams” worldwide operate from retired maritime vessels, both military and commercial, all around the world. The purpose is to enable the amateur community to contact these historic museum entities and receive written confirmation of having done so in the form of a colorful and descriptive postcard called a “QSL” card. **Jerry Jones, Mike Wyles, and Stan Levandowski** arrived at 0900 on 1 June to set up for what was forecast to be a hot, humid and very busy day up in Radio Central. The hot and humid forecast proved to be right on the money and by 10:00 a.m. Jerry’s khaki shorts had ceased to be the butt of witty

jokes. SLATER had two 100 watt HF radio stations up and running. One used the ship’s original 100’ horizontal long wire antenna and the other used one of the original starboard 70’ vertical wires. However, contacts seemed to be few and far between. After dragging out some test equipment, retuning antennas and finding no obvious problems, Mike recommended a quick check of the NOAA propagation forecast and current space weather conditions. Tim graciously made his computer available. What popped up wiped the smiles off of everyone’s faces. The atmospheric conditions were about as bad as they could get.

**Down, but not out, the radiomen did the best they could and managed to work stations in 18 states, three Canadian provinces, and Belgium.** About half the contacts were voice and half were Morse. Museum ships contacted included LST325 in Indiana, USS Nautilus in Connecticut, USS Cavalla in Texas, USS North Carolina, SS Daniel Morrell and SS Carl Bradley, both in Michigan and HMCS Onondaga in Quebec. Although it was not a museum ship, SLATER also contacted the heritage site of the last commercial coastal station (WSC) in Tuckerton, New Jersey.



**Battle of Midway remembered by Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs.**

**The next event was a commemoration of the 71st anniversary of the Battle of Midway, held aboard on June 4th.**

This event was conceived and sponsored by Naval Support Activity Saratoga Springs. About 100 service personnel showed from Saratoga, the local naval reserve center and NPTU, to remember the four day battle that turned the tide against the Japanese expansion in the Pacific. NSA Saratoga Springs CDR Vince Garcia gave an overview of the historic battle in which the US Navy sank four Japanese carriers while losing USS YORKTOWN CV5, and turned the Japanese fleet back.

A surprise guest was **Stephen Dennis from Mechanicville who served aboard USS ATLANTA CL51**. Dennis participated in the Battle of Midway and went on to fight at Guadalcanal and saw the plane that hit USS SAN FRANCISCO when Frank Slater was killed, a day before the ATLANTA was so badly damaged in the November 13th battle that she had to be scuttled. We seated him aboard as our guest of honor. Our thanks go out to **Bill Wicks**, Chaplain of American Legion Post 91 in Stillwater for bringing Stephen to the ceremony. It's our hope that this will be the beginning of a partnership with NSA Saratoga Springs and become an annual event.

**We commemorated our 16th Destroyer Escort Day on Saturday June 15th.** Our guests of honor included Albany County Executive **Dan McCoy**, **Marianne Cummings Donovan**, Col **Mike Stenzel** and Lt.Col **Kevin Lynch**, NYS DMNA. We also had several representatives of the Chian Federation who presented the Museum with a thousand dollar donation. They included **Stavros Haviaras**, **Stefanos Doulos**, **Nikos Papagiannakis**, **Alexandros Doulis**, **Kostas Almiroudis**, and **Heidi Husser**. Destroyer Escort Day is always a day of reflection, commemorating those valiant sailors that gave the ultimate sacrifice while serving aboard DEs. Emcee Steve Long took the opportunity to recognize **Mike Stenzel** and **Kevin Lynch** for their critical contributions during the early days of bringing USS SLATER to Albany.



**Marianne Cummings Donovan honors her father and the crew of USS SAMUEL B ROBERTS.**



**LtCol Kevin Lynch and our web designer Col Mike Stenzel, NYS DMNA, were recognized for their roles in bringing USS SLATER to Albany.**

**This year's ceremony took on an especially poignant tone, with the presence of Alex Doulis of the Chian Federation from New York City.** He told an emotional tale of growing up on one of the Greek offshore islands and looking out at the Destroyer Escorts keeping him safe as a child. Even better, he continued on to say that he had been aboard the AETOS, as a young boy in Greece escorted by his father, and it brought tears to his eyes to return to a ship that meant so much to him. It was not only the sailors that were affected by the action the ships saw, but also their families and the people they were protecting. Another touching moment was when Bill Scharoun read the list of DEs lost in action and **Marianne Donovan** dropped the carnation for USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS DE413. Her father was Electrician's mate **Robert Cummings** who was killed board DE413 during the Battle of Samar in October of 1944, and Marianne never had the chance to know him, and was grateful for the opportunity to honor his memory.



The Slater Color Guard



**Former Coastie Grant Hack explains the depth charge projectors to a group of senior citizens.**



**Dan Kastanis prepares to deal with a younger crowd on Family Day.**

**It's been a busy month for tour guides.** We've had several special tours. Our friend, volunteer photographer and former Albany Rotary Club President **Richard Welty** brought aboard a special group of Brazilian visitors. Richard has spent enough time aboard he's now doing his own tours. We hosted **Julie Schwietert**, a travel writer for Moon Handbooks, and her family. We gave another in-depth tour to the docents of the New York State Military Museum on June 26th. On the 27th we hosted a group of engineers from the GE facility in Schenectady with a heavy emphasis on showing off all the GE equipment aboard SLATER. On June 28th we hosted a large group of Chief Petty Officers who came aboard to honor MMC(SS) **James Norris** for his retirement ceremony. As it was organized and run by Chiefs it was a very personable, inclusive, and humorous ceremony which departed from the usual stiff protocol of these events. By the way, we have a place in the crew for Master Chief Norris if he gets bored in retirement.



**Our next generation of Sailors got their orientation on Family Day.**

**On Friday June 28th from noon to four the ship hosted its first ever Family Day.** Children 10 and under were welcomed free with paid adult admission, and we provided hands-on activities as well as main deck only tours. This was an effort to make the historic ship more welcoming to families with younger children, a way to show them what we have to offer and inspire them to make us a local destination for a family day out. **Dan Kastanis, Julianne Madsen, Joe Delberta, Dylan Bruhns, and Charlie Poltenson** assisted as families were invited to try on naval uniforms ranging from blue jumpers to an officer's cap.

**We have several great new volunteers helping with the education side of things this season.**

**John Abeel**, a graduate student at the University at Albany, has taken over several collections projects back aft and has been an invaluable asset to the ship. John has been working in a cramped, windowless compartment and has shown excellent initiative in tackling the challenges of the situation. Also joining us this summer is **Griffin Keegan**, a high school student at the Albany Academy with an interest in history and naval life. He is assisting with tours and shows great promise as a new crew member. **Ruth Leeson** has joined our Wednesday crew, she is retired from the Marine Corps and she also used to serve as a nurse with the local VA Hospital. Her nickname is "Sarge." Our other new education volunteers, **Stan Levandowski**, **Charlie Poltenson**, **Rod Doty**, and **Don Cushman** have proved to be reliable guides; we're sure they would highly recommend spending your free time aboard the ship enjoying the weather and hosting our visitors. And, again, special thanks to **Tom Cline** who continues to drive in from Binghamton every Sunday.



**Ron Frankosky and the deck...**



**...force cut in and rolled out a lot of paint this month.**



**Maintenance continued to progress despite some extreme weather conditions, some really hot days and an awful lot of rain.** The chippers finally got the fo'c's'le all chipped, cut in and rolled out with nonskid. Next we will be doing the waterways and lifeline stanchions. Meanwhile, Ron Mazure, Walt Stuart and Don Miller moved back aft to the fantail and are hitting some rough spots that have popped up. Ron Frankosky, who normally comes up with the USS HUSE crew couldn't make it this year because of family issues, however, even though he was a couple weeks late, he did come and gave us three good days. He took on the task of cutting in and rolling out the 01 level forward which the HUSE gang had started but couldn't finish due to the incessant rain.

**The shipfitters fabricated and welded snaking tie downs to the two most recently installed chocks and completed removal of wasted chock and are prepping another new chock for installation on the starboard side forward.** They also fabricated a new handrail for the aft gangway to give everyone something to hang on to during those conditions of extreme high tide which are happening more and more often. They eliminated a scupper on the portside of the gun three tub that was pouring water onto the hatch of the crawlspace under the gun tub deck. That water was finding its way into the aft berthing space compartment C-203L which is also our special collections space. Funny story about that. I was noticing water and rust spots on top of one of the lockers all spring. I kept waiting to see how long it would take **Heather** to notice it and clean it up, but she seemed not to notice. Unbeknownst to me, she was wiping it up every day, and every time it rained more rusty water dripped from a hole in the deck under the gun 3 tub.



**Justin Lesser and Thomas Scian...**



**... "boldly going where no man has gone before" on SLATER.**

**We finally took the first step in addressing the problem during the Michigan work week by hauling out about a half ton of steel pipe that we had stored in there to gain access.** Then this month **Paul Guarnieri** made the mistake of asking, "What do you need me to do?" I suggested vacuuming out the crawlspace (I know there's got to be a more nautical word for that.) would be a nice gesture. Paul enlisted the help of **Thomas Scian** and **Justin Lesser** and they spent the day cleaning and vacuuming one of the most cramped spaces on the ship. They just scratched the surface so Doug can get in and repair the deck, because the area will need a lot of scraping and preservation down the road. As long as I mentioned **Justin Lesser**, he's another one of **Chris Hanley's** students who brings more welding and cutting talent to the project. He's normally teamed up with the shipfitters to get more experience.



**Engineering progress on the restoration of the motor lubricating pumps in B-4.**



**Main engine number four in B-3.**

**Down in B-3 the engineers have spent the majority of the month wiping down and spray painting main engine number four. Ken Myrick, Gary Lubrano and Mike Dingmon have nicknamed Gus Negus “Rembrandt” for the time he’s spent wiping down and carefully spray painting. Karl Herchenroder has gaskets on order to reassemble the exhaust elbows and Gary Dieckman is planning another trip to the TAMAROA to get some more elbows to replace four that are rotted out. Clarkson University Student Eric Altman has taken it upon himself to restore the main propeller shaft lube oil pumps and their motors, springing off work that Bill Wetterau has been doing on the system’s piping and valves. Barry Witte has had a crew consisting of students Sam Spicer, Chris Evanchuk, Matt Montena, Corey Hendrick and Colin Steve. They have been restoring electrical boxes in the aft machinery spaces. Barry is training them the right way as they meticulously take each box to bare metal, sand it, spray prime it, and spray it with high gloss equipment gray enamel. The results are electrical components that look like they just came out of the factory. Barry has been doing a great job getting younger people involved with the project. Up in the pilothouse, Erik Collin has been using the same treatment on the equipment up there. He has worked through the engine order telegraph, steering annunciator and is now working on restoration of the VD-2 radar repeater. Of course, Gary Sheedy is still bringing the reefer deck closer to perfection. I think he’s 97% there. This month he refurbished the fuel oil tank covers and fabricated a cable racking system for the EM shop, with welding help from Super Dave.**



Rocky put the final touch on the whaleboat here in Albany.



Craftsman Steve Dull completed the new rudder over in Gaylordsville, Connecticut.

Between “Boats” Haggart, Doug Tanner and the rest of the crew, we got the motor whaleboat lowered and rehoisted with the bow aft and the starboard side inboard so Rocky could finish painting what was formerly the outboard side. He accomplished that in short order, working between rain days, as well as replaced a section of rotted bulkhead he found in the engine compartment. Meanwhile, over in Connecticut, **Steve Dull** completed fabrication of the new rudder and it is truly a thing of beauty. Steve and David Jalbert got the press involved and here is a link to an article that appeared in The Litchfield County Times.

There is still an article from the Spectrum coming up. Our friend **David Jalbert** brought the rudder west with his friend, former Marine Major **Jim Hart**. David has done an amazing job enlisting the help of his friends **Steve Dull** and **George Christophersen**, so if you are a friend of David’s, beware when he offers to bring you over to Albany. David returned to Connecticut with a sample life raft grating and Steve is now looking into what it will take to fabricate four of them.





As for the rudder, “Boats” Haggart rigged an awning for Rocky so he could work on it in the rain, and hopefully, by the time you read this, both rudder and whaleboat will be in the water. **Bernard Smith** continues to keep us fed, **John Thompson** continues to pick up the messes we leave in the machine shop, **Jim Gelston** continues to keep the clocks wound and **Angelo Bracco** continues to hem our ratty signal flags. He tells me that if I don’t buy a new set soon the red diamond in “Foxtrot” is going to be a triangle.

**The tour guide tale of the month is a story of intergenerational communication, or the lack thereof.** As you can imagine, a World War II warship is full of steep ladders and trip hazards, so visitors are strongly encouraged to wear substantial shoes for their own protection. So when **Alan Fox** introduced himself to a family one recent Wednesday he was concerned when he saw that the mother and daughter were both wearing flip flop footwear. Using his most tactful tour guide approach, he suggested to them that they might want to go back to their car and change because our insurance underwriter strongly discouraged the wearing of “thongs” aboard the ship. So Alan was somewhat taken aback when the entire family turned and glared at him, and the husband forcefully asked, “What concern is it of your insurance underwriter what kind of underwear my wife is wearing?”



**Now Alan, who is just a little over sixty and one of our younger guides, was totally perplexed at the incongruity of the question, and remained so until midway through the tour as he carefully watched the family come down the messdecks ladder, and the dual meaning of the word “thong” in today’s culture hit him.** His first question when he got back the following Wednesday was, “Did you get any phone calls or letters complaining about me last week?” He did go home and confess the story to his wife, who according to Alan, is still laughing about his faux pas as I write this.

**What kind of "thong" did you expect us to show?**

**You can support USS SLATER by becoming a member of the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum.** You'll get free admission throughout the season and the quarterly newsletter "Trim But Deadly," as well as invitations to special events. There's a membership application on the website.

**See you next month**