



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers

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Destroyer Escort Historical Museum

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Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan and Assemblyman Phil Steck joined us on Veterans Day.

The last month of our 19th season in Albany began quietly, as we made preparations for another winter. And, you old-hands know what that means. It's time for our annual Winter Fund appeal. But more on that later. Veterans Day was commemorated on Friday, 11 November, in a well-attended ceremony. Board Chairman **BJ Costello** was emcee as he introduced Albany Mayor **Kathy Sheehan** and Assemblymember **Phil Steck**,

who gave their thoughts on the significance of the day. **Ken Kaskoun** and our color guard were present in force, including **Larry Williams**, **Art Dott**, **Bill Haggart**, **Cathy Wheat**, and our newest member, Lt. **Bill Holt**, decked out in his dress blues. Board President **Tony Esposito** did the invocation and benediction, and eulogized the SLATER volunteers who crossed the bar this past year. They include **Don Bulger**, **Bob Bull**, **Dave Floyd**, **Chris Fedden**, and **John Cosgrove**. Belatedly, we learned that this year we also lost CDR **Roy Gunther**, who passed away in Florida.

Roy Gunther was a retired Supply Corps Commander, who moved to Florida from **Averill Park, New York**. Roy's involvement with the SLATER goes back to 1998,



Roy and Rocky working on the whaleboat.

when the ship was vandalized and our compass stolen. Roy donated a replacement that he had salvaged from a wrecked ship. Roy's compass still occupies its space in the pilothouse binnacle. Roy looked around and decided we were worth helping in other ways. He was intimately involved with setting up the camels the first couple of years, before **Tommy Moore** came along. He involved himself on all levels, volunteering as a tour guide, doing maintenance, and ultimately serving as Board Treasurer and doing our budget for several years. He restored the ship's office, and I'm typing on a

table he installed. He was also one of the only people in the crew willing to tackle spray painting, and he painted the CPO mess. He restored the chartroom and fabricated the chart table that you'd swear was original equipment. He played a major role in the restoration of officers' country and the Captain's cabin. Roy freed up the davits and re-rigged all the lifting gear, so we could bring on the whaleboat.

That was when an unassuming fellow named Larry "Rocky" Rockwood joined the crew. When it came time to work on the whaleboat, he and Roy formed a team that turned the boat into the showpiece that it is today. Roy located an engine and transmission for the boat, and arranged for its purchase and shipment. When the rudder rotted out, Roy fabricated a new one. Roy Gunther was a major contributor to all areas of the SLATER project when we needed help the most. Let this ship stand as a monument to his contribution.

The maintenance crew has had several projects ongoing. They have wrapped up the work on the starboard B-3 vent space. NPTU Sailors finished painting out the inside of the space, and **Earl Herchenroder** buttoned it up and touched up the exterior paint. **Doug Tanner, Tim Benner,** and Super **Dave Mardon** have nearly completed fabrication of the new roller, to support the forward gangway. They are also making



The continued support of the NPTU Sailors has enabled us to make a lot of progress this fall.



RPI Midshipmen Nick Grocki and Brian Beam helped drain down the firemain for the winter.

progress with the replacement watertight door for the galley. We secured the water to the ship on Monday, November 28th. We were lucky to get through those late season overnights without a hard freeze.

Down in the machinery spaces, the NPTU Sailors have been cleaning and painting the lower level port side of B-4. In B-3, **Karl Herchenroder** and **Mike Dingmon** continued to work on the B-3 cooling problem. They also took time out to come topside and winterize the whaleboat engine. **Barry Witte** had the **RPI Midshipmen** drain down the firemain for the winter. **Larry Williams** has been working on wiring up the backup air compressor in B-1. The engineers have been slowed considerably due to the fact that both **Gary Lubrano** and **Ken Myrick** have been on the binnacle list. We wish them both a speedy recovery.

Another addition to the sick list has been Chief **Clark Farnsworth**, who has been moved to the Baptist Rehab Center in Scotia and, from all reports, loves the place and is making a remarkable recovery.

Topside, thanks to Ron Prest, Ron Mazure, and the NPTU Sailors, scaling has continued on the 01 level forward, and under the depth charge projector roller loaders aft. We've got two coats of Corroseal and two coats of primer down on all the decks we scaled this fall, but we'll wait until spring to topcoat it, so it will look nice and



Bill, Boats, Angelo and Walt laying out the canvas for the winter gun covers.

fresh for the 2017 season. This is the time of year the deck gang has their hands full. **Boats Haggart, Walt Stuart, Paul Guarneri, and Thomas Scian** got the accommodation ladder stowed. Thanks to an assist from **Anthony Renna** and his crane, we got the paint float out of the water. We put the cover on the whaleboat, and the Monday after Thanksgiving, the deck gang covered all the guns with an assist from the NPTU Sailors. Our

thanks to **Greg Wolanin** for providing the canvas covers.



Ken Powers and Gary Sheedy running new power cables for the steering motors.

Gary Sheedy, Barry Witte, and Ken Powers started running armored cable in the steering motor room. The Midshipmen are heavily involved in this project, too. The power cables between the bulkhead-mounted controllers and the steering motors were originally run below deck, in the overhead of the void space below. The Greeks performed a shipalt, and ran the cables on the deck of the steering gear room. Being the purists that

they are, Barry and Gary are re-routing the cables the original way. This involved re-installing multiple stuffing tubes, and then crawling around the void space to properly mount the cables. That, of course, draws attention to the void space, which is in serious need of some preservation--with no tool heavier than a putty knife. Gary keeps telling me that his spaces are almost ready for paint, but he's been telling me that for about fourteen months now. I'll believe it when I see it.



Congressman Paul Tonko was on hand to honor Rocky with the 2016 Trustees Award.

Our Fort Orange Club event on November 12th was a resounding success. It was a well-attended function that raised more money than last year's event. This year, the Trustees Award for service to the USS SLATER went to **Lawrence "Rocky" Rockwood**, for the eighteen years of skill and devotion he has lavished onto our wooden motor whaleboat, by restoring and maintaining it. Over the years, Rocky has put in

thousands of hours by lovingly caring for this gem of the museum collection. There are few people left who have the knowledge and patience to care for a wooden boat the way Rocky has. We were the beneficiaries of all the skills he garnered working around wooden boats on the Maine coast. Most of his time working has gone unnoticed by the crew, as the majority of his work was done in solitude at **Scarano's Boatyard**. However, the results of his work are magnificent.



The deck gang covering the whaleboat for the winter.

For those of you who don't know the story, the Navy estimates that they built 26,000 wooden whaleboats between the turn of the century and 1956, when they went to fiberglass boats. Our original whaleboat came across the Atlantic with USS SLATER from Greece in 1993. The crew in Manhattan off-loaded the boat and began work on it but, in 1997 it was hastily set back aboard the ship for the trip to Albany. While at the Port of

Albany, the **Scarano Brothers** agreed to off-load and store the boat until funds could be

found for its restoration. **Frank Lasch** secured a \$15,000 member item that enabled Scarano's to go to work. On our end, two new volunteers, Rocky and **Roy Gunther** joined the crew and volunteered to oversee the restoration. The result was a thing of beauty. Roy eventually moved to Florida, but Rocky continued to maintain the boat. It was a big help to Rocky that he was able to keep the boat in Scarano's shed every other winter, so he could work under cover.

The Trustees felt he deserved to be honored for his efforts. Board President Tony Esposito made the presentation. Rocky, a true down-easter, has always been rather taciturn, so in accepting the award, we learned more about Rocky in ten minutes than we'd learned in eighteen years. In return, he presented the Museum with a beautiful hand-carved two-thirds model of a GATO-class submarine. That gave us a real sense of the true extent of his wood working skills. He admitted to being in love with that whaleboat. His sense of humor showed through when he said that he was sorry he only made eighteen years with us, because he'd really wanted to go for twenty and get a pension. He would have been sadly disappointed.



Our annual Fort Orange Club event was another great success.

We were especially delighted to have Rick Scarano and Eric Everson participating in Rocky's recognition. Both, along with Rick's brother John, have been incredibly supportive of Rocky and his efforts to maintain the whaleboat, and we know it meant a lot to Rocky to have them participate. We were also honored to have Congressman **Paul Tonko** and Albany Mayor **Kathy Sheehan** participate in the recognition of Rocky. Their

presence made it truly a night to remember.

Our touring season comes to an end this month. Our guides are amazingly dedicated, and are so good at what they do. Our Wednesday guides seem to get all the school groups. **Alan Fox** and **Mike Marko** handle them like champs. With help from **Grant**



Charles Starks explains how the depth charge projectors work.



The fifth graders from W.H. Barton Intermediate in Queensbury enjoyed their tour despite the rain.

Hack, Andrew, and Claire, the 5th graders from Queensbury made their annual trip to the SLATER.

Thursdays have definitely slowed down this fall, but that doesn't stop our Thursday crew from coming in and giving their all. Don Cushman, Chuck Boone, and Bob Dawson keep each other on their toes. Friday volunteers are as steady as they come, and always strive for that hour tour. They include **Ken Kaskoun, Charles Starks** and, before his knee surgery this fall, **Bob Herbst**. Saturdays are not only for the maintenance crew. It is by far our busiest day of the week. Volunteers **Mitch Lucas, Paul Guarneri, and Will Trevor** keep us moving on these days. **Tom McLaughlin** can't physically give a tour any more, but he entertains our visitors with his stories, pictures, and impressive flag collection.

The Sunday crew consider themselves the MVPs of all tour guides and, if the reviews we get from our visitors are any indication, they may be right. Art Dott, Grant Hack, Bill Goralski, and Tom Cline hold down the fort when Tim, Rosehn, and Shanna aren't around. Sundays are led by **Claire** at the helm. She also helps out during the week whenever needed, on tours, managing the website, and serving as our database manager.



RPI Midshipman Parker Fields running electrical cable in the void below the steering gear compartment.

Our other college students working as tour guides are always dependable, and up for all the wicked curveballs we send their way. They are Andrew, Jon, Dan, and Austin. All of our college students, including these young men and Claire, are graduating this December or May from U Albany or Siena, and we are so proud of them. They have kept up with their schoolwork, tours, and chores around the ship during the day, and overnights on weekends. They have also come in on short notice, when a scheduled tour guide can't make it in. We really appreciate all that they do!

We had six overnights this month, with Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts from all over the state: Middleburgh, Troy, Lansing, Fayetteville, Pleasant Valley, and Cornwall. Our "retired" intern, Vince, came back to volunteer for one overnight, as well as a Sunday. We appreciate his continued support and miss seeing him around! We had one Speakers Bureau presentation this month at Bethlehem Public Library. The presentation on Veterans Day was very well-attended, with around fifty people, and they heard Slater Volunteer **Bob Herbst's** stories of DE Heroes.



NPTU Sailors painting out red primer around gun two.



Walt, Bill and Boats covering gun three for the winter.

Now, let's go back to the statement about the tour season ending at the end of the month. That means the end of our ticket income stream for the winter and the end of our cash flow. You old timers know what that means. **It's Winter Fund Drive time again!** This issue of SLATER SIGNALS is being mailed to all of you who are on our mailing list, in the hope that if you are not a donor, you will become one now. For those of you who are hearing about the Winter Fund for the first time, an explanation is in order. Each year, the ship closes in December, and we lose our main source of revenue for the winter months, our visitors. Early on, we appealed to the local volunteers, those who already give the most, to help us through the winter. We asked those who

could afford it to give some more, namely a hundred bucks more. Fifty percent of our revenue comes from donations to help pay the heating bills, keeping us afloat and enabling the restoration work to continue through the winter.

You can see that, in terms of accomplishments, this has been a great year. We've turned down the heat and dimmed the lights. But, we need your help to keep from dipping into our savings to get through the winter. For those of you who receive this newsletter online, and don't get the mailed version and little return envelope, you can participate by donating through our homepage at www.ussslater.org and hitting the donate button. There is also a donate button on our Facebook page. Or you can download our donation form, and simply mark it **Winter**

Fund. Place it in an envelope addressed to USS SLATER, PO Box 1926, Albany, NY 12201-1926. If you're not online and you want to receive this newsletter, let us know and we'll be glad to put you on the list.



We've got some of you so well-trained that Winter Fund donations began coming in to us in October. Our goal for this year's drive is to raise \$70,000. As I have every year, I have already sent in my \$100, with my wife's permission, of course. I hope you all will follow my lead. Let's hark back to those War Bond posters, and make sure that the volunteers on the front line of this restoration have the money and the tools to do the job.

Let's all help keep the volunteers warm this winter. As always, thank you so much for your continued support. Don't forget the donate button on our homepage www.ussslater.org and to like us on Facebook for daily updates.

See you next month.



Larry Williams brings the whaleboat alongside for the final run of the season.