



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers By
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Thomas Scian and Cathy Wheat did a great job cleaning up the after crew quarters.

With our opening day scheduled for Wednesday April 6th, the first week of the month was a last minute push to get ready for the public and put our best foot forward. Preparations were somewhat hampered by a last minute snowstorm on April 4th that dumped a couple inches on us. But after the great winter we had, no one is complaining. Back up went the descriptive placards on the Observation Deck. **Shanna Hopson** got the Ship's Store

restocked and set up. **Angelo Bracco** put snap hooks and rings on our new signal flags. **Cathy Wheat** got the wardroom table display set up, and all the officer's staterooms in order. **Larry Williams** changed out all the batteries in the emergency lighting. Back aft, **Boats Haggart, Walt Stuart, Thomas Scian** and **Paul Guarnieri** got all the bunks made up, and Cathy cleaned the spaces for the work crews coming in May. All the miscellaneous construction material around the trailer was stowed and the yard cleaned up. **Kevin Sage** got the decks repainted through the whole second deck forward, and the aft head. Shanna put out the schedule of tour guides and we were ready.

We opened as scheduled but the weather set us a little behind. It wasn't until the following Monday that Rosehn Gipe was able to schedule carpet cleaning for the Ship's Store and Briefing Room.



The whole crew pitched in to empty out the trailer for that evolution, and put everything back inside before the day was out. The cold weather put a damper on the exterior painting we had planned. Kevin didn't get back until the end of the month to scale and repaint the port flagbag, and spray out all the depth charge racks.

Boats, I think you can hold off rigging the observation deck awning until it warms up.

He also sprayed out the landing force equipment locker, the crawl space under gun three, and repainted the deck. **Tim Benner** and Super **Dave Mardon** then installed the pipe racks that **Danny Statile** had fabricated. On the last Saturday in April the whole crew turned out to sort and restow all the pipe, angle and bar stock that has been cluttering up the gun three tub, wrapping up a project that has been ongoing for almost three years; the restoration of a space the public will never see.



Danny Statile and Matt Clifford stowing steel under gun three. Also, Barry Witte looks on as Tim Benner fabricates a new mount for the commode in the aft head.

In addition to the pipe racks, the shipfitters, Danny Statile, Dave Mardon, and Chief Clark Farnsworth, have been busy making parts for everyone else. They fabricated a swab rack and welded it in place by the starboard deck gear locker, so we finally have a place to stow damp swabs. For Gary Sheedy, they built a couple of cabinets from Ed Zajkowski's blueprints for the laundry and shipfitter shop, and made

stowage hangers for our welding cable. **Matt Clifford** has also been working for Gary, installing stuffing tubes for the power cable for the steering motors.



RPI Midshipmen completed the reassembly of the firemain in B-4. And, the engineers are progressing with the installation of the B-1 auxiliary air compressor.

Down below deck, the engineers, Karl Herchenroder, Gary Lubrano, Ken Myrick, and Mike Dingmon have two projects going. Aside from general cleanup, they are continuing the reassembly of main engines three and four, in preparation for painting in B-3. Karl and his twin brother Earl have been working on that. In B-1, Mike, Gary, and Ken have been working on the installation of a second starting air compressor. We had the compressor and motor, and there was an empty rack on the bulkhead, so they decided to put it to use. As I write, the compressor is in place and waiting for wiring and plumbing. Aft in B-4, **Barry Witte, Tulsa Scott** and the **RPI Midshipmen** completed the reassembly of the firemain in that space. Tulsa graduates from RPI this month and will be heading off to nuclear power training. He has been a real asset to us, and the leadership he provided among the RPI Midshipmen will be missed.



Larry Williams rewiring the motor whaleboat. We also played host to the USCGC KATHERINE WALKER so their crew could have an Albany liberty.



On shore, Tommy Moore and Earl Herchenroder fabricated a new paint float out of treated lumber, so it should be more durable than the old one. It is awaiting a chance to be flipped so we can install the plastic flotation barrels. They cut up the old float for firewood. Further offsite, we have three other projects going. Down at **Scarano Boatyard, Rocky** has just about finished painting the whaleboat. He's been taking **Earl Herchenroder** and **Gene Jackey** down with him on Mondays to help with the sanding and painting, and **Larry Williams** to do the electrical work. The Coast Guard was back this month. The large buoy tender USCGC KATHERINE WALKER came alongside, so the crew could take a break from scaling and painting buoys and spend a day of liberty in Albany.



It's been a great month for the overnight camping program.

Once the snow melted, April was a month of nice weather and sunshine. Consequently, we have been very busy with tours. Our tour guides are hopping with large school groups, spring break camps, and visitors from near and far. Our interns, Vince, Julianne, Jon, Andrew, Claire, James, and Eric have returned for the 2016 season, and we have been firing on all cylinders, keeping our visitors entertained. They have worked many overnights with Scouts, who love to experience a night on the ship. Sleeping in the berthing compartments, eating in the mess deck, and playing on the guns have proved to be the highlights of their nights. School groups such as Charlotte Valley from Davenport, NY, and St. Catherine's here in Albany, have visited this month and enjoyed a fun learning experience as they delved into a sailor's life, as well as a brief lesson on the Navy in WWII. Jon Palmer manned a table at Siena's "Day of Living History." He showed guests the many different shells belonging to weaponry aboard SLATER



Spring has come to the Hudson.

We have two new education volunteers who have been trained and are giving tours on their own. They are **Charles** and **Aidan**. Aidan has a great interest in WWII and is learning very quickly. Charles recently retired from the Postal Service. He is finding time in that busy retirement schedule to come down once a week to give tours. In addition to new volunteer guides, we also have a new intern. **Dan** is a history student at UAlbany, and

is very interested in military history. He will be replacing one of the interns who will be leaving us. Eric's wife obtained a Pharmacy Residency in Connecticut, and they are moving in June. We are going to miss Eric. He was not here long, but he was helpful, knowledgeable, and kind. Good luck, Eric!



A scene from the Four Chaplains reenactment.

For the second year, the members of our local Scottish Rite Masonic Lodge commemorated the heroism of the "Four Chaplains," with a degree held aboard USS SLATER. The event was well-attended and the weather was perfect. The "Four Chaplains," also sometimes referred to as the "Immortal Chaplains" or the "Dorchester Chaplains," were four United States Army chaplains who gave their lives to save other

civilian and military personnel, as the troop ship SS Dorchester sank on February 3, 1943.

They helped other soldiers board lifeboats, and gave up their own life jackets when the supply ran out. The chaplains joined arms, said prayers, and sang hymns as they went down with the ship. Our thanks go out to **Marty Leukhardt** for organizing the event, **Jerry Jones** for providing the sound, and **Steve Long** for being our signalman.



The shipfitters changing out gas bottles.

An electrical engineer who did a lot of contract work on nuclear subs, Bill spent most of his SLATER days wielding a needle scaler or a paint brush. He's the kind of guy who helped out wherever needed, including giving tours. In fact, when came to say goodbye, we roped him into taking ten people around the ship, as a going away present. We wish Lynn and Bill the best of luck. We know we'll miss Bill a lot more than he will probably miss us. He's the kind of guy who we'll never replace.



Don Bulger was instrumental in the radio room restoration.

We bid what we hope is a temporary farewell to volunteer Bill Wetterau. Bill and his wife, Lynn, are relocating to Denver in a career move that we hope is not permanent, as they have deep roots in upstate New York. Since Bill began volunteering with us in the summer of 2010, he has been a mainstay of our effort, giving us an average of two days a week.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of one of our longtime volunteers, Don Bulger, who passed away on Sunday, April 17, 2016, at Albany Memorial Hospital. Don Bulger was an aerographer who did electronic work at the Naval Research Lab during WWII, before being sent to sea on the oiler CHIWAWA AO-68, which was in dire need of an aerographer.



Don Bulger's USS Chiwawa (AO-68)

Don reported aboard in the middle of the night, and in a scene right out of "Mr. Roberts," said it was several weeks before the captain knew he was aboard and gave him anything to do. He left the Navy as a Lieutenant, and retired from General Electric Research and Development Center in 1983 after working there 43 years. He partnered with **Jerry Jones** to do the initial restoration of the radio shack, including scaling and painting, and was essential to making that space the showplace that it is today. Age took its toll, and it's been several years since Don was active with us. However, his legacy can be seen every time the tourists look in our radio shack with amazement. By the way, Don's ship is still in service as a bulk carrier on the Great Lakes.

Don's spirit can be best summed up in this passage taken from the August 2001 Edition of SLATER SIGNALS. "Don gave me the biggest scare of the month while I was walking up the portside main deck. I looked up at the superstructure to see Don Bulger standing on the outriggers that support the vertical longwire antennas. He was about twenty-five feet above the main deck, trusting a sixty-year-old piece of one-inch pipe to support him while he worked on an antenna insulator. Now, Don is normally a very intelligent individual. He was in radar development in WWII, a former Navy lieutenant, and a GE engineer. And by the way, did I mention he's eighty years old? My recollection is that, as I saw my career pass before my eyes, I calmly called up, 'Don, please get down from there. I'll get someone with an extension ladder to do that for you.' Don looked down sheepishly and replied, 'I thought I could finish before I got caught.' Then, with amazing ease, he swung his leg over the bridge bulwark and pulled himself to comparative safety. I am pleased to report that Tom Moore then removed the insulator Don was working on, using proper safety equipment, and it is now in the radio room under restoration. But you know that the *Nips* and *Jerries* never had a chance with guys like Don on our side. We just hope his wife doesn't read SLATER SIGNALS, as she might not let him come down anymore!" **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.