

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
By Timothy C. Rizzuto, Ship's Superintendent

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USS Slater DE-766
Winter Berth
Rensselaer, NY

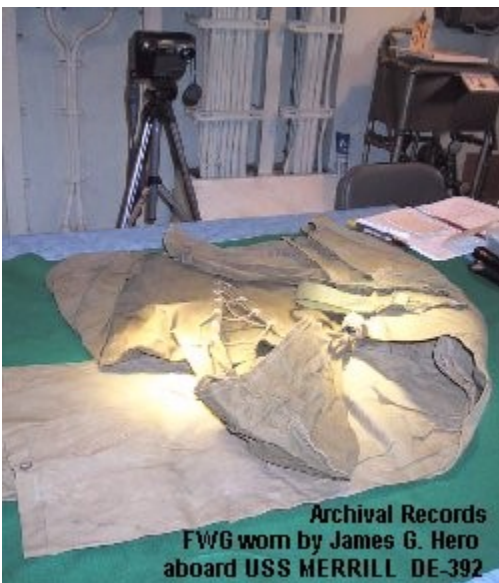


Brrrrrr !!

What's a matter with you guys? Don't you realize winter's half over and we haven't finished anything! We're never gonna have this tub ready for spring. At least that's how it feels to me. Rain, snow and cold these guys and girls are on the job, working their butts off to try to get SLATER ready and make her better than last year.



Rocky clearing snow from
Motor Whaleboat Cover



Archival Records
FWG worn by James G. Hero
aboard USS MERRILL DE-392

Up forward in officer's country, Eric Wiedman has been leading the curatorial team in cataloging all the artifacts. Julie, Chief Dave Floyd, Dennis Nagi, Alan Fox, Al Van Derzee, and Pat Perrella have been working on the rather painstaking process of working up catalog sheets on every item, photographing them, labeling each item with an indelible pen, and entering the data into our computer. Most of the DE items will go on display in the DE exhibit back aft in compartment C-201L. Dave Meyersberg has catalogued almost the entire library; over five hundred volumes and growing, of DE tech manuals and historical information. Dave has also established the criteria for archiving the entire collection and we appreciate his lending this professional expertise to the project.

Erik Collin has been doing his part along with Pat Cancilla and Chris Fedden. They have scaled out the old armory to become a curatorial office, i.e., a place where artifacts can be dropped off to keep them from ending up on my desk. They repainted the entire office so now we have a clean new space for "collections management". Erik has also been busy repainting the MK 14 gunsights on the messdecks. There he joins Rocky and Ray in their quest to make every electrical box on the ship look brand new. The Walkers, Dick Pavlovic, and Claire also continue to brave the cold . But nowhere does it seem colder than in the aft engine room where Bill Coyle, Larry Williams, Bob Callender and Ken Kaskoun have been working on restoration of the lighting.



MK 14 gunsights after restoration

The galley project is coming along well. Gary Sheedy got all the tile up and Clark Farnsworth cut out all the old steel brackets, and is rewelding the steam kettles or coppers and the potato peeler to the deck. That dust is gonna be quite a mess for someone to clean up in the spring, which by the way, in case I didn't mention it, seems just around the corner. Clark was on the binnacle list following cataract surgery as is George Erwin. We wish them both well.

Up in radio, one of our youngsters, 62-year-old child Jerry Jones decided he had to chip out the coding room this winter. You radiomen remember that little five by five cubicle that you can stand in the middle of, put your hands one your hips and have your elbows touch each side. He figured chipping would take about a day and a half. Wrong again moi ET. He's been in there two days a week for three weeks. Welcome to the world of the deck department. Jerry was having trouble bending under the shelves and over to do the deck, so in desperation he enlisted the help of his buddy Don Bulger. Don's reaction was typical of his generation. Something to the effect of, "Get out of the way sonny, this is man's work."

You have to understand Don's birthday was 10/10/20, so at eighty, he's the oldest man in the crew. Jerry's seeming lack of compassion for his shipmate is probably explained by that old "officer-enlisted" thing. The fact is that while Don started life as a white hat in 1942, he ended up as a Lieutenant. All the other guys want to know how Jerry rates a Lieutenant as a striker. Anyway, Jerry admits that there is one great thing about operating a needle gun. You feel so good when you stop. And he's mystified by the fact that there are so many guys in the crew who really like to needle gun.

Those of you really familiar with the layout of the CANNON class DE's will recall that on the opposite side of the bulkhead where Jerry and Don are so diligently chipping, is the captain's cabin.



"Youngster" Jerry Jones & "Oldster" Don Bulger - Chipping Radio Techs

On **SLATER** this is the space where our computer is, where Nancy and Debbie diligently try to answer correspondence, phone calls, keep the books and lately, try to keep their teeth from vibrating loose with the air hammers next door. Ear protection is standard equipment, and makes answering the phones a little difficult. For some reason the curatorial team down in the wardroom also seems to take exception to the noise. As a result, we have developed loud days and quiet days. Mondays, Wednesdays, part of Saturdays, and the occasional Sunday are loud days up forward. Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and the other part of Saturdays are the quiet days. So if you're planning to call us, pick your day carefully. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the loud days will be over up forward.



Don Bulger - Chipping out code room

Up in the office, we have been going through our own reorganization. We are in the process of going through all our administrative and historical files to get things better organized and weed out a lot of the stuff that is now obsolete. It looked pretty hopeless for a while. It's pretty scary when you have the entire contents of three file cabinet drawers strewn all over two offices. It's amazing how much paper a ship can acquire in the three years since we came to Albany. Getting rid of the old paperwork alone should reduce our draft by a couple more inches.



We're doing the lead work to be ready for our next stab at the dry-docking grant. John Waechter drafted the initial spec and put a lot of research into it. In seeking an expert, Frank Keene recommended Tom Magliocca. Tom supervised the dry-docking of the Blue Circle Cement barges for years. Kim Staats had worked with Tom for many years and put us in touch with him. Tom was kind enough to provide us with a set of their specs for a current overhaul. We were also fortunate enough to get a copy of the Liberty Ship, **SS JOHN W BROWN's** cruise book documenting their trip to the shipyard in Toledo, Ohio this past summer. Editor, Capt. Brian Hope's candor and insight make this a very useful planning document. He even included a copy of their shipyard bill; a most valuable document for us amateurs. We're melding all this info into a request for proposal that will go out to several New York and Connecticut Shipyards. We need to

pin down how much it will cost to do the **SLATER's** bottom, and replace any wasted plate. That's always a crap shoot, because you really don't know what you have until you are on the blocks and getting charged a thousand dollars a day while you find out and mull it over. We understand that the actual grant deadline will be this spring. We hope the second application will be charmed with success.

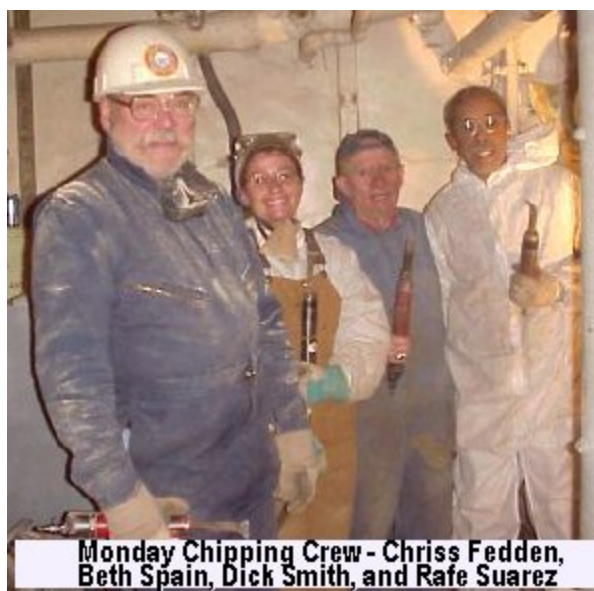
We're keeping our fingers crossed but we think we have the heating system just about straight. Doug Tanner and Russ Ferrer led this project, which involved just about everyone else in the crew. Installing the heating coils aft meant that we needed a larger nozzle in the furnace. When we cut in the aft heating coil, the water temperature dropped from 170 to 130. Russ upped the nozzle from a 1.35 gpm to a 2.00 gpm, made all the adjustments by the book, and could not get the beast to ignite properly. After all our efforts failed, Doug spent what must have seemed like hours on the phone with the good folks at *Utica Boiler* and *Beckett Burners*. He says he learned more than he ever wanted to about Beckett Burners. Doug and Russ spent an entire Saturday starting at 0730 readjusting everything exactly by the book. When that failed to solve the problem, they started to deviate from the book. By 1500 with a low fire baffle, and the installation of an extra damper, they seem to have the beast running fairly well, with warm air flowing forward and aft, and the boiler maintaining 170 degrees Fahrenheit.

Along the way they got aquastadts on both vent blowers so they only run when the temperature is up in the furnace. Just do you don't think we're getting spoiled, at night we turn the temperature down to forty, then back up to fifty- five in the daytime. Some body must have been taking pity on Nancy and Debbie, because one day Gary found the wardroom thermostat turned all the way up to sixty and yelled, "*What the hell you guys think this is, a sauna!*" I have to admit, I was breaking a sweat. Layers of outerwear were starting to come off.

Speaking of paying for heating oil, our thanks to all of you who have been so generous to the winter fund drive. We are actually holding our own financially and thus far have not had to dip into savings. And a special thanks to Les and Annette Beauchaine who continue their work selling the dogtags and **SLATER** souvenirs at *Crossgates Mall*. Their efforts, aside from my incessant begging, are our sole source of winter income.

Back aft, Raf and the chippers have finished chipping out C-201L and are now diligently working on C-202L. Religiously, Raf, Ed Whitbeck, Pat Cancilla, Chris Fedden, Dick Smith, Earl Gillette, and Beth Spain have been going at it. Beth has joined the crew as a really over-rated chipper as she also holds a Master Pilot's 100 GT rating. Doug Tanner and his crew from *GE Selkirk* have been busy installing the watertight door in the aft crew's quarters into the aft motor

room. This will eventually be our public access to the machinery spaces. We figure it's best to do the burning and welding early before we paint out the berthing space. Now, I know this isn't my usual m.o. I usually wait until a space is painted to tear it up again, but this will be our museum space so we'll try and us a little advanced planning on this one. Russ has been mounting and straightening lockers. We also got a lot of great support from both the *Glens Falls* and *Albany Naval Reserve* units this past month, making repairs to the wasted decks in the aft crew's quarters.



Back in damage control Barry Witte and Gary have been working to give us improved pumping capability should disaster strike in the form of a huge chunk of ice hitting a badly wasted section of the hull. They are overhauling and checking out three 440-volt submersible pumps that we obtained from the Navy. This also means checking out and repairing all the submersible pump electrical outlets around the ship which they are well into. As an added precaution, we button up all the spaces below the second deck forward and aft, check flood alarm sensors, and keep our fingers crossed during ice season. We also have five electric circulators rigged between the ship and the pier to keep the water from freezing on the starboard side, and hopefully reducing the ice pressure on the hull. But a dry-docking as soon as possible still seems like a good idea.

It's odd enough to think of all you old timers coming to the ship in rotten weather to do your bit for the ship, but there is another group that's been contributing in all kinds of weather. I'm speaking of the guys from *Wildwood Programs*. The group: Kevin Cornwell, Kevin Mull, George Dyer, Ryan Nichol, Ernie Dillon, Seth Deixler and Scott Cuzdey, have some disabilities, but that hasn't stopped them from becoming an important part of ship operations. The guys have been coming in to clean every week since last spring. They consider this to be their "volunteer job". They come three to five strong on Mondays and Wednesdays, regular as clockwork. When we washed the sheets on the bunks, they stripped the old sheets off and put the fresh ones back on. They even swabbed out the forward three-inch magazine below the CPO mess. They are supervised by Wildwood employees, Kevin Schweitzer, a Navy veteran of the Vietnam era and by Warren Sandles, USN, USAF retired. Kevin came up with the idea of bringing the kids down to the ship to help out, and we owe him a debt of gratitude. It's just one more case of community interaction on the **SLATER**.



**Wildwood Cleaning Crew - l to r
Kevin Cornwell, Kevin Mull, Ryan Nichol,
and George Dyer.**

Thus far, the winter hasn't been too bad. As of this writing, there is no ice on the river. It has come and gone about three times, but we haven't experienced the intense cold that we hit mid January last year. The great thing about being in Rensselaer, aside from the huge parking lot, it being in the Port itself. We watch the oil barges come and go from the Mobil dock on the coldest mornings. On the tug **FRANCES TURECAMO**, Ralph and Mike move to keep the ice broken up.

A WWII armed guard gunner's mate, Captain Ralph's cigar and his finesse in solo docking and undocking the freighters at the port is legend. One old single screw tug. And that's not to mention

his climb down the extension ladder from the pier to the tug at low tide. And finally, there's the longshoreman. To watch the huge generators and turbines come into the port on special railcars and see how they rig, unload and load this massive machinery onto ships leaves us in amazed. Just maybe they ought to ship a few out to California instead of sending them all overseas. We sit on the deck in awe of all these guys, working on the coldest days. It's a shame more people don't see this side of what this nation is capable of. It kind of makes you proud to be an American.



Speaking of proud Americans, that gritty crew of 29 "Old Salts" aboard LST-325 made it across the Atlantic after one of the most debated incidents in recent "naval" history! Our traveling ambassadors Frank & Pat Perrella were at the docks in Mobile, AL to cheer them home & report that the ship arrived at the exact time and date XO J. R. Carter CDR USNR (Ret.) had anticipated in the ship's log while still in transit mid-Atlantic! Although the ship shows the ravages of time we're sure that LST gang will continue to show the enthusiasm & "can do" attitude that already got them this far despite all the odds stacked against them. All of us at **SLATER** send them a special salute as they now begin the tedious task of restoration. Trust us, we know what you're going through. After all, it's all GREEK to us. It can't seem all that bad when you know you've got a live engine room under you ♦ something we have yet to experience!

LST 325 Nearing end of her journey from Greece to Mobile, Alabama.



LST-325 Crew greeting family and friends from bow following docking.



See you all next month - - -