



# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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After the downer that was September, we all needed something to pick up our spirits, and that something rolled into Albany on the evening of Sunday, September 30th in the form of the Michigan DESA fall field day week.

Fourteen members of the chapter, the largest fall field day to date, off loaded their gear and moved aboard. This year the crew opted to bunk in the newly refurbished aft crew quarters, presumably so they could be closer to the head, but I really think they wanted to be closer to the tailgate party they had on the pier every night. This was the week of cleaning the dirty basement. We tackled all these miserable spots that we ignore all year long. **Doug Tanner** took two days off to work with them, and our **Dick Walker** stood by with his truck to get supplies. The week started with **Tom Schriener**, **Jim Franklin** and **Jim Ray** cleaning out the muffler room. They hauled out all the scrap metal, threw about half of it away, swept out the place, restowed everything, and then cleaned the heating furnace to boot.



**Jim Franklin, Tom Schriener & Ron Zarem tackle a nasty job**



When that job was finished they got into a wasted fan room on the main deck portside amidships. We pulled the cover on the B-3 supply room fan, and as expected, found a rusted wasted mess inside. With help from **Bill Hoeth** and **Tom Cintula**, they got it chipped out, and cut and replaced all the wasted metal. That took the bulk of the week. It got so bad that Tom had to enlist his archrival **Ron Zarem** to be his welder's helper. Ron made it clear to **Schriener** that the only reason he had the time to bail him out was because he was such an efficient painter. **Jim Ray** surprised us with his welding talents, which he's kept hidden in the past. He must subscribe to that *"The more you know, the more you have to do,"* philosophy.

Ron also led a crew that included **Earl Moorhouse** and first timers **Dick Matha**, **Billy Conyer**, **Dick Roy** and **Roy Brandon** in heavy cleaning. They started out in the aft steering room. They spent the week sorting out the place and trying to straighten out all **Doug Tanner's** pipefittings. They also crawled under Gun 3. If you guys who served on three-inch DE's remember, there's about a three-foot high crawl space under the gun tub. It was all rusted out, and of course we filled that space up with junk too. Well, the guys went in there, pulled out all the scrap metal (it was quite a heap) and cleaned and vacuumed the whole space out. **Doug** fabricated a pipe rack under the gun and we restowed all our long pieces of pipe in there. They went back into aft steering and fabricated racks for all our angle, flat stock and round bar. Then all the flat plate was stowed in the space created by cleaning out the muffler room. The net result of all this sorting and shelving is

that now we can find a piece of steel when we need it. The following day a work detail filled up **Walker's** truck with scrap metal and hauled it off. He came back from the scrap yard with a big check - eight bucks!

Meanwhile they kept a crew of three chippers back in the aft crew's quarters on the needle guns all week and that really put us ahead on this project. **Rush Mellinger** started off with that crew, but we soon found that his talents were better utilized in the Development Department. We set Rush up with the endowment applications on a picnic table under the ship's store tent, and he spent the week passing them out to all the reunion groups and DE sailors who came aboard that week. There was a definite spike in endowment fund receipts the week after they left, so Rush must have been fairly persuasive.

**Ron Zarem** took his spray-painting talents up to the 01 level forward by Gun 2 and sprayed out the deckhouse and gun tub haze- gray. Then he cut in the whole deck around the gun and painted it with nonskid deck gray. As usual, **Dick Walker** and **Dave Marsh** headed up to the fire control shack and spent the week restoring electrical boxes. They also got a first coat of primer on the deck up there. Finally, **Bill Kramer** and **Jim Andrus** were on hand to cook for the crew and keep everyone happy.

**We were really fortunate to have the Michigan gang on hand Friday the fifth of October.** About 1100, a very large tractor-trailer pulled up to the Snowdock and the driver said he had a delivery. He asked the ominous question, "*Do you have a fork lift?*" There were five crates in the truck containing signal flags from the **Naval Historical Center**. The largest weighing eight- hundred pounds, the lightest, three- hundred pounds! When I was down at the **KIDD**, **Frank Thompson** had sent me signal flags in about eight cardboard boxes. Each weighed about thirty pounds. Nice, manageable pounds. This was different. This was "*Thompson's Revenge*". I'd been pestering Frank about signal flags for about a year. Now I could almost see his maniacal grin down in Washington, DC, thinking to himself, "*I'll bury that yankee dago in signal flags!*" He almost did!

Thanks to the Michigan gang and the fact that the truck driver turned out to be an ex- Seabee who was sympathetic to our cause, we were able to roll all the crates off the truck and use the driver's pallet jack to move them behind the shed. Ron's crew then began breaking down the crates, and by mid afternoon, the contents of three crates were stowed in the aft magazines. And in true naval tradition, I trust everyone got a snap hook. The remaining two boxes were later broken down and hauled aboard by our Sea Cadets. They now have a nice project for the winter, sorting and stowing the signal flags.

**The Saturday before they left, the crew was invited to the annual SLATER volunteer gathering.** This invitation caused the whole crew to stay an extra day. This annual event, since I'm so cheap, is sponsored by the **SLATER** angels, **Claire Oesterreich** and **Pat Perrella**, with the blessing and support of Pat's husband, Frank. (How'd you like to go through life being known as Pat's husband?) Anyway, with the help of **Les Beauchaine**, **Gordon Lattey**, **Chuck Teator**, **Rafe Suarez** and **Tom Cintula**, they put on a feed for over a hundred people that included husbands and wives.



**Chow Line - Volunteer Party**



**Volunteer Party Table**

It was "almost" like a real ship's "ship's party". It was special to have so many spouses involved, because to quote Arnold Lott in *Brave Ship, Brave Men*, "*It gives the wives a chance to see that their husbands are not going to sea with a gang of tattooed hellions, but rather a bunch of fellows that look like insurance salesmen, shop owners, and boys who ought to be at home singing in the choir; all poured into sailor suits and shoe*



**Volunteer Party Table - Younger Crowd**

shines. It gives the old man a chance to see more of his crew together in one place than he ever will again. And it gives everyone a chance to realize in a small way that so long as the ship floats they are all attached to it, whether by regulation, or sentiment, they are all bound together in a common cause." I have to say "almost", because their tattoos are a bit faded, they are way too old for the choir, and their attachment to this ship is not by regulation, but all by sentiment. And that attachment won't end if she sinks. We'll pump her out and start again. So don't let her sink.

**The weather was perfect for the affair.** The two high points were presents from other **SLATER** volunteers, a picture and a video. **Richard** and **Katherine Andrian** spent the weeks before the party printing eight by ten inch color pictures of the **SLATER** and framing them. The night of the party they gave one to each volunteer who attended. That gift represented an awful lot of time, ink and frames.

**The second gift was the premier showing of Erik Collin's new video, USS SLATER - Summer 2001.** For the last eight months, ever since April, every time you turned around here Erik was sticking his video camera in your face. In fact, it got down right annoying at times, as evidenced by some of the out takes. Well, we just thought Erik was doing his best to be irritating, when in fact what he was trying to do was capture the true spirit of the **SLATER**. He studied his talent pool, and Jerry Jones won the audition to be narrator. Erik C. De Mille finally completed his masterpiece about a month ago and every one who has seen it calls it a work of art. What Erik captured in about twenty minutes is the spirit of the **SLATER**. The video opens with scenes of the move from Rensselaer, and then topside close ups of the restored **SLATER**. At this point, **Jerry Jones** introduces himself and takes us on a brief guided tour of the ship with an emphasis on what was accomplished this last year. The restoration process is documented, and all the different types of activities we host aboard are shown. Finally, in a tribute to all the staff and volunteers, the whole gang is pictured individually in brief three-second cuts. The musical background is especially fitting.

The early reviews were posted in the Chief's quarters. The most common comment was "*professional*". Other comments included "*A work of art that captures the spirit of the crew*" and "*beautifully photographed and scored.*" Somehow I was quoted as saying, "*How can I get more work out of these guys?*" Erik has been making copies at home for the crew, so long as they provide him with a blank tape. What was supposed to be an in-house family gift may grow. There is talk about producing the film in quantity and offering it for sale through the DESA Chapters. Right now we plan to send a copy to each Chapter so all our DESA shipmates can see what their contributions have been doing.

Not satisfied to just be taken seriously as a documentary film producer, Erik also did a black and white silent film to document the stress the ship's superintendent experienced in getting the ship moved in the spring. The camera was rolling when I missed three shots trying to get the heaving line from the foc's'cle to the pier. I like to call it acting. He also follows with some wonderful out takes shown to the old Spike Jone's tune "The Furher's Face". Some classic moments of **SLATER** life are captured on tape. We'll let you know when it becomes available to the general public, if we can get it a MPAA rating.

**So the party ended, and it was time to turn to again.** The crew keeps busy. **Clark, Red** and **George** have been repairing wasted metal on the chocks. **Ed, Pat, Smitty,** and **Earl Gillette** have just about finished chipping out C-203L. We hope to get it painted in November. **Bob Lawrence** and **Bill Hoeth** have spent a lot of time in cramped fan rooms. I never thought we'd get to those. The weekday electrical gang **Bob, Larry, Don** and **Ken** have been working on after officer's country and the laundry; staying just ahead of the chippers. **Erik Collin** keeps painting and videotaping. **Dave Floyd** and **Andy Desorbo** painted out the hedgehog mount and Gun 1. **Rich Pavlovic** has Gun 3 looking great. **Bill Coyle** is still working on restoring the interior tags throughout the compartments. **Gary, Mike** and **Barry** have been working on a new electrical panel for the galley and the ventilator for the fire control shack, as well as the B-3 vent fan. **Russ Ferrer** is working with several of the crew who like to climb to install the mast-mounted bullhorn that enabled the 1MC to project over the water to other ships. They have mounted the fifty-pound bracket on the mast. He couldn't wait for a crane.



**Artifacts from USS FROST DE-144  
awarded a PUC for sinking 5 U-Boats**



**Artifacts from USS RALL DE-304  
awarded a NUC for Okinawa Actions**



**Closeup of  
Mast-Mounted  
Bullhorn Unit**



**Pat Perrella with jacket worn by  
T. Nash Broaddus as WWII  
Cdr of USS CATES DE-763**

**Gus continues work in B-4 and Bill Siebert was back circulating oil and tightening covers on the engines in B-3. Rocky and Roy are continuing to work on the whaleboat at Scarano's yard. The plan is now for them to keep it over the winter. The engine is in place, and Doug completed fabricating and then modifying the fuel tanks. Just use the old tanks as a pattern. They'll fit fine. Yeah, right. Not with the new engine. Fortunately Doug takes change in stride.**

**Pat and Kira have been cataloguing a lot of great artifacts from DE crewmembers. Sometimes they even let me touch the new stuff. Items have been received representing the following ships: USS CATES, CONNOLLY, COONER, DANIEL T. GRIFFIN, DOHERTY, EARL K. OLSEN, ELDRIDGE, FARQUHAR, FROST, GEORGE A. JOHNSON, GILMORE, HAYTER, JACK C. ROBINSON, JOSEPH E. CAMPBELL, KOINER, LEVY, LOESER, OSWALD, PARLE, RALL, RICHARD W. SUESSENS, SCROGGINS, SLATER, THADDEUS PARKER, VANCE, WALTER S. BROWN, WALTON, WEBER, and WILLIAM SEIVERLING.**

**We completed another application for a Department of Transportation (TEA) grant for funds to dry-dock the vessel. This is the last round of grants under this program, so let's see if my batting average improves or gets worse. That makes a total of three grants we still have pending, but this is the big one. Deb and Beth continue to log, record and deposit endowment contributions. Nancy and her trusty tour guides are continuing to give tours. It's starting to get a little cool under Claire's tent, but fortunately the side flaps help protect them. Les and Annette continue to sell dogtags. October saw Reunion visits by the USS SIMS, USS FROST, USS STEELE, USS ROY O HALE, USS OSTERHAUS, USS VANDIVIER, and USS MOALE with the Battle of Ormac Bay Veterans. The largest group was the combined reunion of USS BULL, RICH, BATES, and AMESBURY. This last group was especially generous to us, and we are certainly grateful. We've had our last Reunion for the season and things are starting to slow down for the season. We'll stay open through Thanksgiving weekend, and anticipate moving the SLATER back to Rensselaer, right after the Pearl Harbor Day Memorial service.**



**Eric Weidman delivering eulogy at memorial service for John Philip Agnew, Commissioning Supply Officer of USS SLATER DE-766**



**Assembled Group during Agnew Memorial Service**

Finally, we paid our last respects to the SLATER's first Supply Officer, John Agnew. The family requested that we hold a memorial service aboard the ship on Saturday the twenty first. What I imagined would be a small intimate informal gathering turned into a full military funeral. As the crew learned about the event, they all wanted to make sure we paid proper honors to Mr. Agnew. **Dick Walker** and **Ken Kaskoun** took the lead in making arrangements that ultimately included a eulogy by **Eric Wiedman** who had interviewed John for his history of the SLATER, a sermon by **Reverend William Hempel**, a firing squad, echoing taps, and a flag presentation for Marilyn Agnew. Seventeen of the family turned out to see this ship that was John's home for two years, and to walk where John walked, lived and worked. To all of you who participated, our thanks and gratitude. We were glad we could be there for Marilyn and the family.

See you next month.

