

SLATER SIGNALS

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

Destroyer Escort Historical Museum
USS Slater DE-766
PO Box 1926
Albany, NY 12201-1926

Phone (518) 431-1943, Fax 432-1123
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Winter's last gasp. One of our most dedicated guys is **Bob Callender** who served aboard USS KYNE-DE-744. Bob is here three days a week, and has been with us since day one. He usually beats me there in the morning and has the coffee perking by the time I get on board. The Monday the big two-day snowstorm started Bob was here, with **Jerry Jones** and me. We lasted until noon before we wised up and said, "This really looks like the weathermen may be right for a change." and we all went home. It snowed all day Tuesday; I got in Wednesday to about eighteen inches, and an unplowed parking lot. My wife dropped me off. Bob was sitting in his car outside the lot waiting for me. I began to trudge the hundred yards through the snow up to my knees. From the warmth of his car, Bob yelled, "When are they gonna plow the lot?" I gave the best answer I could give, "How the hell do I know!" Bob drove off. I assumed it was too much for him and he was headed back home. Minutes later I saw Bob had parked down the street and was trudging in right behind me. A few minutes later I looked up to see **Larry Rockwood** clearing snow off the whaleboat cover. Eighty year old **Don Bulger** trudded in with his snow shovel and said, "Where do you want me to start?" I thought a path to the portajohn was the right answer. By noon we had the maindeck starboard side clear, a path to the head, a path to the dumpster, a path to the street, and a full crew aboard ready to work. Guess two days at home made us all a little stir crazy.



SLATER's 40s keeping a beam on GRIMMEL's Rensselaer Scrap Metal



Crew breaking for lunch in the Chief's Quarters - getting crowded...



Anyway, the first call I made was to **Mark Bruno** at the port about plowing. The fact was he was short handed and had his hands full with real ships that pay real money, to dig out, and more snow than his trucks could handle. But he said he'd see what he could do. He couldn't handle it, but he found someone who could. He called **Betty and Gary Grimmell** who operate *Rensselaer Scrap Metal* just down the road from us. Now, we'd never met the Grimmells, but we've always been a little afraid of them. It's kind of scary being in a very old steel ship tied up a couple hundred yards from those mountains of scrap metal with the sound of the crusher always in the background. It's one of those places where the giant claw tirelessly drops old cars into a shredder and they come out the conveyor in itty-bitty chunks and drop onto a mountain of shredded scrap. You know the feeling. There but for the grace of God goes the SLATER. We've always been afraid that if we left the ship unattended for a couple of days we might end up on that pile. We'll, it turns out Betty and Barry couldn't be nicer. Long about one thirty in the afternoon; after they'd gotten themselves dug out, Barry trundled down the road in his huge bucket loader and dug us out a driveway and parking spaces for the crew. It's sure great to have friends.

Mid-month and the crunch is on. We open in two weeks. The old girl looks like she'll be ready for the date We didn't get

as much done as we'd hoped; cut your expectations in half in November, and in February cut them in half again. But it's time to stop working and clean up. The crypto room which houses all our tape players, radios and the computer for sound effects is all done. The armory, which will function as the curatorial office, is all done. And the old bread locker which functions as the cleaning gear locker is done. The emergency radio room is ready for painting. Berthing space C-201L is being painted. **Tom Moore** did a great job repairing the insulation. **Bob, Larry Williams** and **Ken Kaskoun** got all the lights installed in the bunk lockers that will serve as our interim display cases.



Future DE Museum C-201-L ready for painting.



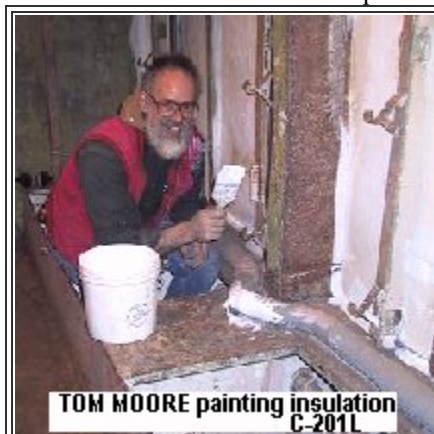
CRYPTO ROOM almost completed



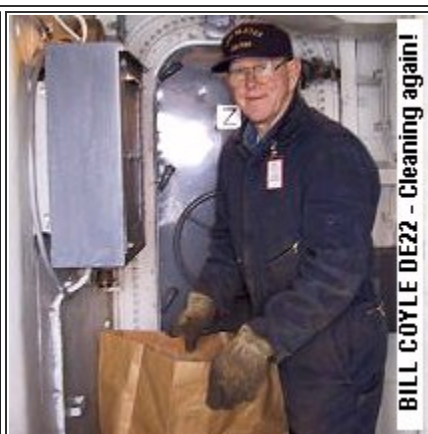
New Watertight door leading to B-4 from C-201-L

Doug Tanner and Tim Benner got the watertight door to the aft motor room completed. It's about the only watertight door with a decent seal on the whole ship. Tom Beeler has cut gratings for all the bunk lockers. And poor **Bill Coyle** cleaned and vacuumed the place three times. Every time he'd finish we'd find a little more to chip. Further aft, C-202L will require about two more weeks of chipping before we can paint it. **Dick Smith, Beth Spain, Ed Whitbeck, Raf** and **Chris Soulia** are chipping away at it. And nothing has happened yet in the after most berthing space C-203L except to pile all the junk in there we had to clear out of the other two berthing spaces. We should start in there in about three weeks. We have to save something for the Michigan crew to do.

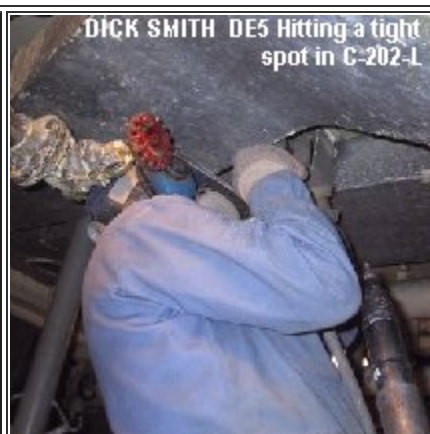
Up in CIC, **Bob Dawson** and **Gene Cellini** got the horizontal plot table leveled and mounted. They bolted it to the DRT so we have one piece of gear secured for sea. Bob is in the process of refinishing all the radar gear so it will look like new before he heads out on another trip.



TOM MOORE painting insulation C-201L

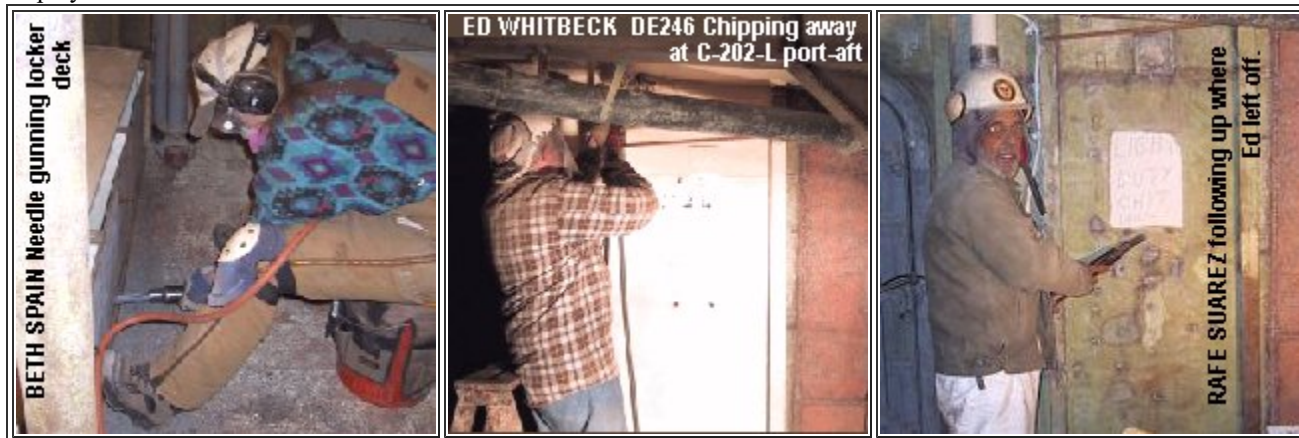


BILL COYLE DE22 - Cleaning again!



DICK SMITH DE5 Hitting a tight spot in C-202-L

A deck down in radio, Jerry and Don are putting that space together. Barry Witte helped them get their power sorted out in the coding room. All the modern gear like the R-390, the dual deck cassette player, the FM radio tuner, and the old antique 486 computer are getting mounted in there, out of sight. The HAM gear is getting mounted in a special locker out of sight. Everywhere else the original heavy big black radios are getting cleaned and remounted. Now, if we can just convince Jerry to stow a few of his precious vacuum tubes down in the forward magazine, he might be able to move around in the space. They are also in the process of outfitting the emergency radio room down below, so that will be on display this season.



Down below Jerry and Don, Officer's Country is coming back together. Julie Weidman and Chief Floyd stowed all the artifacts down in the reefer spaces. We have one reefer that we're using for all the cataloged artifacts and another for the uncatalogued stuff that will work on throughout the year. Now all we have to do is lock everything up and add some mothballs for the summer and cover the wool uniforms with white linen. Any old tablecloths or white cotton sheets out there that you might wish to donate to this cause? Please let us know as this is the preferred archival protective covering. We are working with a limited budget and some tough conditions to bring our collections management effort up to modern museum standards in our 1944 environment.

We achieved our mission of photographing and cataloguing all of the actual DE artifacts and these have been separated from the other items. They will be arranged in the C-201L lockers as soon as the space is painted, and the cataloged books will go on display in the various libraries around the ship. We've really pushed on this as we realize many of the visiting DE sailors will be pleased to see these memories of their ship service. A computer spreadsheet has all of these items listed by ship and donor along with a small color photo image so they can be easily tracked. We hope to have this available for viewing on a laptop during Reunion visits. We imagine it will encourage a lot more items to be dragged out from under the beds and deep recesses of those secret storage areas to be included in the SLATER DE Museum.



A little further down the passageway, the galley looks brand new. Clark Farnsworth and George Erwin reinstalled the three coppers, their splash plate and the potato peeler. Gary Sheedy and Ken Kaskoun installed the condiment shelves. The whole place was still covered with a thick layer of dust from removing the tile. And the deck drains aren't open so we just couldn't give the whole place a good hose down. It took a lot of elbow grease, but Chief Floyd, Chris Soulia, Ed Sakacs, Chuck Marshall, Nancy and Julie brought the space back up to sanitary standards and made it shine.

Erik, Dick and Maralyn repainted the deck. Dick, Maralyn and George then just kept going down the passageway cleaning and scrubbing until they hit the fantail. Erik followed in their wake with a paintbrush.



A deck below the galley, we're getting the messdecks back together. Ray Lammers and Rocky have been using it as a workshop all winter, but it's time to bounce them out. Their electrical box restoration project is being moved forward. As this is a democracy, we gave Ray a choice. He could set up shop in the chemical warfare locker aft, the crew's head up forward, or the chain locker. He wisely picked the forward head.

Nice reward for all their hard work over the winter. **Chris Fedden** talked his wife **Trudy** into laundering all the fart sacks and pillow cases in the forward crew's quarters, and our volunteers from *Wildwood School* are in the process of making up all the bunks again. All the decks are freshly painted and the place really looks sharp.

So where does all this leave us? Two weeks to get the ship all cleaned up and ready for inspection, and the crew is really turning to do the job. Tops on the list is **Gene Cellini**. Gene is back in a big way, now that it's getting warm enough to paint. I've never seen a guy so happy with a paintbrush. Gene is in the process of repainting all the interior decks. He's taking his time cutting them all in and touching up the white and green on the bulkheads, and painted out emergency radio. His primary helper is **Erik Collin**. Erik successfully finished both his winter projects, the armory and the bread locker, and is now a free agent, concentrating on interior touch up with Gene. As he did last year, Erik is even taking the last week of March off from work to help us get ready. Gene is also real excited because between him and **Russ Ferrer**, they got the power painter repaired and ready to go. He can't wait to take that baby outside and really throw some paint on the superstructure. All hands are pitching in to clean up. It's about time to uncover the guns and hang Charles Miner's beautiful wooden "USS SLATER" nameboard on the foc's'cle lifelines.

The winter would not be complete without a big vote of thanks for Les and Annette Beauchaine. They still keep the dogtag booth covered at Crossgates Mall and, aside from your donations, they have been our only source of operating income this winter. Some weekends they have cleared over five hundred dollars. That's a lot of dogtags. Not only is the income important, but having them out there two days a week has great promotional value too. It's a constant reminder to the residents of Albany that we are here. And we're making progress. Les was proud to report that in past years the most common question people asked is, "What's the USS SLATER?" This year people are asking, "Hey, when you gonna be open again?" We measure progress in small increments.

Things are really shaping up with the spring field days. Note the plural! The **Michigan gang** is coming back the first week of May, and they have a full crew of thirty four shipmates including a couple of Diesel experts, a spray painter, a couple plumbers and some guy who says he can weld. They will be followed by the **Illinois DESA Chapter**. **Vic Schadel** so far has ten guys signed up, and get this; an additional five women. The plan will be to put the men in the forward berthing and the women in the CPO mess, with shower times scheduled accordingly. We'll see who gets to use the flush toilet and who gets sent to the portajohn. The issue of who will be the cook has also yet to be decided. Remember that line in the movie PT109 when they were looking for a cook? The guy who used to make the peanut butter sandwiches for his brother got the job. Not to scare anyone away, but Victor still has slots available, so if you're interested in working aboard the second week of May, give him a call at (708) 456-7258, especially if you're a cook. Right now it looks like the bulk of their effort will be back aft chipping and hopefully painting in the aft crew compartments.

If you depend on the US Postal Service for your SLATER news; when you receive this issue, we should be back in Albany. However, if you're one of those who checks our website daily for the latest news, we're probably still in Rensselaer. The plan had been to put the camels in the third week in March, and move the SLATER on the last Tuesday of

the month so we'd open at the Snow Dock on April first. However, due to the lack of thaw, the large amount of snow up north, and the fact that there is still a lot of ice on the smaller rivers up north, we probably won't move until the third week of April. We'll spend our first couple of weeks open to the public in Rensselaer. We'll have directions on the Snow Dock gate, but it's easy to find us. Just cross over the bridge and look for the big white BASF water tower to your right and we are just past that on the river's edge. The only WW II Destroyer Escort around for miles so you can't really miss us!

Notes from Nancy: Our March, pre-season meeting was a success. We took care of business and discussed our favorite subject tour length. Up to that point, the gathering was informative, if slightly dull. But our guest speaker, **Celeste Bernardo**, *Chief of Interpretation at the Charlestown Navy Yard, Boston National Historic Park, MA*, changed all that. With infectious enthusiasm, she got us all thinking about the kinds of tours we give, and how we can evaluate them and make them better. By the end of her presentation, I felt like finding a group of guests immediately and giving them a terrific tour.

Before I began to write this, I had a look at the April calendar. There are large fields of white unrelieved by any black ink - still plenty of spaces to fill. **Call Dick Walker!** Sign up early! Don't leave us in suspense. If you know someone who is interested in being a guide please give us a call at 431-1943.

There's still a lot more. The engineers, **Gus Negus**, **Larry LaChance** and the two **Bills** are making some real significant progress on the emergency Diesel and checking out the mains in B-3. The dry-dock request for proposal has been sent out to five shipyards, as we prepare our grant application to try again for funding. **Nancy** has been grinding out a grant application each month in addition to getting all her guides lined up and trained. **Deb** is booking in a lot of tours and getting our advertising kicked into high gear. **Rocky** is polishing all the door knobs and hardware, and Les is handing his signal flags in the flagbags. **Al Vanderzee** cleaned the wardroom pantry, sans flight jacket. And **Pat Perrella** got a real promotion. Her cleaning station has been moved from the aft head to the wardroom. She got officer's country put all back together and the wardroom table set up again. And as a follow up to last months' saga about our disgruntled Vietnam Vet electrician, **Gary Sheedy** got a job with Adirondack Refrigeration doing the same work as before. And we were all counting on him to spend a little time on unemployment so he could put in a few more hours a week down on the ship. Not to be. The sound of Elvis coming out of the reefer deck keeps clashing with the Benny Goodman on the ship's entertainment system, and now scuttlebutt has it that Gary has installed a lava lamp down in the reefer flat, The answer to the question, "Where's Gary?" is now, "Oh, he's down in his lounge." I sure hope we've had winters last gasp. These guys really need to get topside.

Finally, my wife got a little E-mail from a friend that I'm certain describes the state of mind of most of the DE Sailors I've met. The E-mail read: ***"THE TRUTH IN 13 WORDS Inside every older person, is a younger person - Wondering what the hell happened."*** See you next month on the Albany side of the River.