

SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Remember last year. Everything went like clockwork for the move and the opening. We got all the camels in on the third week of March, moved the ship the last week of March, and opened at the Snow Dock on April first, right on schedule. This year we just can't get out of Rensselaer. That last big March snowfall, coupled with the fact that it just really hasn't warmed up is making it tough on us. The snowmelt has come late, and it was a big one. At one point the main deck amidships was three feet higher than the pier. The river has been running so high and fast for the past three weeks that we couldn't get the camels in until mid April. Then we had to wait for the current to slack up a bit for the move. So it's been a waiting game. But it's tough being in Rensselaer. We really haven't wanted to go out of our way to promote the opening, and then have to redirect people when we move. Once we get across, we'll make big splash.

So we opened on the Rensselaer side. Opening Day Sunday, April 1st was another cloudy cool day. We gave the term "Soft opening" new meaning. It was so soft, you couldn't hear it, but at least we got the ship all cleaned up and got our act together to prepare for the "Frozen Four" NCAA hockey tournament. The tour guides showed up in force even though there was no one to tour.

We hadn't seen **Dave Riffley** in a long time. But he showed up, and there's something about that guy. When he puts on his bell-bottom dungarees, chambray work shirt, foul weather jacket and squares his white hat, nobody looks more the part of the prototype 1940's "tin can sailor" than Dave. I mean this guy really looks the part. Like he either just stepped off a can, or came out of central casting. When the media is around, he's the guy they shoot. And this Coast Guard engineman had never even set foot on a tin can until he stepped aboard the SLATER! I mean, he looked good. I wish the rest of the crew could start looking as good as Dave. I thought he looked even better than **Julie Weidman** did. And I said so. And that's about the time the rest of the crew started murmuring that maybe I had been on the gangway side of the pier a little too long and needed to spend a little more time ashore.



Dave Riffley



Claire and Julie



Friday Tour Guides

Slowly, over the course of the month, we have seen many of our guides and visitor services volunteers return for duty. Even our snowbirds are beginning to arrive, looking bronzed and fit. It is great fun catching up on the news. We are getting ready for May, which promises to be busy with school tours, reunions and lots of guests. **Dick Walker** has been calling on guides to get that May calendar set early. So if you're among them, try to give him your schedule for the whole month boy, will you make us happy. We are trying out the new tour route and if you have questions or comments let **Nancy** know. It's very important when we are busy, that all guides follow the same route, so if you are unfamiliar with the new route, we will gladly show you. You will see a few new faces in our guide staff. We have hired two new part-time students as guides, **Kira Zaikowski** and **John Druzba** to augment the crew during the busy season. Welcome them aboard and share your sea stories!

Anyway, we've got the "open to the public" routine down pretty well. The tour guides are trained and ready to go. We've extended our hours so we're now open five days a week, Wednesday to Sunday from ten until four. On cold days, which are most every day, we've been setting up the gift shop in the aft crew's washroom. At least it's clean and freshly painted. And we have plenty of parking here on the Rensselaer side. Lot's of parking. All the exhibits are back together and the ship looks great. The only real eyesore is the decks need repainting, and we'll get to that in May.

In the meantime, **Les and Annette Beauchaine** are making more money with a little table and a dog tag machine out at Crossgates Mall, than the whole crew is making with that big ship. One week they turned in \$700, while we only made \$500. For the three years, since **Marty Davis** brought up that dog tag machine, we estimate that Les and Annette have grossed \$50,000. for the SLATER. They are special people, and we would be in a lot worse shape without them. Annette in particular carries a real chip on her shoulder. She feels if she doesn't turn in five- hundred dollars a week, she's fallen short. And we do our best to keep her thinking like that too. I'm kind of surprised she didn't turn out to be the CEO of a "Fortune 500" company. I know she's a better sales person than I am. She kind of makes me nervous about my job. Our thanks also to the good folks at *Crossgates Mall* who have donated the space for the machine for the last three years continue to be so cooperative.

A lot of work got done since last month. The temporary DE museum space C-201L is all painted out and cleaned up. **Pat Perrella** is working on getting some of the artifacts out on display for the DECO visit in May. **Tom Beeler** cut thirty-three gratings for the lockers to keep the artifacts off the steel deck. **Mike Stenzel** is printing and laminating the exhibit cards over to DMNA. All that remains to be done is stenciling the compartment, putting a second coat on the decks, and hanging the bunks. **Mike Muzio** painted out the anchor chain and windlass; **Chris** scaled and painted out the area where the gangway will land. **Dick** has gun three just about back together and is doing a real museum quality job on the restoration. The electrical boxes that look brand new throughout the ship are a testament to the winter efforts of **Ray** and **Rocky**. **Rock's** now back hard at work on the whaleboat with **Roy**. **Nancy** made a new tablecloth for the CPO mess. **Gene** and **Erik** got all the interior decks painted and have been doing a lot of touch up painting. **Erik** got all the Mark 14 gun sights mounted back on the directors. The welding crew **Doug**, **Tim** and **Clark** finished the B-4 watertight door and are modifying a door to use in the aft crew's quarters where one is missing. They also completed repairs to the gangway, mounted a ceremonial ship's bell on the fantail for reunion memorial services, and reactivated the fresh water system for the season. And, **Claire** continues to keep everyone fortified with her brownies , fudge and cranberry muffins.

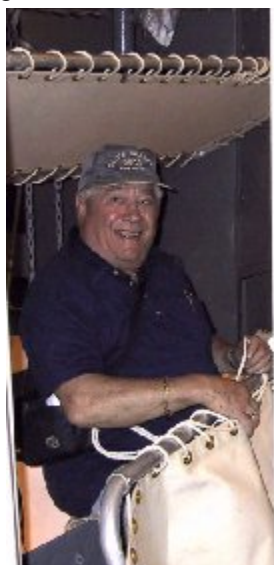


The Chippers have just about finished C-202L, and **Tom Moore** has just about finished the insulation repairs. We're saving the painting for **Ron Zarem** during the *Michigan Field Day*. The Chippers favorite "Chipper" is **Beth Spain**, who joined he crew in December. Beth is a very sweet hardworking girl who loves to be on the water and on ships. Her only vices seem to be that she really wants to work on a tugboat and that she says she knows all the verses to "Barnacle Bill."

I'd hate to meet the degenerate who taught her that. Beth also likes the reaction every one in the crew has to her motherhood status. "How can you have a fourteen year old? You're not that old yourself! What'd ya do, start having kids when you was twelve?"

We finally got to meet Beth's husband **Mark**. He's a sign painter who repaired our banner for us, and made a new sign for the Snowdock. He says it's not easy being married to a wife with her Able Seaman's ticket and a hundred-ton license. Like, "Hey Honey, dinner's on the table. Do me a favor and put the kids to bed tonight. I'm catching a barge to Miami. See you next week." Mark was griping because in the January issue we thanked all the wives who let their husbands come work on the ship, and never gave him a mention. Like I always say, don't come to me for justice. But thanks for the sign. Anyway, it was good to have someone else with a license aboard for the cruise, even if she was a few hundred tons short of what you'd need to pilot the SLATER. Beth will be heading back to her regular summer job as a pilot aboard our neighbor, the cruise boat DUTCH APPLE, so we'll have to share her.

Barry Witte led a team down to the James River Reserve Fleet for a weeklong scrounging expedition. The crew included longtime volunteer and tour guide **Chief Art Dott**, engineer **Bill Siebert**, and naval reservists **Vic DiSalvi** and **Juan Duran**. They spent most of their time aboard the old sub tender HOWARD GILMORE which has the same main engines as the SLATER, so they picked up a truck load of small engine fittings, eight electric 440volt vent fan motor controllers, a lot of gauges and instruments, joiner doors and hardware, sight fixtures, valve wheels, a new breaker panel for the galley to undo another Greek modification. The biggest find was that the GILMORE still had her 24" searchlights. They got the transformer boxes out of the engine room that we need to get the lights operating. It was quite a haul.



The engine room gang is making steady progress. They have been wrestling with the cooling problem in the emergency diesel generator. **Gus, Larry** and **Russ** finally got it solved by bypassing the inoperative thermostat and controlling the water flow manually with a valve. They had the generator running for about thirty minutes. **Gary** and **Barry** had a chance to check out the generator and it was actually making 440 volts and feeding the switchboard. The next time the Enginemen and the Electricians can all get together we will close the bus tie to the forward switchboard and try to power up the forward end of the ship on generator. When we get through that phase, we'll try the whole ship. **Larry** and **Bob** have been repairing the lighting in B-4. We don't know what drug the doctor prescribed for Larry, but ever since he recovered from his prostate surgery, he's been



prowling the decks challenging his shipmates with, "I could take you, you know. I'll kick your butt." We should all feel seventeen again!

Just forward in B-3 Bill Siebert, Dave Riffley and Bill Coyle have been working on the lube oil system. Hack Charbonneau and Jerry Jones obtained about three hundred gallons of used lube oil that we pumped into the starboard lube oil tank, and then **Bill S.** picked up another four hundred. Bill is using the lube oil pump to circulate the oil through the main engines to preserve them. The only mishap was an open valve that let oil gravity feed into the port lube oil tank. It seemed about halfway up the tank; one of the hits the SLATER took to the shell plating resulted in a cracked weld on the inboard side of the tank. About ten gallons of oil leaked into the bilge and that had to be vacuumed out. We swear looking at the dents in the shell plating, the Greek tug skippers must have played bumper car with the SLATER when they thought she was going for scrap.

Tuesday, April 17th was camel day. We gathered on the Snow Dock about 0800. There were ten of us with **Jimmy** and the *Water Department* crane thanks to **Bob Cross** and **John Kosa**. **Hack** was on top of the stack of camels making the hookups. **Gene** gave the signals. **Russ** and **Beth** handled the tag lines and guided them over the side. **Tom Moore, Raf,** and myself were on the water unhooking and shackling them up. **Les, Roy Gunther** and **Mike** hauled them upriver and returned the taglines. By ten thirty all sixteen camels were in place. As soon as the last camel was in the water **Hack** went down the Jacobs ladder to help make the hookups and speed up that process. The job used to take us all day. Practice makes perfect. What was really amazing was while that operation was going on, we still had the regular Tuesday crew working on the ship restoration, and we had the five man scrounging crew down in Virginia getting parts. This organization is really developing some depth to be able to undertake so many operations simultaneously. Anyway, we took a break for lunch and worked until two tightening clamps and shackles and making adjustments.

Monday, April 23rd was really the first decent weather day we had. The sun was shining, and the temperature touched seventy. Miraculously, the snowbirds just began climbing out of the woodwork. Shipmates we hadn't seen since October showed up on the Quarterdeck with their tools. **Clark Farnsworth** worked without a helper all winter long. That Monday he had three helpers. **Red Hume** was back from Florida, **George Irwin** Back from the Cape, **Don Shattuck** back from Texas (showing off his new pacemaker) , **Bob Dawson** back from Hawaii, **Don Norris** came up from Pennsylvania, and **Roy Gunther** came out from his garage workshop. **Ken Kaskoun** was back from China. It was amazing. We had about twenty guys working on the ship. They had to schedule two seatings for lunch in the CPO mess. But it's great having the full crew back again.

The move back to the Albany side was finally set for Tuesday the 24th. It couldn't happen too soon as we were taking a financial beating on the Rensselaer side. We lined up the tugs for 0900 with **Bill Welch** at *Empire Marine*. **Dick Walker** spent all Monday making phone calls to get the crew together. **Tom** checked the camels and made sure they were ready to receive the ship. A really critical item to this crew of elders, we ordered a portajohn for the Snow Dock. We got the electric power turned on. We arranged to have the telephone service transferred across the river. We cleaned up the pier and got all our gear stowed on the ship. **Dick Smith** arrived at 0600 and began loosening the wire ropes. By the time I go there at 0745, the waterlines were in, the pier was clean and forty hands were standing by. I observed three other things. The river was up and running fast again with the ship was riding high. There was wind; a LOT of wind. And **Bill Welch** was on the pier, sans tugs. **Bill** said, *"We've only got one tug available, the warm weather and snow melt really has this river running again, and with this wind I think it would be prudent to hold off."* I was having deja vu from December. All I could say was, *"You've been on this river a lot longer than me. I'm with you. We'll hold off."* I walked to the gangway, called the crew around and said, *"I lied again. We're not moving today. I was all a ploy to get you down here to work. Tighten up the cables and turn to."* Then I ran like hell.



I got up to the office and picked up the phone to call the water department to cancel the crane. Just as I picked up the phone the line went dead. Verizon had disconnected the phones. I went looking for a cell phone, thinking that maybe it was time to forget writing about the move and get this issue of *SLATER SIGNALS* wrapped up. I could write about the move next month along with the Michigan and Illinois DESA field days, the DECO convention and the annual board

meeting. I heard **Mike Muzio's** voice on the IMC. *"Now, secure the special sea detail. Commence ship's work."* Maybe we'll move Saturday. See you next month, from where ever we are. **See you next month.**

