

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
Vol. 5 no. 5, May 2002

May has become the month where the regular crew gets a boost from the out of town helpers. The first two weeks of the month saw a flurry of activity as the **Michigan** field day week was followed by the **NI DESA/USS HUSE DE145** work week. On top of that we had our quarterly board meeting, a flood of school children and the start of reunion season. It seems just like yesterday that we were stowing the gift shop stuff and calling it quits. Now it's time to start it all again. **Nancy's** guides are back at work and are enthusiastically showing off the ship. Some of our maintenance guys have shed their overalls for denim and joined the ranks of the tour guides. We can't wait for all of the DE reunion groups that we have scheduled to arrive. We know they will be stunned when they see the great shape the **SLATER** is in.



This was the eighth field day week for the Michigan DESA chapter.

The Michigan crew arrived for their week of work on April 28 and the Northern Illinois/ USS HUSE crew took the following week, arriving on May 5. Both crews dovetailed beautifully with our regular volunteers to accomplish a lot of work we'd been trying to get done for years. Michigan brought 28 men, including four cooks. This was their eighth trip to Albany. It seems like the number of cooks goes up each time they come, and they were turning out some tasty meals in the galley. And with four guys, **Bill Kramer, Jim Andrus, Paul Monaco, and Frank Warner** taking turns, they were all still smiling by the end of the week. As always, the food was great.



Ron Zarem chipping the machine shop.



The USS Huse crew poses in the freshly painted machine shop.



Tim Markham scaling in the machine shop.

The weather turned out to be pretty lousy all week, but we had plenty of inside work for the crew. The work parties divided up into teams. My top priority was the machine shop. The team that got assigned to chipping out the machine shop had some of the worst duty. We've wanted to do this ever since the ship came over from Greece.

But we could never shut the shop down long enough to make it happen. With the arrival of the Michigan crew, we threw their best men into the shop and said, "Don't come out till it's chipped."

Ron Zarem, Tim Markham and Chuck Green went at it with needle guns. The first part of the process was pulling all the gear out of the shop. Looking at the mound of welding cable, air hose, tools, parts, equipment, scrap metal and safety gear on the deck outside the shop, one volunteer commented that it looked like the machine shop had barfed onto the weather deck. With the grinder, lathe, drill press and welding machines all covered over, the space was dismal. They chipped for four days and spent Friday patching and repairing the insulation. **Chuck Green** in particular really stayed on the job. This is rough work. So rough that **Tim Markham** decided it would be more fun to fix the commode. But he went back to chipping. **Zarem** seemed to spend a lot of time wandering around supervising

everyone else, but he stuck with it. It was **Chuck Green** who really kept his nose to the grindstone in there. After a week of real backbreaking work chipping it still was pretty sorry looking. **Ron** said, "This is the first time I have ever worked on the **SLATER** when the space I was working in looked as bad when I left as went I came." That situation wasn't to last for long.



A life raft getting a final coat of paint.



A messcook's job never ends.

Up on the flying bridge Dick Walker, Dave Marsh, John Clark, Ron Mazur and Bob Donlon led the restoration of the fire control shack and the upper sonar room. Both spaces are coming along beautifully. In the forward crew quarters **Rusty Nichols and Art Wuckert and Ski** led scaling and painting the bunk lockers. These lockers are being used by the Scouts for the overnight camping program, and we don't want to send any kids home with chips in their gear. A big project was rigging the forward life rafts of the superstructure and getting them repainted. **Doug Tanner and Tim Benner** fabricated a special davit mounted on the bridge to help lower them. **Rush Mellinger and Roy Brandon** spent a week under a tarp that **Doug Tanner** rigged for them so they could work in the rain. By Friday before they left, they

got the rafts rigged back into position. All week long USS MILES shipmates **Chuck Markham and John O'Leary, Sr.** stayed on top of the mess everyone else was making, keeping the **SLATER** respectable for visitors.

Dick Briel, Steve Borovich, Jim Ray John Stefaniak and Gil Rivette helped Pat Perrella install the glass locker tops in the museum space. We have relocated the DE museum space to the largest compartment aft, C-203L. This provides eighteen more lockers to display artifacts, gets the museum away from all the tank top trip hazards that were in the C-201L location, and away from the threat of being flooded out by the head or the sewage tank. The crew completed this space last winter and rigged out all the bunks. Pat is busy arranging the artifacts and setting up the displays for our new season of reunion sailors. The space is looking beautiful. It may not be as slick and high tech as some of the museums that you've been in, but we're proud of the fact that it's a museum built with **HEART on a REAL HULL**. When Michigan departed at the end of the week the museum space was really starting to look like a museum. The fire control shack looked brand new. The machine shop was all torn up and ready for painting, and the gear it had contained was strewn all over the starboard main deck.

That situation didn't last long. The **Northern Illinois/USSE HUSE** crew arrived on the Saturday the Michigan gang left. They went right to work. The top priority job was getting the machine shop repainted so we could get it back in service. The **USSE HUSE** Reunion Coordinator **George Amandola** took his shipmates **Malcolm Holderness, Bill Mehan, Clem Vaughn and Harry Strauser** into the shop. They masked and primed it out Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday, **Tommy Moore** came in and sprayed out the white topcoat. On Thursday the **HUSE** guys painted out all the trim and on Friday they started moving all the gear back in.



The USS Hume and Illinois shipmates take a break.

Meanwhile down in the bowels of the ship Jim Larner from the USS DAY took his daughter Robin into the reefer space and they



Jim Lerner and his daughter Robin Painted out the refer deck.

started brush painting white primer. They worked down the hole all week, and by Friday, they had the space looking great. The area that the public sees looking down the open hatch looks fully restored. Back topside more HUSE men, **Joe Collette, Bob Kehrer, Roy Roetzler, Lou Riccardi and Jack Parker** went to work on the aft life rafts. **Doug Tanner** helped rig them down to the main deck. The spent a week scraping, repairing rot and repainting, and Friday morning we hoisted them back into position. Being hosts for the group, **Vic Schaedel and Bud Ried** volunteered to cook breakfast and lunch for the crew all week. With the help of **Ryan Spielman**, they also painted out lockers in the museum space.

The one small bit progress we didn't address is what has been happening down in the engine room. The big bit of restoration news is that the engineers rolled Main Diesel number four, two complete revolutions on air. They got the HP air compressor and starting air system hydro tested and working. They got oil in the sump. They jacked the engine by hand, and opened all the cylinder cocks. They prelubed it. They built 450 pounds on the starting air cylinders and let her turn. They were hesitant to go further because they were concerned that the generator bearings weren't getting any lubrication. **Larry LaChance, Chuck Longshore and Russ Ferrer** are progressing in their effort to restore the fire and bilge pump in B-4.



Slater Engineers working on the number two ship's service generator.

When the Michigan gang arrived, Bill Siebert snagged some of the most talented mechanics despite my best effort to make painters out of everybody. Siebert took **Tom Schriner, Emmett Landrum and John O'Leary** down into B-3 and they went to work checking out the 8-268A 200KW ship's service generator. They spent the week cleaning, inspecting, repairing broken lines and prelubing the engine. By the end of the week they were ready to test roll the engine. They put the starting air to it and surprise, it fired on the first shot. The engine ran for about half a minute before they got it shut down. After lunch they called all hands for the official start. With a shot of air the engine roared to life again. There was a black puff of smoke from the stack followed by a whisp of blue. It ran smooth and sounded great. They secured the engine after twenty seconds and spliced the main brace in celebration.

It was a great two weeks for all hands. It's a small step forward, but if the crew stays as fired up as that engine was, this old girl just might move again one day. The big problem now is to find some funding for the project so they can have a source of parts, as they get deeper into the overhaul. It would be appropriate at this point to get into some of the philosophical reasons for getting into the engine work. Our primary mission is the preservation of the **USS SLATER** and her technology as a historic artifact to serve as an educational tool. Operating **SLATER** under her own power, for many, may not seem practical and feasible for our small organization. We won't know that until we get further down the road. However, we view getting the equipment in operating condition as an important part of the preservation process. Even if an engine is only run once a quarter to warm it up and then shut it down, that makes the difference between preserving an engine, or a frozen hunk of iron. Another reason for going down this road is that it brings life, people and activity onto some very cold dark places in the **SLATER**.



The Michigan crew working on locker tops in the Museum Space.



Rusty Nichols repainting bunk lockers.

Unbelievable as it is to me, there are people in this world who don't want to clean and paint.

There are volunteers who live just to overhaul machinery and make things work. This gives those people a reason to get involved with **SLATER**. It increases our volunteer base, and puts people in neglected spaces, who are now watching and caring for those engine rooms. It's another step in bringing the **SLATER** to life. If it weren't for the engineers, a full third of **SLATER's** hull would be neglected except for an occasional security check to make sure the bilges weren't full of water. The engineering component of this project will be driven by the volunteer effort. While we are not in a position to commit funding to this aspect of the restoration at this time, we don't want to impede the progress of engineers with such a can do attitude. As **Tom Schriener** said, "If we had this crew for two weeks and some spare parts we could do a complete overhaul of one of these babies.

We've had many reunion groups aboard with the coming of the warm weather. Thus far we've had the **USS BRONSTEIN, JACOB JONES**, and on May 16 a combined group of about 80 from the **USS EDWARD C. DALY, USS GILMORE, USS DOUGHERTY and USS AUSTIN** came to see the ship. On the next day about 50 crewmembers from the **USS WESSON** came aboard. These were some of the most enthusiastic reunion sailors this old ship has seen. There must have been something in the air last week that was giving our reunion sailors a nip from the fountain of youth.

Deb Moore was amazed at their spunk. She told me, of one very distinguished-looking, well-dressed man was mounting the ladder to the pilothouse just outside my office. The look on his face was of a kid at Christmas.

"Are you sure you're allowed to go up there?" asked his cautious wife.

"F@#! 'em," he replied. "I'm going up."

That comment embodies the spirit of the DE sailor. No obstacles. Sighted sub sank same. Sighted ladder, climbed same. **Deb** unlocked the flying bridge for one of the first group who wanted to see his sonar duty station. He sprinted up the vertical stairs and urged his wife to make the trip as well. She left them alone up there, so they could relive whatever memories they liked. But as she sat in the Captain's Quarter's she watched as steady stream of very old men and women charging up to the flying bridge. Usually the ladies get tired of the ship well before the men do and congregate under the tent on the pier. Not these women. She had to hold a lady's cane as she came down the ladder from the pilothouse. There was no stopping these folks. The passages and decks were filled with happy faces and "remember when" moments. They stopped their inspection for a memorial service on the fantail, with **Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings** in attendance as an honored speaker. They poked into every corner of the ship, into places they had not entered when they were in serving onboard their own DE. These folks were determined to see it all.



Volunteer Larry LaChance teaches patriotism to scouts as they learn to fold the flag.

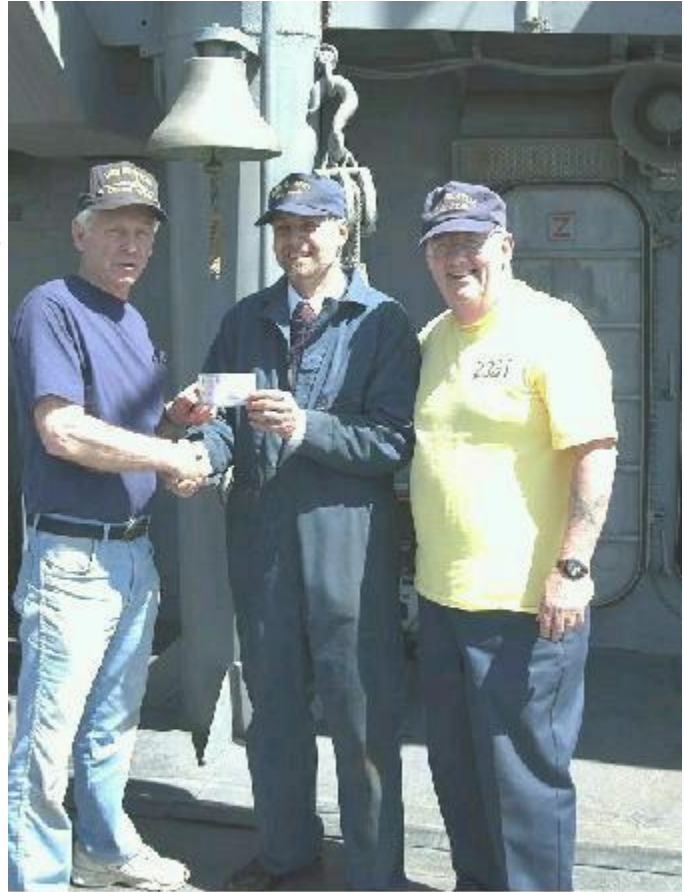
Greg Krawczyk is still working on trying to obtain some parts of former USS CAVALLARO for us. He sent us six sounding tube caps, which we really did need to replace the temporary steel plugs we've been using. **Erik Collin** has been photographing electrical fittings under **Barry Witte's** direction and we've been e-mailing the pictures of critical items for the restoration **Greg** so he knows what to look for. He's taking a week of leave time recruiting

volunteers in Korea for the project. Next we'll be begging for donations to ship the stuff home.

We lost another one of stalwart volunteers this month. Lou Grasek died of cancer after a long illness. **Lou** was devoted to his family, his

USS REEVES shipmates, and the **SLATER**. He was one of **Nancy's** most dependable and best tour guides from the day we first rigged the brow, and he published the **USS REEVES** newsletter faithfully long before I knew him. **He and Maggie** kept **Nancy** supplied with Teddy Bears to sell in the gift shop. Our hearts go out to **Maggie** and the **Grasek family**.

For every loss, there is a gain. We'd like to introduce the youngest member of SLATER crew, three-week-old Evan David Kirk. Evan is the very first grandson of DEHM Board member **Gordon Lattey** and **Albany County Convention and Visitor's Bureau** President **Michele Vennard**. **Gordon** paid for **Evan's** membership before his mother was out of the delivery room. **Evan** has a way to go, but we're already looking forward to the day when he can swing a paintbrush. **Evan** may not yet understand what an honor it is to be connected to DE history, but his proud Grandpa will be making sure he does.



NIDESA Coordinators Bud Ried and Vic Schaedel present us with a check for the Slater's restoration.

See you next month.