



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Again, I went back reading the December 2002 to see what happened a year ago, and so I wouldn't end up repeating myself. The first part was the story of my appendicitis. Don't have to worry about repeating myself there. That was a once in a lifetime event. Then there was the Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony and a lot of comments about how cold it was. Well, I don't have to worry about repeating that story, because this year we had two feet of snow the day before the ceremony and we had to cancel the Pearl Harbor Day Event. Then there was the story of the move to Rensselaer. Well this year, due to circumstances beyond our control, we're still tied to the Snow Dock in Albany, so I won't worry about repeating myself there either. The only thing repetitious is the cold and snow.



December 7th 2003. Winter wonderland.

A lot of planning went into making the Pearl Harbor Day ceremony the best yet. Paul Czesak, Ed Hurley, and Mary Witkowski worked a month on preparations. Invitations went out, we had all the Pearl Harbor Survivors who were there last year line up to attend. Mayor Jennings and Mike Breslin were scheduled to speak, and Bob Cross was going to make remarks about President Roosevelt's reaction to the attack. We even had a friend of Frank Lasch's, Harriet

Degraff, who was a child living on Diamond Head during the attack, planning to attend. **Rosehn Gipe** had all the programs printed up and ready to hand out. Our color guard even all had matching flat hats to wear while parading the colors. And best of all we were going to have it on Sunday, December 7th at 1255 EST, when the attack actually began in Hawaii. On Friday, December 5th, the snow started about 2300. It snowed all day Saturday. About 1400 in the afternoon, **Paul Czesak** made the decision to call it off. The phones started ringing and the emails went out. Very few decisions have been so right. When we woke up Sunday morning, it was still snowing, and snowed until about 1400 that afternoon. I guess everybody got the word, because when we arrived Monday morning there wasn't a footprint around.



December 8th 2003. The crew contemplates whether or not its time to take down the summer awning and put away the patio furniture.



Removing the Winter Wonderland.



Ready to lift the gangways.

Monday morning it was time to get ready for the move. We had scheduled the Water Department crane to lift off the gangways at 0800. But with the snow, not much was moving. The crew showed up as usual, and we turned to digging. We dug all day, and got the main deck and all the bitts and chocks clear so we would be ready to handle lines on move day. Tuesday morning **Ricky** arrived with the crane, and old standby rigger **Hack Charbonneau** reported for duty. We lifted off both gangways without incident. We set the old 32' aluminum pick back in place at the quarterdeck, as that's the one we can manhandle on move day without a crane. **Tommy Moore** came in and got the camels all cleaned off the debris. We were ready to go.



Hack Charbonneau supervises lifting off the permanent gangways in preparation for the move.



The crew rigs the temporary gangway on December 9th.

That afternoon, a tragedy occurred elsewhere that would affect us. I got a call from **Bill Coyle** that a ship had capsized a mile down river at the port. My first call was to **Dick and Maralyn Walker** who work with the Seaman's Mission, and Dick confirmed that he was watching it on TV. A Dutch heavy lift ship, the STELLAMARE was at the Port of Albany loading two GE generators bound for Italy and Rumania. My understanding is that they had a counterweight rigged to starboard and the first generator loaded in the hold outboard. In the process of loading the second generator aboard, something went wrong, and the ship capsized outboard. **Mark Bruno**, his port crew, and the **Longshoremen** responded immediately with a heroic rescue effort to get the men off the ship and out of the water. Fire and rescue crews responded soon after and helicopter and rescue boat searches were conducted, but three sailors were missing, presumed lost in the hold. **Mayor Jennings** was on scene as the search and rescue efforts went on through the night, but to no avail. **Reverend Hempel and Dick and Maralyn Walker** of the Seaman's ministry were on scene to assist the survivors, many of whom they know from the STELLAMARE's previous visits. The crew was primarily Russian. This was the first such incident in the history of the Port of Albany, where heavy lifts are a matter of routine.

The net result for us on the SLATER is that the pier in Rensselaer is not available to us until the STELLAMARE salvage is complete. The Coast Guard has taken over on scene responsibility, and is limiting only essential traffic past the wreck site. Our winter berth is directly across from the wreck, and since all traffic has to hug that side of the channel, our presence on the side is considered an obstruction, so we can't move until the wreck is cleared. Estimates are from two to six weeks. So here we sit. Standing by.



Les Yarbrough scaling in the anchor windlass room.

We've taken several precautions for our stay here in Albany. We normally moor the ship with lines doubled and six one-inch wires, so we're plenty secure. The western most pier of the Dunn Bridge is just ahead of the ship about 100 yards, a little to starboard. The ice tends to jam up behind it, and flows around it, so the bridge pier serves as a natural ice deflection system, giving the ship much more protection than we would have in Rensselaer. We have doubled the cables up on the camels, and set the ice agitators off the port side, two off the bow, two between the camels, and one aft, to keep the ice from forming between the ship and shore and thus limiting

pressure on the mooring lines and seawall. We'll just hunker down until the Coast Guard says we can move.

So, we continue working as before. The chippers Raf Suarez, Dick Smith, Ed Whitbeck, Chris Fedden and Les Yarbrough are hard at work in the cold of the anchor windlass room. Electrician **Barry Witte** did them a big favor. In between rerunning alarm cables with **Mike Clark**, he and **Ray Lammer's** refurbished a 440volt multipurpose outlet and installed it and put an electric heater up there. The chippers lives are immeasurably improved. **Erik Collin and Gene Jackey** have been chipping out the tile in the scullery as part of the mess decks restoration. The weekday electricians **Bob Callender, Larry Williams, Don Shattuck and Ken Kaskoun** have continued work in the topside cold on the sound powered phone circuits when they aren't shoveling snow. The shipfitters, **Clark Farnsworth, Doug Tanner, Mac Smith, Tim Benner, and Chuck Teal** repaired the wasted bulkhead and deck in the cold main deck hedgehog magazine that had been leaking onto the CPO mess for years. They also welded up a couple holes in the portside wardroom bulkhead that we discovered when the interior insulation began falling off the bulkheads. They have also been transferring oil from tanks in preparation for welding the wasted deck in **Gary Sheedy's** reefer space. **Stan Murawski** has taught himself how to lay up insulation board, and he is right behind the welders, insulating and painting.



Chief Floyd, Gene Jackey, Stan Murawski and Andy Desorbo cover the three-inch guns for the winter.



In the warmth of the radioroom Don Bulger works on their radio gear.

Rocky is out in the cold taking care of his whaleboat, making sure that snow doesn't accumulate on the boat cover and the lashings stay tight. Gus Negus and Paul Czesak have been aboard organizing the unheated engineering logroom and putting the blueprints and tech manuals in order. **Gunners Dave Floyd, Andy Desorbo and Rich Pavlovick** have continued in the cold chipping away at the ordnance and getting all the gun mounts secured for the winter by pulling in all the telescopes, MK 14 gunsights and getting the canvas covers out. **Geoffrey Bullard** keeps our clocks repaired and **Bill Coyle** keeps them wound. And in the warmth of the radioroom, behind the cloak of secrecy, the radio gang continues to do whatever they do in there. **Jerry Jones, Don Bulger, Walt Stolte, Joe Breyer and Dick Engler** spend hours on their dits and dahs. There was one visible sign of progress in that they actually ran a piece of armored coax up a series of unused cable supports on the portside of the pilothouse exterior. It dangled in the breeze for three weeks until **Joe** finally connected it to a whip antenna. That's progress! Tell me this isn't just like the real Navy!

The semester has ended at SUNY Albany, and our interns have all finished up. We want to thank **Dave McGarrigle, Guillermo Trujillo and Seth Siegel** for all their help this semester in giving tours, and keeping the SLATER clean and functional. The SUNY Intern program has been a great benefit to us. The tour guide crew has secured for the season, I want to thank them all for a great job this year. Now the burden of operations falls back on **Les and Annette Beauchaine**, and **Nancy Buxton** who are working to keep the dog tag machine at Crossgates Mall clanking through the holiday season, as they have done for the last five years. My thanks to them, too. Also, **Nancy and Rosehn** are still operating the gift shop out of the trailer Mondays and Tuesdays if there are any SLATER gifts you need to purchase. We also have two new volunteers who have joined our ranks. **MacDonald Smith** brought in a friend of his, **Roy Warner**. Roy is a former IC electrician who served on the Destroyer tender SIERRA. He is working on getting the IC room and electrical signage straightened out. Roy in turn, has brought his wife **Margaret** aboard to help out. I always said, all we need is a Destroyer Tender. Maybe we will get one yet, but one man at a time.



Greg Krawczyk's crate of 3,500 pounds of destroyer escort parts is finally delivered from Greg's living room in Seoul to our Snow Dock.



Macdonald Smith brings a CAVALLARO speaker aboard.

SLATER Scroungers have been hard at work this month. Michelle Vennard of the **Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau** made a most welcome donation to us in the form of three surplus computers. **Erik Collin** lent his expertise to upgrade their memory and install the machines in our network, replacing our old Pentium ones'. The system is running a whole lot better. **Jack Madden** made a contact with **Bob Reiter** of the **Rensselaer County Veterans Service**, and they donated a pile of wool blankets to us and a box of chambray work shirts. From far away Pennsylvania, **Walter Shaub** of the **CONNELLY** made us a complete set of covers for all the MK 14 gunsights. And Santa arrived on the **SLATER** two days before Christmas. **Greg Krawczyk's** 3,000-pound shipment of **CAVALLARO** parts actually arrived on board on December 23rd. Our volunteers assisted the movers in unloading what was one big crate. We stowed the gear in the passageways and in the trailer and will sort and stow it this winter. Mission accomplished, and in the nick of time for **Greg**, I might add. Apparently as his new bride **Lynn** moved in through the front door of their Seoul apartment, Greg was passing the last of the **CAVALLARO** parts to the movers out the back door.

Covering Guns.





Just when we'd seen it all, an interstate highway sign got thrown over the seawall onto our mooring lines.



Macdonald Smith, Rafael Suarez, Dave Floyd and Bob Donlon look over recent, donations to the coffee mess, temporarily alleviating the coffee crisis.

You folks have been most generous with your response to the winter fund. Since the start of the drive, we have received approximately \$17,000 in contributions and more is coming in every day. Help us through the winter and help yourself to a tax deduction. If you're working on your year-end tax planning, consider a gift to DEHM. A gift of cash or stock demonstrates your belief in and reinforces your commitment to the SLATER project. In most cases, you can deduct the fully appreciated value of a stock gift. Legislation currently pending before Congress is designed to encourage charitable giving. The proposed tax changes provide for a non-itemized deduction allowing non-itemizing taxpayers to deduct giving over \$250 up to a cap of \$500 for individuals, \$1000 for

joint filers. To charge your cash gift by phone or to make a stock transfer, please give us a call. This information is not intended as legal or financial advice. Please consult an attorney or financial planner accordingly.

Now Hear This! Have you earned awards for military service, but never received them? Bob Dawson is working with the **Rensselaer County Veterans Service** to request awards for area veterans. The current plan is to have requests processed this winter, and then have an awards presentation aboard SLATER in March. To request all awards, commendations, and medals earned during and after military active duty, but not received, give us a call. Of course, there's a form to complete and you will need a copy of your DD214 Separation Form, or its equivalent.



Congressman Mike McNulty addresses the SLATER volunteers in our wardroom on December First.



USS McNULTY vet and expert model maker Bud Lovett and Congressman McNulty on the Quarterdeck.

Monday, December first, we had a very special event aboard the SLATER, and one that didn't get snowed out. USS McNulty veteran **Bud Lovett** and his daughter drove up from New Jersey to meet our local Congressman **Michael McNulty**, and **Mike's father, John J. McNulty, Jr.** a former Pharmacists Mate who served aboard USS STARLIGHT AP-175 in World War II. In a ceremony in our wardroom, attended by a gathering of our volunteers, Bud formally loaned the model of the USS McNulty that he built for our museum to the Congressman. Later that week **Frank Lasch** and I drove the model down to Washington where it is now on display in **Mike's** Washington Office. Mike has offered to initiate legislation to try and get the SLATER funding for the needed permanent mooring in Albany, and the even more needed dry-docking. While nothing can be promised, we now have the support of someone in Washington who has been aboard several times and is personally concerned about the future of the SLATER. It's a long road, but it's a promising beginning. Our thanks to **Congressman McNulty, Bud Lovett**, and all the folks who are working so hard to make this happen.

Finally, thanks to the efforts of Frank Lasch, Rosehn Gipe, and Gene Cellini, we entered a tree in the annual Christmas Festival of Trees at the Albany Institute of History and Art. No regular Christmas tree for the SLATER. We replicated the scrawny palm tree in a bucket made famous aboard the fictional USS RELUCTANT in "Mister Roberts." One of 75 entries, our tree was selected as one of the 20 trees to remain on display through the Holiday Season. Think the crew is trying to tell me something? **Happy New Year and see you next month.**



Just waiting for the word to move.