



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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Seems like we've had a lot of rain in August, so we were kind of apprehensive as the week of the HARVEY visit approached. Monday August 17th, we made the final preparations for her arrival. Part of the planning included having Dennis Nagi take the whaleboat out and meet the HARVEY. We thought it would be nice to have the one part of the SLATER that can get underway actually get underway. Dennis showed up about 1030 to get the whaleboat ready, but low and behold, Roy Gunther and Larry Rockwood had beat him to it by an hour. They had just checked out the engine and headed over to the Albany Yacht Club fuel dock to fill her up with diesel.



Dennis Nagi's arrival.

I hadn't paid much attention to the time as there was a lot going on, but around noon, Dennis mentioned that the boat had been gone an awfully long time, and was no where in sight. Now I started to worry. In this day of instant communication between continents, we had a boat out with no radio or cell phone, because it never ventured out of sight of the mothership. I suggested that they might have gone down river to Scarano's Boatyard to show the whaleboat off and look around. Dennis gave them a call, and no one knew anything about our whaleboat. Another thirty minutes passed and the County Sheriff's boat went by with the Albany Police Boat nearby. I flagged them down and casually mentioned that there was probably no problem, but if they happened to spot our whaleboat while on patrol, I'd like to know where those guys were. Rocky and Roy aren't the type to park at the Riverfront Bar and Grill and drink lunch. I was up in the office when fragmented reports started coming in. Rocky appeared briefly in the gift shop to get his car and go back to Scarano's to pick up Roy. The boat was stuck at Scarano's. Rocky brought Roy back

and Roy took off. Rocky called his wife and he took off. All I knew was Rocky and Roy were gone and the boat was at Scarano's.



The whaleboat comes home.

Doug Tanner, who always happens to be in the wrong place at the right time, was there that morning, a Monday, rigging the accommodation ladder. He volunteered to take Dennis and his truck down to Scarano's to find out what the story was. About thirty minutes later Doug was back without Dennis. Yes, the boat was at Scarano's. It wouldn't start. Electrical problems. They had flagged the HARVEY down, and HARVEY was towing the whaleboat upriver to us. Just about the time Doug finished with his report, the HARVEY appeared down river, plumes of water shooting from all her fire nozzles, making her usual grand entrance. There, behind, in tow, the large American flag flying proudly from her stern sheets, was our whaleboat. At the tiller was Professor **Dennis Nagi** gritting his teeth as he was soaked by the HARVEY's spray. The HARVEY made her approach promptly at 1400. We pulled the whaleboat around to the portside and got the HARVEY secure.

When they got around trying to diagnose the problem, they went through the whole electrical system. They ended up pulling the starter apart and surprise, it was full of rust! Remember that story last month about how we flooded the whaleboat! Maybe that had something to do with the problem. Anyway, it's home on Roy's bench and should be back together in a week.

Paint day was a miracle. First there was the weather. In the middle of a week of rainy and cloudy weather, Tuesday was the bright sunny day we had all hoped for. Second there was the crew. About twenty-five people showed up to help us out. The HARVEY arrived back from Troy promptly at 1000. They disembarked passengers and the crew bailed out for a day trip to the Canal. We prevailed on them to make one move before they left so they used their engines to move the HARVEY forward about a hundred feet. We rigged a four-inch manila line from our capstan to their port waist to move her, and bow and stern lines rigged to hold her in. Moving her forward with our anchor windlass was easy.



Thessaly Bullard and Ian at work on the waterways.



Ron Mazure painting waterways.

We had accomplished all the prep work and some of the side painting out of the whaleboat and off a stage. The original paint job had held up very well and there was very little rust and flaking. We had so many people we were able to split the crew into several sections. The main project was working from the HARVEY rolling-out the starboard side. **Tommy Moore, Stan Murawski, Erik Collin, Dave Hamilton, and Charles Miner** worked this part of the project. Another crew painted waterways on the starboard side, **Bob Donlon, Ron Mazure, Al Vanderzee, Claire Oesterrich, Kira Zaikowski, Thessaly Bullard, Bill Scharoun and Joe Breyer's wife Marilyn.** **Buzz Swillio and Jack Madden** repainted the exteriors of the 20mm gun tubs on the starboard side. And the fifteen-crated hedgehog projectiles that had been donated by the Army Ammunition Depot in Hawthorne, Nevada, through the auspices of **Peter Papadakos of the Gyrodyne Foundation**, were uncrated and stowed in the forward hedgehog locker by **Joe Breyer, Dennis Nagi, Dave Floyd, Andy Desorbo and Ian Killer.** **Jonah Levy** and his dad **Steve** repainted the hedgehog projector. While all that was being accomplished, **Chris Fedden and Peter Jez** worked chipping away on the portside main deck and **Ed Whitbeck** was wrapping up scaling in the Bosun's Locker. We did more than we ever expected in one day. As always, **Richard and Catherine Andrian** were there photographing the whole effort.



Accommodation ladder progress.



Stan Murawski and the view from the HARVEY.



Last minute touch up as the HARVEY prepares to depart.

That evening was an annual event that the whole crew has come to look forward to. Each year the HARVEY's crew has found a wonderful way to thank the SLATER volunteers for their work. The HARVEY crew put on a barbecue for both crews and, as always, it was a wonderful event. The evening was perfect, and the beer and wine flowed, once again making our crew wonder if they hadn't signed on to the wrong ship. The grilled steaks were delicious, and the SLATER crew provided a multitude of covered dishes, but the hit of the party was, as usual, the dessert, **Linda Murawski's** cheese cakes, **Eileen's** cupcakes and **Claire's** brownies, all of which disappeared way before the event was over.

As in keeping with tradition, ET1 Jerry Jones was the very first man on the chow line, in a group of about 75 hungry volunteers. Not only did he manage to be first, but he also went in line for seconds, and possibly thirds. If that wasn't enough, the next day, when the HARVEY cooks prepared lunch for their crew, Jerry managed to get in line again, and was seen chowing down on their fantail. That man has no loyalty. Whichever ship in the nest is the best feeder, that's Jerry's ship.

We in turn provided berthing and hot showers for the HARVEY crew, which were much appreciated. The following day, we opened to visitors and the HARVEY ran three excursion cruises for visitors. They took sixty people a trip and we filled every slot and took people on a waiting list. They stayed over until Thursday morning, when they got underway for the down river trip. The HARVEY crew was so helpful that next year we plan to place our volunteers at the HARVEY's disposal as a way of showing our appreciation for what they did for us this year. Our thanks to all the folks on the HARVEY who made their visit such a pleasure.



Working on the accommodation ladder.



Bob Calender and Bob Donlon take a break.

The regular crew carries on. The accommodation ladder is now in place and functional. **Doug** and **Tim Benner** got the accommodation ladder mounted in place. We've actually used it. **Clark Farnsworth** wanted to cut off the wasted chock right adjacent the accommodation ladder and the new ladder made a perfect platform to cut through the outboard edge. No need to hang through the lifelines on this one. It will make welding it up a whole lot easier too. Clark would kind of like to have an accommodation ladder under all the chocks he has to work on. In addition to the chock, the boys are fabricating a new steel coxswain's stand for the whaleboat that will be sturdier than the copper pipe previously used. They are also working on the portside B-2 engine room hatch that the chippers went right through when they tried to needle gun it. The electricians completed the burglar alarm system for the gift shop. And in our effort to keep traditional marlinspike seamanship alive, we had our old friend from the NYS Canal Corp., **Tommy Doin**, aboard teaching us how to make rope fenders out of our old manila line. Volunteers **Les Yarbrough** and **Nelson Potter** seem particularly adept at the lost art.

A few financial notes. Thanks to the **LA Chapter of DESA** holding their annual **SLATER** restoration raffle, we received a check for \$30,000, which is a great help to our effort. We thank all of you who bought tickets and wish you luck at the drawing at the end of the month. And thanks to our improved promotional efforts our attendance for July was up 52%. Each month since the beginning of the 2004 season we have seen an increase, and our goal is to keep that trend going.

Since our attendance is up, our tour guides have stepped up their effort to give quality tours to all guests. Many guides have once again experienced that wonderful moment, when they get to rest after a tour except for the fact that the supervisor is waiting for them at the gangway with a brand new group of eager tourists. They take a few sips of water to fend off scratchy throats and dehydration, put on their, "very happy that you are here" smiles and begin again. So supervisors Nancy, Rosehn, Eileen and Penny say a heartfelt thanks to all of you!

We lost another one of our volunteer shipmates on July 5th. **Dave Blostein** came aboard about two years ago battling cancer. Always cheerful and upbeat about his condition, he was a GE instrument technician who joined the crew in the spring of 2002. He was a former electronics tech who saw combat in Vietnam and then served on two **GEARING** class cans. He said his claim to fame was he never stood a watch and never missed a meal. He was limited by the treatments he was undergoing but did a lot to help us along. He got pulled into all the problems of the engineering and ordnance departments, and had proved very adept at taking large pieces of



Visitors return to the SLATER after a cruise on the HARVEY.

machinery apart and getting them back together. He worked with the gunners freeing up the train drives on the three inch guns, helped **Larry LaChance** build the shoreside deck, restored the pyrometers and a lot of the instrumentation on the ship's service generator in B-3, and was a big help to **Dennis Nagi** installing the gutters on the trailer. His last visit with us was in June. Like so many of the crew who have gone before, I wish I'd spent more time with him. Also, this past month, **Mary Ellen Woltz** passed away. Her husband **Cliff** was one of the SLATER's engineering officers during World War II, is a key man in keeping the former crew members association organized, and serves actively on our board of directors. We extend our sympathy to the entire Woltz family.



Senator Schumer's presentation.

As we reported earlier, Robert F. Cross, trustee of the USS Slater and author of the recently-released Naval Institute Press book, SAILOR IN THE WHITE HOUSE: THE SEAFARING LIFE OF FDR, is hard at work on a new book telling the stories of DE sailors in World War II. Bob currently is interviewing WW II veterans about their experiences aboard destroyer escorts, and he reports a terrific response from many of you who have sent letters, diaries and other memorabilia of their days at sea. Bob greatly appreciates your interest and support. If you have stories or other information you would like to share with Bob, please send it to Robert F. Cross, c/o Destroyer Escort Historical Museum, P.O. Box 1926, Albany, New York 12201. Please be sure to include your telephone number so you can be contacted.

We've been in the spotlight several other times this past month. On August 3, we were chosen as the site of a press conference by **Senator "Chuck" Schumer**, as he made an announcement concerning the need for legislation to protect service personnel from high interest loan fraud that is increasing at an alarming rate. We took advantage of the opportunity to meet with him to reaffirm our need for assistance in obtaining a federal appropriation to help fund the dry-docking of the SLATER. We were also invited to attend a press conference in Corning Preserve where **Governor George Pataki** announced

several 2004 New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Grants. The SLATER received a \$27,000 matching grant to fund our continued restoration. The funds should be available for doing work in 2005.

Paul Czesak was responsible for arranging another nice affair this month. We hosted a dinner at Lombardo's Italian Restaurant for Vice Admiral **John Ryan**, former superintendent of the Naval Academy and present head of SUNY Maritime College. As a little side job, Admiral Ryan is the interim head of the whole State University of New York System while they search for a permanent Chancellor. We were entertained by the Admiral's stories and observations about Annapolis, Ft. Schuyler and the Navy today. For us, the high point of the evening was being able to take him back to the SLATER where CDR **Bill Kraus** and Master Chief **Dave Floyd** provided coffee and cheesecake in the wardroom, followed by a twilight tour of the SLATER. I believe it was the first time a three-star flag has flown from the SLATER. Admiral Ryan was particularly impressed with **Master Chief Floyd** who functioned as bosun, signalman, and side boy for the arrival. The Admiral saw the before and after pictures and was quite impressed with all the support you have provided and all the work you have accomplished. He extended a Bravo Zulu to the whole crew. Keep up the good work and carry on. **See you next month.**



Next we have to cut in the waterline.