



SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers
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Vol. 8 no. 7 July 2005

July. Tropical working hours for some ships, but not on the SLATER. My hero of the month is **Don Martin** of the USS SWEARER DE186. Don rolled in the last week of May intending to spend a month with us working and attend his reunion. Don travels in a large motorhome and tows a small red pickup truck behind it. That presents a problem because we really don't have space for anything that large. But to get a good man for a month, we'll solve any problem. I normally take Sundays and Thursdays off, so naturally Don arrived on a Thursday. I got a call from the ship that Don had appeared and that no one knew where to put him. I said as soon as my wife got home with the car, I would be down to meet him. The first problem was getting him situated with a place to park. I had put out an email to the volunteers hoping that someone with a large home would volunteer their driveway, but the only offer I had was in Watervliet. I met Don at the ship, and decided the best thing to do was to put him in the overflow lot across the street. The overflow lot is an area under I-787 directly across from the U-Haul building. For years we have used it when our parking lot is full. Last year the City officially recognized its function for the Dutch Apple and us and they cleaned it up and graveled it. Since it's the USS SLATER/Dutch Apple overflow lot, and I'm the director of the USS SLATER, I kind of figured it was mine to do with as I pleased. I met Don at the ship, and we drove his little pickup out to Crossgates Mall where he had the motorhome located. He drove the motorhome back to the ship and I led the way in his pickup. We got him nicely situated and he bedded down for the night.

The next morning he was ready to go. Don doesn't waste any time. He wanted to chip paint. I figured it was therapeutic for him. So we set him up on the fantail with a needle gun, air chisel, respirator, ear protection, goggles and a bucket to sit on. He went to work. Don chipped eight hours a day for a month straight, and he did a beautiful job. He almost had the whole thing done. However, he, like all engineers on diesel DEs, has some hearing problems. He wears VA provided hearing aids that had gotten out of adjustment. He made an appointment with our local VA to get them adjusted, had the obligatory two week wait, got in, got adjusted, and then they checked his vision. The eye doc told him that he should try to keep his head up, stay away from vibrating tools, and prescribed glasses for him. The bad news for us was that his needle gunning days were over.

The good news was that it would be another three weeks before his glasses were ready, so we got him for an extra two weeks to work on the ship! All I had to do was find work to keep him gainfully employed and keep him from getting bored. Don became a painter for his last two weeks. During a cool rainy spell he finished painting out the bosun's locker forward of the anchor windlass room and painted the deck in there. He helped prime and paint overheads outside the radio room under the flag bags, and under the 20mm gun tubs.

If you remember, Don knows how to spray paint, so we put him back to work on his old job. He spray painted the aft bulkhead of the superstructure deckhouse on the 01 level and dressed it up really nice. Then he did all the depth charge racks, roller loaders, "K" Guns and depth charges, and the 20mm splinter shields on the fantail. He even scaled and painted out the pea coat locker in forward crew berthing.



Don Martin hard at work spraying 20mm gun tubes.

He left the campsite in much better shape than he found it. Like any good sailor, he complained the whole time that he didn't like these jobs and would rather be needle gunning. He did get to attend his reunion, and brought Walt Roberge and his shipmates from the USS SWEARER back over for their reunion. Don also managed to have a couple run-ins with the law. I got a call at home, on my day off of course, that the police where there demanding that Don move his motorhome. It seems someone had complained that Don was squatting on state land. I got the police on the phone and explained that the parking lot was the SLATER overflow parking lot and that Don's motorhome was our overflow. When that didn't seem to be working I said I had permission from **Bob Cross**, the Water Commissioner and the Chairman of the Port Commission. They said they'd check. I immediately got Bob Cross on the phone, got permission and explained that I figured he'd be getting a call from the police shortly. Shortly thereafter Bob Cross got a call from the Albany Police and explained to them that the parking lot was the SLATER overflow parking lot and that Don's motorhome was SLATER overflow. That seemed to work.

Don had a second run-in with the police, but this time he called them. He went to bed early one night, no doubt tired from a hard days chipping. While he was asleep it seemed that kids climbed on top of the motor home and cracked a window. Don called me at home. Surprisingly, it was my day off. Also surprisingly, it was seven PM, broad daylight. I rushed down and when I got there, there were three police cruisers on the scene making a report. We figured it was time to get Don back to our side

of the street, but the size of the motorhome was still a problem. **Lou Renna**, a former Albany detective and skipper of the DUTCH APPLE came to our rescue. He cleared space so Don could park his motorhome on the grass near the DUTCH APPLE office. And there he parked for three weeks. It's great to have good neighbors. The last week he was here, one of the local volunteers asked Don, "When are you heading home?" Don's response was, "I am home." I distinctly heard it. I wonder if he remembers saying it. It was great coming in every morning to find him working and the coffee made. He finally hitched up the little pickup to the back of the motor home and headed out on July 15th. He truly left his mark and he will be missed. I think **Gary Sheedy** summed it up best when he told Don, "How'd you get so much done, and the rest of us don't seem to get anywhere?"



Dave Hamilton chipping an aft 20mm tub.



Ed Whitbeck picks up where Dave left off.

We have several new volunteers guides, John D'Anieri and Glen Harrison. Ken Berg is a former Coast Guard gunner's mate who served on the cutter USCGC CHASE WHEC718 back in the seventies, so he's just a kid by our standards. He brings some much-needed mechanical skill to the ordnance department and has been working on the restoration of gun 31 with Erik and Smitty. **Eileen Mathena** is a former US Navy Engineman Second Class. She has the distinction of being the first enlisted female in the engineering department aboard the USS HUNLEY AS31. Having survived that ordeal, getting along aboard here should be a piece of cake for her. The fact that she served aboard sub tenders is a plus as far as **Gus Negus** is concerned. She also was recently called up and served as an engineer in the same small boat unit that Beth Spain is attached to in Kuwait. Despite the fact that she also types sixty words a minute (A hell of a lot faster than I do), she 'll be joining the engineers in their efforts to resurrect our diesels. **Mike Patterson** is an Army Reservist, a Police Officer, and he's been to welding school. So guess what he's doing aboard the SLATER? If you guessed chipping paint, you're wrong! He's working with the weekend shipfitters honing his welding skills. Appearance-wise he's the most squared away member of the gang, but Doug still has him beat for talent. **Bernard "Smitty" Smith** is a retired Navy Master Chief Cook and former aviation machinists

mate. **Dick Walker** pulled him into the project, and he's now a three-day-a-week volunteer, maintaining the guns with **Andy Desorbo**, Erik, and **Rich Pavlovik**. We have new volunteer guides, **John D'Anieri** and **Glen Harrison**. John is a gator and served as a LT(jg) aboard USS BOTETOURT APA136. Actually, by our standards, all of these new volunteers are just kids. Hopefully you'll be reading a lot more about their exploits in coming issues of this fine periodical.



Chris Fedden chipping an ammo locker on the fantail.



John Kosa is chipping the ammo lockers forward of the pilothouse.

We also have some summer help. **John Kosa, Jr.** is the son of **John Kosa**, our friend in the water department who has been with us since the beginning. John Jr. is working with us through the city summer youth program afternoons helping Erik chip and clean. **Tim "T.J." Heckman** is young man brought to us by **CDR Bill Kraus**, working with **Erik Collin** on Saturdays. He's cleaning, chipping and painting and doing whatever else Erik needs done to keep the ship looking sharp. And we have our summer help in the interpretive department to guide tours. Midshipman **Dave Athay** is back with us for a second season as is **Les Beauchaine's** grandson **Mike Long**, and **Penny Welbourn**. And just to confuse the issue we hired a new tour guide named **Mike Collins**, as well as **Ken Kaskoun's** granddaughter **Bridget Stevens**, and **Amanda McLaughlin**, a graduate student working on her history degree. They are also a big help with the overnight camping program. Welcome aboard to all of you.



The number 3 3"50 is fired for the first time since returning to the United States by Erik Collin.

With Don Martin's departure, the chippers are back on their own. Dave Hamilton, Chris Fedden, Ed Whitbeck, Peter Jez and Jim Gelston have been making good headway despite the heat. Right now, they are inside the fantail 20mm gun tubs, which do a wonderful job of blocking any breeze that there may be. They're also chipping the 20mm ready service lockers, which is making a lot more work for the shipfitters. **Stan Murawski** is doing a complete restoration of the foxer gear winch on the fantail. **Tommy Moore** is in the process of building a new 12' x 12' barrel raft to make maintaining the SLATER's sides a little easier and a little safer. We need something light enough that we can lift between the camels. **Doug Tanner, Tim Benner, Chuck Teal** and now **Mike Patterson** have been working on the floater net baskets. **Clark Farnsworth** is working repairing rotted 20mm ready service lockers and a "K" gun arbor, as well as his beloved chocks. **Gary Sheedy** convinced **Joe Breyer** that welding on the reefer decks was more fun than working in the radio room so they've been down there repairing the overhead piping and installing an expanded metal cage.

Roy Gunther completed fabricating the replacement rudder for the whaleboat out of oak, and it looks just like the original. He says it will outlast all of us. He and **Rocky** should have the boat in the water by the time you read this. The consummate Bosun's Mate **Mike Muzio** has been back with us. Mike replaced all the heaving lines on the new ring buoys that we bought and is splicing eyes in a new spool of mooring line so we can replace our worn spring lines. Finally, after two years of research, scrounging and preparation, the USS SLATER Ordnance Department reached a milestone. On Saturday July 2, 2005, number three three-inch gun fired a saluting charge. A great deal of credit goes to **Erik Collin** who coordinated this effort and did the research to make it happen. Thus we now have a saluting battery and the capability to fire saluting charges on special occasions. **Nelson Potter** continues making fenders. **Les Yarbrough** continues to mend signal flags and make flameproof mattress covers. And the weekday electricians, **Larry Williams, Don Shattuck, Bob Calender** and **Ken** seem to spend most of their time fixing and replacing the ancient bulkhead fans which we are so dependent on in the summer.



Mike Muzio prepares new line to replace our tired old spring lines.



Frank Peter hard at work cataloging every printed item on the ship.

For those of you officers, remember what it was like working in the heat of the summer at your little stateroom desk, before ships had air-conditioning. Frank Peter is living the life. Working alone, on Mondays and Tuesdays, down in the sanctity of stateroom 101, Frank Peter is performing a minor miracle. He is cataloging every book, technical manual and blueprint that falls outside **Pat Perrella's** province. He has been working away on this for the past two years, using an Excel spreadsheet. Twice a week he gives me an updated floppy disc and I put the most recent inventory on my hard drive. He is now up to 4,367 entries, including every blueprint aboard. You can sort by subject, title, author, year or location. It won't be long before we can find anything. To give you an idea of how thorough he is, I had taken the rolled set of whaleboat blueprints, and being able to think of no better place to stow them, set them in a waste can in the engineering office with all the other rolled blueprints I had no space for. Sure enough, when I was perusing Frank's list I found item 1501, 26-foot wooden motorboat listed as being located in "Engineering Office Waste Basket." Could be time to come up with a better stowage plan.



Gunner's Mate Ken Berg working on the number 1 3"50.



Chad clean lockers in C-201-L.



Larry Williams keeps the all important fan in the Chief's Quarters running.



While tour guide Bridget Stevens suffers outside on the hot deck.

On Tuesday, July 19 fifteen teachers joined us for a professional development workshop in association with the Greater Capital Region Teacher Center. Penny Welbourn and Eric Rivet gave the teachers a good look at our ship and then presented follow-up activities that could be used with various grade levels. The teachers learned about the destroyer escorts in World War II and, we hope, will be more inclined to bring their students for a visit. On July 9 & 10 we took our traveling display to the Empire State Aerosciences Museum Air Show in Scotia. Thanks to **Jim Kuba, Stan Murawski, Jim Gelston, Chuck Marshall, Barney Bullard, Bob Dawson, Bill Scharoun, Bob Whitney, and Ken Kaskoun and the Sea Cadets for manning the table, handing out literature, and answering questions.**

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Shirley and "Hack" Charbonneau. Hack was diagnosed with cancer, and has completed his radiation treatments and is now beginning chemotherapy. If you read back though SLATER SIGNALS you'll see how much Hack has meant to this project over the years. He was the rigger who was always there when we needed him and we trust he'll be there for us in the future. For the time being, we're here for him. Some shipmates have been asking for their address to send cards, and it's 15 Veeder Drive, Albany, NY 12205-3619

Finally, Beth Spain should be home by the time you read this. Now a First Class Boatswain's Mate, Beth completed her tour of duty with a small boat security unit in Kuwait. In addition to making first class, she was qualified as a Patrol Leader with the responsibility to take tactical command of all the Patrol Boats and the static gun mounts. She said that the days were long with no time off but it comes with the territory. She wrote **Larry Williams** *"6 more days! I can't wait to see everybody! Thank you for all your support. I don't know what I would have done without my Slater family's support during this deployment. The phone cards I have received have been a godsend; keeping in touch with my family would be so difficult without them. I can't tell you how much I have appreciated them. We are nearing the home stretch now. You all made my time here a little more bearable. Thanks again, Beth."*

Thanks to all of you who supported Beth, and from all of us on the SLATER, Welcome Home Beth!