

## SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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**August. The 24<sup>th</sup> to be exact. For the first time I could have worn a sweater to work this morning.** It's way too soon to be thinking about sweaters. Every time my wife sees a yellow or red leaf on a tree she breaks into a cold sweat. We know what's coming. But for now, we enjoy the last weeks of summer. Right after I got the last SIGNALS out I was invited to do a radio show over at Siena College along with the skipper of the HALF MOON, **Chip Reynolds**, and the President of Albany Aqua ducks, **Bob Wolfgang**. It was a great chance to promote the Albany Riverfront and our projects. Following the interview Chip offered me the chance for this landlocked sailor to get a little bit of sea time underway. Chip Reynolds, skipper of the HALF MOON, the replica of Henry Hudson's ship that explored the Hudson in the seventeenth century was headed down river to Caddells shipyard on Staten Island for a dry-docking. Chip thoughtfully asked me if my wife and I would like to ride down river. We reported aboard at 0530 on July 25<sup>th</sup> and were underway at 0600 sharp. The watches were divided into two sections, port and starboard. My wife and I had port watch. You stood six and six. While on watch we rotated between bow lookout, helm watch, and mess cooking, doing an hour of each. We motored the whole trip. They have a propulsion diesel, diesel generator, modern head, an electric range in the galley (but you can only use one burner at a time underway because that's all the generator will handle), refrigerator, radar, GPS and a radiotelephone.

### **Beyond that, it's pretty primitive.**

The visitors (crew) sleep on the deck, while the old hands have the few bunks or hammocks. Steering is done by whip staff, a vertical staff hinged to the tiller on the gun deck below. In a stiff breeze you have to throw your whole body weight against it to stay on course. On the plus side, the whip staff is in an enclosure below the poop deck, so at least the helmsman is out of the rain and sun. The down side is that the raised foc's'cle gives you no forward visibility, so when they tell you to hold course off the cell phone tower dead ahead, you can't see the cell phone tower that's obvious to everyone else. They conn the ship from the poopdeck, out in the open, and yell steering orders to the helmsman below. The same for the bow lookout, who has to yell the length of the vessel and point out oncoming ships, obstructions and landmarks. When it comes time to raise the anchor you put the poles in the capstan, and all hands heave round the windlass on the main deck, as the anchor rope



**Heading down the Hudson River aboard the HALF MOON.**

comes in below on the gun deck. As the rope comes in it is faked down forward on the gun deck in a space with four-foot headroom. And we didn't have to set sail and climb the rigging.

**The trip down river was a wonderful experience, taking me back to my days as a Sea Scout boating out of Nyack and Stony Point.** Unfortunately, my wife had the worst helm watch in the early afternoon when the wind really kicked up and it took all her strength to hold the ship on course. Not being a working sailor, her comment about the trip was, "When it was nice it was really nice, and when it was bad, it was really bad." I guess that sounds a lot like the Navy. I had the helm watch that night just after we passed under the George Washington Bridge, and it made me remember why I'm in this business to begin with. Steering the ship down past the Jersey shore and into the upper bay by compass is something I used to love, and I haven't gotten to do it in years. Chip anchored in the shoals off Brooklyn, figuring that the big ships would run aground before they could ram us. We rigged the anchor lights and hoisted the anchor ball around 2200, and turned in. It was a warm night, so we slept on deck.

**I had 0400-0500 anchor watch and there were no problems as the anchor held fast.** We had a great breakfast, and were underway by 0930 for 1000 arrival at Caddells. As we entered the Kill Van Kull, it became evident that Caddells is quite a large and sophisticated facility. There were several floating dry-docks large enough to handle the SLATER, and they were all filled with tugs and barges. Two line handlers came aboard from Caddells' tug and Chip slipped the HALF MOON into a 100' floating dry-dock. The yard birds rigged mooring lines and wires, centered her on the dock and commenced pumping. As the dock rose, the workers began cranking away on chains that pulled all

the tracked side blocks snug against the hull. The whole process took about 45 minutes, and it wasn't long before we climbed down the extension ladder and were checking out the hull, which looked pretty good. It was also at this point that the girls learn the awful secret of the dry-dock experience. Amid the din of sandblasting, scaling, grinding,

spray painting, cutting and welding, suddenly your functional home ceases to be functional. There's no running water, the heads are secured, no electricity, cold lunch, and the only way to get to the shore head is down a steep rickety ladder. Welcome to the shipyard. Chip provided transportation back to Albany that left around 1400, and by that time we were too sad about leaving him and the caretaker crew as they prepared to pressure wash the hull. Now if we can make all these things happen for SLATER. It was an inspirational experience.



**If only it were us in dry-dock!**

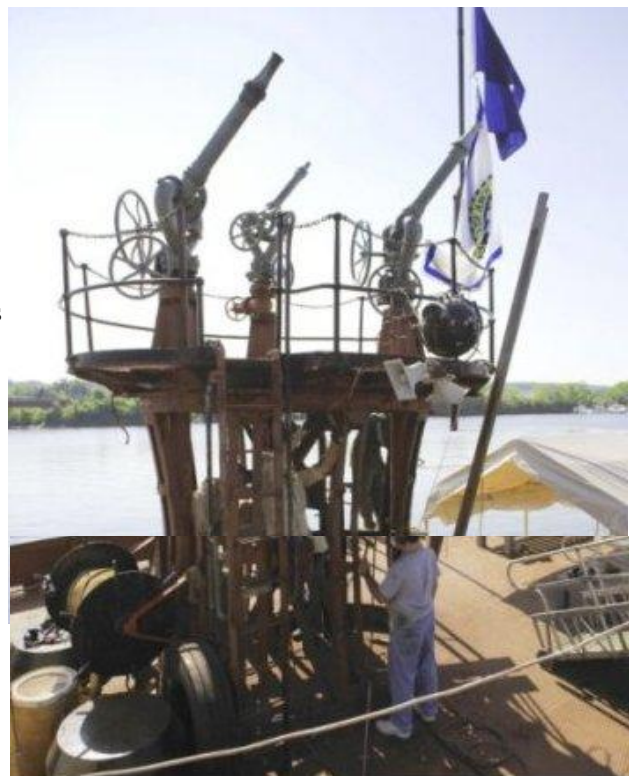




**Three Historic Ship's moored together, the tug URGER, the JOHN J HARVEY and the SLATER.**

**We got back from vacation in time for the next big event of the month, the annual visit by the fireboat JOHN J. HARVEY from Manhattan.** The annual visit by the HARVEY is a major event because there is always a great party by the two groups of volunteers. The HARVEY arrived on Monday August 15<sup>th</sup> for a brief stay to off-load passengers and load passengers for the trip to Troy. We welcomed them to Albany with a gun salute from our newly restored aft three-inch gun. From Troy, they went on to overnight in Waterford, and they returned Tuesday at 1500 and moored alongside the SLATER. They had company. The historic New York State Canal tug URGER accompanied the HARVEY and nested outboard, so we were three abreast. The tug was a classic sweetheart. Meticulously maintained by the NYS Thruway Authority's Canal Corps. The brass was polished and the engine room was spotless. She was a role model for all of us.

**The HARVEY made two thirty-minute cruises at 1600 and 1700, and there seemed to be a lot of excited firemen and their families who made up the visitors.** Our volunteers started to gather on the deck to get a head start while the HARVEY made her last trip of the day. As they were enjoying a cold one, the skies darkened and we got drenched in a downpour. As bad as it was for us under the awning, it was a lot worse for all the people out on the HARVEY. After they secured, we rigged the gangway, it was one soaked group of fire safety inspectors who left the ship. The skies cleared, they fired up the grill, the beer was tapped, the wine uncorked and the party began. The weather turned gorgeous and we had a delightful evening, swapping sea stories between the two groups of volunteers. The party was a little more sedate than usual as a result of the absence of **Sharon Sheedy**, so table dancing was not featured as part of this year's entertainment. That night we berthed most of their crew aboard the SLATER. We owe a special debt to SLATER volunteer **Chaz Furman** who volunteered to stay aboard as host and security for the visiting HARVEY crew.



**The SLATER chippers working on the HARVEY.**

The following day we made good on our promise to spend a day working aboard the HARVEY as repayment for all those steak and salmon barbecues and letting us use their ship as a paint platform last year. Doug Tanner helped them with some welding in the engine room, Gus Negus and Karl Herchenroder helped with mechanical repairs, and the rest of us undertook to chip and prime the aft fire monitor tower. We worked all day with needle guns and chipping hammers and created quite a pile of rust and paint chips. It would have taken us a week to do the whole thing but we gave it our best effort and gave them a good head start. They ran a noon cruise on Thursday and were underway for home at 1400. The only downer was that in the process of cleaning up, and gathering trash I inadvertently picket up Chaz's new HARVEY tee shirts that were in a backpack and threw them in the dumpster. My apologies for that.

Helping the HARVEY crew wasn't the only civic assistance we gave this month. For the first time the SLATER crew was invited to fill a slot on our public television summer festival. Helping WMHT answer the phones gave us a little more public exposure, and we seemed to be pretty well received. The crew included Clark Farnsworth, Bernard "Smitty" Smith, Dave Hamilton, Andy Desorbo, Frank Lasch, Fred Sirois, Rosehn Gipe, Nelson Potter and Bob Donlon. We got a lot of phone calls from folks who just wanted to express their thanks for what the veterans of the greatest generation had done for the world. The telethon coincided with "American Experience: Victory in the Pacific," an excellent documentary on the last days of the Pacific War leading up to VJ Day, and we made sure the monitors were turned up in between pledge breaks. That and the fact that they provided us with all the pizza and junk food we could want, and that our wives won't let us have at home, made it a very pleasant evening.



Gus Negus makes a gasket for his engine.



Doug Tanner repairs an ammo box while Joe Breyer works on a pipe fitting for Gus.



**Back on board the SLATER, the engineers enjoyed considerable success this month.** Gus and Karl, **Barney Bullard and Eileen Mathena** got the emergency diesel back together and started it up. Gus said without either it started easier than his car. It's been a long road to success. **Ed Whitbeck, Peter Jez, Chris Fedden and Dave Hamilton** wrapped up the chipping on the fantail. Then we looked around and saw that most of our fantail 20mm ready service lockers are rusting away. **Tim Benner, Chuck Teal, Doug Tanner and Clark Farnsworth** are now up to their armpits in ready service lockers. We picked out the four worst ones and are making repairs, as the chocks and floater net basket sit neglected, put on the back burner for now. **Stan Murawski** is doing a beautiful job with the restoration of the foxer gear winch on the fantail. On gun 31, **Ken Berg** has the foot pedal mechanical firing mechanism back together, and Smitty is making great progress on the sightsetting mechanism. Once we get it working, somebody has to figure it out so we can explain it to the public. Karl's friends at **Streck's Machine Shop** repaired a broken helical gear and **Erik Collin** is getting the train gear back together.

**Thanks to the efforts of Rocky Rockwood and Roy Gunther, the whaleboat is in better shape than ever.** Rocky spent a lot of time salvaging and cleaning the hardware from the old rudder and Roy spent several weeks in procuring the lumber, taking measurements and making patterns from the old rotted rudder and fabricating the new rudder. Roy even donated the cost of the lumber. Both are away for the summer, so Erik enlisted the help of **Ken Kaskoun, Bob Calender Gus Negus and Larry Williamsto** make some other repairs to the whaleboat. They fixed an oil leak that was where the dipstick tube entered the block. A little tightening fixed that, but it required pulling the instrument panel. **Tom McLaughlin** is sorting out signal flags, and **Les Yarbrough** has been repairing them as well as sewing up mattress covers. **Barry Witte** is still pecking away at battle lanterns, and **Gary Sheedy and Joe Breyer** are still pecking away at the reefer deck. But the outstanding achievement of the month has to go to ET1 **Jerry Jones**. He created a CD and a system that can be played in the radio room that puts Morse code in the radio room and an actual sonar ping coming out of CIC. His sonar ping even has a return echo with Doppler. Leave it to a radioman to outwork the rest of the crew.

**We were saddened to learn of the deaths of two of our shipmates from the Michigan Chapter in July, both of who had been SLATER Field Day stalwarts over the years.** While I was away on vacation, I received notification that two of our shipmates from the Michigan Chapter had crossed the Bar. **Dick Briel** called to inform me that **Steve Borovich** (DE532) has passed away. Steve was a regular at the Michigan field days and was a long time supporter of the SLATER effort. A few days later I received an email for **Charlie Markham** that reported the passing of **Paul Monaco**, DE-148. Paul was also a Michigan field day regular in the galley keeping the troops happy and fed. The Michigan Crew had attended the funeral in uniform of the day with White Shirts with Dark Pants and ships Caps to pay their, and our, respects. Losing friends like this is the hardest part of being involved with the SLATER. We couldn't do it without guys like Paul and Steve. They will be missed.



**The helm on the tug URGER.**



**Engineer Jessica answers bells in the HARVEY's engine room.**

**The fall reunion season has started. We hosted over forty shipmates and families from the USS WALTER C. WANN DE412 this week.** They held an impressive memorial service which included posting our color guard, tapsover the ship's IMC and tolling the ship's bell for their departed shipmates. We're working with The Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau to host many more reunions this fall including the USS Garfield Thomas DE193, CORT DIV 20 & 22 (USS Gandy DE 764, Poole DE 151, Peterson DE 152), The 11<sup>th</sup> Special US Navy Seabees WWII, USS Tinsman DE 589, USS Cushing DD 797, USS George A. Johnson DE583, USS Whitehurst DE 634, USS Hanna DE 449, USS Paul G. Baker DE642, USS Hilary P. Jones DD 427, USS Bright DE747, USS Hamul AD 20, USS George E. Davis DE 357, USS Reynolds DE 42, USS Wingfield DE 194, and our Army friends from the 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry Reunion on September 29 - October 2. If your ship doesn't have a reunion, or you don't want to wait until they put Albany on the schedule, the **Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau is putting together their second Greatest Generation Reunion Package September 29- October 2 2005.** It's your chance to see the SLATER and all the other sites in the Capital Region. If your ship is interested in scheduling a reunion in Albany contact **Jeanne Toth**, the new reunion representative at the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-258-3582 ext. 106 to receive a free information kit including two complimentary passes and commemorative pin from the USS Slater. "Albany. Looks like history. Feels like a vacation."

**And finally, The Michigan crew has set the dates for their fall field day week.** They will be coming to the USS Slater, on Sunday 25 September 2005 to Saturday 1 October 2005. The weather will be warmer (for painting) and the annual SLATER volunteer party is planned for Saturday 1 October. You can leave after the dinner on Saturday or Sunday. If you are interested in joining them for the week or any part of the week contact The "Duke of Earl" Moorhouse USCGC Lansing WDE 488, phone 248 549-1907. Any of the you who want to work are welcome to join them. Hope to see you there.

See you next month!



View from the HARVEY.