



# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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**Our last tour day was Sunday November 26<sup>th</sup>.** I start thinking about the move in mid-November. That involves notifying the Port that we'll be headed their way, lining up the crane to pull the gangways and camels, calling our insurance agent, notifying the Coast Guard, and lining up the tugs. We like to get out as soon as we can after Thanksgiving, before we have to fight ice to get into the Rensselaer dock. So the Wednesday before Thanksgiving I had called **Chris Gardella** at **Port Albany Ventures** to get a sense of when he thought he could move us. He said to call back Monday morning when he'd have a better feel for how the week after Thanksgiving was going to go. In the meantime I called **Bob Cross** and lined up **Ricky** and the crane for Monday the 27<sup>th</sup> at 0800 figuring it best to have the gangways off so we'd be ready for the tugs, when that day came. As instructed I called Port Albany Ventures at 0800 Monday, and Chris asked, "Can you be ready in two hours?" I didn't know how, had no crew lined by, but I said "Sure." Then the mass email went out to the move crew, and we made a few critical phone calls. Fortunately, I had told everyone it might be a good idea to check their email at 0830 for an update and most of them did. Like the rescue squad, by 0900 they were rolling in en force. The weather was perfect, calm, sunny and fifty degrees.



Here is some wallpaper for you - The SLATER approaching the dock in Rensselaer.

Fortunately, Doug Tanner had shown up early, and set about using the crane to lift the SL radar consol and transmitter from the USS CLAMP, the SA radar transmitter, and the new desks for the ships office from the DES MOINES, setting them on the 01 level aft. The rest of the crew went about the routine of pulling the wires, waterline, sewer, and electrical power. Engineers Gus Negus and Karl Herchenroder cranked up the emergency diesel generator. Larry Williams, Bob Callender and Ken Kaskoun shifted to ships power, and the generator performed flawlessly. The tugs arrived and Denny Donovan made up the CHEYENNE to the starboard side amidships and used the HERBERT to pull us off the pier. He chose to push us down stern first, a little less graceful, but very efficient. As we approached the Rensselaer dock, the HERBERT made up to the stern and the CHEYENNE cut loose and moved around to the portside. I took me about twenty minutes of tinkering to get the gangway saddle lined up and we waved the HERBERT off to her next job. I didn't think we were short handed, but I have photographic proof showing photographer Richard Andrian actually pulling wires with the rest of the crew, so it must have been tougher than I thought! We stayed on ships power all afternoon until we had all the lines doubled and the cables made up. As always, the Port Albany Ventures crew was efficient and professional, making up for the fact that our crew is comprised of a lot of aging though enthusiastic amateurs, including myself. Denny does a great job handling us. Our thanks continue to go out to those guys, as well as the Albany Port District Commission for providing us the free berth all winter long.



**Stacking Camels.**



**Loading one of two new desks.**

**Wanting to take advantage of the great weather, we did the camels the next day.** That went equally well. Tommy Moore and Larry Williams were on the river with me, while Doug Tanner was in charge up top and Tim Benner climbed the camels to unhook the straps, and about ten of the crew supported them. That was putting a lot on the guys to pull off two major events two days in a row, but they were up to it. We had one hang up when we were drifting the north raft of camels down to the lift point and a cable got snagged on the bottom. Fortunately Tommy had his battery-powered sawzall and we are able to cut it loose. We had everything out by noon and were cleaned up and out of there by 1300. The shore power was on, the dumpster had been delivered and the Port-a-John was in place. All the comforts of home.

**We've scheduled much more work than we can ever accomplish this winter.** The list calls for repairing the aluminum gangway, restoring the aft passageway from the machine shop to the aft cross passageway, completely renovating CIC, rebuilding the chart table, redoing the ships office, and fabricating the platform for the surface search radar antenna. We had some great support from the Naval Science Department at Rensselaer Polytech. Thanks to the recruiting efforts of Barry Witte and midshipmen John Camp and Kevin Guldner, they've had from five to fifteen midshipmen aboard almost every weekend. One weekend they helped Jerry Jones move all his precious SL radar gear from the 01 level to CIC using a block and tackle. The moved the old SA radar cabinet out of the radio room and mounted the new unit in its place. Jerry and Erik Collin have made big plans for the restoration of the SL radar in CIC, and getting some of the equipment operational for public display. I haven't seen Jerry this excited in years. So excited in fact that he went home, fell down the basement steps and broke his leg. That has put him on the binnacle list until February.



In the aft passageway, all the display artifacts and damage control gear have been cleaned out and stowed below by the RPI Midshipmen. Gary Sheedy brought in a jackhammer, and Rocky Rockwood, Earl Herchenroder, Chris Fedden, Gene Jackey, Chad Johnson, Peter Jez, Don Miller and Erik set to work breaking up the tile in the shower stalls, taking up the linoleum in the cross passageways and grinding the bulkheads smooth. We made of lot of trips to the dumpster with ceramic tile and discovered the underlying steel deck looks like swiss cheese. There are some nice new skylights in the engineroom. Tanner and Benner have already started work cropping out the wasted metal to renew it with new steel. The total replacement area will be about six square feet in four different locations.



**Earl Herchenroder chipping shower stall concrete.**

**Doug Tanner has two other projects he's working on.** First are new bearings and a stainless steel shaft on the gangway to permanently repair the damage that resulted from the flooding this year. Tanner needed a 60" x 1 3/8" stainless steel piece of round stock. He went dumpster diving at one of our unnamed benefactors and came up with three short pieces of stainless inch and a half round stock that added up to sixty inches. He assigned **Joe Breyer** the task of lathing the three pieces down to the required inch and three eights, and then he planned to weld them together. Board member and West Point graduate **Hal Hatfield** (I'm required to add "West Point" whenever I mention Hal's name) heard of Doug's frugality, and persuaded his friend **Bob Kivort** at **Kivort Steel** to donate a shaft that didn't have to be welded together. So Doug and Joe are well on their way to completing that task.

**Second is the fabrication of the platform for the SL radar antenna.** Having secured the original drawings of the platform, **Doug Tanner** wanted a place where he could do the work undisturbed from week to week.

Normally, we do this kind of work on the main deck starboard side outside the machine shop, but that becomes a thoroughfare in the wintertime when we are moored starboard side to. The welding curtains Doug rigs to try to get some protection from the wind on Saturday are inevitably taken down by the crew on Monday. So Doug decided he needed to be on the pier out of the traffic flow. So he and Tim Benner set out to build a temporary welding hut on the dock outside the machine shop, easily reached by welding cable, cutting hoses and extensions cords. Doug took our one section of scaffolding, set it up, added some wooden framework, tarped it with plastic and tied the whole thing together with marlin. We dubbed the shanty "Tanner's Ville" a reference that will only mean something to the locals. The structure lasted about a week. I was up on the signal bridge lashing down the searchlight covers when a horrific gust of wind upended Doug's beloved welding hut and totally devastated "Tanner's Ville." Only Tim Benner's marlin lashings kept the wreckage from going into the river. This "catastrophic" event was totally ignored by the local media, but considering the lack of success we

have had obtaining historic preservation funding, we are considering putting in for a disaster relief grant to help us recover from the destruction of "Tanner's Ville"

**Speaking of frustrated individuals, did I mention Gary Sheedy?** Our long-suffering electrician's mate continues his dogged solitary restoration of the reefer machinery space. He spent the last month scaling the refrigeration compressors and motors getting them ready for restoration. He has actually made considerable progress, despite the lack of praise and support. The portside electrical storeroom is now fully restored; deck painted, lockers shined, cabinet drawers labeled and parts stowed on shelves in a state where we can all find what we need. My only complaint with the space is that his collection of pinups are from a Macy's bathing suit flyer that his wife received last spring. She doesn't know he pulled it out of the trash. While attractive, the girls need to be replaced with something a little more period, preferably done by Alberto Vargas.

**The engineers are not frustrated.** Coming off the successful run of the emergency diesel following the move, they have continued with three projects, restoration of the 200 KW generator set in B-3, installation of the starting air compressor in B-1, and repairs of and restoration of the ship's service air compressor in B-4. And parts continue to rain down on them. We got another call from **Herb Dahlhaus**, retired port engineer for **Gibson and Cushman Dredging** on Long Island. He went to the yard with his son-in-law's old pickup truck, and got another load of parts for the 3-268A engine including heat exchangers, liners, pistons, rings circuit breakers and a camshaft. But the truck was so overloaded there was no way he could make the trip to Albany. So **Stan Murawski**, Gus and Karl rented a U-Haul trailer and drove Stan's SUV down to Islip to pick up the gear on a Saturday. The following Monday the whole crew turned out to bring the gear aboard and stow it in B-2. These parts have come full circle. **Gibson and Cushman** brought them from DEs that were being scrapped in the sixties to support their dredges. Now that the dredges are being retired, the parts are coming back home to a DE to support our restoration for years to come.

**Paul Czesak organized our annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony on Thursday December 7, 2006.** We made the decision a couple years ago to move the ceremony from the SLATER, because we feared doing the ceremony out on deck in the cold was going to kill all the men we were trying to honor.



**Chuck Teal welds in new passageway deck plate.**



We held the ceremony in the City Hall Council chambers for two years, but this year the good folks at the **Joseph E. Zaloga Post No. 1520 American Legion** on Everett Road here in Albany offered their facility and donated a lunch. The ceremony was jointly sponsored by Albany County Executive **Michael Breslin**, Albany Mayor **Gerald D. Jennings**, the **Albany County Veterans Bureau**, and the USS SLATER.

The survivors included **Arthur Biskin**, 89 of Albany, Airman, Wheeler Field; **Charlie Ebel**, 87 of Guilderland, Seaman USS Curtis AV 4; **Robert "Gus" Grimm**, 85 of Guilderland, a Carpenters Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class, USS Cummings DD 365; **Bill Langston**, 85 of Cohoes, Fireman, USS West Virginia BB 84; and **John Sloboda**, 87 of Cohoes, SGT 18<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, Wheeler Field. We filled the hall with Post members, CAP-DESA members, SLATER volunteers, and guests.

**We attended a second memorial service that week.** On Saturday 9th December, our friend **Reverend Hempel** and **Dick and Maralyn Walker** of the **Albany Maritime Ministry** held a brief memorial service at 12 noon to remember the three sailors who were lost when the MV Stellamare capsized, **Yuri Akofin**, **Victor Alexeev** and **Suliman Khasenvich**. The service took place at the granite memorial across from the Port Administration Building. **Mayor Jennings** was present to help lay the wreath at the memorial.

**There's so much more going on.** Our thoughts go out to **Earl Gillette** who has been laid up with an infected foot ever since October, joining **Jerry Jones** on the binnacle list. **Les Yarbrough** is back with us making canvas covers for the 20mm guns. The whole crew continues to be supported by **Melissa Van Peet-Loan's** cooking lunch for the crew every Saturday, and **Gary Lubrano's wife** took a day off to cook lunch for the Monday crew. The CPO mess is decorated for the holidays, and **Bill Coyle** taped all your cards to the refrigerator. On the down side, I received the rejection notice from the Department of the Interior for our \$600,000 Save America's Treasure Grant request. However, our spirits continue to be buoyed up by your support of the Winter Fund. Your support is right up there with last year's and we expect to have over \$30,000 by year's end. If the envelope is still sitting on your kitchen table, now is the time.



**Rigging the gangway handrails after the move.**



**Doug Tanner and Tim Benner contemplate the reconstruction of Tanner's Ville.**



**RPI NROTC Cadets hoisting a new radar unit up to the O2 level...**



**and taking a break after all the hard work.**



**Learning the hard way to cut a cable.**



**Lunch was standard college student food.**

Finally, General Electric retiree Doug Tanner was invited to attend, what he described as, a GE "Think Tank" seminar on wind powered turbines at the regional GE headquarters. Doug invited his right hand "Thinker" Tim Benner along as a guest. Based on a comparison of GE's profit margin to our profit margin they want to implement many ideas they learned from the seminar. Their first step is to convert the CPO mess into a similar "Think Tank" conference room with plush padded chairs, Internet access at each seat for the laptops that we will be buying for the crew, and a wide screen high definition television panel for daily power point presentations we will be developing. Benner bought right into this concept because "Thinking" looks like it's a lot easier than "Doing." However, what most impressed Doug and Tim were the fresh cut flowers in the men's room, obviously GE's way of enabling their male employees to stay in touch with their sensitive side. Doug was so impressed with this touch that on his next day back aboard the SLATER, the first thing he did was install a little plywood shelf in the Port-a-John, and set a vase of flowers on it. Even though they are synthetic, a concession to the sub-freezing weather the flowers and the crew have to contend with, we were all moved by this show of Doug's sensitivity. We didn't even know he had a sensitive side! Corporate thinking has finally come to the SLATER.

**Thanks for being so Generous to the Winter Fund, and See you next month**