

# SLATER SIGNALS

The Newsletter of the USS SLATER's Volunteers  
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**If you thought SLATER was just an Albany project, think again.** In May support for the SLATER seemed to pour in from all over the country. The month started with the arrival of the Michigan crew. Their work was broken up into four main projects. Monday, **Doug Tanner** led **Scott McFadden, Bill Wasko, Ron Zarem, Mike Zarem, Stan Pachuki, John Adriani** and **Josh Warren** erecting scaffolding on the port side of the superstructure. The goal was to get all the hard to reach areas primed and painted. They were joined by former SLATER motormac **Bill Svihovec**, who found himself on the deck force. Over the course of the week they got all the hard to reach areas on the port side primed and top coated with epoxy paint. The second task was up on the flying bridge. Back in March we had dropped the QJB sonar cabinet into the upper sound room and pretty well trashed the place in the process, removing electrical boxes and insulation so it would fit. All the actual drawers had been removed and were stacked in the fire control shack. That was the job for **Dick Walker, Bob Donlon, Ron Mazure** and **Gary Headworth**. Not only did they get the stack reassembled, but with the help of **Blaire "Butch" Warrender**, they restored the lights in the sonar shack so we could see, remounted all the electrical boxes and the wire to get the Cease Fire horn working and by the end of the week, they had pinging sounds coming from the sound hut. Needless to say, they were CD produced, not QJB originated. Then there was welding. **Laird Confer** and **Rush Mellinger** picked up where we left off with the fabrication of the third floater net basket, completed it, and began work on the fourth basket. **Erik Collin** had a team of **Emmett and Jeff Landrum, Tom Burrows, Jerry Vanburkel** and **John Fasano** strip and prime three-inch gun # 1 as part of our effort to make it a showpiece.



Rush Mellinger on the floater net baskets



Mike Zarnem paints the superstructure.





Tom Schriener presents his long glass and case to us in the presence of his shipmates at the Michigan Field Day.

Finally there was the shaft alley. Ed Zajkowski wanted to do some truly meaningful preservation on the SLATER, so he planned to tackle one of the worst places on the ship, the port shaft alley, an area that has been flooded more than it has been dry since the SLATER came over from Greece. To accomplish his goal he needed to find two dedicated volunteers who didn't know what a "Shaft alley" was until it was too late to back out. He found them in marina owner **Dow Clark**, and attorney **Dick Roy**. They rigged a Red Devil blower and spent three days in conditions equivalent to a Pennsylvania coal mine. They pulled out a thirty gallon barrel of dirt, rust and chips, continuing evidence that if left to her own devices, SLATER will return to the earth. All went well until the last day when they poked a hole into an adjacent fuel oil tank, which filled the space with about four inches of oil. But the deed was done and the space was ready for painting. They won the award for my favorites of the week.



The Pilothouse.

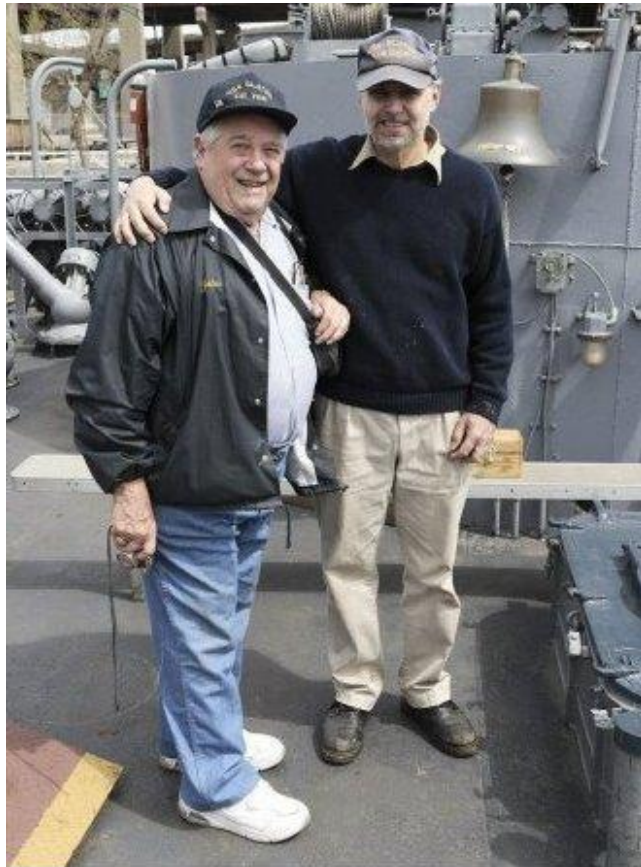


The Exec's Stateroom.





Let this photo stand as a tribute for all the shaft alley volunteers, Ed Zajkowski, Dick Roy, Jim Lamer, Ernie Aeschliman, and pictured here, Dow Clark, who all must have wondered how they got picked for this detail. The photo on the right shows an example of clean bilges.



Our number one individual donor John Bartko of the USS O'REILLY.



All the way from California, Emmett Landrum chipping mount 31.

Greg Krawczyk came up to participate and brought gifts, a 20mm magazine and a MK60 gun sight he purchased off Ebay. Tom Schriener also brought a gift, a hand made box for a quarterdeck long glass he had previously donated to us. He was also the Chief Cook this time. Through it all the galley crew of Tom, his son Joe Schriener, Roy Brandon and Frank Warner kept the crew well fed and happy. I did



have a problem watching one of the best welder/mechanics I know happily spending his days slinging hash and burgers, but a happy cook means a happy crew, so I guess **Schriner** has found his true calling. I believe he may have burned his last welding rod aboard SLATER, but certainly not his last piece of toast. Finally **John Bartko** and **Rush Mellinger** were both on light duty, but yet were everywhere helping out all their shipmates. We had originally detailed them both for the shaft alley project, but John bought his way out with a \$5,000 donation to the endowment fund, and Rush agreed to tour guide duty, so that was his escape. It should be noted that **John Bartko** of the USS O'Reilly has become the single largest individual donor to the SLATER project. Commitment comes from all directions and all levels. During their field day, we were visited by three state legislators, Assemblyman **Felix Ortiz** from Brooklyn, Chairman of the Veteran's Committee, **Darrell Aubertine**, Chairman of State and Local Relations, and longtime supporter and local Assemblyman **Jack McEneny**. They took a real interest in our progress and the efforts of the volunteers, and we hope it will lead to closer state involvement with the SLATER. Our thanks to Bill Kraus and Joanne Martin who put the visit together.

**The last of the Michigan crew departed early Saturday morning.**

That Sunday morning I was on a plane headed for San Francisco. The goal: to acquire the SL radar consol, TBL radio transmitter, and a wardroom bookcase from the old salvage tug USS CLAMP ARS33. For this I will remain permanently indebted to the volunteers of the submarine PAMPANITO moored at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. Upon setting down at the airport about 1700 I was met by my old friend **Rich Pekelney**. He and his wife let me stay in his apartment for a week on an inflatable mattress in his living room, well aware of the financial constraints of the historic naval ship business. Up until he got married, about five years ago, Rich had a reputation for running one of the busiest youth hostels in San Francisco. Ship lovers from all over the world seemed to land on his doorstep. An expert on vintage shipboard electronics, Rich has always taken a broad view of historic ship preservation, and recognized the importance of the SL radar to the SLATER's restoration. When you figure that almost every "Fourpiper" DD, DE, PF, AVP, LST, LSM, and every spit kit minesweeper, tugs, subchasers, and even a lot of LCIs carried an SL unit, you realize we're talking about at least a couple thousand radar sets here. This is the only one we could find.



**We couldn't have done it without them - Volunteers from the USS PAMPANITO and the last know example of an SL radar antenna on the deck of the CLAMP.**

**We hit the fleet early Monday morning and were welcomed by Fleet superintendent Joe Pecoraro who remembered me from my scrounging days while working on the old KIDD in Baton Rouge.** I really didn't have a clue how I was going to get this gear off the CLAMP, and what I was going to do with it once I got it off, but I was met by a group that had all the answers. **Jim Adams** has been in the marine repair business longer than I've been alive and was an expert on rigging all the equipment out of the holds. **Tom Horsfall** is an antique radio buff whose passion for this old gear has gotten him involved with



almost every ship restoration project in the Bay area, and now he was there to help us. **Len Vaden**, who Rich described as one of the finest Navy electricians he has ever worked with, and **Aron Washington**, assistant ship manager of the submarine PAMPANITO, and **Will Donzelli** of the QJB sonar fame. **Will** was on the west coast visiting electronics fairs and agreed to haul the SL unit back east for us with his van and trailer. I'm not sure he knew what he was getting into.



**Still yielding treasures on her way to the scrapyard, the USS CLAMP ARS-33 in the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet.**

**The weather was perfect for ship stripping.** A beautiful day in Benicia that was just a little cool. We crossed HOGA, of Pearl Harbor fame, to get aboard CLAMP moored alongside. Tom and Will went to work on the TBL transmitter, located on the 02 level just aft of the chartroom. Rich and I went to work unbolting the SL radar indicator, in the chartroom, just aft of the pilothouse. Jim, Aron and Len went to work down in the forward hold where a space housed the SL transmitter, the TBL motor generator and controller. Rigging beam clamps, chain hoists and a come-along, we had all the main components unwired, unbolted, and sweated out onto the deck by early afternoon. The bolts were some of the easiest I have ever undone, amazing considering they had been there for sixty plus years. The radar antenna assembly was located in the salvage workshop on the main deck back aft, and there was a nice double watertight door for easy access to the fantail, and the six of us were able to lift it and carry it out on deck.

**For me, it was the bittersweet experience I always have when stripping ships I'd rather be restoring.** I had served as an ordinary seaman and officer's mess man on a sister ship in Merchant Service, the former USS CABLE ARS 19 out of Key West in 1974, where butter would turn to soup in thirty minutes. And I remember faking down a heavy greasy towing cable, working it over our heads as Joe the AB said, "When I was twenty, I never thought



**The port side scaffolded and ready for painting.**



I'd still be doing this when I was sixty." But that was a long time ago and the voices were now silent as the CLAMP gave up several precious parts to the SLATER's restoration, adding CLAMP to the long list of ships that will live on as part of SLATER. On Tuesday Suisun's old MARY ANNE derrick barge came out to the CLAMP and lifted all of our precious equipment off the ship and hauled it ashore without incident. **Jim Adams** was waiting for us with his truck, and we loaded the TBL transmitter, controller and motor generator aboard for the trip to Alameda. The PAMPANITO has storage at the old naval air station and there we staged all our equipment for future shipment to New York. At the same time, they showed me a box of spare parts and the speech control unit previously been removed by PAMPANITO'S crew that will be given to SLATER.



Some might say that a crackerjack welder behind a grill is a real waste of talent.



Sonarmen Ron Mazure on Bob Donlon check out the newly installed QJB sonar stack.

**On Wednesday, Rich and I were back on the road at zero dark thirty to spend the day on the old sub tender NEREUS.** Working with **Will Donzelli**, we located several interior IMC speakers that we needed as replacements, and two four drop pantry call boxes that matched the style carried board the SLATER in the wardroom pantry and on the open bridge. We had to cut our scavenging short to get in and load the radar gear onto Will's van and trailer. We loaded the SL radar consol, transmitter and antenna for the trip east. The five hundred pound scope section went into the back of his van. The transmitter went alongside him in the cab where the passenger's seat had been, and the antenna and dome went onto the two wheel "Tuffy" trailer he was towing behind. That wasn't all he was hauling. Packed in around our load were twenty-five or thirty boxes of tech manuals and assorted electronics parts and a stone statue he was bringing east. When he left for Concord to pick up another large mainframe computer that was going on the trailer, surely the boys in Vegas were betting against him.

**Thursday we headed back to NEREUS with Tom. We pulled out 110 old battle helmets and liners we had located and off loaded them with the rest of the NEREUS gear, and hauled them to the**



**warehouse in Alameda.** We also spotted several searchlights that are candidates to replace the two that John McMichael is missing on the STEWART. There is no way I can adequately express our thanks to the folks at the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet or the crew of the PAMPANITO. With no gain in it for themselves except the love of old ships, they provided the brainpower, tools, and muscle to make this whole acquisition possible. And special thanks to **Rich Pekelney's** wonderful wife **Rony** for her tolerance of the "Creature on the living room floor" for four nights. We will be forever in their debt.



**The USS HUSE Crew take a break on the Foc's'c'le to pose for Richard Andrian.**

**Upon my return I was greeted by the advanced contingent of the USS HUSE crew. They arrived twenty strong and went to work where Michigan left off. George Amandola, Dave Perlstein, Joe Coletti and Robin Larner handled the galley and kept the crew fed all week. Roland Robbins and Bill Meehan took care of the paint locker and made sure that the brushes were all clean and that everybody**



who needed paint had it. **Walter Bringslid** kept the crews quarters, crew's washroom and showers and the mess deck clean and operational for the group. The painters, **Jaye Robbins, Jeff Robbins, Jeff Kehrer, Dave Kehrer, Bill Morton, and Don Bean** managed to sand and paint the remainder of the forward superstructure with epoxy paint, despite a week of pretty crappy weather. The only day that was really nice was Thursday, and the entire crew turned out, including the galley crew, to complete the job. **Jeff Kehrer** deserves special praise for following last year's high wire act with a follow up that included painting the aft end of the Fire Control hut while hugging the mast. The most traumatic moment came when former supply officer **Dave Perlstein** actually got paint on his arm and shirt. Dave felt that his "officer and a gentleman" image had been tarnished forever until he realized what a badge of honor a little paint can be among the deck apes. He had the paint spots photographed from several angles, and he will probably be wearing the stained shirt to the DESA convention in Michigan as proof of his physical exertion. On their last day **Bill Archibald** arrived with his two sons, **Bill Jr.** and **Tom**. They worked restoring the dogs on the bridge level 20mm ready service lockers, and were on hand to help us break down the scaffold, and off load the precious SL radar gear that arrived that Saturday morning. Yes, **Will Donzelli** beat the odds, and the radar gear is now safe and sound on our pier.



**Pat Perrella** gets the museum space ready for the tour season.



State Assemblymen **Darrell Albertine, Felix Ortiz** and **Jack McEneny** took the time to take an in-depth tour of SLATER this month.

**Bill Camp** and **Doug Streiter** performed a variety of mechanical miracles. This included tightening the packing on the whaleboat shaft, repairing an annoying leak under 40mm gun # 42 that was dripping right onto the log desk and the sign in book, and doing a variety of repair jobs for Gus and Karl in the machinery spaces. **Guy Huse** worked with **Gene Jackey** and got all of the oil pumped out of the port shaft alley and into our waste oil tank, and then pumped the leaky source tank down to sludge. But my two personal heroes were **Jim Larner** and **Ernie Aeschliman**. Jim, a WWII vet off the USS Day and one of the oldest, and Ernie of the HUSE and one of the smallest, volunteered to spend the week in the starboard shaft alley. They spent the week cleaning, scaling and vacuuming so that the space is now clean, dry and ready for painting. More than anyone else, the shaft alley guys went beyond the call of duty, even beyond cruel and unusual punishment. I think they all got sick of peering up at laughing faces and the repeated question, "What the hell did you guys do to deserve this detail?" What they did was



express a level of commitment to the SLATER that almost makes you want to cry. I'll be forever in awe of such men.



The Adirondack Red Hats enjoy the tour with Glenn Harrison.

**Finally, the third annual fundraiser SLATER Night at the Ft. Orange Club gala dinner will be held in November this year, in conjunction with Veterans Day. This change was made to facilitate the schedules of many of our key supporters and because there are so many other conflicting events going on in June. Letters to the sponsors will be going out shortly so watch your mailboxes. See you next month**



Emmett Landrum, airedale turned chipper.