

Stories from the Crew

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Crew Stories

"CUSH" Cushing (LT/XO, 51-53)

My favorite non-duty story was when we were in the Med in 1951 and could not dive because Gen. Ike (SACEUR) had decreed a NATO exercise with *SIRAGO*, *TIGRONE*, and two Dutch boats which required our staying on the surface until we were discovered by an airplane. It was rough as a cob and we rocked and rolled and nobody was happy until finally Capt. Kaufman said,

"Screw Ike, let's dive and have lunch in peace."

Anyway, I was in the Officers' head in the FTR and found Mel Rolow sitting on one of those stainless steel cabinets with a cushion, reading a paperback and muttering to himself, "Round-bottom son-of-a-bitch, round-bottom son-of-a-bitch."

Duane Gow (RM2, 52-52)

During my time aboard the *Sirago* it was pretty routine to assume that if you had the weekend off, your liberty started about 11 AM on Friday. This was great for me. My girlfriend lived in Western Penna and I could get away from the boat ahead of most of the non sub personnel and hitchhike to her place and get there by early evening.

My first weekend off I left the base with a shipmate. We caught a taxi to the Newport News ferry and after a short ride I had my thumb out and was on my way.

The next weekend I had off I was by myself and caught a taxi and told him I wanted to go the ferry. It seemed like a much longer ride this time and I found the cost of the ferry had increased considerably in just a short time. It turned out that the ferry ride was hours instead of minutes. A few inquiries to the ferry crew made me realize that there were two ferries out of Norfolk - the Newport News (which was the one I wanted) and the Cape May (which was the one I was on). So instead of getting off in Virginia for a quick hitchhike home, I got off in southern New Jersey which meant I had a whole lot further to go and it was nearly dawn Saturday before I arrived there. Thankfully folks were good about

picking up hitchhikers in those days.

On the way back that time I got picked up by a couple of sailors from a tin can who lived within 25 miles of my girlfriend. They couldn't get away from their ship before 5 PM on Fridays so after that I used to hitchhike home on Fridays and catch a ride back with them on Sunday, which allowed me to sleep most of the way back. It was a great arrangement for me.

Mel Rycus (EM1, 52-54)

Off duty remembrances: Poker out at sea, pay-day stakes: One time the dealer picked up a pinochle deck by mistake, table stake bidding was going out of sight, until someone noticed the box that the cards came out of.

Also, one time on liberty in one of the Caribbean Islands, we ran out on money, headed back to the boat, borrowed a frozen turkey, and headed back the up the pier to trade for what-ever. Coming back along the pier were some of the officers. We flipped the bird over the side, and it was quite a sight to see the frozen turkey bobbing in the water with the drumsticks up. We were lucky the officers did not see that sight.

The main trick on newbies was flooding the head while they were sitting on the john. We reached across from the other enlisted men's head and opened the water flow to the upper portion of the john.

Tony Gilbert (EM2, 62-62)

Back in 1962 the *Sirago* visited the city of Quebec along with some other U.S. military ships. Naturally, all of the women in Quebec wanted to see what a Submarine looked like. The only entry to our boat allowed at that time for visitors was through the dog shack and then down the conning tower ladder.

One young lady wearing a skirt (as most women in Canada did) was coming down the ladder as an EN1 was starting to ascend the same ladder. She noticed him looking up as he initially attempted to ascend. Her foot slipped a bit on some condensation and a bit of debris fell down and entered the EN1's eye. When she finally finished her climb down, she looked at him and

said with a French accent, but perfect English,

"I hope you got a good look".

He responded with "No... it was dripping".

After giving him a strange look for that comment, she lifted her skirt and gave him a full frontal view but he was still unable to see anything since he was continuing to rub his eye trying to rid himself of the debris. However, I can say that the rest of us enjoyed the "scenery" of that moment. We all had a good laugh and applauded. She and the rest of the visitors saw the boat and all went well for the remainder of our stay in Quebec. The view from the "boardwalk" looking down on the St. Lawrence River was just spectacular.

I also remember the "ration" the Captain allowed us to have one time as we left Quebec. I still say the best Captains are all "Mustangs".

I learned a lot from my days of being an Electrician's Mate. How about throwing "fire balls" in maneuvering from one side to the other when underway and the new guy comes back for indoctrination of the electricians job. Yes, I got it twice before I caught on.

Speaking of "fire", if memory serves me correctly we got the efficiency "E" that year due to our expertise in fire extinguishment that took place just prior to the actual commencement of the official exercise.

Stuff I learned on Sirago is still applicable now. Checking the "forward battery" was my job and through trial and error you realize a few things about clothing. Recently, I remembered to use some "all wool pants" when servicing my engine room on my own sailboat where battery acid is almost everywhere due to the battery over charging and the over-gassing condensing on the sitting spots. Battery acid eats wool at a much slower rate than other fabrics. Where else would you learn such important stuff?

