

Sirago Newsletter



Volume 9, Issue 3

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More Sea Stories

Joe Roche (CO / Editor)
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Shipmates,

In this issue we have more stories from the crew as well as some important information about the 2009 Reunion. Enjoy!

Regards – **Joe Roche**

COFFEE

Joe Hoffmann – LT 63-66

SIRAGO went into the Norfolk shipyard in the Fall '65 for an overhaul; the big item was removal of one of the F-M engines and installation of the Prairie Masker. Typically there is the removal of most everything so that the boat is virtually stripped below decks. And the galley coffee urn is one of the first to go; that and a still-recognizable monkey wrench that must have resided inside the pot at least

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since the previous overhaul..... So what of all those supposed cleanings by the mess cooks? – Obviously they didn't get to the bottom of things. I don't recall anyone having anemia either, but I hope the wrench wasn't put back in the pot for the sake of a "mineral supplement".

MOVIES and GRINDERS

John Eldridge – MIDN 1/c 70-70

Being a 20 year old midshipman with no transportation off of the base, I spent some nights right there on board. The movie "For A Few Dollars More" was a big hit that summer of 1970. Probably had been a big hit in town five years sooner, but you know, we'd get the movies eventually. I must have watched that movie six times. (Don't tell anyone, but I still watch it. Never has been as much fun as on 485.) Anyway, we would sit in the crew's mess. One of the crew members had worked in a sandwich shop. When it got close to a reel change, he would go into the galley and start making "grinders." (Another new term that had not entered my 20 year vocabulary.) He'd take orders and fire out about six grinders during the course of a single reel change. Sure made it fun and was nice to have a freshly made sandwich as Clint Eastwood and Lee Van Cleef got ready to shoot some more bad guys.

I went on to serve on five nuclear subs. We'd have popcorn, pistachios, pizza (the 3 Ps of the nuclear navy movie snacks). Never had a grinder again. And, you know, the first three subs still had reel movies... and you had a break in between the action. That break came in handy, and not just for replenishing snacks either. The fourth sub had gone to taped movies that ran the whole time. You'd have to mandate a break. On the last two, I could get the movies patched in to the TV in my stateroom. But, nope, watching a movie alone is not what

submarining is all about. I hope it never is.

But, I don't think a movie ever went by without the thought.... "Those hard working but carefree days on Sirago, ending with a movie and a grinder won't be repeated." Those were great times. I didn't know it then, but other great times would follow, just never that same one. And as it should be, it is a great memory.

STEERING

Dave McCallum – EM3 62-63

I would initially just like to say how great a time I had at the reunion. It was my first return, but hopefully not my last. I felt like I might have been a little out of place because I was not a long timer on the boat, but I found that there were many so called 990's (nukes/MTs) on the boat. But I have to truly say that it was my most memorable time of the 10 years I spent in the Navy. That being said, when we were at the Reunion, a number of us (Larson, Booth, McCallum (me), and others we asked) tried to recall who was "SNAKE". It all stemmed from a helmsman, who steered like a drunk. Larson and I were on lookout, and if you looked stern you saw this beautiful serpentine scroll work from the screw. We laughed at it, and the OD was not too pleased with the lack of ability to stay on course. He directed the Helmsman to stay on course, but it continued. So the impending 'fix' was to make SNAKE put steering in Manual. If any of you recall practicing that, it was not much fun (was it 10 turns per degree?). Anyway, from that time forward, we called him Snake, and I sure wish he would come forward, for that was one of the best laughs we all had (including Snake) during that period in 1963.

WAR PATROL CHIEFS

Bill (Harvey) Collins – IC3 64-66

A few of the chiefs aboard Sirago wore the WWII war patrol insignia when I reported aboard Sirago in 1964. Those chiefs were approaching the end of their Navy careers even though some were only in their late 30's or early 40's but had their "20" in. I'm sure some had joined the Navy to do their duty as quickly as they turned 17 if their parents would sign for them, as many young men were anxious to get into the war before it was over. I recall that the patrol pin showed the number of patrols by small stars added at the bottom of the insignia. The original pin represented the first patrol. Each star that was added was one more additional patrol. One of the chiefs had four patrols, others one or two.

Occasionally when two or three of these "old salts" would gather in the crew's mess, stories would start. I was mesmerized by the tales of depth charges caving in a pressure hull around a main engine or a war patrol in Tokyo Bay to try for an aircraft carrier or views through the periscope at a sinking transport. I'll never forget those stories or those chiefs' faces.



CREW NEWS

We have found only **one** new crew member since our last newsletter – **Fred Kennedy (ENFN 60-60)**. During the same period we have learned of the loss of **four** senior members of our crew:

Hugh Rosania LCDR (XO) 52-54 (died 26 April 2008)

Joe Mac Johnson RM1 55-57 (died 15 November 2005)

George Kurtz TMC (COB) 52-54 (died 12 October 2007)

David Strunk TM1 49-51 (died 10 July 2007)

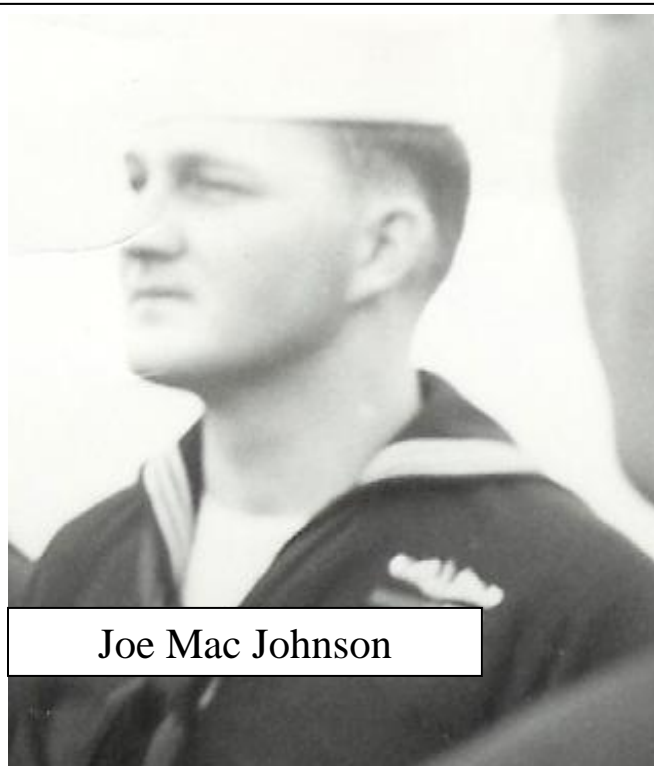
We don't have a photo of David Strunk but he died in a "boogie boarding accident" so obviously he was a typical active submariner! *Sailor, rest your oar.....*



Hugh Rosania



GEORGE A. KURTZ, TMC USN
CHIEF OF THE BOAT



Joe Mac Johnson

Other Notices - PHOTOS

Some of you have receiving in this newsletter a “blow-in” that has to do with us trying to get some photographs into our archives. We have carefully reviewed all the annotated old photo archives (see www.sirago.com and then visit our photo albums) and have found that there are a number of crew members for whom we have not a single clear photograph. We looked at primarily the CREW and AT PLAY albums for old photos, but also considered the albums that are no longer posted on our website (but are in our archives) which include photos and information about our past reunions as well as photos you crew members have mailed us. Some of you have informed us about photos of yourself that were not properly annotated.

We have also sent out some emails to folks on this same subject and are hoping to receive some photos. We are especially interested in photos from the period you were aboard Sirago, but in absence of such a photo, a current photo or one you may have taken of yourself and friends at a reunion would be good. We just need to have a photo on file to be able to have... in case perhaps one of you has a “boogie board accident” or are, for whatever reason, no longer with us.

The purpose of our whole organization is to remember and commemorate the USS Sirago and every member of her crew – TO THE LAST MAN. Your children, grand children, and great-grand children will appreciate the work we are doing to keep the story telling going, keep the memories fresh for those who will never experience a life aboard a diesel boat, and to officially celebrate your contribution to the work of our armed forces.

If you know that you have no photo on our website, or if you have a better photo of yourself from the old days, then please email it to Mike Bickel (Bickel485@aol.com) or mail it to him at 1125 Villaview Dr. / Manchester, MO 63021 and he will see that it is archived properly and available for viewing.

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