

# Sirago Newsletter



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## Mess cooking memories!

**Joe Roche (Editor) jfr485@optonline.net**

Duty Section 6164

I'm sure after 35-40 years our memories have dimmed somewhat about virtually every aspect of our time on Sirago, with one exception....our tour of mess cooking. For many of us it was the most thankless and hardest job we did. In most cases the crew never failed to tell us what a lousy job we were doing and were the worst mess cook ever to serve on Sirago. The hours were very long; the work was dirty and tedious. We were like a lion tamer going into a cage of hungry lions without a whip, gun or chair to keep the animals from devouring us. We learned to develop a thick skin and a fast mouth to keep the animals at bay and we did it three times a day for two or three months. Here are some of those memories from our shipmates.

**Ken Koller (RM2 64-66)**

Joe – Some of my memories of mess cooking on Sirago are as follows:

1. Pretending the GDU was a torpedo tube. What great fun, Mike Young and I blasting miscellaneous crap out the GDU, trying to find some relief with the miserable job of mess cooking.
2. Mess cooking under 1st Class Cook, Park, an ex-WWII cook who was busted more times than I witnessed a sunrise.

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3. My MOST memorable: Mess cook's responsibilities included dumping trash and garbage over the side. I was rudely awakened one night and ordered to gather up the trash and garbage, pass it to control room, and prepare to dump. I spent the next half-hour, still groggy after a long day before, gathering up the garbage and passing it to control room. Once it was all gathered up, accumulated in control, I looked up the conning tower hatch and asked: "permission to dump trash and garbage, sir!" only to find out we were at about 200 feet and the entire control room and con busted out laughing at my expense. Not a single crewmember let on that I was being hoodwinked the whole time I was preparing to dump. There is little compassion for mess cooks on diesel boats.....man, was I glad to finally get assigned to the Radio Gang!!

**Paul Anderson (FTSN 60-60)**

I had the unique experience of briefly mess cooking on the George Washington SSBN 598 "boomer" prior to becoming qualified and getting my crow. We had three cooks: an old salty chief, a great third class, "Ski", who was a top notch cook and had a great, friendly, accommodating personality and the third, was a first class with a real attitude and temper, "Stormy." Although Stormy was a pretty decent stew burner, when he wanted to, he could suddenly erupt with a wild temper tantrum.

One particular such incident I recall was during the supper call with steaks to order on the menu. We would carry out platters to each table as Stormy cooked them up and all the steaks on each platter would be cooked the same, rare, medium or well. One of our crew's most amiable enginemen, from the "A-Gang," Walt Orcutt sat patiently waiting for a platter of mediums to come out as platter after platter of rares and wells came out, since there were few calls for mediums and, apparently, Stormy was not going to do up a platter of mediums until he had sufficient calls.

So Walt sat there patiently and periodically repeated his call to Stormy for "a medium any time now" and soon it became "a medium sometime this patrol," etc.

Each time I went back to pick up another platter I mentioned Walt's order and patience to Stormy, until I could see by his look and livid complexion that I had best simply say nothing further.

After about ten more minutes of all this building up a head of

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## Messcooking (Cont.)

steam Stormy suddenly shot out of the Galley with a burnt steak in his bare hand and slapped it down on Walt's plate and told him something to the effect of "here's your #&@! steak; eat it or pound it up your %#@." Then the livid Stormy went back to the Galley like nothing happened. Meanwhile, everyone else sat there saying nothing, sort of totally surprised and dumbstruck for a few moments. It was the only time I ever recalled silence during a chowdown. Later, I heard that the X.O., Tom Bryce, had a little chat with Stormy; however, nothing ever really changed his caustic and volatile temperament.

### **"Mike" Michaelsen (MM2 64-67)**

Skimmer was the cook when I mess cooked. We had an inspection from someone off the tender Orion. We knew the inspection was coming so when we did the dishes we scrubbed all coffee cups clean before putting them in the rack. When the inspection came along the inspector picked a row and looked for a dirty cup. Not finding one he emptied the whole row and then left. Skimmer said good job.

There was a very heavy torpedo man who worked the forward room. He was a first class. He sat over by the chief's table. One time while I was mess cooking he came in early before the others and sat down. I asked him if he was going to sit there to eat and he said yes. I removed the plate and fighting gear and returned with a bowl and serving spoon. He got real mad and as I ran out of the mess hall he threw a knife at me and closely missed.

On another note, I had the top side watch on a Sunday afternoon. We had a single Canadian cook who really loved his job. When I hollered down the after battery hatch for a relief he poked his head around the corner and said we are having steaks, how do you want yours done. I told him and when my relief came I went below to the best steaks I've had in a very long time. I told the cook he out did himself and he went on liberty with a smile.

While at sea Lilly was the night baker on one trip. Some times he would make sticky buns. If they were good the 4 AM watch change would eat most of them and he would catch hell at 8 AM for not making enough. If he messed up and they didn't taste good the 8 AM watch change would give him hell for making too much.

### **John Brownley (LCDR/XO 62-63)**

Joe,

I was XO during the second year of Ray Anderson's command. Doc was corpsman and Chief of the Boat. (Not a great idea because this always put him in the center of the most dangerous activity. Not exactly where you want your only medic.)

Anyway we were in "Task Group Alpha" and spent a lot of time at sea. The men were beginning to look bored and grumpy. I asked Doc did he have any ideas to stir the men up. He said sure. Doc emptied a box of table salt into a plain box and marked it with the chemical symbol for potassium nitrate. He gave it to the cook with instructions

to sprinkle a little on all the food. It wasn't long before one of the mess cooks began to tell everyone that the Doc and XO were feeding them "salt peter". There were complaints of lost of energy and petitions to the CO to stop doctoring their food. Ray loved it and we did stir up the troops. Best, John B.

### **Mel Rycus (EM1 52-54)**

Late 1953 or early 1954, Jack LaTorre & I decided to deep fry a chicken in pure butter. Reb our cook was off for the weekend, so we did the deed ourselves. My memory of the event stayed with me, and in my early years of marriage, with two daughters, I told them how great it tasted, and tried to repeat the deed in our kitchen. Till this day they still remind me how awful it was, and how I ruined a good chicken, and made such a gross mess of our kitchen.

### **Tom O'Brien (IC1 69-70)**

Your request for Mess Cooking stories brought back lots of memories, but the one that made the most impact on me was my first boat, the USS Sea Devil (SS400) on which I reported sometime around Christmas of 1958 in Yokosuka, Japan.

Houston or Houstus J. Kennedy was the POIC of fine dining as I recall and my first mess cook day was alongside the pier. We had these cylindrical stainless steel shit cans....ahhh..recepticals for collecting the leftovers.....and I noticed the duty section separating the "clean chow" from some of the "rough stuff". The two cans were about half filled so I dumped them together and started up the ladder to visit the dumpster on the pier.

Kennedy met me topside and began my first of many ass chewings.....and then had me separate the "clean scraps" from the "rough". Naturally, the clean was on the bottom! I guess I thought this was some of the ritual for a non-qual, so I jumped right to it. This Irish wise guy kid from Boston had never worked for a black First Class petty officer with umpteen war patrols under his belt, so I decided it was in my best interest to just play along!

When Kennedy "escorted" me to the dumpster I found another stainless can into which I was directed to place the "clean chow". Still no explanation. After cleaning up the mess hall and scrubbing the deck Kennedy directed me to take a large can of hot coffee and a can of sugar topside and leave them by the brow. About this time I thought this guy was getting a little soft. About the time I hit the pier the dumpster truck pulled up and two mama-sans stepped off, (knew they were mama-sans because they carried their babies with them in one of those little front end papooses) retrieved the coffee and sugar; then went to the "clean can" and picked through to feed the babies and themselves; heating the pieces in their mouth filled with hot very sweet coffee.

## Messcooking (cont.)

Then I got the picture! Kennedy was soft! He had been doing this for years on several West Pac trips. Japan was in tough shape financially in those days and he was doing his part. I never forgot that gesture and for several West Pacs after that I had the opportunity to continue some of what Kennedy taught me, perhaps in different ways, but still it helped me grow.

Kennedy and I never talked about the "why" of separating the chow after that. He did talk a lot about using the cooking oil when one of his boats ran out of lube oil someplace in the Sea of Japan.....but, that's another story.



## REUNION INFORMATION

As of the writing of this newsletter (late December) we have 19 couples registered and 5 singles for a total count of 43. By the time you receive this newsletter in late January, I expect at least twice that many in my hands. PLEASE review your last newsletter (November 2004) and use the insert provided to sign up for the reunion. Don't lose it. IF you need another signup sheet, just call or email me (Mike Bickel). Refer to the last page of this newsletter for my address / phone / email information. If you are on our list of those planning to attend (which changes up and down as time moves along) please get that form (with some payment – check) to Garry Goetschius (see the form itself and also his address on last page). The process is to get the form WITH some payment (full or partial) as quickly as possible.

Here is a current list of those planning to attend:

### **Sirago Crew PLANNING TO COME by Duty Section: (157):**

**DS4548 (9):** Bill Campbell, Jerry Casey, Jim Gavigan, Charlie Johnson, Leslie Jones, Riley Keysor, Jim McCullough, Fred Tassell, Ron Thibideau

**DS4952 (11):** Harry Caldwell, "CUSH" Cushing, Duane Gow, Bob Kaufman, Bob Ledbetter, "JJ" Long, Gerry Magee, Dan Reilly, Joe Rock, "Buck" Steere, Dick Underwood

**DS5356 (13):** George Albert, Morton Appelbaum, Jeff Badgett, Dick Clifford, Don Hall, "Stoney" Hilton, Bob Liland, Robert Mazurek, Ed McDevitt, Buddy Shumake, James Thompson, Carl Trost, John Tumilty

**DS5760 (20):** Art Allum, Paull Anderson, Wayne Booton, Ed Crawfoot, Paul Curry, Roger Dean, Bill Dort, George Goodwin, Don Gotta, David Hauer, George Hinda, Ed Jones, Neal Jones, Mel Laubach, Vic Lombardo, Glenn Neal, Ed Shaffer, Bill Shamphan, Bud Tolbert, Frank Wixted

**DS6164 (28):** Bill Abbruzzese, Don Amorosi, Ted Anthony, Bob Boddiford, Bruce Boughton, Dale Craig, John Geoghegan, Lonnie "Ray" Haley, Tony Hastoglis, Joe Hoffmann, Jim Hughes, Mike Leeds, Nick Lira, Reggie McCarver, Larry McClintock, Fred McGuire, Joe Roche, Ralph Schmidt, Roy Scott, Gene Shore, "Butch" Sites, Al Standish, Jerry Stellick, Ray Tholen, Gordon Trolley, Frank Weltner, Ralph Wiggins, Marv Yokum

**DS6568 (34):** Ken Anderton, Bill Bailey, Gary Beasley, Clyde Beatty, Rob Carey, Bill Clegg, Virgil Clemmer, Tim Cole, Bill Collins, Pat Conroy, Dennis Duren, Bob Ewing, Ron Flint, Dave Glaser, Garry Goetschius, Nate Isenhour, Bob Karge, "Tex" Loftin, "TY" Lynch, Marvin Mayes, JD Mayo, Rich McCamant, Bob Michaud, Ira Nerzig, Joe Palermo, Doug (Big Robbie) Roberts, Stanley Robinson, Bob Rosen, Tom Sawyer, Rob Schutte, Dean Sedgwick, Chuck Veir, Marshall Woods, Lewis Zipperer.

**DS6972 (42):** David Ackerman, Tom Antos, Fred Baker, Herb Bauer, Robert Bell, Frank Berlingeri, Mike Bickel, Jeff Binford, Dennis Boland, Russell Burrows, Ray Bussard, Frank Campbell, Matt Cola, "Rusty" Curtis, Doug Davis, Jack Enos, Bob Flora, Tom Foglesong, Doug Fox, Ken "Stewburner" Frazier, Bob Garvey, Eddie Gee, Frank George, John Holmes, Robert Holt, Bill Huskey, Ron Kennedy, Andy Knauer, Paul Knickman, Les Lammers, "Johnny D" Lee, Tom Lowe, Randy Morgan, Tom O'Brien, Keith Owens, Michael Peterson, Lanny Renken, "Tex" Ritter, Fred Thompson, Marty Valdez, Jim Ware, Paul York

**Reunion Information (cont.)**

So, as you can see, we have quite a crowd planning to come so if you aren't on that list and are thinking maybe this might be a good time to see folks you haven't seen for 35-60 years, now is your opportunity!

Our tentative plans for 2007 are to have our reunion in New Orleans. As you know, we wanted to have a reunion away from the Norfolk area this year, but things in Portsmouth, NH just didn't work out for us. We are determined to "spice up" our 2007 reunion with a trip down south.

Things cost quite a bit more in Norfolk during August than they do in April or September of course. But we're trying to keep the prices the same even though our own costs have increased dramatically. We also don't have the number of free rooms we had last time and in fact have next to nothing, but we still want to offer some "scholarship" allowances to those who may otherwise be unable to attend the reunion. But to do this, we need some "Scholarship" contributions. If you are so inclined to help out a shipmate in need, then send a check (made out to USS Sirago and marked "Scholarship") and mail it to Garry Goetschius (see opposite panel for his address.) **Mike Bickel ♦**

**DUTY SECTION NEWS**

**Recently Deceased Sirago Crewmembers:**

*(Please – also refer to the Family Gram Insert)*

**Costas (Gus) Haris** (TM2, 67-68 died 12/06/2004)

*-----Sailor, rest your oar*

**USEFUL INFORMATION:**

**Current Officers of our Organization:**

**CO:** Mike Bickel / [RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM](mailto:RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM) / 1125 Villaview Drive / Manchester, MO 63021 / (636) 225-7528 (Mike is also "acting" Supply Off (**SO**))

**XO:** Dave Glaser / [DGLASER@PECOFOODS.COM](mailto:DGLASER@PECOFOODS.COM) / 27 Goodwin Drive / Soso, MS 39480 / (601) 729-4039

**AO:** Joe Roche / [JFR485@OPTONLINE.NET](mailto:JFR485@OPTONLINE.NET) / 74 Lincoln Ave. / Pearl River, NY 10965 / (845) 735-9020

**DO:** Garry Goetschius / [G.GOETSCHIUS@WORLDNET.ATT.NET](mailto:G.GOETSCHIUS@WORLDNET.ATT.NET) / 3620 Locust Circle East / Prospect, KY 40059 / (502) 228-2736

Joe Roche  
74 Lincoln Ave.  
Pearl River, NY 10965-1707

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