

Sirago Newsletter



Volume 6, Issue 2

May 2005

The Sirago Legacy

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Duty Section 6164

Shipmates,

In one of my stories, "The Final Days" in the February 2004 newsletter, I said that, "The energy that made Sirago who she was and who we are, will remain in the universe as long as one of us is alive, because we are the ones who perpetuate her memory, by sharing those memories."

Based on that premise of "sharing those memories," we want to create a lasting "memory" of the Sirago...by having as many of you that are willing to take a few minutes to think about your time on Sirago and to submit to me a small bio of the time you spent on Sirago.

We need information from ALL crew members concerning their time in the navy and especially their time on Sirago. We need your help in gathering this information (your own information) for purposes of getting as much accurate and

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anecdotal information as we can about YOU and YOUR time in submarines and YOUR time on the Sirago. Sure... we know your dates aboard and all your address information...But that doesn't give us the most important aspect of this project. It's your stories that comprise the legacy of Sirago.

Therefore this project is officially named the SIRAGO LEGACY PROJECT and we want as many crew members as possible to contribute to this effort. The e-mailers have already been notified of the project and stories having been coming in from them on a steady basis.

I have decided to try to collect this information, so mail me a letter with answers to the following questions:

1. If you have good THEN and NOW photos of yourself, please mail them along with your stories and they will be returned to you at a later date.
2. When you reported aboard Sirago... when was it (month or season plus year). We may have the year right but want you to confirm this. Also... what was your rate / rating / rank when reporting aboard (ie; SA, FA, TM3, ENS).
3. Was Sirago your QUAL Boat? If not what boat was it.
4. How many boats did you serve on (and names of them)?
5. Which shipmates did you hang out with most (on Sirago)? Elaborate on this in story fashion please.
6. Describe an event that took place (on Sirago) that can still be remembered today, with as much clarity as passing time will allow. Sea stories are (of course) acceptable.

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7. ONLY if you have trouble with 5. and 6. above, or because you served such a short time on Sirago and have another boat that you remember much more clearly... then change the "(on Sirago)" requirement to the boat of your choice and tell the story. We would just need to know what boat you are talking about.

Mail your stories to me:

Joe Roche
74 Lincoln Ave.
Pearl River, New York 10965

After collecting your stories, we would like to put them into some sort of form, whether manuscript, book or pamphlet and offer it to you as your own Legacy of Sirago in which you participated in as a crewman of Sirago.



REUNION INFORMATION

Mike Bickel

Folks,

I have to apologize to some of our new emailers who have been found over the past few months. For some unknown reason, I failed to change my standing "Sirago Information" email to show that we were going to have our reunion in VIRGINIA BEACH and not any longer (as originally planned) in Portsmouth, NH. I am hoping that everyone knows where the reunion is and certainly you have the SIGNUP sheet which is included with this newsletter.

I also want to mention a few more things about coming to the reunion. FIRST... if you have already signed up to come, I probably have included the signup sheet again but only because my mind goes out to lunch when I'm stuffing mailers and can't keep track of everyone. So... just because you got another "signup" doesn't mean we haven't already received yours (if you mailed one).

Also... just because that signup sheet says that all the money has to be in by May 31st doesn't mean that I won't forgive you for jumping aboard at the last minute. It's just that it's a bit harder for my planning so please try to get those suckers into Garry Goetschius (see the instructions on the signup sheet) as quickly as you can with at least SOME portion of payment.

Another thing is that it is very important for you guys who have been to reunions to show up so that the "newbies" that Rich McCamant has been finding can have as good a time as YOU had when you first took the chance to come to a reunion. Guilt is good.

Here are the folks (as of this moment) who have said they were coming. FYI, I have received signup sheets from 82 of the 155 listed below and they are coming in faster and faster... so please get on the boat.

Sirago Crew PLANNING TO COME by Duty Section: (155):

DS4548 (8): Les Addotto, Bill Campbell, Jim Gavigan, Charlie Johnson, Leslie Jones, Riley Keysor, Jim McCullough, Fred Tassell

DS4952 (10): Harry Caldwell, "CUSH" Cushing, Duane Gow, Bob Kaufman, "John" Ledbetter, "JJ" Long, Gerry Magee, Dan Reilly, "Buck" Steere, Dick Underwood

DS5356 (14): George Albert, Morton Appelbaum, Jeff Badgett, Bob Barringer, 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, Roger Dean, Bill Dort, Don Gotta, David Hauer, George Hinda, Ed Jones, Neal Jones, Richard Konow, Mel Laubach, Vic Lombardo, Glenn Neal, Clyde Russell, Bill Shamphan, Dennis Strake, Bud Tolbert, Jim Wilhelm

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

DS6568 (34): Ken Anderton, Bill Bailey, Richard Barnette, Gary Beasley, Clyde Beatty, Rob Carey, Bill Clegg, Virgil Clemmer, Tim Cole, Bill Collins, Pat Conroy, Dennis Duren, Dennis Eber, Dave Glaser, Garry Goetschius, Ray Harrison, Nate Isenhour, Bob Karge, "TY" Lynch, Marvin Mayes, JD Mayo, Rich McCamant, Bob Michaud, Ira Nerzig, Doug (Big Robbie) Roberts, Stanley Robinson, Bob Rosen, Tom Sawyer, Rob Schutte,

Reunion Information (cont.)

Dean Sedgwick, Chuck Veir, Steve Whitaker, Marshall Woods, Lewis Zipperer.

DS6972 (41): David Ackerman, Fred Baker, Robert Bell, Frank Berlinger, Mike Bickel, Jeff Binford, Russell Burrows, Ray Bussard, Chuck Cain, Frank Campbell, "Doc" Carter, Matt Cola, "Rusty" Curtis, Armando Dela Rosa, Jack Enos, Bob Flora, Tom Foglesong, Doug Fox, Ken "Stewburner" Frazier, Gary Gamauf, Bob Garvey, Eddie Gee, Frank George, John Holmes, Robert Holt, Bill Huskey, Andy Knauer, Paul Knickman, Les Lammers, Tom Lowe, Randy Morgan, Tom O'Brien, Keith Owens, Michael Peterson, Scott Primmer, Lanny Renken, "Tex" Ritter, George Self, Fred Thompson, Jim Ware, Paul York ♦♦♦

STORY TELLING

From Ray Hartenstein (DS5356):

The only exciting story I'd have would be the time I almost blew the after battery and old SS485 to kingdom come!!

About 1954 something, while in port at Norfolk, Va. an unnamed (you know who you are!) FN and I were down in the AB jumping out a bad cell when one of the jumpers fell, or was dropped, across the bad cell's terminals. Well that cell wasn't dead by a long shot and at 1000's of amps discharge it started spewing sparks and copper was flying everywhere. My helper(?) was out of that battery well like shot from a gun and left me down there (he may still be running?). It took me a split second to recognize what was happening and I tried twice to kick it off with my heel but it didn't budge and smoke was filling the place. I panicked but stayed calm enough to reason that if I didn't get that thing off those terminals before it welded solid, me and that sub were going *up* in history, so I gathered all my strength and gave it one more kick and it came loose and all was over with no fire or explosion. Needless to say I felt like both I and the sub were living on borrowed time after that (unreported!) incident! I'm sure some ship yard worker was wondering how all that *welding* took place on top of that cell after it was finally removed!!

I hope the statute of limitations has run out on this report!! Hey I'm too old to go to jail, AINT I??

Ray Hartenstein

IC1 USS Sirago SS485 (53-55)

From Mel Rycus (DS5356):

OK, Mike, early "54", Gitmo, preparing for Nato maneuvers, kept eyeing huge bunch of bananas on tree in front of base commanders building. Night before departure for Reykjavik Iceland, I shimmied up the tree, with a little help from Jack Latorre, and a borrowed meat cleaver from the galley. We cut the bunch down, it took four slightly inebriated guys to carry this huge bundle down to the boat, and then conceal in the battery wells. Everyone knows that no officer ever ventures into the wells, so we knew that our secret would be safe. The bananas ripened beautifully, and all the way to Iceland we were eating bananas, and driving our commissary officer nuts, trying to figure out where they came from, because they were not ship stores. One of many stories still to be told.

Mel Rycus

EM1 USS Sirago SS485 (52-54)

Note from Mike Bickel: *Hmmm....I wonder if the bananas caused the bad cell?*

From Mike Bickel (DS6972):

Well...as long as everyone is "coming clean", I guess I myself ought to tell an embarrassing story on myself.

Before I reported aboard Sirago, I was, like all other officers, assigned to Submarine School in Groton for 6 months. Periodically, we students would go out on a day trip on one of the SUBRON 8 boats to get ourselves acquainted with the reality of being aboard one of those things.

We came aboard quite clumsily and, of course, knew nothing – or next to nothing about subs at the time. The poor crew had to put up with us, feed us, and treat us with some level of dignity that later (when we reported aboard our own boat) would not be so graciously offered.

I remember being taken into the forward engine room while underway on all four engines. It was deafening in that room but the engineman (second class I think) that was showing us stuff wasn't wearing any ear protection so that he could hear any questions we might have.

Story Telling (cont.)

After telling us all about the various safety functions and normal operations that would go on in the room he sort of did a "qual-card" show and tell of each and every hull valve, flapper, gauge, etc. within the room.

My mind was spinning with all the stuff that rattling off and I guess I was getting fairly agitated at thinking of having to know all that stuff, or at least be able to pass a qualification test eventually to get my dolphins.

He had said something about the outboard and inboard exhaust valves for #1 engine and I think my mind went into some sort of overload. Inboard Exhaust Valve? Inboard Exhaust Valve? For some reason my hand shot up in the air and he asked if I had a question.

Facing this petty officer and yelling at the top of my lungs to be heard in the room of young officers, I asked:

"So... why on earth would anyone want to exhaust INBOARD??!!"

Seemed like a good question at the time.

He stared at me and shook his head sadly. ♦♦♦

DUTY SECTION NEWS

Recently Deceased Sirago Crewmembers:

Tom Antos (MM2, 70-72 died 2/3/2005)

Vincent (Pat) Dunn (SN, 53-54 died 2/22/2005)

Ernest Kindig (EMP1, 50-51 died 1/12/2005)

Ray McCooles (S2c, 47-47 died 1/1/2005)

John Tittman (MM1, 59-63 died 2/28/2005)

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

INFORMATION ON DECEASED ABOVE:

Tom Antos was planning on attending this next reunion. Known to us on board as "Bunky" he was a career man and eventually COB of USS Grayling (SSN 646). Ray McCooles was aboard Sirago a short period but is best known as the luckiest submariner, as he was ordered off the Thresher 2 hours before it sailed its last time because his wife had a medical problem. John Tittman attended our last reunion (his only reunion) in 2003 and was hoping to make this next one. Vince (Vinny) Dunn (known to his family as Pat) had Sirago as his only boat. He had just been found October 26, 2004. Ernest Kindig was found in July 2001 and was not in good health at that time but he appreciated keeping in touch.

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