

Sirago Newsletter



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CREW MEMBERS WEATHER the STORMS

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Shipmates,

Since Joe Roche was in the process of moving his household from New York to Delaware he asked if I would step in and pull together some of the news for this edition of the Sirago Newsletter. As such I spent much of my time trying to figure out what happened to everyone down south during this latest rash of KATRINA, RITA, and WILMA. I can't say too much about WILMA other than many of our folks were frustrated and without power for an inordinate period of time, but pretty much no major damage. Therefore, I'd like to focus on what happened with KATRINA and with RITA.

Rich McCamant and I were first concerned about

continued this page

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1-3 CREW MEMBERS WEATHER THE STORMS
- 3 DUES – if you are willing
- 3-4 Report on Recent Deaths

folks in the New Orleans, Biloxi, and Mobile areas as that is where KATRINA hit hardest. With RITA, of course, it was the Houston area. And then, of course, it was Florida for WILMA. I'm going to cover them in reverse order.

As I said, there isn't much to report on WILMA other than the frustration of many crew members without power and the unusually long period of time that such power took to restore. But all in all, not too many complaints.

With RITA, we were most concerned about the Houston area and the border between Texas and Louisiana. We were all concerned, of course that perhaps the same folks who got hit by KATRINA might get hit again, and to some degree that was true, but the main "story" here was the huge evacuation of the Houston area which everyone saw on the news. One of my own crewmates, Bobbie Joe Brown, a torpedoman who died a couple of years ago, left his widow in a town called Groves, Texas... right in the path of RITA. We've kept in touch with Deb and their son Sampie before and after "Brownie's" death. Bobbie Joe had the "Brow Canvass" of the USS Sirago somewhere in his attic and long before he passed on we were all trying to get him to look for it so that we could have it for one of our reunions. He died before finding it but his son Sampie had said (after Brownie's death) that if he ever found it, he'd like to come to a reunion and present same to the boat. Sampie didn't live in the house... just Deb and Bobbie Joe. Fred Baker (another of our 6972 guys) has kept in close contact with Sampie since his father's death.

When we realized that RITA was coming right for

Continued on Page 2

Deb's house, Fred tried to call Sampie but the voice recording indicated that he was out of town for a while so we figured he was going to pick up his mother and get her out of town. That's exactly what happened. He spent 26 hours on the road on a trip that would have normally taken 4 hours. Frustrating, but he did get her out of the house. We heard later that there was no damage, but of course we were all concerned.

KATRINA was a different story because of the damage created and it was a true wakeup call for all those who thought that these storms really aren't serious stuff. I talked to Janet Aucoin (Norm's wife) to find out what was happening in Biloxi where they lived. She reported that although most of the homes around them were completely destroyed, theirs miraculously made it with very little damage. Frank Hamaker in Ocean Springs (right across from Biloxi) was quite amazed at the complete destruction of all the beachfront property – he told me it was as if someone just came through and magically erased all these buildings between the railroad tracks and the beach. It was quite a shock for him to see the devastation but his property was spared.

“Skip York” in Mobile Alabama witnessed some pretty horrendous storms and the power was off for about 6 days in places – lots of wind damage to structures and the bay area. The USS Alabama (Battleship Park) is still “listing” badly right now, but the USS DRUM (sub) was not damaged. There was also damage to the pavilion area around that museum, but they are working on it as we speak. Skip was also spared pretty much.

In Soso Mississippi, David Glaser – who lives way out in the woods (more or less) with his wife and two daughters (remember them from the reunion?) was completely without power for more than a week. They have a home generator but David needed to get gasoline for it... but he called me on his cell phone (charging cell phone on car battery) telling me that his car was running out of gas and that pretty soon he'd be stranded looking for a gas station with power trying or to find a place that could manually pump gas for his car and for his

generator tank that he was towing around. He asked if there were some guys who wanted a ton of free firewood if they would just bring down all the chain saws and figure out a way to get there without a filling station working.

But the strangest story is about Eddie Hamback – from the New Orleans area. Eddie was an MM3 from 64-66. He was living in Harvey Louisiana with his brother Charles. Harvey is 3-4 miles from the center of New Orleans so, of course we were concerned. It was completely wiped out as far as I know. Rich McCamant and I were trying out all kinds of strategies on how to find him which ended up with tracking down some of Charles' children who had moved away and this led to the wife of William Hamback (a son of Charles) living in the state of Washington who told me that her husband's family was trying to get the status on his father (Charles) and uncle (Eddie) - our crew member. Here's what we found out:

Eddie Hamback was NOT living with his brother Charles at the time because a couple of years earlier, he had a bad fall and he hit his head on a porch and was in a coma for months. After he came out of the coma (hospital) he found he couldn't move his legs or feet. He was then moved to a nursing care / rehab center to work on him getting his ability to walk back. He had been in this care center for almost 2 years when Katrina hit. His newsletter was being sent to Charles because that was the best way for him to be able to get it and Charles would come over and deliver it to him personally. He looked forward to it. When the hurricane hit, the facility where Eddie was staying evacuated them to a place in Charencro, LA which is a nursing home and he weathered the storm out there. Charlie and family had their own problems just trying to figure out what happened to not only their possessions, house, etc. ... but also... what the heck happened to Eddie! But it ends up that Eddie's rehab center (near New Orleans), was wiped out too so he will stay put where he is for at least a good number of months. I talked to him on the phone and he was EXTREMELY happy to hear the voice of a fellow submariner from the Sirago and I am sure would

appreciate getting some cards or correspondence (or phone calls) from folks he knew on Sirago (or those he didn't know - like me... who just care that he's OK). This is especially true now because his brother is without a home and living elsewhere so that means that basically none of his family can visit him. Eddie has no wife and I think some of his kids have actually died to so other than his brother's family, the Sirago may be the only family he has left. Here's his contact information:

Edward Hamback
c/o Evangeline Oaks Nursing Home
Orange Station - Room 202
240 Arceneaux Road
Charencro, LA 70520
(337) 896-9227

Mike ♦♦♦

DUES – If you're willing....

If you are an honorary crew member or associate member, you must pay \$5.00 dues per year to help offset the cost of the association in keeping in contact with you. HOWEVER... if you are a Sirago crew member, you do NOT need to pay dues, although such dues payments help us to pay expenses and keep this organization going.

Look at your LABEL (address label on this newsletter). It will tell you the last year you paid any dues (or it will say F2003 if you were adopted into our organization when it was officially formed in 2003). This is your "dues marker". This marker will tell you either that you have paid into the future, or are current, or you've never paid anything. To MOVE this marker ahead by one year takes \$5.00 for every year you move it. So... if your marker says /F2003/ you can move it to F2006 by paying \$15.00. It is NOT necessary that you do this, but we appreciate anything you can do to help out our organization. If you are a crew member and pay this, it is 100% tax deductible. You can make out a check to USS Sirago and mail it to: Garry Goetschius / 3620 Locust Circle East / Prospect, KY 40059-9020. Mark this as "dues".

November is our "dues" month so you'll only see this notice in the November newsletters.

REPORT on RECENT DEATHS

In the LOST & FOUND CREW insert to this newsletter you will note that there were 7 crew members who were part of our association who have recently passed away. The purpose of this article is to expand on those crew members who were active members of our association.

LCDR/XO John Brownley (62-63) did try to attend the 2003 reunion but was unable to make it and he is survived by his widow Jeanne who informed us of his death last May.

We found out that Bobby Quinn (EN3 54-57) was deceased after calling his home (being concerned about him living in Mississippi) and finding out from his widow Pat that he also died back in May.

Bob Stupka (YNSN 68-68) (a good correspondent) never made a reunion and we were informed of his death by his widow Virginia.

S1cTM John Byrnes (47-48) was confirmed deceased by social security records when his mail was returned. He has no next of kin and never attended a reunion.

We were informed of the passing of John Bassett (IC2 57-59) by Wayne Booton. He was survived by his widow Mary who is an honorary crew member.

The two people that died recently who WERE very active in our organization were Leroy Ippoliti and Mike Leeds.

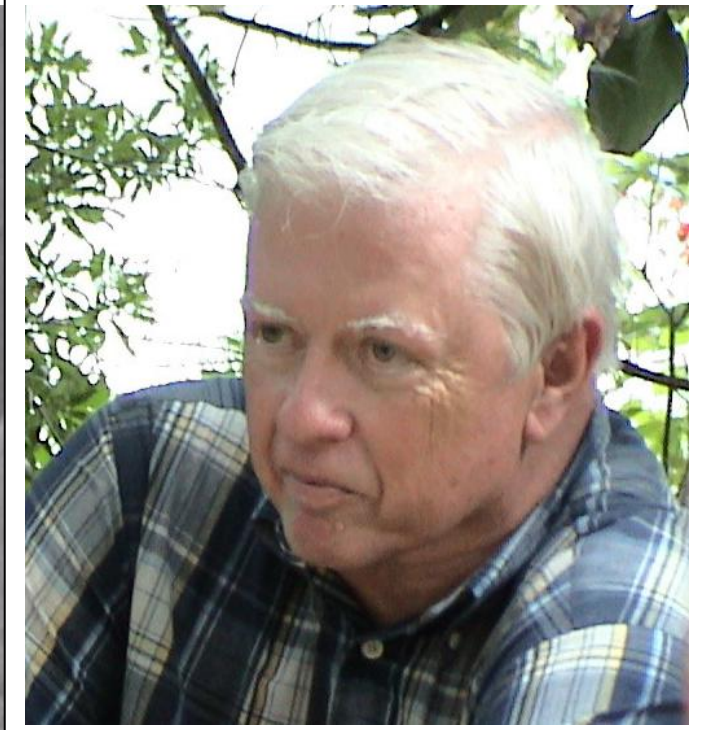
Leroy Ippoliti (EM3 50-53) was very instrumental in getting Sirago reunions started. He and Bill Gerber worked closely together to recruit folks to come. He attended most of the early reunions starting in the early 90's and his last reunion to attend was 2001.

Mike Leeds (LT 61-64) wanted to attend reunions, but his health was failing. In some way, I believe that he knew this as he INSISTED this last reunion to host (at his expense) a 6164 duty section BBQ at his home (about 45 people). He was quite emotional about being able to see his crew again. The photos that follow show Mike Leeds as he looked on Sirago

and also at the reunion.



Mike Leeds Aboard USS Sirago



Mike Leeds at his home – REUNION 2005

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