

Sirago Newsletter



Volume 11, Issue 4

November 2010

Reunion '11

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Shipmates,

Quick update on the 2011 multi-boat reunion. Our count of interested Sirago folks is up slightly (to 83 crewmembers) and the percentage of those having their signup sheet turned in is up to 46%. I need for the remaining 64% to get your signup sheet in and have provided 2 copies so that you can retain a copy. If you are listed below in bold and underlined, then you're good. If you are listed below in normal type, then you have told me you were interested, but haven't sent in your signup yet so please get it to me quickly. If you are in that last category and you don't think you will make it, then please let me know - see email above if you have email - otherwise write me: Mike Bickel / 1125 Villaview Dr. / Manchester, MO 63021. Here's the list:

USS SIRAGO (SS-485) (83): (POC: Mike Bickel)

Mark Adler, George Albert, **Art Allum**, Paul Anderson, **Bill Bailey**, **Fred Baker(*)**, **Richard Barnette(*)**, **Clyde Beatty(*)**, Frank Berlinger(*), **Mike Bickel**, Bruce

Boughton, Audrey Boyer (H), **Bill Browning**, Charlie Bryant, **Russell Burrows(*)**, Ray Bussard(*), Frank Campbell, Bill Clegg(*), **Tim Cole(*)**, Bill Collins (aka Bill Harvey)(*), Pat Conroy, **Dale Craig(*)**, Roger Dean, Armando Dela Rosa(*), **Tom Foglesong(*)**, **Doug Fox(*)**, Art Fried, Frank George, **Anthony Gilbert**, David Glaser(*), **George Goodwin**, **Duane Gow(*)**, **Ray Harrison**, **David Hauer(*)**, Jerry Hauser, **Joe Hoffmann**, John Holmes, **Jim Hughes(*)**, Frank Indoe(*), Bob Karge(*), **Ken Koller(*)**, **Dan Kozlowski**, **Tom Krug(*)**, **Dennis Larson**, Mel Laubach, John Ledbetter(*), John Lee, **"Tex" Loftin**, **JD Mayo(*)**, Bob Mazurek, David McCallum, **Rich McCamant**, **Larry McClintock**, **Jim McCullough**, Art Michaelsen, **Ira Nerzig(*)**, Keith Owens, Ron Price, **Willy Ramos(*)**, Dan Reilly(*), **"Tex" Ritter**, Joe Roche, **Mike Rolow(*)**, **Bob Rosen(*)**, Roy Scott(*), Dean Sedgwick(*), **William Shamphan**, Butch Sites, Ed Sowinski(*), **Al Standish**, Buck Steere, Jeannie Thompson(H), **John Tumilty(*)**, **Chuck Veir(*)**, Jim Ware, Roosevelt Watson, Frank Weltner(*), Carl Whisman, Steve Whitaker, **Ralph Wiggins**, Marshall Woods(*), Marv Yokum, **Bob Zorn**.

This "Signup Sheets" which are included in this newsletter do not have the optional shirt/hat ordering as I have already placed my orders. However, there will be some at the reunion (not many) so you might be able to score something there.

Guns and Snorkel Masts

I was a member of the decommissioning crew so Sirago was outfitted with whatever stuff she had on her last official days of operation. Actually, that's not quite true because there were a fair number of parts ripped off as memorabilia during those last days, but you get the idea. So... not having been aboard her as a fleet boat with bridge and cigarette deck, I didn't know if she had

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or didn't have a Snorkel (aka Schnorkel) in operation. There was also an argument going on as to whether Sirago's big 5" gun was aft of the sail or forward. So... I put the question to those senior crew members who were aboard in the 1945-1948 time period when Sirago went through a number of changes, including snorkel changes and gun placement changes. Here were some of the comments I received.

From John William King RM3c 45-46: I have pictures of Sirago at Sea during builders trials.

1 ea 5" after deck.

2 ea 40 MM (1 C Deck after and 1 C Deck fwd)

We did do dock side trials with a Schnorkel. I was in the duty section aboard during trials.

With engines running they would lower Schnorkel into the water, to check if it was a working device. If I recall they used a crane to lower the device into the water dock side.

We had a Doctor that checked us before and after trials, to see if we had any ear problems.

After 65 years this is the best that I know.

We never went to sea using the Schnorkel, it was removed from Sirago after dock side trials.

John William King

Crew 4548

From Jim McCullough F1c 45-46: I remember Sirago only had (1) 5 Inch gun aft of the Conning Tower. The reason I remember this so vividly is a tale in itself.

When Mahoney, Lane and I reported aboard I was assigned to be the, "Hot Shell Man" (HSM) on the 5" gun. Now no one told me what a "Hot Shell Man" did during Battle Stations Surface! About three months later, I found out!!

We were in Panama on our shakedown cruise. One scheduled event was a Battle Stations Surface with live firing of all guns on an island off of Balboa.

The Gunners Mate gave me an asbestos vest and long asbestos gloves, placed me behind the gun and told me I was to catch the shell after the gun fired!!

The word was passed, "Commence Firing!" With that, a Fiery Red Hot thing came flying at me!! Splash!! it was overboard!! The captain, Fritz Harlfinger, yelled down to GM Miller, "If the HSM misses the next shell relieve him!" I missed and that was the end of my Battle Stations Surface career!!

Regarding the Snorkel, I'm pretty sure Sirago did not have it while I was aboard. Seems to me one or two boats had a Snorkel mast laying aft of conning tower. If they planned to use it they had to raise it up prior to getting underway.

From Bob Mulhall QM2c 45-45: One gun aft. Snorkel testing alongside dock. Not in commission.

From Jerry Casey S2Y 47-47: In 1947, while I was aboard, Sirago had a 5" gun forward. Also, it was still a fleet boat---no snorkel and if my memory serves, no discussion re same.

From Lester Addotto EMC 45-51 (transcribed): Lester Addotto remembers being in dry dock in Portsmouth on Aug. 13, 1945. An Italian submarine was forward of the Sirago. Some of the Sirago crazies trained the forward gun on the Italian sub and scared the heck out of

the Italian crew. That was on Commission Day. Guess there was a gun on the front of the Boat. Les does not know when it was removed.

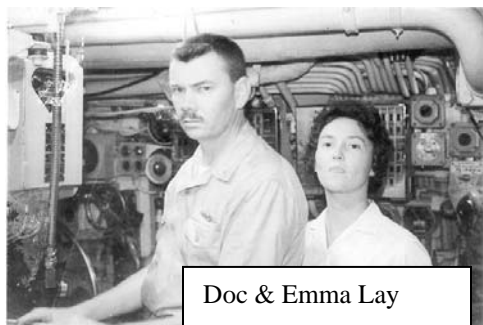
While docked in Aug 45 the yard people were experimenting with snorkeling along side of the Sirago. The Sirago did not have snorkeling until approx. 2 years later.

OK – that seems to wrap up the commentary. A few things seem clear. The Sirago seems to have “participated” in some dock-side Snorkel exercises using a mast that would (in practice) be raised from horizontal to vertical from the after deck. Before Sirago was commissioned and before any boats had this mast, she participated by having a mast connected to some sort of air-intake manifold and with the help of a crane, the mast was put into salt water to see if the valve would work – and at the same time all hatches were shut, the main induction shut, and some engines were lit off that would intake through this temporary test mast and would exhaust normally over the side. The guinea pig crew members were inside the boat to see what happened to them. But this was just Sirago helping with some tests. It wasn’t until Sirago had the Guppy conversion (48-49) that a retractable vertical mast was put in place complete with diffuser mask, etc.

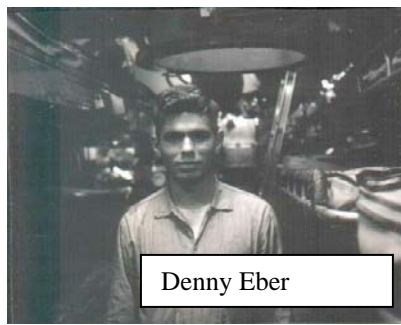
On the subject of guns, it seems that most all of the photos show a 5” gun aft of the bridge. There are other crew members who have said there was a gun forward of the bridge other than Chief Addotto, and I also know that there was some sort of hatch that used to be in the control room that led up to the forward deck for ammo-loading... so there might be more to the gun placement stuff than we know. However... I do believe that Chief Addotto (or the person who transcribed his comments) was mistaken about the gun forward on Commissioning day because the photo labeled “commissioning photo” shows the gun aft of the sail. Unless that sucker can be popped off and on real easily, I don’t know how that would be possible.

ETERNAL PATROL NOTICES

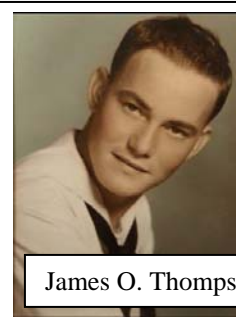
Julian Colina	TN	57-61	Died 17 July 2009
Vernon Lay	HMCS(COB)	60-64	Died 9 November 2010
Dennis Eber	FN	64-65	Died 15 September 2010
Francis Alexander	F1c	45-46(Plank)	Died 26 August 2010
Howard Hensley	EMC	65-67	Died 15 February 2010
Harold Tennyson	RMC	69-72(Dcom)	Date of Death Unknown
Harvey Peterson	RMC	60-62	Died 10 February 2006
James O. Thompson	ET1	55-58	Died 26 August 2010
Rick Onorato	EM2c	45-46(Plank)	Died 16 October 2010
Robert Prest	SA	49-50	Died 12 November 2010



Doc & Emma Lay



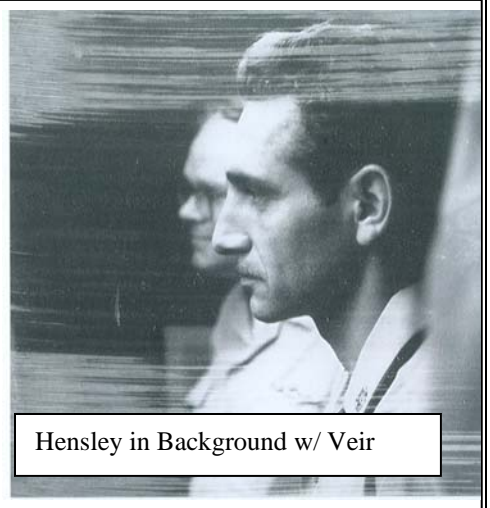
Denny Eber



James O. Thompson



Rick Onorato



Hensley in Background w/ Veir

From Harold Webster on James O. Thompson: I am devastated by news of Jim Thompson's passing. He was my best friend and I learned a great deal from him about maintaining the electronic gear aboard the Sirago. We were very close and often went on extended liberty together. In fact my friends back in Kentucky got to know him well enough to call him "Jimbo," a sign of affection.

Sailor... rest your oar...

Rich McCamant
10225 Ocean Gateway
Easton, MD 21601

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