

Sirago Newsletter



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Celebrating the Sirago

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Shipmates:

This newsletter continues the theme of "Celebrating the Sirago". In our last issue we talked about Chiefs no matter when they served on the Sirago. This issue focuses on our Elder Members, some of whom were on the Sirago after having conducted War Patrols on other boats during WWII. We have also included a "Roll Call" of our own "Plank Owners" as a special insert. You will notice that only eight (8) plank owners are left alive. I've talked to a number of our crew members who served during WWII and, for the first time, who talked to me about what it's like taking a depth charge pounding in the South China Sea and running full on four while passing through the narrow Lombok Strait. The "After Battery Rat" insert talks about these valiant men as well. Enjoy!

CRUISE 2013!!!

We are pleased to announce that a group contract has been signed with Carnival Cruise Lines to take us on a 5-day cruise to the

Bahamas – departs Port Canaveral on Monday April 22, 2013 and returns to Port Canaveral on Saturday April 27th. While we have more than a year until this happens, anyone desiring to participate in this will need to email or phone Mike Bickel (bickel485@aol.com) – (314) 223-8999) to make sure you get included as part of the group. Minimal down payments will need to be made during February 2012 which is right around the corner. We have pre-reserved 10 inside cabins and 15 ocean view cabins in close proximity to each other. Veranda cabins will also be available for those of you who like sailing in real style. We are attempting to make the lowest price (inside cabin) as close as possible to \$600 per person (2-person occupancy of cabins required). We'll be visiting Freeport, Nassau, and Half Moon Cay (Key) as well as having an "at sea" fun day. We can get more cabins and have flexibility on other things as well. This \$600 (approx) price per person includes the cabin, all meals, all taxes, all gratuities and port charges. We have NOT included in this price any side trips, alcohol, cancelation insurance (minimal amount) or airport transfers (Orlando to Port Canaveral). The reason for this is that some of you would prefer to drive and park at Port Canaveral or already live in Florida and won't need that. We're trying to get the most crew aboard for this wonderful celebration as possible. Once you contact me (Mike Bickel) I will arrange for you to talk directly to the person who is handling all these arrangements. You will be paying your own way directly and the only thing the USS Sirago Association will be doing is making and guaranteeing these arrangements. Bottom line – if you don't sign up, you'll miss the boat, so please email me or call per above (email preferred if you have that.) ***

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CREW STORIES (recorded by Mike Bickel): "Web" Webster said that I should contact some crew members about their WWII service and he recommended I start with Ed Crawfoot (LTJG 57-59). I had no idea that he was a mustang officer who served aboard the USS Pompon (SS-267) during its first three War Patrols in 1943. Ed was an EMlc on these patrols. In reading what he sent me on these patrols, it seems that the Pompon was pursued by not only escort ships but also Japanese submarines that fired torpedoes but the Pompon evaded them. On her first patrol (Truk Islands) she sank a 5,871 ton transport and heavily damaged another 3,080 ton ship and was subjected to depth charge attacks by the escorting vessels. Her second patrol (South China Sea) met with very bad weather and while she shot many torpedoes, they virtually all failed to arm properly, but this didn't keep the Japanese from pursuing her but they suffered no depth charges. Her third patrol, again in the South China Sea she did a battle surface and sank two patrol boats with her guns and boarded one of them. Very near to what is now Viet Nam she laid mines. As an EMlc, Ed spent lots of time in the wells during battles.

I talked also to George Hinda (EN1, 55-60). He was aboard the final (12th) patrol of the USS Greenling (SS-213) as an EN2. She sailed from Pearl Harbor to the Nansei Shoto Islands when she ran into a convoy of 9 warships and received a pounding of depth charges lasting for almost 3 hours. She received some damage but George related the she was boxed in by these vessels and really couldn't easily escape. While the official record shows about 100 depth charges, George says that their official ship's log showed 130 depth charges but the Gunners Mate below in the pump room counted 135. This was in January 1945. I asked George what it was like and he said that the EMs were all over tending to shorts and electrical problems as well as keeping salt water out of the battery wells with rags. They were on silent running so the crew was sometimes used to trim the boat to keep from the noise of using the trim pumps. People were chewing their cigarettes because it was battle stations and you couldn't keep them lit anyway if you wanted. Finally George told me that they had this experimental 4 foot long "noise maker" that they could fire out a signal ejector and that successfully got all the destroyers to go on a wild goose chase while they escaped and had time to change their underwear.

Finally, I talked to Tom Reilly (GM1, 46-46). I actually was calling him about his service aboard the Sirago during a secret experiment to test out the Momsen Lung equipment. This is recorded in Sirago's history log in September 1946 as "Experimental Exercises". I always wondered what it was, but Tom was part of putting the Sirago on the sea floor (or near it) off of Norfolk and he was one of 15 people selected to be guinea pigs for this escape experiment. Obviously it worked. Tom was also aboard when Jim Horbock died in late 1946 when he was topside to secure the brow in heavy seas and was knocked out and swept overboard and died. For a few days he had to be put in the icebox to keep him. Radio reports leaked out because they had tried to

call a doctor on a tender. Horbock's wife was pregnant and so was Tom's and the radio leak was that a man died, name not give due to next of kin... but whoever it was had a wife pregnant. Needless to say, for a number of days Tom's wife was beside herself with fear that it was Tom. Tom went on to tell me about his time on a number of WWII boats including the Gato, Cabrilla, Gurnard, and Grouper. Tom has received a presidential citation for his work aboard the Gato (SS-212). He made GM1 (from GM2) during these war patrols. They ran full speed through the Lombok Strait to get to their assigned area where they were told to stay in their area and shoot at any surface craft. They were regularly depth charged and I asked Tom what that was like. He said - "Well.. we were young and adventurous, but those depth charges... have you ever heard of 'shitting your pants'"?

ETERNAL PATROL NOTICES (D=Decom Crew, P=Plank Owner)

Note: in addition to what is shown below, Dennis Larson attended reunions '07, '09, and '11. See also Special Insert on David Glaser who was the XO of our Association.

James J. Beling	MMFN	62-63	Died 18 January 2011
Alton D. Coleson, Jr.	ICFN	61-62	Died 19 May 2007
David G. Glaser	RM2	66-68	Died 3 December 2011
Ramon Z. Gregorio	ENC	71-72 (D)	Died 11 December 2008
Doyle E. Huff	TM2	46-47	Died 13 August 2011
Leslie Loren Jones, Jr.	EN1	45-49	Died 19 November 2011
Dennis F. Larson	SN	62-62	Died 30 November 2011
Earl Michael Myers, Jr.	QM2	66-67	Died 14 February 2011
Frank Vincent Weltner	LT	60-63	Died 2 August 2011

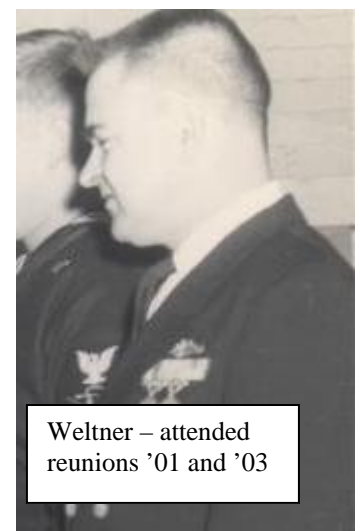
Sailor, rest your oar....



Jones – attended reunions '98, '01, and '03. WWII War Vet



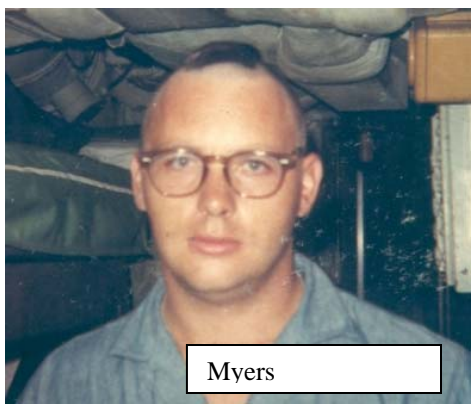
Huff – WWII War Vet



Weltner – attended reunions '01 and '03



Above – David Glaser and Bob Rosen in 1968 and in Reunion 2011. David attended Reunions '98, '01, '03, '05, '07, '09, and '11.



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