

# Important Sirago Organizational Announcement

from  
Mike Bickel

This special **INSERT** is being provided to all Sirago Crew Members, Associates, and Honorary Members. **PLEASE READ THIS DOCUMENT** in its entirety (both sides) as it contains important information about our organization's future direction.

Up until this time, the Sirago group has been an informal group and has managed to survive through contributions made to the Booster Fund as well as through cash generated from selling items. Over time, we have grown tremendously, due to the dedication of many crewmembers that have given of their time and money to support our microfilm library and our booster fund. In fact, it is this very growth that has caused us to realize that we need to formalize the organization into a Veterans' Association. Such an organization would have the advantages of: avoiding certain taxes; reduced postage rates; allowing the members to deduct contributions as charitable contributions; and, provide an umbrella under which any legal or insurance issues may be dealt with. We are now large enough and strong enough to take on this task of incorporating the organization and chartering ourselves as a nonprofit veterans' association.

Although the paperwork is not yet completed, the USS Sirago (SS485) Veterans' Association, Inc., should be in place around the time of the 2003 reunion. The organization will be a 501(c)(19) (fraternal, veterans, nonprofit) organization. Some crewmembers have already volunteered to fill the officer positions necessary to get the organization formed and running. More detailed information on this will be presented at the 2003 Reunion and in the first newsletter following that reunion.

The purpose of this special **INSERT** is to inform you of certain very important changes that will affect all members of this organization. It is important that you read the following in its entirety.

With any formal organization, there are rules (Constitution, Bylaws, etc.) that govern exactly how things are to be done legally. Part of this legal structure is the concept of **MEMBERSHIP**. Membership needs to be defined, as well as defining how membership is given and what benefits accrue from being a member. Even given where we are today, benefits like the newsletters, the reunions, and locating old shipmates all cost between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per year.

In the past, we have avoided the topic of dues because we did not want to have any crewmember being denied participation within the organization just because they couldn't afford to pay some dues. We have managed to survive by the collection of booster funds and through the sale of items. **LUCKILY**, such boosters and sales have actually grown over time, and we have gone from having no funds at all to having just enough money in the bank to cover our ongoing expenses.

Here are some statistics that may interest you. Only about 60% of our crewmembers have ever given any money toward a booster fund. This, of course, means that 40% of the people receiving a newsletter have never paid anything. While we have asked for a (voluntary) \$5.00 contribution per year toward the booster fund, many generous crewmembers have given as much as \$20, \$50, or in a few cases, \$100. This wonderful generosity has been greatly appreciated and has kept us going. However, even with such generosity, items still need to be sold to generate enough cash to stay in business. We have worked very hard at this and are in business at this time. However, I would foresee a time when people have every hat, shirt, pin, patch, flag, and movie that they could reasonably expect their wife to put up with, so I don't expect that revenue stream to be there for many more years.

At the same time, I still am absolutely dedicated to not forcing crewmembers to pay dues. After all, it is our country that owes them so much—they don't owe us. I have a deep respect for every man who ever stepped

aboard the USS Sirago and put his life in danger to protect our country. Therefore, we have come up with an innovative approach whereby crewmembers will not **HAVE** to pay dues, but if they **DO** pay dues, certain benefits will be given to them and to their families. The details follow.

On the front of this newsletter, you will notice that your name has a /2003/ behind it. This /2003/ is called a “Dues Marker.” This marker applies to any crewmember, associate, or honorary. A crewmember is defined as anyone who was assigned to active duty aboard the USS Sirago. An Honorary is a family member of that crewmember (usually after said crewmember is deceased) like a widow, son, daughter, etc. An Associate is any other person who receives this newsletter. The /2003/ behind all of these people's names means that their Dues are Paid for 2003. That's the good news.

For all you Honorary and Associate Members, we **WILL** be expecting you to pay dues, which are assessed (at this moment) at \$5.00 per year. As part of our start-up plans, we are designating everyone as Current and you will not need to worry until the end of 2003, when \$5.00 will be due for 2004. You can, if you desire, mail a check for \$5.00, \$10.00, \$15.00, or any multiple of the current yearly dues to pay for multiple years' dues and your marker will be updated accordingly to show a future date (i.e., /2006/). The benefits of membership to an honorary or associate are: 1) being mailed a regular newsletter as well as special announcements or notices and, 2) being invited to join us at the reunions. The benefits of paying ahead are that in the event that the dues rate is changed, you are already paid and protected against such inflation...at least for as far ahead as you paid. Failure to be “current,” however, may jeopardize receiving the benefits just described.

For all you **CREWMEMBERS**: as I said, you do **NOT** have to pay dues. As crewmembers of the USS Sirago, you are members of this organization by virtue of being alive. If you choose not to pay any dues, your marker will just stay at the /2003/ level. Even if you never pay dues, you will have the same “benefits” of membership as a fully paid-up Associate or Honorary. However, an additional benefit of being “current” with your dues (assuming you decide to pay) is that you have the privilege of being able to **VOTE** on issues confronting the organization and you may **HOLD OFFICE** within the organization. Paying ahead on dues is the same procedure as for Honorary and Associates as described above. There is an additional benefit to crewmembers for paying ahead. If a crewmember has (for example) paid until the year 2010, but then dies suddenly in 2006, the extra 4 years of paid-up dues will be transferred to his widow or child at their direction. In the event that they are already members, such extra years will be added to their marker. This benefit ensures the crewmember that such advanced dues will not be lost in the event of his death.

If an associate or honorary chooses to not pay dues after notice has been given, they will probably not receive further newsletters, etc. However, if they later change their mind, they can merely re-join from that point forward—sort of a pay-as-you-go policy. However, there is a different arrangement for crewmembers. Because crew members do not **HAVE** to pay dues at all but (if they are current) enjoy benefits (voting, holding office) that are not enjoyed by honorary or associates, the following applies: if a crewmember is not current and then desires to become current, back dues must be paid for all years missed since they were last current. This ensures that a crewmember that hasn't been current for 5 years doesn't pay just one year's worth (currently \$5.00) for the right to vote at a particular reunion.

So—bottom line—everyone is paid on the dues side for the year 2003. No crewmembers will be forced to pay any dues at all. Those crewmembers that **DO** pay dues and are current enjoy the privileges of voting and holding office. Paying ahead is an easy way to ensure that you have full benefits (whatever that is defined to be for your group) into the future without worrying about inflation. We will still want to have booster funds from those who can contribute over and beyond the dues. If a crewmember chooses **NOT** to pay dues, but desires to just do booster, that's OK too, of course.

*Mike Bickel*