

# Sirago Newsletter

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## Sirago Enginemen

Stories from and about our dirtiest crewmates

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The following contributions from our own Enginemen (and about them from others) are submitted for this issue:

**Robert Hook (RM2c / DS4548):** Actually, it happened AFTER I was transferred to the commissioning crew of TIGRONE (SSR419) in Portsmouth. I was visiting the SIRAGO on a weekend to see one of my old buddies and a couple other clowns in the duty section. As it happened, they were in the process of fumigating the boat. While we yakked topside, the fumigation time elapsed, and the duty section made ready to clear the fumigants from inside the boat. Having never observed the evolution, I hung around to check it out. You know the procedure: They opened the ER hatch, sent an engineman below with a mask to start the main engines (I think it was two). When they were lit off, the engineman (Alvord) exited the ER hatch & proceeded forward to open the Fwd Torpedo hatch. Before he got there, someone SHUT

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## Jerome Turkowitz Awarded the Purple Heart

*Crew Member Finally Recognized after 50 Years*

**Mike Bickel**

Duty Section 6972

Jerome Turkowitz was a 15-year-old kid when he signed up to be in the Navy. Of course, that would have been impossible, except for the fact that he had his older brother's birth certificate in his hand...an older brother whose certificate only read "Male – Turkowitz." That would do, though, because it provided a way for "Turk" to join the armed forces of the United States, who were fighting the JAPS and that awful regime in Germany who were killing the Jews. He was a street-smart, scrappy Jewish kid from New York who wanted to help his country and wasn't afraid of a little action.

Turk was eventually assigned to the USS Finback (SS230) out of Pearl Harbor, destined for the Sea of Japan. On September 2, 1944, Turk looked up and saw some smoke in the air – a plane had just been shot down. As the submarine approached, young Turk took a leap from the deck and swam to the plane, finding two of the plane's crew members dead. Looking up, however, he saw another parachuting down. He swam out to it, cut the parachute lines and brought George Herbert Walker Bush back to the boat. The captain of the Finback had remarked that he didn't know "the kid" could swim like that. Turk not only fished the future president of the United States out of the water, but also continued to be the lead swimmer, fishing other pilots out as they parachuted into the water. He even manned the machine gun to shoot at Zeros when the assigned gunners mate was wounded. Turk was also wounded but kept on shooting.

But then, a series of events happened that pretty much devastated young Turk. First, the Captain found out he was 15 when he enlisted, so the records were conveniently lost regarding awarding of a "purple heart." A kid that young couldn't be discovered in such a high-risk situation, so, as Turk puts it, "I wasn't there."

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the ER hatch. Result? No external air source for the engines. As you can imagine...it hit the fan. They tried all possible means to get air into the boat, thru the whistle, sanitary tank vents, whatever they could think of, all to no avail. When those main engines started running out of air (& it didn't take long), the sounds, thumping & banging & clattering, was heart rendering. Being a visitor & somewhat of sound mind, I got the hell out of there! As I crossed the gangway at full speed, that whole boat was vibrating like a bongo drum, but slowing down rapidly. Never did get the hot skinny on the repercussions of that fiasco. Don't think I ever really wanted to know. *(Ed. Note: Sanitary Tank huh?...hmmm...I wonder who shut that hatch...)*

**Art Michaelsen (MM2 / DS6568):** You guys can pick on the Enginemen / Machinist Mates all you want, but remember a few things... Who got the boat to where our orders said we had to go, who made the fresh water you drank, who made the air that raised the boat after it was submerged, who made the electricity to light work spaces, living areas and recreation areas (recreation areas? ...it's been a long time). And also made the air conditioning and received the exhaust ventilation. There must be more but...who knows?

One time I remember we were returning from operations in the Caribbean. We were having a smooth ride, standard on four were our orders, and all was right with the world. I came off the 8-12 watch in the after engine room and after lunch decided to go topside up the sail to see the sun and just hang out. This was the first and only time I had ever done this. It was a beautiful day. The sun was hot, the water was crystal-clear, and we were going fast and towards home: what could be better. Then an order came up and the boat made a slow turn to port. I was puzzled - why did we turn when there was nothing in our way. After the turn was complete, I noticed we were headed back to St. Thomas. I asked the con officer what was going on and he said I would not understand. This made me more interested, so I asked if we forgot something in St. Thomas or did someone fall over the side. With this crack, he proceeded to explain to me that we were ahead of schedule and that we had to slow down to get back on schedule. So we were going to backtrack for some time and then turn around again to be in the right place at the right time. Well, I worked in those noisy engine rooms and we could slow the boat down by stopping one engine. I reminded the

officer that the engines required complete overhauls every 6000 hours and that shutting one down would save a lot of work. He would not hear of my suggestion and repeated that our orders were standard on four. This made me very angry and I never went topside again to learn how operations should be done.

**Robert Holt (EN1 / DS6972):** I was the RPPO for the engine rooms. We were scheduled to go to the Med soon and ENC Bob Ayers was concerned about the leaky exhaust manifold on # 3 Main Engine outboard. There was none to be had, even our engineer—LT Gaboric, I think—couldn't get one out of squadron. This really bothered Ayers. One day I was up in "the field" where they staged the big spare parts before delivery when I saw a large long wooden crate. Aha! It had an exhaust manifold in it. I went back to the boat and got my wheel book to see which engine it would fit (665360079 was the # for the right hand engine - believe that? after 30 years I still remember that # !!).

I went back to the field and, lo and behold, it was the one we needed. I guess I was looking perplexed when the tender guy in a forklift came up and asked if he could help. I said I was trying to figure out how to get my exhaust manifold to the Sirago before my chief had my ass. I had written SS-485 all over it and the paper work had "blown off." He delivered it to the pier. I got Ayers to come up and I think I could have bought him for a nickel!!! "Holt," he said—then he paused, looked at the manifold, then at me, and continued "NO, I don't even want to know." We got it to the tender, they cut it in half, welded flanges on it, and helped us install it on # 3. No problems from # 3 on the Med trip!!!!

**Mel Rycus (EM1 / DS5356):** Summer of "54" Portsmouth Naval Yard, Jack Latorre and I are heading out to chow when one of the enginemen asks us to drop off an engine cover, cast aluminum, to the paint removal shop. When we get there, no one is around, so being the nice guys that we were we hooked a hanger into one of the grommet holes and dropped the cover into a tank of some sort of solvent to sit while we got lunch. Upon our return from lunch, we stopped by the shop to retrieve the engine cover. We lifted out the hanger, and there was nothing there except for the brass grommet. Needless to say, our supply officer was pissed, as up until that time, he had held all repairs within the budget. ♦♦♦

## CALENDAR OF FUTURE EVENTS

**USSVI Convention – Duluth, MN. Sept 16- 22, 2002.**

Please refer to [USSVI Flyer inserted](#).

### REUNION 2003 – “HIT THE BEACH” REUNION

VA BEACH, VIRGINIA

APR 30<sup>TH</sup> – MAY 4<sup>TH</sup> 2003 (PLEASE HOLD THIS DATE OPEN)

Sirago will hold its 7<sup>th</sup> Reunion at the Holiday Inn – Executive Center located in Virginia Beach. Please also refer to included “tentative schedule of events”.

We want to know if YOU are planning to come. If you haven't already done so, please contact Mike Bickel by mail or e-mail ([RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM](mailto:RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM)) to let him know.

## GUESS WHO'S COMING – 2003!

### CREW MEMBERS ARE TRYING TO COME (190)

DS4548: (11): John Arkfeld, “Bruce” Boutillette, “Jerry” Casey, Don Chase, Bill Donley, Leslie Jones, Frank Matuszek, Jim McCullough, Bob Mullhall, Fred Tassell, Charlie Woods.

DS4952: (12): Red Bracken, CUSH Cushing, Leonard Erb, Duane Gow, Ray Gundy, Bob Kaufman, Norm LeBlanc, “John” Ledbetter, “JJ” Long, Dan Reilly, “Buck” Steere, Dick Underwood

DS5356: (24): George Albert, Jeff Badgett, Charlie Balkcom, Leonard Bradshaw, Dick Clifford, Gary Feasel, Don Hall, “Hal” Hinds, Jack Liptrap, Robert Mazurek, Ed McDevitt, Joe Meyer, John Mylant, “Rawhide” Rainey, Harold Rosen, Mel Rycus, Ben Shepard, “Buddy” Shumake, Blair Smith, Carl Trost, John Tumilty, Ed Vallecorse, Wally Walraven, Dwight Williams.

DS5760: (26): Beecher Allen, Art Allum, Dick Andrews, Pat Ashton, Wayne Booton, Roger Dean, Richard DeVuyst, Bill Dort, Peter Eadie, Gary Farmer, George Goodwin, Don Gotta, Ron Hahn, Frank Hamaker, David Hauer, Ed Jones, Dick Kinne, Richard Konow, Mel Laubach, George Reisner, Francis Rickel, Bill Shamphan, Lou Shepard, Dennis Strake, Charles Tolbert, Harold Webster.

DS6164: (32): Don Amorosi, Ted Anthony, Bob Boddiford, Bruce Boughton, Darryl Brunsvold, Charlie Bryant, Dale Craig, Kevin Dunne, David Furby, Hal Galloway, Bob Gross, Lonnie Haley, Tony Hastoglis, Joe Hoffmann, Jim Hughes, Mike Leeds, Jack Linevitch, Nick Lira, Larry McClintock, Fred McGuire, “Smokey” Owens, Joe Roche, Al Rouchon, Ken Savage, Ralph Schmidt, Art Scholz, Butch Sites, Al Standish, Richard Waite, Frank Weltner, Ralph Wiggins, Bob Zorn.

DS6568: (39): Ray Anderson, “Billy” Byrne, Rob Carey, Bill Clegg, Virgil Clemmer, Pat Conroy, Bob Cox, Jerry DeBoer, Dennis Duren, Bob Ewing, Ron Flint, David Glaser, Garry Goetschius, Herman Hill, Nathan Isenhour, Bob Karge, Ken Koller, “Tex” Loftin, “TY” Lynch, JD Mayo, Richard McCamant, Art Michaelson, Geof Morse, Carl Nardone, Joe Palermo, Ray Rausch, Doug Roberts, Bob Rosen, Rob Schutte, Dean Sedgwick, Nelson Shiver, Dennis Simoneau, Gary Thonn, Thom Warburton, Marshall Woods, Dominic Yacovone, Harry Yockey, Michael Young, “Zeke” Zimmerman.

DS6972: (46): David Ackerman, Tom Antos, Fred Baker, Herb Bauer, Pete Becker, Bob Bell, Frank Berlingeri, Mike Bickel, Jeff Binford, Bobbie Jo Brown, Russell Burrows, Ray Bussard, Chuck Cain, Frank Campbell, Paul Dix, Jack Enos, Mick Finn, Tom Foglesong, Doug Fox, Ken Frazier, Jim Gach, Eddie Gee, Frank George, Robert Holt, Bill Huskey, Bob Ianucci, Al Inboden, David Keene, Bud Keidel, Ron Kennedy, Andy Knauer, Les Lammers, John Lee, Randy Morgan, Tom O'Brien, Keith Owens, Lanny Renken, “Tex” Ritter, George Self, Marty Valdez, Larry Vicente, Jim Ware, Thurman Webb, Carl Welch, Tom Yankay, Paul York. ♦♦♦

Also, a young LTJG thought it would be funny to poke fun at Jerome's Jewishness, and told people that Jews had horns and began rubbing Turk's head—while laughing in front of the crew. Turk “decked him” and that pretty much sealed his fate for the rest of his Navy career.

When the boat returned from operations in Japan, Turk served some time in the brig and then was assigned to a “work crew” on the Sirago. His qualification papers and rating taken away, he was considered by many to be a “screw up” who would never amount to much. No record existed of what he had done.

However, in 1989, Turk and his wife were surprised to be invited by Pres. Bush to attend his Inaugural. Apparently, others involved in the “action” were not going to let “the kid” go without recognition. In 1995, New York Governor George Pataki awarded Turk the state's Medal of Honor. And now finally, just a few months ago, our scrappy Sirago-ite received his long-awaited Purple Heart. ♦♦♦



**SIRAGO - TRIVIA**

How can you get from the Control Room topside without going through the Conning Tower or any other compartment? If this were a Qualls question, virtually our entire crew would be stumped. But, when asked of the 4548 Duty Section (see diagram below), the answer is: "By ascending through the Gun Access Hatch in the forward Port Side of the Control Room." This was used back in the old "fleet boat" days in what was referred to as a "Battle Surface" where the 5" gun would be used to fight rather than expending torpedoes. From periscope depth (55 feet), the bow and stern planes were put in full rise, bow buoyancy tank & MBTs blown, and when she broached the surface, a small crew of gunners mates would quickly ascend the trunk, undog the gun and ammo lockers, load and fire, and could be down just as quickly. According to Gene Racine (RT2c/4548), this could all be done in 23 seconds.

**DUTY SECTION NEWS**

**STATUS on PHOTOPPOINT:**

As all on-line crewmembers know, Photopoint (all our photos on-line) went down before Christmas and the company went belly-up. We are hopeful that our photos will be retrieved, but until then, you can still get good information from our site at:

<http://service.freesitenow.com/Sirago/>

**RECENTLY DECEASED:**

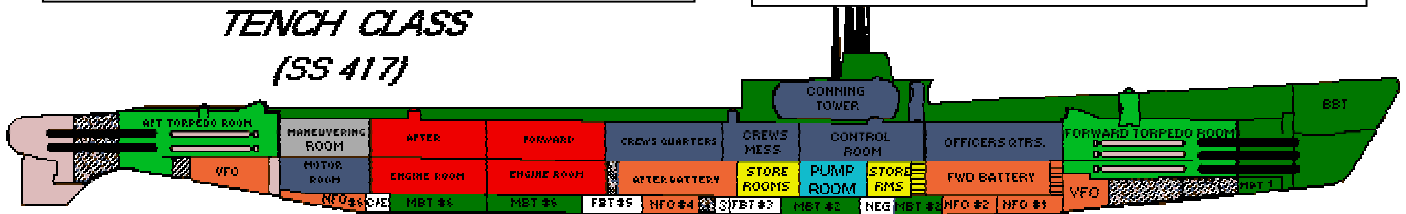
- John Akey* (RM3, 58-60 died 9/8/2001)
- Sam Anders* (LT, 52-53 died 3/2/2002)
- Joe Paison* (F1c, 45-47 died 3/11/2002)
- Bud Sebesta* (EM1, 49-53) died 12/5/2001)
- John Traverson* (ET1, 65-65 died 2/4/2002)
- John Wandell* (CTM, 47-47 died 8/22/2001)

**FOUND ALIVE COUNTS (by duty section)**

DS4548: **75**      DS4952: **51**      DS5356: **65**  
 DS5760: **85**      DS6164: **98**      DS6568: **113**  
 DS6972: **121**

**RUN SILENT RUN DEEP?:** If you are an e-mailer and you have NOT let us know, please email Mike Bickel at: [RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM](mailto:RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM).

**TENCH CLASS  
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