

Sirago Newsletter

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Rocking and Rolling!!

Everybody loves a "Sea" Story

Mike Bickel (Editor)

Duty Section 6972

In our last issue, I helped relate the story of the 72^o roll which happened in early 1971. I was besieged with questions about why we didn't submerge and wait out the storm. We would eventually have had to snorkel to charge batteries, which would have been an impossibility in 50 foot seas, and we didn't know how long the storm would last. I also received some more stories of "rough seas" from various crewmembers. So... I decided to stay on this "Rocking and Rolling" theme for this particular newsletter. Here are some stories:

Fred Baker (CS3 / DS6972): I cannot remember the fellow's name. He was a young seaman that came on board probably after Northern Europe. Light colored hair good personality and it seems I remember a mustache but I'm not sure on that. **(Ed. Note: This was probably either Lammers or Keidel).** You (Mike Bickel) were on the bridge as usual it was probably the last watch before dawn. That seemed to be the one

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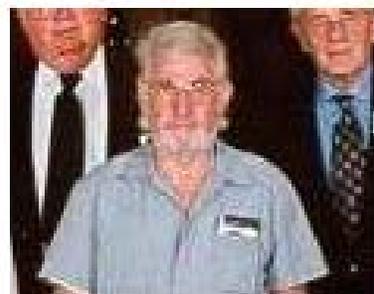
Death of Jim Pierce (IC2)

Avid Reunion Attendee - Jim Pierce dies July 12, 2001

Mike Bickel

Duty Section 6972

I am sorry to report that Jim Pierce – IC2(SS) who served aboard the Sirago from 1954-1957 died on July 12th. He was an avid reunion attendee and below are some photos from him at the 1990, 1998, and 1999 reunions. He came to virtually all of them, including this last one in 2001. Jim had prostate cancer but that wasn't going to keep him away from the reunion because he loved sharing stories with old friends.



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you almost always caught. I had come up to visit, as usual, we were running into the sea which was somewhat rough but I remember we were in short sleeves. You and I were on the front of the bridge and this young man was the lookout. If you remember when a wave hit the bridge you could tell by the sound if it was coming over the top. If you ducked right, the water went straight over you and you remained dry as a bone. Well, we had sent this guy down to get us some coffee and we were discussing how to straighten the world out or something when we heard this wham on the sail. We just kept talking and ducked and then stood back up. Behind us a voice said "thanks a lot guys" and there was this fellow, water dripping all over him and a cigarette plastered over the side of his face holding two cups of sea water.

George Goodwin (ETRSN / DS5760): Ed Jones (LT) and I spent a memorable lookout watch together in the northern climes one afternoon. That was the time we took a 79 degree port role as we maintained station during a raging storm. He and I were discussing the merits of female anatomy variations. The boat was on the snorkel with the conning tower hatch shut. Just the two of us to pass the time as OOD and Lookout. He had his back to the direction of the sea which was moving starboard to port. I was on the port side of the bridge facing him. We both wore that crappy old foul weather gear that weighed a ton even when it was dry. Of course we were both nearly wet to the skin. As a safety precaution we had the safety harnesses; mine was attached to the TBT. His was dangling free.

When the rogue wave hit us we were not prepared for the immensity of it. I was forewarned by the continued roll to port of greater proportion than we had been experiencing up to that point. I glanced aft and saw the sail was almost lying flat on the horizon. What a moment! I then looked up over Ed's head and I couldn't comprehend what I saw; it was the largest mound of water I had ever seen. It looked 4 or 5 stories high! The wave was vertical and we were horizontal. I said something like, "holy s**t!" and I dropped to my knees and wrapped my arm around the TBT. Water broke over us filling the bridge and dog house; I felt my body floating free as I continued to clutch the TBT. During that moment I saw my name on a bronze plaque at that rotunda inside the gate to the D and S piers. That's where they had a memorial to

those who lost their lives at sea during peace time. It seemed like about 15 or 20 seconds passed before the water drained from the bridge; I couldn't see Ed anywhere. I knew his harness had been unattached and thought immediately that he had gone overboard. That foul weather gear would have taken him to the bottom like a stone! Before that idea could truly take hold in my consciousness I heard him coughing and sputtering; the force of the wave had pushed him down into the dog house (luckily!). He was all right, thank God! The guys in the conning tower recorded the roll at about 79 degrees. The guy on the helm had watched the inclinometer run all the way over and he thought that was the final angle. I thing Maurice Laubach was the QM of the watch.

Don Amorosi (IC3 / DS6164): While on Sirago in 1964, we were involved in war games with other navies. The object was to simulate a nuclear attack on the continental United States in which were obligated to transit the Atlantic, launch missiles, and retreat undetected. Sirago had a southern target and made the trip undetected.

However, we were savaged by a hurricane in the process (Gladys, I believe). We took a severe port role (estimated at 60 degrees at nearly 400 feet) were thrown to the surface and took another severe port role there. I remember two things vividly: a crew member was straddling the hatch into the after battery and it broke loose and closed on him; it was the first time we ever spread lithium carbonate because the air was so bad. I was going through the galley when we took the first role. I remember watching from the deck as cups and plates left the racks along the hull, traveled in line, and smashed on the opposite side. The injured crew member was suspended in a hammock like contraption made of white line as Doc tried to keep his injured arm and leg from being further injured. His screams are indelibly printed in my memory. I can remember when on watch as an electrician having to crawl around the boat as the air available was so poor that walking and other exertion caused blackouts.

The two roles caused many things we thought to be immobile to break loose and travel. When I inspected the battery wells, there was wood all over the place. Battery cells had moved and splintered separators. We went into the yards near Norfolk right after that.

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CALENDAR OF FUTURE EVENTS

REUNION 2003 – “HIT THE BEACH” REUNION

VA BEACH, VIRGINIA

APR 30TH – MAY 4TH 2003

Sirago will hold its 7th Reunion at the Holiday Inn – Executive Center located in Virginia Beach. For those of you “on line” you can review their web site:

www.va-beach.com/hiexec/

Please keep this date open. Remember that the reunion is NOT in 2002, but rather **2003** so you will have plenty of time to plan for this event which will be the biggest ever – maybe even the biggest boat reunion ever! Hoping to have 300!

There are many crew members working on the logistics for this particular reunion – even at this early date. We will be offering plenty of “goodies” (shirts, hats, and other paraphernalia) for those of you who would like a special keepsake. We’ll keep you updated!

PS – I have a “few” silver dolphin hats left. Call me (636) 225-7528 - \$18 each – when they’re gone, they’re gone.

WE WANT YOU!! - REUNION

PLEASE HELP US PLAN FOR THE CROWD

We want to have an idea if you are thinking about coming to the reunion. If you have already emailed Mike Bickel (RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM) about this, you are excused!

So... for you “snail mailers” we’d like you to **write a quick note** to Mike Bickel saying one of two things: “I will try to come” OR “I will probably **not be able** to come”.

Please take the time right now to email or mail that quick response to this question. Planning is everything for a good reunion. ♦♦♦



**I WANT YOU
AT THE
REUNION**



Jim Pierce – on Sirago as IC3, 1956

Here are some comments about Jim from his crewmates and family:

“Wally” Walraven: He was a nice guy and was liked by and liked nearly everyone.

“Web” Webster: He was a good man, soft spoken and quiet, clever, and a good buddy. He was on one of the boat's beach football teams that scrimmaged together at Lindbergh Beach on St. Croix, VI back in 1956. His battle station was generally in the conning tower.

Nicole Brimer (daughter): He really enjoyed going to the reunion every year. It gave him something to look forward to. He told me a whole lot of stories about when he was in the Navy, but it was mostly about when he and his buddies would get in trouble. He was an electrician at Kelly Springfield Tire Company (Goodyear) for 37 years until Mary tragically got ill. She became incapacitated in 1995 so he retired to take care of her here at home. He didn't go a lot of places after that. In fact the only place he ever went after that was to Navy reunions. He played on the computer sometime, but I believe it was just to keep in touch with his old Navy buddies. He was very funny, but also very stubborn. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer June of 2000 which had already spread to his bones. He was too weak to lift my 10 pound baby, but when the Navy reunion came around in May 2001 he insisted on going. I loved him a lot. ♦

SIRAGO - TRIVIA

Did Sirago have 3 engines or 4? In fact, both answers are correct. For the first part of her life (1945 – 1965) Sirago had the normal 4 engines – 2 in each engine room. In July 1965 a **Prairie Masker** was installed into the Forward Engine Room in place of #2 Engine (port side). This machine in combination with external piping with small holes produced a cloud of bubbles surrounding the aft end of the boat. This “bubble screen” would reflect the loud noises of snorkeling and keep Sirago very quiet while sneaking around those “Cold War Waters” of Northern Europe while on secret patrols.

So... from 1965 – 1972, the Sirago had this “bubble machine” which didn’t take up the full space taken by old #2. The extra space was used at certain times as a Storekeepers office and later on served as a place where a small machine shop area could be placed with lathe, etc.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

DUTY SECTION NEWS

We're up to 544 found alive so far. The goal is 600 by next reunion. Those microfilms have helped enormously in getting full names to search. Any of you “snail mailers” who would like a printout of the “found dead and alive” guys of your duty section, just drop me a line. For emailers, I will email.

DS 4548: 73 Found Alive, 35 Last Dive

DS 4952: 53 Found Alive, 33 Last Dive

DS 5356: 61 Found Alive, 23 Last Dive

DS 5760: 81 Found Alive, 19 Last Dive

DS 6164: 64 Found Alive, 9 Last Dive

DS 6568: 89 Found Alive, 10 Last Dive

DS 6972: 120 Found Alive, 9 Last Dive

DS ?????: 3 Found Alive, 2 Last Dive

Photopoint News:

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