

# USSVI Special Insert

Volume 8, Issue 1 – Insert - USSVI

February 2007

## Consider the USSVI

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At last look at our 850+ Sirago "Found Alive" sub sailors who get this newsletter in one form or another, only about 125 – 150 of us (about 15%) are members of the USSVI. I would make the assumption that this percentage may not be so low for the USS Sea Leopard or for the USS Cutlass although we (Sirago) may have more actual "bodies" in the USSVI.

So... since I've mentioned the USSVI... exactly what the heck IS the USSVI, you might be wondering? The USSVI is the United States Submarine Veterans, Inc. and is a not-for-profit organization of Submariners across the nation that also has some of our members living in other countries.

If you are an "on-line" person with a computer, you can go to [www.ussvi.org](http://www.ussvi.org) and poke around to find out what the organization is all about. Basically, it consists of "Bases" that are formed in many different cities throughout the U.S. to try to attract submariners to join the ranks. If you were to "join" this organization, a typical cost would be \$30 per year. This is the cost if you join a local base, which I would recommend if you consider joining this organization. For your money, you will get a subscription to a fantastic magazine called **American Submariner** and you will enjoy the comradeship of other submariners who live in your local area.

The USSVI was created many decades ago and is not the same as the organization called "SUBVETS" which is the nickname for "Submarine Veterans of WWII". That's another organization I belong to even though I am not old enough to have been even born when we were fighting World War II. I think it's also a worthy organization and for that reason, I am an associate member of "SubVets" as well as a LIFE member of the USSVI.

I know that \$30.00 per year is not insignificant and there are ways to cut this cost by either being a life member or by getting a discount for paying for multiple

years at a time. I recommend looking at the website and reviewing what USSVI "bases" are in your area and then joining a local base and running the dues through them. You'll not only get the advantage of the National organization and American Submariner Magazine, but you will (more importantly) be invited to meetings and outings with the local base group and their wives to swap silly stories, get to know folks you didn't even know were in your area, and compare the differences between being a Tench Class Smoke Boater and other classes of Diesels as well as figure out what life aboard a Nuke is like if you don't already know.

You may not know it, but the whole Sirago Reunion thing (and newsletters, comradeship, etc.) all started with a few USSVI guys, who were also Sirago crewmates, who decided to get the old Sirago crew together. "Ray" (Wendell) Rausch (DS6568) actually had the idea and worked with a few other fellows like Bill Gerber, CUSH Cushing, Carl Trost (ex-CNO), to do some of the earliest reunions. Very similar to the situation with USS Sea Leopard and USS Cutlass, our Sirago reunions started in 1992 with the National USSVI Convention and then to 1994 (ditto). The first Sirago reunion that DIDN'T involve a convention was 1995. Then in 1998, the Sirago Reunion was held in the same city as the convention, but in a different hotel. By 1999, the Sirago crew didn't need a "convention" to attract enough people to come from our boat, so starting in 1999 we have held our reunions in "odd" years, rather than every year like USSVI and WWII SubVets do.

By going to the USSVI website, you can get any/all information you need, but if you are NOT an online person, you can call 1-877-542-DIVE to get an application form. There are benefits like being a member of the Holland Club after 50 years of being Qualified, etc. and I know that many of you guys are nearing that age if you haven't already exceeded it. Myself... I wasn't qualified until 1972 so I've got another 15 years to go yet before being a member of the Holland Club.

Our own "Base" was created here in St. Louis at the OUTBACK Steak House on August 27, 2001, just 15

days before 9/11. We named our base the USS Springfield Base so that we could be associated with an actual “active duty, in service” submarine. We had our growing pains and our organizational difficulties at first, but were given good advice by the National office on how to do things properly, how to form our bylaws, etc. and put our association officers in place. Within 2 weeks of our “formation” meeting at the restaurant, the base commander and the secretary resigned due to having pressing commitments and one of the guys having to move. I was the Vice-Commander and at first, felt a bit resentful having to instantly pick up the pieces and see what we could do.

However, after a few months we were chugging along, having meetings and having some pretty fun outings with the members and their wives. We did a number of “road trips” (day trips) away from the Metro area – lots of eating, caving, eagle watching, museum visiting, eating, drinking, etc. We even did a weekend thing to old St. Genevieve and did some wonderful sight seeing (and eating and drinking) there too. We now have a regular standing position marching in the St. Louis Veterans’ Day Parade downtown with the WWII SUBVETS. It’s really good that we can help them out because frankly, they are too frail to carry a flag or their own banner in some of the stiff winds and breezes you get on St. Louis streets downtown. We’re proud to do it and we love being with those old salts.

And... being associated with the USS Springfield (SSN 761) has been a lot of fun as we have participated with their crew directly doing Memorial Day parades and events in Springfield, Illinois. Her crew has been as proud of her and all of the exploits she’s been through as our own crew was (and is) of Sirago.

Here are some more “advantages” that I associate with being a member of the USSVI:

1. Being a member, I have had great help in finding a crew member I was interested in locating.
2. Being a reunion coordinator for the Sirago, I have found that I can get super prices on neat things for our reunions as the USSVI is OK with selling that to you for your base needs or for other needs. Frankly, as storekeeper, I find myself buying more stuff from the USSVI for Sirago reunions than our base ever did. For example, our base would never normally order 250 Submariner Wife Pins (pewter) at one time.
3. Both the USSVI and the WWII SubVets have as their Creed the continual and constant remembrance of those submariners who have died in action, especially the crews of WWII boats and, of course, the Scorpion and the Thresher. It is a moving ceremony hearing the bell toll for the 52 lost boats of WWII as well as for our more recent losses. We should never forget the sacrifices made by those men. We’re part of that tradition.
4. For boats having trouble coordinating a “boat reunion” the USSVI conventions are a natural and easy place to get this done without any risk. Although the Sirago is a strong boat and has a good group of association officers who prefer to do our own coordination, the USSVI convention may very well be the “natural” place to hold a future SSSBS (SUBRON Six Smoke Boat Sisters) reunion. Who knows?
5. And finally... for the majority of our “found” crew who can’t get around to a reunion due to health or finances, having a local base is a way to sortie the boats to YOUR location rather than having to travel.

JUST DO IT! ♦♦

