

Sirago Newsletter



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Change Happens

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Shipmates,

You probably notice that this newsletter is coming out later than normal. This is because we had an emergency situation come up which dominated virtually all the time of the person in charge of putting this newsletter together. Mike Bickel was recently informed that the site that houses all our 2000+ photos was giving us a limited amount of time to access these photos and then, on April 1st would be deleting them all. The most important photos to us, of course, are the old ones taken during Sirago's lifetime.

For those of you who have been with us a while, this might seem like déjà vu. We had the same thing happen at the end of 2001 when our then "Photopoint" site went dark suddenly and without notice. The same thing is now happening with Epson – but at least we had notice!

This meant that Mike had to roll into high gear and copy and archive not only 2000+ photos but also all of the annotations for said photos so that we would not lose this precious history. For those of you that have given us your email addresses, you already received the email notification of the lateness of this newsletter.

So... concerning our website (www.sirago.com) we will be connecting the photo tab to a new site which you can go to directly if you like, but can also access (once we hook it up) through the Sirago site. We have decided that ONLY the old archival photos will be shown on this site and that reunion photos and descriptions will just be held privately by the organization for possible use in newsletters. You can get to this new photo site directly by going to <http://picasaweb.google.com/usssirago> where you will see over 1300 photos from the old days. The albums are somewhat out of order (as shown on that link) but you will figure it out I am sure.

You will notice that at this writing, the descriptions are not shown (except for some in the 4548 crew album). We HAVE all the descriptions, but it will take quite some time to post these descriptions to the website so please bear with us.

Another change that I need to inform you about is that our Treasurer (Garry Goetschius) and our XO (David Glaser) will be rotating off by next reunion. These two association officers are to be congratulated on their supreme dedication and work for the good of us all. Our new Treasurer (more information on this later) will be starting training shortly and we are currently soliciting for the XO position.

Regards – **Joe Roche**

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Crew News

From Rich McCamant (MCCAMANTSS485@hughes.net)

We've asked for crew stories and we received a great number, two of which are included in this newsletter (Stories from the Crew - Insert). We received some that were so long we may need to issue them in installments, but will make every attempt to publish them. But... we still need more. You can email or write them to me (see email above or return address of this newsletter) and I will get them to the right person to include in our newsletter.

Because this newsletter is delayed, you will be receiving this and the May newsletter pretty close together. For this reason, I am only reporting what I knew as of the end of February when we committed our documents for this edition. More information will follow on finds and losses in May 2008.

As usual, there are a number of crew deaths and finds that need to be reported which follow:

CREW FOUND

David Butler – MDN1/C (Midshipman) – 1969 Summer cruise aboard Sirago.

Bill Daley – SA – 1969-1970

Michael Lee Cunningham – TM3 – 1965

Thomas Evans – EM3 – 1962-1963

CREW – ETERNAL PATROL – (those that had been on our roster previously as FOUND)

Jack Liptrap – EM3 – 1955 (died 24 September 2007)

Ron Pollard - YN3 – 1962 (died 22 December 2007)

“Mike” Mayes – RMC(COB) – 1968-1969 (died 13 October 2005)

Bob Gustafson – LTJG/Chief Eng/Plank Owner – 1945-1946 (died 12 January 2008)

William Murphy – EN1 – 1960 (died 2 June 1996)

“Buck” Sheeley – ET3 – 1948 (died 30 January 2008)

As you will notice from the dates above, some of these fellows died some time ago, but in spite of the newsletter coming to them, nobody reported to us (until just recently) that they had passed away. In some cases we got notification of “deceased” on the newsletter and only after that, the research showed up that they had, in fact died and their last address was the place where we were mailing.

As usual, our losses exceed our gains so our total crew count went down by 2 people this period (and it would have been three if it hadn't been for the Midshipman we mysteriously found who was chatting about his great time on Sirago... here is an excerpt:

This is so unreal. I don't think I've heard of anyone from the Sirago since I was at basic Officer Sub School and Lee Twombly was one of my instructors. Yes I was on board Sirago for a 6-week Midshipman Cruise in June and July, 1969. I'm not sure what book you saw on Amazon, but I've never written a book. Maybe I was included in some book that listed submarine CO's or something like that.

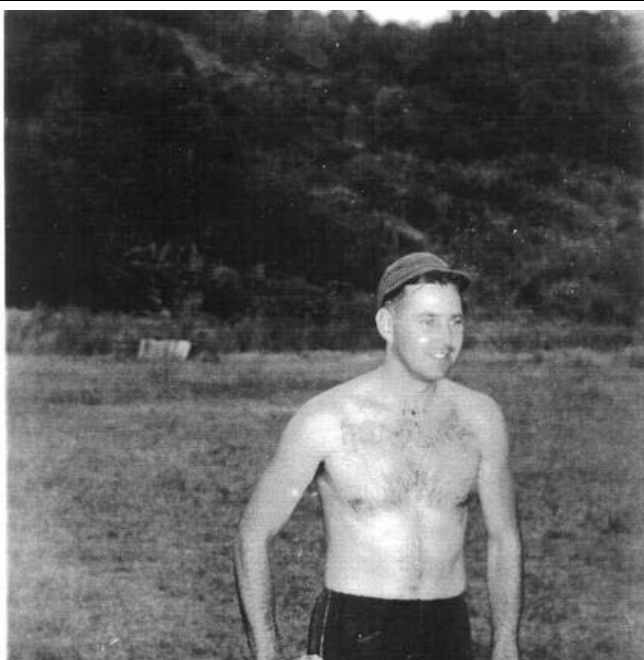
I had a wonderful time during that cruise. I had had a one-week introduction to Submarines in New London the summer before, so I requested a submarine cruise for my First Class Cruise to see what going to sea on a Sub was really like. I was assigned to Sirago. For me, it was like a 6-week Disneyland ride. The boat hadn't been out of overhaul very long, was in great shape and was doing POM workup to go to the Med. We spent almost the whole

time I was on board in the Caribbean diving and surfacing, shooting torpedoes at surface ships and other subs and spending 3 weekends in port for liberty - two in San Juan and a long 4th of July weekend (4-5 days) in St Thomas. The CO didn't want me to stand duty ("Midshipman cruise is for liberty"), but my cruise book had a prac fac to stand at least one day of duty; so my "duty day" was spent in St Thomas as lifeguard while everyone who wanted to enjoyed swim call. We had a cookout on the pier and watched a movie (The Graduate) with a sheet hung from the side of the sail as a screen. What a great time! On the way back to Norfolk, I got to submerge the ship (with a little help of course). The day we arrived back in Norfolk, I was hanging around the boat after most of the crew had left on liberty. My cruise was going to be over the next day or so (July 20). Another boat missed a check report and the Squadron was initiating Submiss procedures. There were only a couple of officers and me on board (Gaboric was the Duty Officer, I think). We couldn't get hold of anyone else and if we had to get underway in an emergency, he was going to have me stand OOD. Fortunately communication was made with the boat and we didn't have to get underway with just the duty section. That cruise was the first time I tasted what it was going to be like to be an Officer. I was hooked. I was going Submarines even if I had to go through Nuclear power training.

I looked through the website you linked. I saw pictures of some the officers I remember: Al Gaboric, Lee Twombly and Tom Sawyer. I wish I could remember more names. I remember the Chief Quartermaster being exasperated trying to teach me how to shoot stars. There was a QM1 (I think) on board who taught me how to do a Strip plot during Battle Stations (The plot table was in the wardroom). I wished I could remember his name because he taught me more about the boat than anyone else during that cruise. I'll never forget his professionalism and enthusiasm and how he took it upon himself to teach a dumb midshipman. The day I graduated from the Naval Academy, June 3, 1970, Sirago pulled into the yard in Annapolis for midshipman familiarization. I met them on the pier. Some of the officers tried to talk me into going out with them the next day, but I had to decline since I got married that next day.

Bob Gustafson was the penultimate plank officer (meaning that there is only ONE plankie Officer left on Sirago – and that person is Bill Donley (LTJG – Comm Officer). Bob Gustafson has been at a reunion quite some time ago, and so has Jack Liptrap. While Jack was not aboard Sirago for much time at all, he was VERY active in the Clamagore Association and helped us get our act together with regard to finding records and looking for crew members. He was, therefore, quite instrumental in us being in the position we currently enjoy as the only boat with virtually EVERY crew member accounted for (only about 40 out of 1600+ at this writing not accounted for). I am including a photo of Gustafson (left) from the old days (in Panama) and of Jack Liptrap (right) at the 2001 reunion.

Rich



Updating Our Records

It is VERY important that you keep us informed of any/all address, phone, email changes, etc. We now have a very good email communication infrastructure with the googlegroups and this works well ONLY if we know your email address. We KNOW that there are many of you out there with an email address, but you haven't informed us about this yet. We are not in the business of trying to fill up your inbox with junk mail, but we do use the email to inform you of new crew members found, ones who have recently died, and we prefer (if possible) to email you when we "post" this newsletter to our website so that we can avoid printing and mailing costs. So... you can call or email Rich McCamant about any such changes (including whether or not you would allow us to let your newsletter be by WEB rather than by mail). Rich's phone number is: 410.820.5225 and his email is MCCAMANTSS485@hughes.net.

Another thing you can do for us has to do with photographs. If you have access to the internet (or have a daughter or grandkid that does) view your

duty section to see that we have a photo of you from back then. If so, then that's good. However, if we have no photo at all and if you've never been to a reunion (ie. we also don't have a recent photo), then for goodness sake it would be good to get one for our archives, whether it's an old photo from your time on Sirago (preferred), or a recent one (whether mailed or emailed to us). It is very important that we have these photos for our archives as part of documenting the history of the USS Sirago (SS485) and her crew. You would honestly be surprised at how many children and grandchildren are fascinated by the fact that their pop or grandfather rode under the sea in a sewer pipe – sometime the thought of it makes them break out in a cold sweat. But beyond the "cold sweat" they are very proud of you... and so are we. Therefore we proudly display any/all photos of our crew members – on duty or on liberty to show that you were there – doing your duty – protecting our country and those future kids, grandkids and great-grandkids of yours.

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