

Sirago Newsletter



Volume 10, Issue 1

February 2009

Reunion '09

Joe Roche (CO / Editor)
SS485@COMCAST.NET

Shipmates,

I want to draw everyone's attention again to the Reunion Signup Sheet included in this newsletter. Now is the time to get this signup sheet in with at least a partial payment so we'll know you are coming and can plan our events.

Regards – **Joe Roche**

Being Thankful

George Goodwin (ETRSN 58-60)

Last November I was asked to put down something relating to Thanksgiving. My inclination is to connect my long association with the crews of the submarines I have served in to the many times I have had a sense of gratitude for whatever the particular moment delivered. Being a submariner is, in itself, a reason for gratitude and thanksgiving. Submariners know what I mean. Allow me to present my own train of events that have led me to be forever grateful and thankful for events and

people in my life.

The first person in my life with whom I had a pure loving relationship was my father. He was a strong, male influence with whom I shared a close existence. For a few years before I joined the Navy he and I were the only ones in the home. In 1957 my siblings had all flown the coop, my mother was a travelling professional musician, and my dad and I spent one wonderful summer together alone. I was just out of high school working at a large corporation in downtown Boston. My father was very ill from a lifetime of debilitating conditions such as tuberculosis, double hernias, heavy smoking, etc. He was able to move about the property but his conditions prevented him from doing most yard work alone.

During an afternoon of gardening I paused near him and mentioned I had been thinking of what I would like to do with my life. I mentioned I wanted to join the Navy. I was happy that he showed sincere enthusiasm and later that evening and during the next few days he and I discussed the possibilities of enlistment. He wanted me to strike for something in the electronics field. Electronics was a relatively new field and his vision was of me enjoying the pioneering adventures that still were available.

I did join the Navy and was selected to attend ET "A" school. While home on boot camp leave I told my dad the good news that I was starting "A" school in February at Great Lakes. He was very happy and I recall leaving him on the front porch of our house before heading back to Illinois. He hugged me for the first time since I was little. It was a strangely vague goodbye that I will always hold in my heart.

A few weeks after I started basic electricity and electronics school I was informed by the Chaplain at Great Lakes that my dad had died. After I returned home on emergency leave I discovered that he had

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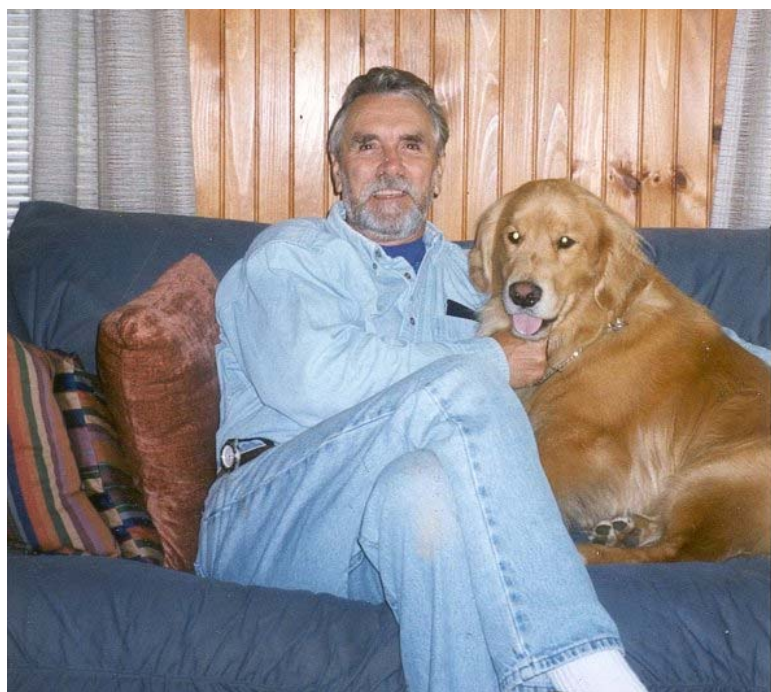
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taken his own life. Suicide is devastating for families and friends. I was crushed, distraught, left with a feeling of abandonment. My dad had checked out without me. I was left with anger and bitterness and no ability to describe what I felt or how to deal with it.

The next few years in the Navy were touch and go. I barely made it through “A” school. I got in trouble with the authority of the Navy. I had two captain’s masts at Great Lakes for separate cases of being AWOL. I was struggling to be grown up. I missed my dad. I was alone and drifting. Upon graduation from ET school I was sent to Norfolk to duty on the Orion (AS 11). While I was in “T” division awaiting assignment to the ET repair shop Subron 6 put out a call for volunteers to transfer to any submarine alongside. Men with a specified qualification would be accepted for submarine duty without the need for submarine school. I qualified with my gct/ari score and I was given a choice of any boat in the squadron. I looked at the names of the boats on the chalkboard in the squadron office and immediately struck on Sirago SS 485.

That was the beginning of my new life with a terrific bunch of men. I unknowingly had chosen to join a band of brothers who would be able to tolerate my raw, foolish, untrained persona. During the next 20 months or so I was pushed, shoved, crammed, ignored, humiliated, disciplined, trained, encouraged, and finally qualified. (I actually earned my dolphins in 11 months with 3 and half months of mess cook duty included.)

My dad was missing from my life but on Sirago I had 68 or so new men who were available and took turns in showing me the ways of adult males. I was given opportunities to watch models of courage, integrity, and other behaviors becoming to mature manhood. During this process I became the father that I lost. I am forever grateful to the Submarine Service and the men I served with for what I was able to become. During stressful times I am able to draw upon those experiences. I often recall vividly the moments when one of my model shipmates did something so naturally and effortlessly in demonstrating what men do best. To this day, over 50 years later I am still thankful and deeply grateful for submariners. I am thankful and deeply grateful for the opportunity to become a submariner and to pass on the qualities that I know my father would be proud of.



George Goodwin acts as Duty Section Chief for the 5760 Duty Section and contributes stories and memories to this newsletter regularly. George is the one on the left 😊

DEPARTED SHIPMATES

It is with a heavy heart that we announce that we have noted the loss of 4 more shipmates since our last newsletter was published. We will dedicate the rest of our newsletter space to their remembrance. I am hoping that we all realize how important it is to renew old acquaintances before it is too late. Like all other crew members who have died since the last reunion, they will be remembered by solemn ceremony during Reunion 2009. Ron Hart attended Reunion 2007 and Plank Owner Jim Gavigan attended reunions 1992, 1994, and 1995. We only recently found out about his death.

James (Ron) Hart – STS3 – 1964 to 1966 – (Died 28 December 2008)

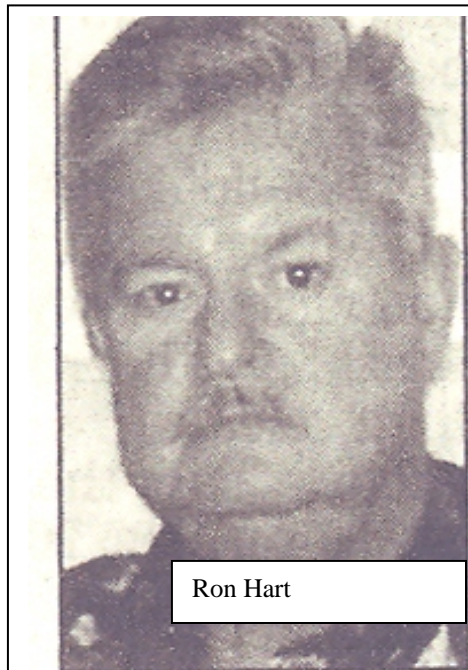
James Gavigan – YN2c – 1945 to 1946 (Plank Owner) – (Died 23 November 2006)

Gene Racine – RT2c – 1945 to 1946 (Plank Owner) – (Died 8 February 2009)

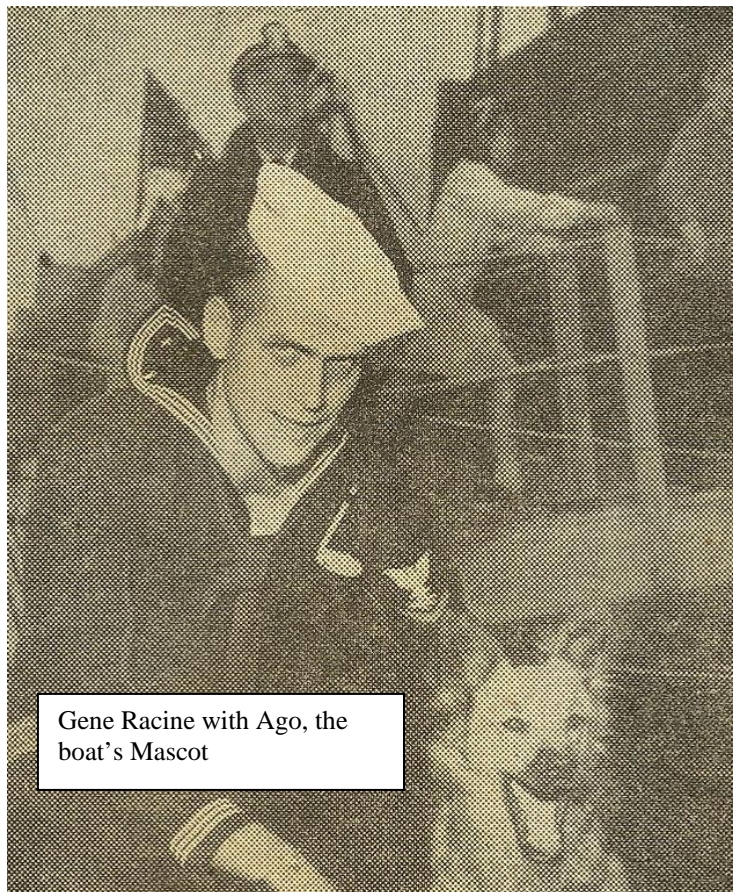
Robert Patterson – EMC (COB) – 1958 to 1962 – (Died 28 December 2008)



Jim Gavigan (Plank Owner) with Paul York (DeComm Crew)



Ron Hart



Gene Racine with Ago, the boat's Mascot



Robert Patterson (EMC/COB)
with his wife.

Our crew members served aboard the USS Sirago at various times from 1945 until 1972. Being aboard the Sirago was a very special time in each of our lives. We learned from each other while serving our country by silently and secretly participating in important operations.

While there are things we hesitate to talk about since they might still be classified, our time together is highly valued. For this reason, we make the time to come together again during our reunions... remembering the times when we depended on each other for our very lives.

We celebrate the good times we shared in stressful conditions under the sea.

Rich McCamant
10225 Ocean Gateway
Easton, MD 21601

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