

Remembering David

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A Toast to David Glaser – RM2(SS)

On the evening of December 3rd, 2011 I received a call from Victoria (Tori) Glaser-Allen reporting that a few hours before, David had quietly passed away. She was, of course, in tears and it was a terrible shock to her mother and sister but she wanted me to know quickly because, as many of you already know, he was the heart and soul of the USS Sirago (SS485) Veterans' Fraternal Association, Inc. I have held up the November newsletter in order that we get everyone information about his death and also information about our next Cruise Reunion which he was working on when he tragically died. The Glaser family and the remaining four association officers are committed to insuring that the 2013 Reunion Cruise will take place as conceived by our association Executive Officer (XO) David Glaser. On March 6th 2012 there will be a memorial service for David in Mississippi – more information on this (hotel, exact time and place, etc.) will be communicated to all via email within the next few weeks. If you are not an emailer but you desire to get more details about this memorial service, you can call me at home and I'll give you what I know – see my phone number and email in the banner above. Since David was a quiet and “behind the scenes” kind of guy, I wanted to let everyone know how important he was to the success that our reunion association has achieved. So... consider this insert “A Toast to David Glaser” to whom this successful association owes its existence.

In 1999 I had been working with Bill Gerber who was singlehandedly running small Sirago reunions since 1992 and had gotten the crew member count up to about 38 maximum to show up at his reunions. I was trying to find the guys that I knew personally on the Sirago and was feeding information to Bill to add to his database. I met David Glaser in Mobile Alabama on the 100th anniversary of the Submarine Service (April 2000) having been invited by Paul York – one of those crew members whom I knew personally. Paul, knowing that I had found a number of people we both knew, wanted to see them in one place and we actually got 13 guys there who all knew each other from the same time period aboard the Sirago. This was quite different from Gerber's reunions because you might only have 2-3 fellows who knew each other because the Sirago was around from 1945 to 1972 and had about 1600 different active duty crew members during its 27 years of service.

David Glaser was there at the festivities and went out of his way to introduce himself to me and wanted to sit down privately to discuss something. He was from an earlier period on the Sirago and also told me he was aboard the Sea Leopard and Cutlass. He told me that what I was doing was “important” and that I needed to find ALL the people on the Sirago and get as many of them to come to a reunion as I could, since he knew that Bill Gerber was in ill health and wouldn't be around much longer. Long story short – Bill Gerber was looking for a replacement person and I ended up taking over the Sirago group from Bill... with David Glaser at my side to guide what I was doing. The very next reunion (2001) we had 125 crew members plus their wives show up at the most unbelievable reunion Sirago had had up to that time. I'm telling you this to let you know that David was a brilliant strategist and knew what he was talking about.

By the 2003 reunion (with the Sea Leopard as a guest) we not only had over 135 Sirago crew members and their wives, but we found Sea Leopard crew members and got a total of

90 of their crewmembers plus their wives there in addition to the numbers the Sirago had. All of a sudden, the Sea Leopard, which had falling reunion counts and also only had about 40 crew members maximum were ready to organize around this David Glaser organizational model. David told me that the strength of any organization is its leadership and organizational model. Too many boats have one passionate person behind all their reunions and when that person dies, or for whatever reason cannot keep going, the whole group fails. David saw an opportunity to make a great organization and he put together all the incorporation papers and the 501(c)(19) fraternal association filings so that this organization will never die until the last person is on eternal patrol.

Getting the right people involved and pumped is also a secret that David taught me. Rich McCamant who is our association's CO earned his position by the tremendous energy and personal passion he exhibited in finding most all of the crew members that Sirago ever had aboard. I thought that I was good at finding people, but my skills compared to Rich's are minimal. So another thing that David taught me was the ability to "step aside" and allow new talent to grow. I have learned from David that mentoring and helping to make others successful is much more important than doing things on my own.

One of the stories I love to tell about David is about how opposite we are and how we bicker with each other. That's probably why we worked so well together. I would get all worried about things and David had a wonderful way of calming me down and assuring me that it would all be OK. One time when I was bitching about how I could not conceive of how something could possibly work in practicality, David's answer to me was: "Well... I'm not sure how it could be done either. You're a smart guy and you'll figure it out. But I can tell you one thing... when you finally stop talking about all the reasons why something 'cannot work' and begin thinking about how something 'might work', WE WILL MAKE PROGRESS!" And of course, he was right. Turning dark energy positive was his skill.

David was a private and very spiritual person. He took very seriously his responsibilities as an association officer and did all the work with the hotels and venues to insure a successful reunion. He tended to not want to pick up the 1MC and talk, but rather enjoyed being behind the radio shack door letting me know privately which transmissions were important and which weren't. He liked that role and avoided the limelight. While I appreciated his desire to stay in the background, it was a shame because during most reunions, people would come up to me and tell me how great the reunion was. I'd look around to grab David and he would have snuck away somewhere to get out of the spotlight.

The USS Sirago (SS485) is the ONLY submarine that has accounted for all but about 30 crew members (out of 1600 active duty). There is NO submarine having served that length of time that can come close to this achievement. We have gotten accolades from crew members who were on multiple boats who tell us that those other boats don't know what they're doing on reunions, but the Sirago does and so the Sirago is the only boat for which they jump at the chance to join in the reunion festivities. We're the only boat I know that has no official "dues" but rather one which seeks voluntary contributions to support newsletter costs. If a crew member is pinching pennies, we don't want their family to suffer but we DO want to keep communicating with them. These strategies were David's.

Finally – we've done multi-boat reunions, and from Sirago have launched the SubRon Six Smoke Boat Sisters organization which is now on its own... *And in 2013 Sirago cruises!*

David – I lift my glass to you.... We are all better because of your tireless spirit! - *Mike*