

Sirago Newsletter

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REMEMBERING NORFOLK!

Home Port for Sirago 1949–1972

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David Ackerman (LT / DS6972): I remember the skill with which our troops were able to extract equipment from the tender without so much as a piece of paper to show for it, and somehow manage to get the boat to sea every time on schedule regardless of the lack of spares, budget, or time to keep the equipment going. Most of all I remember how much I appreciated the solid, strong, dedicated, enlisted crewmembers who, regardless of their intentions to remain in the Navy or leave as soon as possible, always kept me out of trouble, taught me things I never could have learned on my own, made life bearable (despite the constant barrage of demands from on high), and for whom I continue to hold the greatest respect. As for my fellow officers: despite our complete lack of knowledge, we did indeed manage to hold things together, complete all our missions, and always in the end make the number of surfaces equal to the number of dives. I remember "hanging out" topside with the topside watch and

smoking a couple of cigarettes and keeping each other from being bored out of our minds most nights in port. The general feeling I have of those times is genuine appreciation for the support I received from the people I was lucky enough to have report to me, and the rest of the wardroom in my quest for "a kinder, more gentle navy" where everyone was respected for their contributions, regardless of rank or rate. Are we there yet??

Gary Farmer (STS2 / DS5760): I remember the barracks that the boat sailors were assigned to over in NOB (I think). The boat guys had pretty much the top floor of the barracks. When a boat came in was about the only time there was a hot-water shortage in the place. On weekends, someone was designated as the GOFER, and they went to this new place called McDonalds where burgers were about \$0.14. Everybody else pretty much left us alone.

Of course, there was the old Dolphin Bar downtown where no skimmer dared enter. That was holy ground for most of us. Officer types weren't allowed. I've downed many a beer in that place. There used to be a vacant lot just inside the main gate where we used to have some good football games, but all I remember was dropping a "winning" touchdown pass from Mr. Yockey during one of those games.

I also remember an incident that someone else may remember. I don't remember the exact time, but I believe in the fall of '60. There were about six boats tied outboard of the Orion when a strong wind blew in. A tanker was moored out in Hampton Roads and its mooring chain snapped early in the morning. We had to get underway in a hurry or risk getting crunched. Most of us made it except for the Sea Leopard. There were DDs behind her so she could only go ahead—which she did. She climbed the sea wall at the head of pier 22 or 23. Actually, not much damage. Anybody remember that?

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Anybody remember having to change into uniform of the day when crossing the Orion? That was a pain since most of us kept our uniforms in the barracks I referred to.

Joe Hoffmann (LT / DS6164): We had a Squadron CO, Commander McCauley, that was a trick. There was always this big kick about keeping the topside and pier slicked up in the event VIPs made the scene—that being the command from ORION. But you were simultaneously supposed to get the repairs, painting, weps loading, supplies, etc., done too. And as Meegan, Hulick and Conger would argue, "in dress whites besides." But the biggest eyesore was this '40s Plymouth - a bright blue, brush painted (probably the sale can of Dutch Boy) junker parked in the SUBRON 6 spot at the head of the pier. I think it would even run on rare occasions. CDR McCauley went to sea with us several times but seemed to disappear and find another way back to NORVA at the first port call. Until SS485 tied up again to 22, there was this constant stream of encrypted (not necessarily encoded) messages asking the status of his stereo purchase, case of scotch, whatever... And as part of an ORI, there was, in no uncertain terms, the order from him that I was to ask his daughter out. She was a very nice girl and it was no burden for me, but was she ever mortified by the circumstances. I can't recall how we did on the ORI but there was never an occasion to see her again.

Dean Sedgwick (LT / DS6568): One of my "fondest" memories of D&S Piers is the CO of the Orion (Capt J.C. Bellah by name) standing on the wing of his bridge watching the sailors and officers interact on "his" pier. If two met and proper military courtesy was not rendered, both the officer and the sailor were escorted by his security watch to his cabin to explain their malfeasance. Well, this was a problem for Sirago sailors as we had a tradition that said, if you were an ensign or JG and not qualified, you did not rate a salute. If you were a JG or LT and qualified, you did not care about salutes. So, they only saluted LCDRs and above. Sure made sense to me.

David Glaser (RM2 / DS6568): Johnny's was the place that most of the Sirago sailors hung out during the 65–68 time frame (that is, for those that

did that sort of thing, and not everyone did). The day-shift manager for Johnny was a cute little girl named Cindy. The locker club (I think it was called Bell's Locker Club) was across the street from Bell's bar. Only non-qual pukers had to use the locker club. Since 90% of my non-qual time was at sea, I only used the locker club a couple of times. Bad geedunks.

For the single white hat, the real action took place in Barracks J-50. It was set up WWII style and folks moved the lockers around either to form cubicles or in a row, back to back down the middle, dividing the barracks in half the long way. Guys used to show dirty dittys movies on the walls, and chairs were in the shower room where guys would sit with three shower heads all aimed on them to try to get some of the diesel oil out of their skin. Things went on in the barracks that no self-respecting master-at-arms would ever tolerate. Carburetors were rebuilt in the TV room and adult beverages were consumed in prodigious quantities. The married guys may have had their wife and kids to come home to, but we had a whole flock of nameless young ladies who liked to entertain young sailors home from the sea (it was coincidental that they helped us spend our very last dime), and we had J-50 to lay our heads down.

A great way to end up the evening, if you had any money left, was to go to the Giant Supermarket, pick out a steak from the meat counter, and have them cook it on the spot. It wasn't fancy but the meat sure tasted good, and a steak like that would have cost a fortune in a restaurant. Oh, to be young and stupid again.

Mel Rycus (EM1 / DS5356): Fall 1952, first day reporting for duty in Norfolk, sub due to leave early next morning for sea duty. Went on liberty with new shipmates, we all got a little inebriated, picked up by shore patrol, spent night in brig, sobered up real fast, worried about missing boat next morning. Not to worry, shore patrol escorted us to the boat 15 minutes before departure. My

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CALENDAR OF FUTURE EVENTS

REUNION 2003 – “HIT THE BEACH” REUNION

VA BEACH, VIRGINIA

APR 30TH – MAY 4TH 2003 (PLEASE HOLD THIS DATE OPEN)

Sirago will hold its 7th Reunion at the Holiday Inn – Executive Center located in Virginia Beach. Refer to included schedule and sign-up sheets. PLEASE send them in and pre-pay EARLY. We need to book and pre-pay for events.

We want to know if YOU are planning to come. If you haven't already done so, please contact Mike Bickel by mail or e-mail (RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM) to let him know.

GUESS WHO'S COMING – 2003!

CREW MEMBERS ARE TRYING TO COME (196)

DS4548: (12): John Arkfeld, “Bruce” Boutillette, “Jerry” Casey, Don Chase, Bill Donley, Leslie Jones, Bob Keegan, Frank Matuszek, Jim McCullough, Bob Mullhall, Fred Tassell, Charlie Woods.

DS4952: (12): Red Bracken, CUSH Cushing, Leonard Erb, Duane Gow, Ray Gundy, Bob Kaufman, Norm LeBlanc, “John” Ledbetter, “JJ” Long, Dan Reilly, “Buck” Steere, Dick Underwood

DS5356: (25): George Albert, Jeff Badgett, Charlie Balkcom, Leonard Bradshaw, Dick Clifford, Gary Feasel, Don Hall, “Stoney” Hilton, “Hal” Hinds, Jack Liptrap, Robert Mazurek, Ed McDevitt, Joe Meyer, John Mylant, “Rawhide” Rainey, Harold Rosen, Mel Rycus, Ben Shepard, “Buddy” Shumake, Blair Smith, Carl Trost, John Tumilty, Ed Vallecorse, Wally Walraven, Dwight Williams.

DS5760: (26): Beecher Allen, Art Allum, Dick Andrews, Pat Ashton, Wayne Booton, Roger Dean, Richard DeVuyst, Bill Dort, Peter Eadie, Gary Farmer, George Goodwin, Don Gotta, Ron Hahn, Frank Hamaker, David Hauer, Ed Jones, Dick Kinne, Richard Konow, Mel Laubach, George Reisner, Francis Rickel, Bill Shamphan, Lou Shepard, Dennis Strake, Charles Tolbert, Harold Webster.

DS6164: (32): Don Amorosi, Ted Anthony, Bob Boddiford, Bruce Boughton, Darryl Brunsvold, Charlie Bryant, Dale Craig, Kevin Dunne, David Furby, Hal Galloway, Bob Gross, Lonnie Haley, Tony Hastoglis, Joe Hoffmann, Jim Hughes, Mike Leeds, Jack Linevitch, Nick Lira, Larry McClintock, Fred McGuire, “Smokey” Owens, Joe Roche, Al Rouchon, Ken Savage, Ralph Schmidt, Art Scholz, Butch Sites, Al St andish, Richard Waite, Frank Weltner, Ralph Wiggins, Bob Zorn.

DS6568: (42): Ray Anderson, “Billy” Byrne, Rob Carey, Bill Clegg, Virgil Clemmer, Pat Conroy, Bob Cox, Jerry DeBoer, Dennis Duren, Bob Ewing, Ron Flint, Jerry Friedman, David Glaser, Garry Goetschius, Herman Hill, Nathan Isenhour, Bob Karge, Ken Koller, “Tex” Loftin, “TY” Lynch, “Rex” Major, JD Mayo, Richard McCamant, Art Michaelsen, Geof Morse, Carl Nardone, Joe Palermo, Ray Rausch, Doug Roberts, Bob Rosen, Rob Schutte, Dean Sedgwick, Nelson Shiver, Dennis Simoneau, Gary Thonn, Tim Ullon, Thom Warburton, Marshall Woods, Dominic Yacovone, Harry Yockey, Michael Young, “Zeke” Zimmerman.

DS6972: (47): David Ackerman, Tom Antos, Fred Baker, Herb Bauer, Pete Becker, Bob Bell, Frank Berlingeri, Mike Bickel, Jeff Binford, Bobbie Jo Brown, Russell Burrows, Ray Bussard, Chuck Cain, Frank Campbell, Armando Delarosa, Paul Dix, Jack Enos, Mick Finn, Tom Foglesong, Doug Fox, Ken Frazier, Jim Gach, Eddie Gee, Frank George, Robert Holt, Bill Huskey, Bob Ianucci, Al Inboden, David Keene, Bud Keidel, Ron Kennedy, Andy Knauer, Les Lammers, John Lee, Randy Morgan, Tom O'Brien, Keith Owens, Lanny Renken, “Tex” Ritter, George Self, Marty Valdez, Larry Vicente, Jim Ware, Thurman Webb, Carl Welch, Tom Yankay, Paul York. ♦♦♦

first and only time in the brig, and my first and only Captain's Mast.

Bill Schmitt (EM3 / DS6164): I remember coming in from sea and putting on my dirtiest set of whites and heading for the barracks, but first stopping at Bell's for a beer on the way. Smelling like sweat and diesel fuel guaranteed you a seat at the bar (I was single then). After taking a shower and changing clothes I remember hitting the strip for a night of boozing, playing pool, and carousing with the women that hung out there all the time.

Jerry DeBoer (EM3 / DS6568): The place I remember is the Old JOLLY ROGER—they would have jam sessions and Bob Ayres had a good set of pipes. He'd sing and entertain the ladies while we gave him our total SUPPORT !!!!!!!!! Some of the guys I remember: Big Robbie, Twisted Carey, Rick Russmann, Bill Harvey aka Bill Collins. It was fun hanging with the guys.

Bruce Anderson (SD2 / DS4952): On the various area military bases, when visiting foreign ports or northern USA cities, the crews of the boats had great times together.

However, upon returning to Norfolk the socializing between black and white shipmates ceased because Virginia, like all southern states, had laws which forbade white and black sailors sitting together on public transportation or socializing in public places. I can remember many instances when white sailors refused to obey the bus drivers' orders telling them not to sit with their black shipmates. This was still going on when I left Norfolk in 1958.

Don Gotta (S02 / DS5760): The “real” hangout for us ol' smokeboaters was The DOLPHIN TAVERN on Bramelton Ave. It was owned and operated by the Submariners best bud in the 50s and early 60s—one fine gentleman named Jack Hawks, now deceased—he used to let a few of us sleep in his walk-in cooler on Fri. and Sat. nights after closing if we didn't go to the old serviceman's club on Bush St. The only rule was to keep marks on paper or the wall with the number and type of beer we drank, and we paid him back either in the morning or payday. He never got stiffed by any bubblehead for the beers or for the bail bonds he paid for us quite regularly. Robbinette was the chief of the

vice squad then and loved to bust bubbleheads for whatever reason he could make up or, in most cases, catch us doing. I think it was during the Christmas season of '57—it was cold as all get out—and Francis Xavier (the cook off of the Runner) and a few others of us built a fire in a big trash can by the bar to keep warm, and of course we were spiking our Ballentine Ale with gilly when in walks Robbinette and his goon squad. Seems there was an undercover cop in the Dolphin who called it in. Needless to say, they got a bunch of us in the paddy wagon and hauled us to the crossbar hotel for a night's stay. Poor Jack got closed up for the holidays and was not a happy camper. When the word got out about his predicament, all of the Boat sailors got together and went down to the Dolphin and did a real makeover on the place. It looked like brand new when we finished, and when Jack reopened he threw us one hell of a party and put "our pictures back on the piano" (no offense Mush). We moved to Bell's when the Dolphin was torn down in the name of "revitalization." Jack then bought Little Italy up the street from Bell's and a bar called Eat the Nest across the street from it—but those are other stories. ♦♦♦

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

DUTY SECTION NEWS

OUR WEBSITE:

Our website is "up and running" with a full complement of crew photos (over 1250). We have added a couple of pages to this site so even if you don't have a computer, get your kid, friend, or your librarian to help you access this wonderful site. The address is:

<http://service.freesitenow.com/Sirago/>

RECENTLY DECEASED:

Andrew Donaldson (TM1, 53–56 died 3/25/2002)

William (Ben) Gum (IC1, 48–54 died 11/2001)

Mario Ramasco (EN2, 48–48 died 7/11/2001)

Alexander Ross (EM1, 56–59) died 4/2002)

FOUND ALIVE COUNTS (by duty section)

DS4548: 74	DS4952: 50	DS5356: 65
DS5760: 84	DS6164: 97	DS6568: 112
DS6972: 123		

RUN SILENT RUN DEEP?: If you are an e-mailer and you have NOT let us know, please e-mail Mike Bickel at: **RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM**.

WHO DID THE BEACH PICTURE?: On the back of the Schedule... son of Dennis Simoneau (DS6568).

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