

Sirago Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1

February 2001

“Even MORE Stories” from the Duty Sections

Sifting Through the Email Traffic

Mike Bickel

Duty Section 6972

Well, here we go again. It's story time in the After Battery of the old USS Sirago. This time I thought that we'd do a little “officer humor” – or is that “humor at the expense of the officers?”.... hmmm.

From Harry Yockey: (The “Lovely” Affair)

This actually happened on board SIRAGO circa late '61 or early '62. CDR Raymond Anderson (type "A" aggressive) had relieved CDR Bernie Peters (quiet, efficient, and highly respected) as CO. Anderson's first sentence in his standing orders was "I like angles!" and he demanded that all diving officers use maximum angles-plus when changing depth. LCDR John Mackenzie was XO, LT John Roberts (class of '56) was Engineer and I ('57) was Communicator-Electronics-RPS Custodian, and ENS Ken Savage ('60) had just reported aboard from Sub School. He was among the first group of submarine officers who did not have to first qualify as OOD underway on a surface vessel before applying for submarines, i.e., he was really wet behind the ears. We were operating with ASW Task

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Who Loves Ya?

Crew Members Express Admiration for Leaders

Mike Bickel

Duty Section 6972

I sent out a memo to our “on line crew” crew asking them which people on the Sirago they “most admired”. Here are some of their answers.

From Bob Zorn (6164): Chief Patterson, EMC(SS)

was COB when I reported aboard in September 1960 and served as COB until he retired late in 1961. He had a unique way of establishing and maintaining his authority: he used gentle humor and a soft voice. Previously, in my short Naval career, I had experienced ‘authority’ as loud talking, sometimes obscene, yelling & screaming. Chief Patterson did it another way, and I came to admire him for it. If there was a mistake made in diving the boat, he'd take the offending planesman aside & tell him how to do it correctly. He did not hesitate to correct us junior officers – calmly, in the wardroom or goat locker. There certainly were other great people on the Sirago, but the one man that stands out is Chief Bob Patterson. He was the epitome of a great submariner... cool, calm, tremendously knowledgeable... and a good guy.

From Bruce Boutillette (4548): C. G. Carlisle (XO)

would be the person I most admired. I admired him for his kindness and clean speech. I never once heard a foul word uttered by him.

From “Wally” Walraven (5356): The two names that come to mind as “most admired” were CAPT. Cramer and Ben Visocky. I know that Ben is gone now, but I remember him like it was yesterday.

From Ken Frazier (6972): I think Chief Barnette (Barney) fills this position. If it hadn't been for Barney and his quick thinking during the crisis we have all heard about, I would not have boarded the Sirago for a tour of duty. Thanks Barney!!

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Group ALFA on two week cycles (out 2, in 2) and we had 10 officers (2 extra) due to the SSBN training pipeline. It was usual to leave one officer and several crew members ashore each underway period to alleviate "hot" bunking.

In those days, many in the crew really enjoyed a CPO cup filled with cocoa mix, powdered cream, sugar, and hot water which became known as a "lovely" -- a great cold weather substitute for a black and bitter! Shortly after Anderson relieved Peters, we had an all officer's meeting in the wardroom all with our coffees and the CO with his usual black and bitter while smoking his "El Presidente" cigar. The stewards mate entered and delivered a "lovely" that Ens. Savage had asked for before the meeting began. When the CO saw this frothy drink he asked what it was and, instead of saying hot cocoa, ENS Savage said "A lovely, Sir." Anderson nearly went ballistic! He claimed that "lovelies" were not manly. After a short tirade he outlawed lovelies on the ship. Many of us thought he was a joking until, the next underway period a few days later.

ENS Savage had the 4-8 watch on the bridge. The CO had a set routine in the AM. Wake at 6, coffee and cigar in the WR at 0615, followed by a trip to the bridge (surfaced) or conning tower (submerged) then breakfast at 0700. Of course the "no lovely" decree had become common knowledge with the crew. And you know the crew as a whole on a tight knit diesel boat has quite a sense of humor. So, after the CO went to the wardroom, the chief of the watch who was also the COB, had the messenger of the watch prepare a "Lovely" for ENS Savage. He held it until about 0628 when he had it delivered to the bridge. ENS Ken was thrilled that the crew liked him enough to be so considerate and thoughtful...until about two minutes later when the words "CAPTAIN TO THE BRIDGE" came over the 7MC from the QM of the watch in the conning tower. Ken Savage should have heaved the cup overboard! The poor Ensign was chewed out royally as soon as the CO spotted the lovely. And of course the CO chewed out the XO for not carrying out his order banning lovelies. It was gradually sinking in that he really meant it!

John Roberts and I had a talk about this. We still were skeptical that anyone could outlaw the consumption of a harmless food product. So we decided that some fun could be had by depositing a package of cocoa mix along with a note {The Lovely Kid} and, thereafter, {The lovely Kid Strikes Again} where the CO would be certain to find it. We figured that with two of us it would be extremely difficult to pin the "crime" on either one. I would plant (usually in the Captain's Stateroom under a pillow or on the desk) while Roberts was on watch

and he would reciprocate. We even got our wives involved. We operated with a carrier so we got mail drops at sea. We would prepare an envelope "FOR CO's EYES ONLY" and have it mailed a few days after we were underway and both on board so the postmark would cover our tracks. The CO would become furious and rail at the XO. But, we were never caught. Finally, John Roberts got out of the Navy (I relieved him as Engineer) and I thought I had better cool it because I was going to be aboard another year. I did about two more Lovely Kid plants after John left so his good name would be protected.

By the way, Anderson was a great CO. Because of him I qualified for command during my first submarine tour and was first in year group '57 to do so. Also, I've never "publicly" owned up to this charade which got a lot of laughs on board for many months. John and I are the only ones who knew beside our wives. We couldn't trust bring anyone else in on our secret.

From Mike Bickel: (Don't try this at home!)

OK – I admit it. I had too much to drink that evening and barely made it down the forward torpedo room escape trunk without killing myself. Puerto Rican Rum and spicy food that I wasn't used to had my gut rumbling and I made it to the officer's head just in time. I wasn't sick to my stomach yet, but was VERY happy to have made it into the head before something embarrassing happened.

I had been out pretty much of the afternoon and wasn't aware that I was literally sitting on a time bomb. While I had been dancing the rumba (or something) a few members of the Duty Section had been pressure testing the forward torpedo room. This involved using 225 pound service air to pressurize the room while another crew member was topside, below the decking soaping down cables to see if any bubbles appeared. This was pretty routine. What wasn't routine, however, was the fact that the inboard sanitary vent valve had not been re-opened after the pressure test. During the test a certain amount of pressurized air had leaked through the flapper valve at the bottom of the head removing the water seal and allowing the tank to be slightly pressurized. But the opposite was not true. Once the torpedo room was vented, the tank had a positive pressure and did NOT leak the other direction so it remained pressurized with the only thing between me and disaster being this single flapper valve. If the inboard vent had been opened the tank would not have had pressure in it, but this procedure was forgotten.

OK – now I feel better. All done. Clean up. Pull up pants. Lean over head. Open outer hull valve. Open inner valve. Water fills bowl. Open flapper.....

REUNION 2001 - NEWS

REUNION 2001

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

MAY 2ND – MAY 6TH 2001

Sirago Reunion – Lake Wright Resort

I am expecting about 125 crew members plus guests for a crowd of about 200. You can check on who is coming by viewing our web site (see Duty Section News). If you need another signup form email RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM or call me (636) 225-7528. Money is due by the 15th of March. THERE IS STILL ROOM and a “**Scholarship Program**” for those of you with a “short funds” problem. (NEXT ARTICLE)

REUNION 2001 – SCHOLARSHIP

The Lake Wright Resort will be providing us with a “few” (2-3) rooms for free as a reward for getting such a crowd to come. These rooms will be made available to crew members who are dying to join us in this “once in a lifetime” event, but don’t have the funds available to do so. Additionally, \$1.50 of the \$10.00 registration fee that is paid by every reunion participant will be donated to the Sirago Reunion Scholarship Fund and will also be available to those same crew members who are selected for the scholarship. The names of crew members receiving such benefit are never revealed and the information is considered “private”.

To be considered for this “scholarship”, you must call or email Mike Bickel (see email and phone # above) by **February 28th** and indicate only that you desire to be considered. You do not have to give any specifics – I will just assume that you could use help at this time – no questions asked. In the event that there are more crew members “applying” for scholarships than there are free rooms available, names will be selected at random. Those selected will be advised privately as well as those not selected. ♦♦♦

REUNION 2001 - CHANGES

The American Rover Dinner Cruise is not available and your only choice is the Spirit of Norfolk Dinner Cruise so if you haven’t yet sent in your signup form, don’t sign up for the American Rover. It was completely booked by one group.

Regarding the Men’s and Ladies’ luncheons, we will end up having the same menu for everyone and in each case will be the recommended “house specialty”. If there are any people with dietary restrictions, please notify me and we will do our best to accommodate you.

From Mike McEniry (6164): LCDR Jack McKee would be my candidate for “most admired”. He was very patient in teaching me some of the most intricate points of navigation.

From Matt Cola (6972): LT. Carl Whisman (Weapons Dept. Head) wins my vote for “most admired”.

From Robert Gunny (4548): CAPT. Fritz Harlfinger is my “most admired” because of his approach to command and his WWII Record.

From Bill Jay (4952): Without doubt, **CAPT. Kaufman** was the finest officer I have ever been around!!!! What more can I say? We won every “E” we ever participated in. The whole crew would have followed him to Hell if necessary.

From Alex McArthur (6568): Bob Ayres and LCDR Yockey win my vote for “most admired”. Most of the “snipes” will remember that Bob Ayres had a serious thing for good looking engine rooms. He was a good leader as well as a good friend. Mr. Yockey is without a doubt the best engineering officer I have ever had the honor to work for.

From Joe Hopkins (6972): I really would have to nominate **the whole bloody crew** as a group I admired. The only other place I’ve found such a group of individuals who “stuck together” was in my 20+ years in the fire department. Both groups are “in it together” and you can’t get much tighter than that.

From “Mike” Michaelsen (6568): I think the person I most admired was **Mr. Yockey**. He listened and was always making us better sub sailors. He would light off a smoke bomb in the main induction to see how we snipes would respond to a catastrophe. After he became the XO of another boat, he would still take the time to talk to his “Sirago gang” as we’d pass on the D&S Piers. He wins my vote!

From Ken Koller (6568): There are four people I admired because of their leadership qualities: **Bob Ayers (EN1), Chief Bonner (COB), LCDR Yockey (Eng. Officer), and**

Most Admired (continued from page 3)

LT. Nardone (Comm. Officer). All of these men were true leaders in their own way. At age 18, these guys seemed like gods to me. Looking back I realize they were the cream of the crop.

From Mike Young (6568): My most admired person on board was **Carl Nardone**. When you're 18 or 19, every officer looks like a god to you (or acts like one). But Mr. Nardone let us see the human side of him. On watch we'd talk about food sometimes and the dishes our parents used to prepare for us. We'd come off watch pretty hungry and would make some "submarine pizzas" (Ketchup, tomatos, cheese, bread-Toast in oven)

From Bob Ewing (6568): **CAPT. Frank Talbot** wins my vote. He was always calm, cool, and collected. During my career I have thought about him many times and have tried to achieve the confidence he showed in the face of any situation.

From Jerry DeBoer (6568): **Jack Bonner (COB)** was my father figure and was wise beyond description. Wonderfully dry sense of humor!

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DUTY SECTION NEWS

As of the end of January 2001:

DS 4548: 41 Found Alive, 24 Last Dive

DS 4952: 47 Found Alive, 27 Last Dive

DS 5356: 53 Found Alive, 19 Last Dive

DS 5760: 50 Found Alive, 11 Last Dive

DS 6164: 44 Found Alive, 3 Last Dive

DS 6568: 82 Found Alive, 9 Last Dive

DS 6972: 107 Found Alive, 9 Last Dive

DS ?????: 9 Found Alive, 2 Last Dive

RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP?:

If you have access to an email address and haven't yet told us about it, please contact me: RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM. Also, don't forget about our web site with over 750 photos. Go to <http://service.freesitenow.com/Sirago/> and follow the links (password ss485).

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