

Sirago Newsletter

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SIRAGO VETERANS' ASSN.

Sirago's Crew Members Start Incorporation Procedures

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Every Sirago crew member and honorary will receive with this newsletter a special insert focused on the Sirago Reunion Organization. Sea Leopard personnel are also receiving this newsletter for the purpose of keeping in touch until our April/May reunion, but will not receive the insert.

The purpose of this particular article is to inform everyone of the direction we have elected to take for the future of the Sirago reunion group.

As you all know, our "organization" comprises a reunion coordinator, duty section chiefs, and many volunteer workers for various projects encompassing reunion coordination, searching for crew members, raising money, and other necessary tasks. Over the past 2-3 years we have grown tremendously, from about 160 crewmembers found to about 630

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Torpedoman Culley joins the Russian Navy (cont.)!

Culley Relates Details of Russian Foxtrot Diesel

Bob Culley (TM2, 70-71)
Duty Section 6972

In the November issue, I related that I had found a Foxtrot-class Russian diesel boat in Seattle and, being a good qualified DBF guy, I got shanghaied into giving tours (after qualifying of course). Any good smoke-boater will tell you that if you've earned your dolphins in the U.S. diesel boat navy, you can pretty well "qualify" on any diesel submarine...just a matter of being able to interpret some language and you're ready to "rig for dive."

I went down to the dock when they towed it into the Seattle Pier 48 and talked with the sub business manager. He told me that it was open for tours the very next weekend. This was in late June 2002. Anyway, I found out that a bunch of local (Seattle) sub vets were volunteering to do the tour guide thing as a service to the local community (read "no pay"). So, anyway, having chased this type of sub around the North Sea for a couple of years while serving on the USS Simon Bolivar (SSBN 641), I thought it would be a "hoot" to actually put my own hands on the torpedo tubes of my adversaries and to see what we had been listening to, and chasing, for all of those months in the North Sea (1968-1969).

So...learning that I could help out and be a tour guide guy in the forward torpedo room (with another sub vet that was stationed in Norfolk about the same time period), well, it was mental candy to me. So they scheduled me and "Carl" to do the tour guide bit on Saturdays from 1300 to 1730 each weekend. As far as I know, it is still going on that way today, although I have recently moved to Nevada, so I can't confirm.

Here is some of the "lesser known" stuff about this boat:

The boat has no method of making fresh water—they

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have a big honking water tank and when they run out of water they just “go home.”

There is no bunking at all in the forward room. No escape hatch there either...you swim out the lower tubes if trapped in the forward room. That ought to work like a champ if wedged in the mud!

No enlisted (sit down) mess tables at all. They had food runners for all the enlisted dudes. Only the officers and the political officers got to sit down.

Bunks and movies are in the after torpedo room.

Three of the biggest honking diesels are abreast in the only Engine room. They can rig for direct drive: engine to clutch to gen/motor to clutch to shaft to screw...read “dump all the sound directly into the water”...but big speed and horsepower output. They are not of the Fairbanks Morse type with the cranks above and below the cylinder bores, each bore sharing two pistons (that’s strictly Yankee design, I’m told). These are more of a conventional engine with overhead valves, with a valve cover that looks in the photo like a table. As to the center engine, the shaft has what was explained to me as a “Jacking Motor”—windings around the shaft. When the Ruskies were trying to “run silent,” they shut down all the motors, etc., in the ship and the only propulsion that they would employ would be this small jacking motor, capable of about 2–3 knots. The windings are around the shaft just before it goes through the hull below the aft torpedo room (center line) to the room. It will only spin the shaft

super quiet and super slow.

Get this: no torpedo loading hatch in the aft room. Yep, they flood forward at the pier and blow aft, and with the tubes exposed aft they load the aft tubes from outside the boat through the muzzle doors (torpedo screws first), trying not to bend a screw, dealing with wind and currents. WOW! And there is only enough room in the aft torpedo room to partially pull the fish out to do a minimal PM on them while under way.

This diesel boat was prowling around our coast as late as the early 1990s and represents a curious mixture of new and old technology, all blended into a very interesting mix.

I must say, however, that as interesting as it was, I surely would never have wanted to call her my home. The EBA system, for example is no more than a personal mask and a hose about ¾ inch in size that attaches to a central “Filter Box” in each compartment to filter out the “Big Chunks” of smoke, etc., prior to having to breathe the stuff. There is not a separate air system at all—just a filter in the box that looks just like a car air filter.

Bob (the Cullster) Culley – TM2 (SS)

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Engine Room looking aft (STBD) – 3 engines abreast. Big one in the middle... 2 smaller ones port and starboard. The square units at Joe’s knee height are Valve Covers. Air to engines coming down from overhead in a turbine-like scoop. “Joe” is Joe Sciola, a neighbor of Bob Culley.



Bob Culley taking the Russian sub tour standing port side looking forward out of the wardroom which seats 12 (10 officers + 2 political officers). Check out round hatch aft.

REUNION 2003 - UPDATES!

As you should all know, our reunion is in VA Beach this next April 30–May 4, 2003. See reunion signup sheet included.

PLEASE SEND IN YOUR SIGNUP SHEET AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN. Space is filling up for events, and items for sale have already been ordered. There is a very "limited" inventory of items for sale at the reunion. Payment in full must be received by March 15, 2003, to guarantee your reservation for events.

Reunion Scholarship Fund: Currently 3 crewmembers are being funded on a "scholarship" basis to come to the reunion. Anyone desiring to contribute to this fund should mail checks to me (see return address on this newsletter) and mark them "SCHOLARSHIP FUND."

LANCASTER FUND UPDATE

STICKING TOGETHER IN TIMES OF NEED

As all of the "on-line" folks already know, Gus Lancaster (EN3 59–62) lost his son in a fatal car accident some months ago. In addition to the tragedy associated with losing a son, a further tragedy has occurred as a result of paperwork not being filled out properly when the son retired from the Navy just a few months before the accident. Apparently, both son and daughter-in-law failed to properly fill out the SBP (survivor benefit plan), so the daughter-in-law is left with no husband, young children, and no means of support.

Many crew members have come forward to contribute funds during this last holiday season and we are happy to report that a check for \$1000 was sent to Cindy Lancaster to help brighten an otherwise dark holiday season. Anyone desiring to chip into this fund can mail a check made out to USS Sirago and "marked" LANCASTER fund. Mail to me (see return address).

Furthermore, a number of crew members have provided contact names to see if this situation can be reversed so that Cindy can receive the benefits she thought she would be getting in the event of her husband's death. Although many have expressed doubt that much can be done, we are moving ahead with certain paperwork and filings to see if this can be reversed. Perhaps it cannot. However, I would encourage everyone to "support" this effort, at least until next June when we will probably know one way or another as to whether we can change the minds of the legal beagles in the United States Navy.

This notice is the last solicitation for this cause and I am hoping that a few more dollars can be raised.

crewmembers found "alive" and another 175 or so on eternal patrol. We have "accounted" for over half of all crew members who have ever stepped aboard the USS Sirago for active duty.

Under the advice of David Glaser (Duty Section Chief 6568), and with help from Walter Liptrap (5356), we have elected to take the big step of incorporating the group and chartering ourselves as a non-profit Veterans' Fraternal Association 501(c)(19). This will take some time to accomplish, as our homeland security group is watchful of all non-profit organizations these days so the paperwork has gotten more tedious. Under this structure, however, we will be able to offer a true tax benefit to anyone contributing to the organization (booster funds) as well as offering some level of protection for our leaders and coordinators.

We have adopted a structure of "officers" and will be adopting the name "USS Sirago (SS485) Veterans' Association, Inc." Most officers will serve for periods of at least 2 years and hopefully longer if they desire. Our officers to take charge for the 2003 – 2005 reunion term are as follows:

Commanding Officer: Mike Bickel (6972)
Executive Officer: David Glaser (6568)
Administrative Officer: Joe Roche (6164)
Disbursing Officer: "CUSH" Cushing (4952)
Supply Officer: "Wally" Walraven (5356)

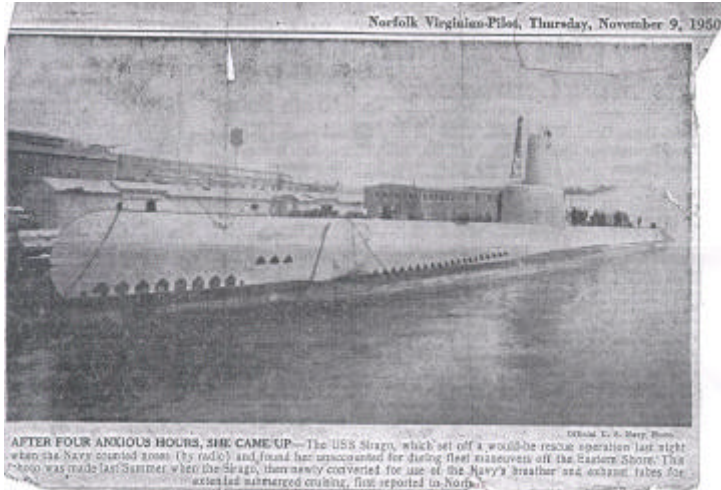
All the above officers have agreed to serve during this first "organizational" period (2003 – 2005). Starting with the May Newsletter, Joe Roche will be taking over the communication and roster administration functions. Starting this next summer, all monies will be transferred to accounts in Virginia with "CUSH" in charge of all disbursements. "Wally" will be our "home shopping channel."

David Glaser and I will direct activities and provide leadership as CO and XO of this group until and through the 2005 reunion. Both of us would like to see a "new" CO and XO team take over the running of the group after the 2005 reunion. We want to run this just like a boat, changing CO and XO every two years so nobody gets burned out. With a strong team in place and a well-structured organization defined, this should not be a problem.

More information will be provided at the reunion. ♦♦♦

SIRAGO TRIVIA

On November 8, 1950, Sirago went from a status of "Sub-Miss" to "Sub-Sunk" during operations off the east coast. For four anxious hours she was hunted while wives ashore suffered white knuckles. An aircraft during the exercise operations had dropped a red flare by mistake and Sirago was trying to shake a few destroyers during the operation when they missed responding to their SITREP.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

DUTY SECTION NEWS

OUR WEBSITE:

Our website is still "up and running" with a full complement of crew photos. Don't forget to add the password of ss485 when viewing the list of photo albums—this will give you access to 7 more albums called the "At Play" albums. The address is: <http://service.freesitenow.com/Sirago/>

RECENTLY DECEASED:

Calvin Howard (IC1, 54-56 died 8/2002)

Jerome Turkowitz (S2c, 47-47 died 5/30/2002)

FOUND ALIVE COUNTS (by duty section)

DS4548: 73	DS4952: 50	DS5356: 65
DS5760: 87	DS6164: 104	DS6568: 128
DS6972: 124		

RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP????

IF you have an e-mail address that we don't know about OR if your area code has changed recently OR if you have moved OR if you have died and it's your widow reading this and hasn't told us yet... please UPDATE us with your current status. It's hard enough finding all you steely-eyed killers of the deep, but to lose you after finding you is a true tragedy. Write or e-mail me

RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM regarding this.

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