

# Sirago Newsletter



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## Lookouts to the bridge!

*Stories from our crew*

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**Bill Albright (QM1, 47-48)**

I was not a lookout, but a Quartermaster First class. We had a previously qualified reserve officer aboard for his 2 weeks tour of duty. He was OOD. I went topside and told him I was going aft to take the Ensign down as we were getting ready to dive. It was a cold New London day and the halyard snaps were frozen. So I took a bit more time than usual. I heard the diving alarm and the vents starting to blow. Hit the deck and as luck would have it the diving alarm on the bridge had not yet been turned off. I hit it 3 times and they caught the dive just as the bow started under. They surfaced and opened the hatch. I popped down and things went on as usual for a school boat. I have never had an officer tell me he was sorry so many times in my life. Every time we passed each other or were within talking distance I got another apology. Scared the s\*\*t out of me though, as I had on heavy weather gear and the Sound is cold that time of the year. Don't know how long I could have lasted. But things worked

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## Now & Then! Looking Both Ways...

*Pictures & stories of the crew taken while stationed on Sirago and photos of them now.*



### “Doc” and Emma Lay - Now

I was aboard Sirago probably less than 12 months while Doc Lay was COB. A couple of things come to mind, the first being that Doc was the only professed Seventh Day Adventist that I knew during the USN years. You had to admire his living his beliefs and I can't recall a single instance when he reverted to anything more than "darn" or some similar expression of exasperation. My recollection is that there were frequent attempts by the after battery agitators to taint his dinner with pork but none that I know of that he didn't catch. During my stay on SS485, In the MED cruise of '63-'64, Doc was conspicuous in his acquiring some of the earliest mopeds I ever saw and brought them aboard (2 or 3) for the trip across the Atlantic.

out OK and I guess God had other plans for me.

**Darryl Brunsvold (ET3, 61-62)**

Most memorable lookout watch...that's easy. Anyone on board from Fall '61 until Spring '62 that remembers a blonde, 6'2" ET3 who was always seasick? That was me. Even though I reported aboard as an E4, I had to stand lookout watches until I qualified. I never did finish quals, by the way - after about 5 months on Sirago I was sent to Portsmouth Naval Hospital for evaluation of my motion sickness. From there I went through Nuc school (as an RO) but seasickness prevailed and I was assigned to tender duty. Funny thing is, during the 4 years I spent on the Hunley and the Proteus, I logged considerable time (months) underwater going out on sea trials on the boomers that we tended (lot smoother ride!). I mustered out as ET1 - I had passed the chief's test but opted for the new GI bill and got my engineering degree.

Anyway, I remember vividly one trip down near the Bahamas when we had to ride out a fairly nasty storm. I was the lone lookout on the bridge with a LTJG who thought the roller-coaster ride was fun. We were tied in with ropes and taking green water over the bridge about every other minute. Of course, our foul weather gear was soaked through. I was barfing all over the place but it didn't matter because every time one of those big rollers crashed down on us, it rinsed everything off. I still remember how the boat would start to shudder and you knew the next one was coming over the bridge. I would hang on for dear life and hold my breath, and when I could breathe again, try to get the salt water out of my eyes so I could do what I was supposed to be doing. The JG would holler something like, "Wow - that was great!" and go back to singing Calypso songs - I really do think he was enjoying it all. He finally sent me below, Doc gave me some more meds and I retreated to my rack with a barf bucket. I don't think I have ever been so miserable in my life. If memory serves me correctly, I was told later that we ended up steaming without a topside lookout watch until the storm let up some.

**Duane Gow (RM2, 52-52)**

As you all know, lookouts while on the surface turn into bow and stern planesmen when submerging. Being a radioman myself and in the control room area when this "transition" would occur reminded me of something.

When I was aboard in 1952 the Captain was WW Price. He seemed to love great up and down angles. In fact, rumor had it that his ambition was to "loop the loop" with a submarine. On one occasion we made a very fast dive with a VERY steep down angle. The torpedoman in charge of the forward room (can't remember who it was) submitted a request for transfer as soon as we were back in Norfolk. Capt Price reputedly told him, "Nobody goes out the back door on

my boat!" "Back door hell!" the TM replied, "One more dive like today and I'll be falling out the forward tubes!"

**Wally Walraven (TM2, 51-59)**

I stood an awfully lot of lookout details in the 8 years I was aboard. Seems funny that I can only think of a couple of memorable ones. I had the Starboard "hole" once on a dependence cruise. It was in October I believe and the weather was pretty horrible. Cold, windy and about 5 ft waves. My wife would never go to sea, so I was free to take any watch for those who had brought their wives. One Mate I believe 3rd class EN Johnson's wife got white as a sheet and asked to come to the bridge for some air. Needless to say I was downwind when the dam broke and got her breakfast and lunch, down the front of my foul weather jacket. That's as close as I came to giving up my own chow.

The other memory was a little scarier. We were in the North Atlantic in really horrible weather. Again it was winter and cold as hell. I'm pretty sure that Lt. Kilmer had the bridge. He actually enjoyed being there. A sailor to the end. Requin was supposed to be somewhere off our stbd qtr. We had to take the radar operator's word for that. We couldn't see anything because the waves were coming over our heads and there were times when I was pretty sure we were never going to surface. We were tied down so we couldn't get washed overboard but that only made the watch seem more dangerous. They finally had the common sense to get us below and navigate from the conning tower. I think I would rather get vomit on my foul weather jacket than be submerged on the bridge in the North Atlantic.

**Mick Finn (EN2, 68-70)**

Happened to come upon a Russian, Whiskey Class Boat whose CO thought his Doo Doo didn't stink. Passed each other in opposite directions, very close and very slowly. CO was called to the bridge at first sighting and when asked if we would "dip the colors" for them he replied, "Right after He does". Not gonna happen that day. So, after insuring the Russian CO had no intention of making the first move our illustrious CO "Flipped them Off" It was a proud moment for me. Pretty sure they caught the gesture as the Russian boat replied with a flashing light message of "DITTO". I remember asking if I could flash (moon) them back but was told not to push our luck.

I don't believe I'm still remembering some of the antics we got into in those days.

I also spent some "lookout" time under the FTR hatch during "Open House", but that's another story.

**Editors Note:** *As an Engineman, I can also attest to the superb eyesight of the engineroom gang. We may not have been able to hear a sonar contact. But we certainly adept at spying "Open House" contacts...Especially those coming down the FTR hatch!!*

## REUNION 2003 – A BLAST!

A total of 132 Sirago crewmembers and 88 Sea Leopard crew members plus their wives, girlfriends, guests, and crew widows attended this most recent reunion. Photos will be posted on our website over the next few weeks as they are received (see page 4 for website updates).

For those of you interested in “who won the ball game?”, the SIRAGO was declared the winner with a score of 18 – 12 against the SEA LEOPARD. Both team captains were awarded engraved baseball bats and made “honorary Captains” of their respective boats.

### REUNION 2005 – Portsmouth, NH!

Our next reunion will most probably be held in Portsmouth, NH on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commissioning of the USS Sirago (August 13, 1945 was commissioning). So... please be thinking about the August 10 – August 14, 2005 period to be a Portsmouth, NH to relax, do some whale watching, and visit to the shipyard for a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremony. More information on this will follow as we solidify our plans.

## WAR VETERAN? LET US KNOW.

### TAX STATUS FOR SIRAGO GROUP DEPENDS ON YOU

We are filing as a Veteran's Association under the 501(c)(19) status. This status allows us to count any member, associate, or honorary who is associated with any “war time” to go toward the 90% requirement to be 100% tax exempt on boosters, dues, etc. Here's how it works.

If you were in the military at any time during the below periods (whether on Sirago or not) you QUALIFY for this status of being a “war vet” even though you saw no war. Many of you have already let me know via email if you fell into this category. However, many of you are “snail mailers” and haven't heard us discussing this. SO... if you are a snail mailer and “qualify” per the dates below PLEASE send Joe Roche (see return address) a note indicating you are a war vet. Do this also if you have never informed anyone of this status.

#### Valid Date Ranges to Qualify:

12/7/1941 – 11/30/1946

6/27/1950 – 1/31/1955

8/5/1964 – 5/7/1975

Please note also that it doesn't matter if the service was Active Duty or Reserve.

Seems there was a real effort required to get them disassembled enough to get below deck but these were to be his preferred means of transportation during retirement (hills of Alabama?).

Doc was not a man of many words but knew what had to be done - and did it with respect and dedication. - Joe Hoffman *DS-6164*



Doc and Emma Then-During a dependents cruise

Joe -

You are absolutely right about the after battery agitators trying to get him to eat pork. One night during our infamous mid-rats spread of un-named, unknown cold cuts, (that always had a green sheen to them) some leftover pork chops were put out. One nefarious IC-man, by the name of Larry Jinks, who I am certain you remember, asked Doc if he wanted anything. Doc asked him to make him a sandwich of something, which Jinks did, but added a boned pork chop.

I heard Doc took a bite, and hollered (supposedly heard from the FTR to the FER hatch) that if he got a hold of Jinks he would have him shot out of the GDU...Jinks of course, had slunk out of control & was long gone. All that considered, Doc was a good sport about it.

As to the mopeds. In a telephone conversation I had with him last summer, he recalled he took them apart and used the engines to run a saw, or pump water while he was building his house. Joe Roche *DS6164*

## OFFICER CHANGE NOTICE!

### Mike Bickel

Please take note that **Joe Roche** has taken over the Sirago newsletter. Any / all correspondence relating to your address, phone number, email address, etc. should be directed to him (see return address). His email address is: [jfr485@optonline.net](mailto:jfr485@optonline.net). Joe has been confirmed as the "Administrative Officer" of our group and will serve until at least 2005 in this capacity.

**Garry Goetschius** has been confirmed and will act as both Disbursing Officer and Treasurer for the group.

**PLEASE NOTE:** All Checks (booster, dues, or any other contributions or payments) **MUST** be made out to:

### USS Sirago

and must be mailed to:

Garry Goetschius  
3620 Locust Circle East  
Prospect, KY 40059-9020

Other officers include myself, **David Glaser**, and **Leonard Walraven** (aka "Wally"). David will act as Executive Officer and Wally will be our Supply Officer.

Joe Roche  
74 Lincoln Ave.  
Pearl River, NY 10965-1707

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## DUTY SECTION NEWS

### Recently Deceased Sirago Crewmembers:

*John P. Arkfeld* (S1/c, 46-47 died 10/02/02)  
*Stanford Burnham* (S1/c, 45-46 died Summer 02)  
*William C. Jay* (EM3, 51-53 died 1/11/03)  
*George H. Leistensnider* (ET3, 48-48 died 4/15/03)  
*John Linevitch* (STS1, 63-65 died 10/31/02)  
*Melvin R. Preston* (PHM1, 47-47 died 8/24/02)  
-----*Sailor, rest your oar*

## WEBSITE NEWS

Our website has recently undergone a major change. Please check out [www.sirago.com](http://www.sirago.com) for access to photos, on-line crew lists, crew status lists, reunion information, Sirago history and more. Websites do cost money so "booster" funds are always appreciated.

## TREASURER CHANGE

**Please Note:** Our new Treasurer / Disbursing Officer is Garry Goetschius. Please mail ALL contributions to his address (**not** to return address of this newsletter). See opposite panel.

US POSTAGE  
STAMP  
HERE