

Sirago Newsletter

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November 2000

“More Stories” from the Duty Sections

Sifting Through the Email Traffic

Mike Bickel

Duty Section 6972

Here I am listening in on those great “stories” again. It’s great to be on email and be able to hear what other crew members have to say about their experiences on the Sirago. Some of these stories are a bit risqué but I am sure they will still be appreciated. “Opinions expressed in these stories are not necessarily those of Sirago Reunion Management.... Yada yada yada.”

From Harold Haugland (QM1):

I seem to remember that we were in port for a holiday and had ladies and children on board. There was a mess cook that had dropped down the storeroom hatch in the after battery to get some ice cream topping or something like that. He had been down there so long that nobody thought about it when we started a movie of cartoons and some "Family Flicks". Anyway near the end of the reel, he pushes up the hatch, out comes the ice cream topping can, and this hand reaches up and

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The Loss of Bill Gerber

Coordinating a decade of reunions, Bill will be missed!

Mike Bickel

Duty Section 6972

On September 24th, 2000, Bill Gerber died. Only a few hours before, some shipmates had visited him in his home and Bill’s last words to them were “See ya”. Although we all knew that Bill was in failing health and needed a tether to an oxygen tank because of recent lung failure, there was never any doubt in any of our minds that he would somehow “be there” at the next reunion. At least we were hoping for a miracle because he told some of us that he had already seen his last reunion... the one he coordinated in 1999 amidst Hurricane Floyd in Norfolk.



William (Bill) Gerber – April 1948

The Sirago Reunions date back about 10 years, a fact which shocks every new crewmember who is welcomed aboard. They weren’t BIG reunions, but rather started with a group of 10. Although Bill didn’t

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grabs somebody's wife's ankle and he says "Which one of you G** D** F*ing Fags is wearing nylons?" It was like the Adams' Family. He lets go of the ankle, pulls back the hand and the hatch closes very quietly. He stayed down there till after the movie was done and the families had left the boat.

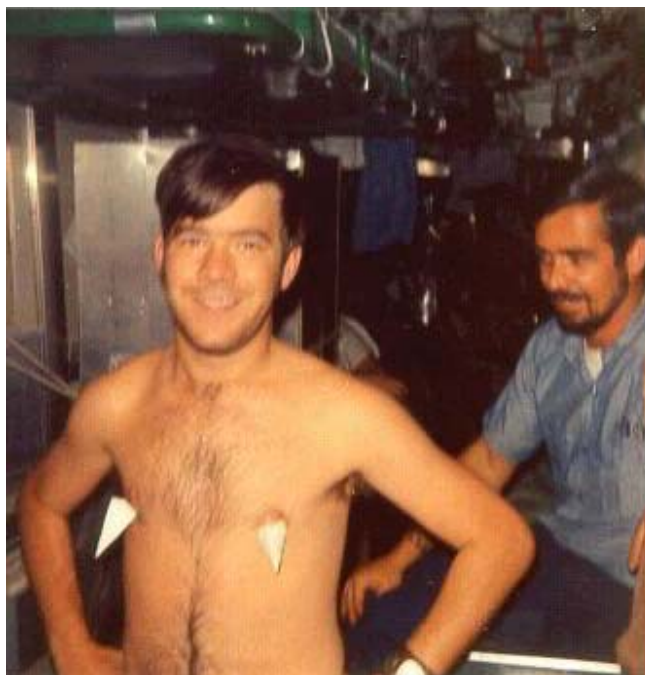
From Les Lammers (SN)

As we all know, Fairy Tales start with "Once Upon a Time" and Sea Stories start with " This ain't no bullship" or something to that effect. This one starts above Norway, above the Arctic Circle, in the middle of nowhere. A summer cruise with 80 guys you knew by smell, or knew so well. We were going in circles for three weeks, doing donuts in the ocean. Doesn't take much to keep this crew amused. We ran out of food missing a port call due to the aggressive op schedule, and ate fried bologna cartwheels at every meal. The Captain deferred asking the aircraft carrier to send us some chow. We were "By Gawd Bubbleheads" and could wash down the bologna with diesel fuel! We saw all the movies on board several times and were starved for entertainment. Somebody decided we should organize a dance! Now to the uninitiated, normal person, this would seem weird and bordering on a homosexual experience. To us, however it seemed completely normal and what the hell, we didn't have any goats or sheep on board. They ran when they saw us coming! Who sez animals are dumb!

So we took the mini strobe lights off the life jackets. If the boat sank in the North Atlantic we would freeze to death in twenty minutes anyway, so who cares if we were found. The strobes were hung on the racks in the forward torpedo room. The Fillmore Auditorium had nothing on us. The reel to reel tape deck in the sonar shack was getting ready to rock the rolling boat. We called each other and arranged dates. I was going with Bunky Antos a Machinist Mate in the forward engine room. He was cute and greasy! That night the Big Deal went down. All the debutantes were there! The Beatles White Album, complete with reverb, was blasting from the sonar room. Every one was having a great time. Once in awhile an officer could be seen pressing an eyeball to the glass port on the watertight door. They knew better than to come in. So we were dancing, having a good time and then, our normally mild mannered YN2 (SS) completely lost his inhibitions and pulled out a pair of panties, placed them on his

head and started to REALLY get into the swing of things. We all busted his chops 'cause he was holding out with the goodies. These were the real deal given to him by his blushing bride. He was in a trance-like state as the aroma of Eau De ???? completely permeated his being. The next thing we know the Capitano Man enters the Torpedo Room and takes a look at 'ol "yoeman", the first Victoria's Secret Model in the U.S. Navy, and screams "Young Man, You are Sick". Well the Old Man really put a lid on things with that statement and that was the end of the dance. ♦♦♦

Retired Chief (ETCM) Gregory Bell "At the Hop":



CALENDAR OF FUTURE EVENTS

REUNION 2001

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

MAY 2ND – MAY 6TH 2001

Sirago Reunion – Lake Wright Resort

Please keep your calendars open for this event! It's never too early to sign up. We are expecting about 125 crew members plus guests so it should be quite a blowout. Could be even more there. **SEE NEXT ARTICLE.**

REUNION 2001 – LAKE WRIGHT

SIGNUP SHEET ENCLOSED – SIGN UP NOW!

I hope that you have all reserved early May of next year to join your crewmates in one of the largest submarine reunions happening in the U.S. I say this with confidence because I am in contact with 218 of our 375 "found" crewmates by email and I can tell you that everyone is excited about having this next reunion and my guess is that 125+ crew members will show up with their wives and guests, so we'll pretty much be "owning" the Lake Wright Resort.

I have included a schedule of events and two (2) copies of the signup sheet so that you can fill both out and keep a copy for your records. **PLEASE** get this document in to me as soon as possible. The "form itself" is the most important item to get in, even if you "hold back" payment until March 15th (the final due date for money in for "advance pay" items). Of course I would "rather" that you pay for all advance-pay items with the form since it makes my accounting much easier. You will notice on the form that in the event you must "cancel", and you do so by March 15th, I will reimburse your monies in full (except for special discount tickets for Nauticus).

Lots of planning has already gone into this event. The photographer has been contracted, guest speakers are lined up, restaurants have been reserved, etc. This planning and work has been done by a dedicated group of individuals from the Virginia Beach and surrounding area including Bob Bracken, Dale Craig, Al Inboden, Robert Holt, Dick Underwood, "Wally" Walraven, David Hauer, "Big Robbie" Roberts and many others. This "local coordination" effort has been led by Capt. Prentice "Cush" Cushing, and we appreciate all the good work he and his group have performed.

Unlike some other boat reunions, the Sirago reunions have never been "lame". People you know will be there. This is an event you can proudly bring your wife and kids to. ♦♦♦

personally "start" the reunions, he was part of running them practically from the beginning. Wendell (Ray) Rausch (DS6568) actually started the reunions for Sirago, but it was "GERB" who got them organized and coordinated. Databases were created, a newsletter was written and Bill built the reunion group from 10 to about 160 people when I found out about it in Spring of 1999. Since that time with Bill's help, we have built the group to over 375 "found" people and another 85 "last dive" crew members which now includes our "GERB".

Bill had had a bit of trouble on his computer in the few months before his death and some of his crewmates were getting concerned and called me to see if there was anything wrong. I contacted Bill and found him cussing his computer saying that he would have it working shortly. A few weeks later I got my last email message from him. As usual, he was giving me information on a crew member that he wanted to be sure was in the database. This was Bill in true form. He never stopped caring and he never stopped working.



Bill Gerber (center) at the 1999 Reunion

Bill will be sorely missed. He had a way of getting people to share his passion for the crew and to take on whatever tasks were necessary to make it a success. I was there in Norfolk during Hurricane Floyd and I can personally tell you that no stupid old Hurricane was going to keep Bill from having a successful reunion and a great time. Reunion

2001 will be dedicated to "GERB"!◆◆◆

SIRAGO – MERRY CHRISTMAS

Since there won't be another newsletter until February, I thought I would wish you all a Merry Christmas. I have heard many stories of the personnel on the Sirago having to spend Christmas in a foreign port, making up presents for needy children, or being underwater at the time. These brethren gave so much and continue to give so much to their fellow shipmates. Merry Christmas!



DUTY SECTION NEWS

Here is the tally on our Crew Seeking Activities. I'm just starting to work on 5760 so don't worry, we'll get them all over 40... I guarantee it!

DS 4548: 42 Found Alive, 23 Last Dive

DS 4952: 47 Found Alive, 23 Last Dive

DS 5356: 45 Found Alive, 14 Last Dive

DS 5760: 26 Found Alive, 2 Last Dive

DS 6164: 42 Found Alive, 3 Last Dive

DS 6568: 55 Found Alive, 8 Last Dive

DS 6972: 106 Found Alive, 8 Last Dive

DS ?????: 10 Found Alive, 2 Last Dive

Photopoint News:

Try this NEW Link for Sirago which has a link to photopoint albums (don't forget password of ss485):

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

Mike Bickel
1125 Villaview Dr.
Manchester, MO 63021

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