

# Sirago Newsletter

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## Sea Leopard joins Reunion!

*Two Tench-Class Smoke-Boat Sisters Meet in VA Beach*

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Within six months of the last reunion, we got to thinking how great it would be if we could just invite another smoke boat from SUBRON 6 to our reunion. A number of boat names were mentioned including Grampus, Cutlass, etc., but the Sea Leopard (SS483) kept coming up in the conversation. Of all the boats in the squadron, the Sirago and Sea Leopard were the most alike, both being the same Tench class, made in Portsmouth, same configurations (except for that extra-big battery of the Sea Leopard) and only 2 apart in hull numbers. So we went after her—decided to “sortie” with her. It took a while to find her, but we did and then got our sonar team together with hers to resurrect as many of her crew as we could find to come. Please also refer to the special insert on the USS Sea Leopard. Although this “relationship” just exists through the reunion, the Sirago has been given permission to

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## Torpedoman Culley joins the Russian Navy!

*Reading Russian Quickly – He Qualifies!*

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

This Foxtrot-class diesel boat caught my attention in Seattle Washington. I visited it and when the owner (who bought it for \$75K) saw I was a smoke-boat sailor, he drafted me into his “tour guide” group. As none of us knew how to read Russian, we found a lady who did and we led her from gauge to manifold, etc., asking her what each sign said. That’s how I “qualified” (got her signature!). As a Sirago torpedoman, I had only “heard” about these boats. Now I’m one of them! I will give more facts in the next issue. ♦♦♦



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"pilot" the Sea Leopard crew to Virginia Beach and show them a good "Sirago" time. See also the article on the REUNION regarding the softball game, etc. I thought it would be a good idea to hear some "Sea Leopard" stories, so here we go:

Tom Tyler (MM3, 71-73):

We were out on a Med cruise—the XO was one of those types who liked to do middle-of-the-night drills. He went back into maneuvering and pulled a K-switch...we lost all planes! The fella that worked in maneuvering was asleep in the aft torpedo room and heard the alarm and responded. His name was Madalinski. Ski always had one speed: slow but steady. This particular time he was blazing a trail. He entered maneuvering and saw the K-switch pulled and reset it. Control room got all their planes back. The XO said he wanted this switch pulled as part of the drill and pulled it open again, making for yet another loss of all planes. We are now at a pretty hefty down angle and passing test depth...the captain takes charge and calls for "Blow safety!" I looked over and saw submarine old-timers I knew were not religious, sitting in the corner doing the Hail Mary heart cross. For some reason I wasn't concerned. It took about 30-45 seconds (an eternity for some) for the safety tank to overcome the down angle and forward momentum, but we popped to the surface like a cork and safety did exactly what it was designed to do <thank God>! I've seen men count on God that day that never believed in God until that day.

Jerry Hooper (EM2, 56-58):

I guess the statute of limitations has run out on this. In about 57 or 58, we discovered that the air conditioner in the maneuvering room would hold 3 cases of beer. We got tired of removing and replacing 16 screws to remove the inspection plate, so we took it the shop and for a couple of pounds of coffee we got a pair of hinges and 15 screw heads welded on. Then, we were just 1 screw away from a cool one.

Ed Covey (LTJG, 58-59):

When SEA LEOPARD was working with Task Group Alfa, we had a lot of experiments. One was inspired by Admiral Joe Thatch who thought he could catch submarines by tying a bell on them.

S2F aircraft would sow hundreds of little bells attached

to magnets that were supposed to attach to the sub.

After repeated inquiries from Admiral Thatch to other ships and planes in the area as to the results of such "bell spraying" on the submerged Sea Leopard, Skipper Joe Bonds finally got tired of the nonsense and got on the UQC and said something to the effect:

"WAIT A F---ING MINUTE AND I WILL STICK MY ARM THROUGH THE HULL AND RING YOUR F---ING BELL FOR YOU.

No more inquiries from Admiral Thatch.

Wendell (Ray) Rausch (EM1, 57-66)

This is a story about Marv Shevela and me when we made Port in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He and I went to the EM Club to do a little drinking. We got started on Zombies and don't ask me how many we drank but we consumed quite a few before the Shore Patrol was called to put us out. We got into a fight with the Shore Patrol (probably 3 fellows) that started off as just a "pushing us out the door" match, but when one of them unstrapped his billy club I became convinced that he would use it on my head, so I grabbed it out of his hand. Then I turned him upside down in the dumpster with help from Marv and I was beating the bottom of his shoes with the club. They did finally get us corralled and put us in the paddy wagon to take us to Shore Patrol Headquarters.

During the ride, I noticed there was a spare tire lying on the floor of the van. When they arrived and went around to unlock us from our cage, opening the back door, it went flying out of the van hitting one of them right in the middle of the stomach.

After they booked us, they proceeded to take us back to the boat, but before we got there I managed to escape and started to run to the boat on my own. Who was on duty that evening I have no idea because I don't remember anything about it. As you can figure out, I was restricted for the rest of the Caribbean Cruise. What a waste! All that fun I missed on the rest of the cruise to St Thomas and Columbia. Oh well, I did it myself. ♦♦♦

*Editor's Note: This self-described "Wild Man" is none other than the person who officially "started" the reunions for both the USS Sirago and the USS Sea Leopard in 1992. We all owe him much gratitude.*

## 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 BEFORE DECEMBER 15, 2002.** The reason for this plea is that space is filling up for events, and items for sale will need to be ordered by year-end. You can pay “partially” and then pay the remainder by March 15, 2003, but we need those signup sheets. Also: **BOOK YOUR ROOM.** We have a certain room “blockage” until the end of the year and if not “used,” many of those rooms will be removed from our block factor. 221 Sirago and 103 Sea Leopard crewmembers will be there.

**Reunion Scholarship Fund:** Once again, we will be offering some “free rooms” and some “cash” to crewmembers who might otherwise not be able to make it to the reunion. If you find yourself in that situation, please e-mail or call me and we will put your name in the hat. This is 100% confidential and for both boats. Mike Bickel (636) 225-7528, [RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM](mailto:RMBICKEL@STUPP.COM). Contributions also appreciated.

## SIRAGO / SEA LEOPARD CONTEST

WHO WILL WIN THE “E” THIS TIME?

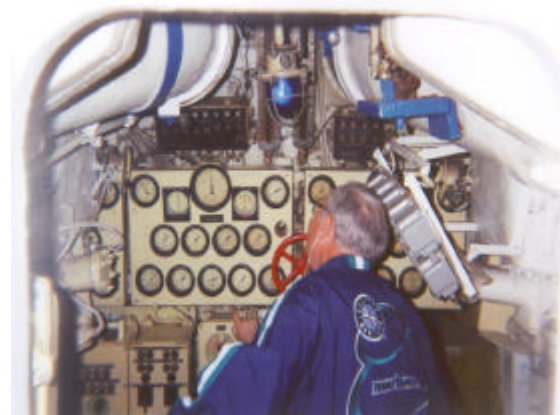
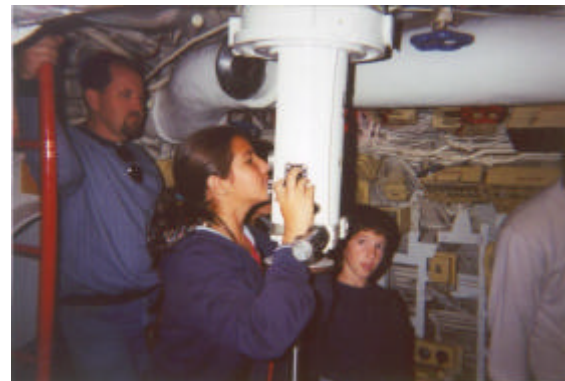
After the “Pirate Picnic” that will take place on Saturday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, 2003, Sirago crew members (with the help of wives, kids, and grandkids) will challenge the Sea Leopard crew (also with wives, kids, and grandkids) to a **softball game** right there at the picnic. Captain for the Sirago side is Ken Koller (RM2, 64-66). Sea Leopard will be Captain'd by Don Espeseth (TM2, 61-67). These two SUBRON SIX, COMSUBDIV 61 Smoke-Boat Sisters will see, once and for all, who really deserves to have the Division “E”. Please e-mail or call Ken Koller or Don Espeseth if you can participate for your boat. Bring a glove if you can.

Ken Koller: [KenKoller@earthlink.net](mailto:KenKoller@earthlink.net) (208) 524-4726.

Don Espeseth: [despeseth@comcast.net](mailto:despeseth@comcast.net) (609) 953-8656.



*Sirago Team - 1946*



*Top: Tubes Aft...no room for torpedoes, just bunks. Check out space between torpedoes...wide beam. Middle: Control Room Looking Port. Ladder goes up to Conn. Bottom: Air Auxiliary Station (air banks) w/ “Christmas Tree” in Overhead.*

## SUPPORTING THE NEWSLETTER

There have been a number of "serious contributors" to our newsletter publishing efforts, not just in story writing, but also in terms of "booster funds." When Frank Berlingeri (see card below) made his contribution, he included his card. Used to be he was an "oiler" and a damned good "pump forward trim to sea" guy. Now he's a doctor. As he says: "A pump's a pump!" All contributions are welcome!

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## DUTY SECTION NEWS

### Recently Deceased Sirago Crewmember:

**Jimmie R. Moore** (EM2, 50-52 died 6/30/02)



Jimmie Moore rightmost in photo. EM2 on USS Sirago. Later he went to the Naval Academy and was CO of the USS Odax (SS484). Jimmie attended our last reunion (2001) and is shown below.



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