

# U.S.S. Mississinewa



AO-59  
**SCUTTLEBUTT**

Summer 2002 – Issue 5  
<http://www.ussmississinewa.com>

## It's Written... *Now We Need To Find A Publisher!*

Well, after a tremendous amount of work, Mike Mair has completed the writing of his book about the U.S.S. Mississinewa, AO-59. It now has been turned over to James P. Delgado, the Executive Director of the Vancouver Maritime Museum and renowned maritime author. Mr. Delgado has already started the difficult job of editing. By September the manuscript is expected to be ready to approach US Naval Institute's (USNI) senior editor Fred Schultz, who, we hope will be publishing the book. Mike has requested the title: Oil, Fire & Fate: The Story of WW-II's USS Mississinewa, AO-59.

Mike has been informed that it could take up to as much as 12 to 18 months from receipt of the manuscript before it is actually published. Because of the long time required in publishing a book, Mike Mair and Bob Fullerman are going to produce a "Rough Draft" of the book and try to make it available to the "crew and families" of the AO-59. More news on that will be going out, as soon as we have more concrete information to share.

## The Passing Of Our Crewmen

Lawrence Delet-Kanic, S2c



Lawrence H. Glaser, SM1c



Robert Vulgamore, F1c



Paul T. Upchurch, S2c



Leo Cummings, S2c



Robert Vulgamore, F1c

November 7, 1910 - October 30, 2001

Robert (Bob) Vulgamore was born in Wakefield, Ohio and enlisted in the US Navy in Portsmouth, Ohio in late 1943. Bob and his wife Helen were married in 1931 and had five



# The U.S.S. Mississinewa lies silently and peacefully, 120 feet below the ocean's surface, in the far away Ulithi Atoll lagoon.



Photo by: Dr. Rick Von Stein

## News from Sickbay:

Back in the Sickbay, but this time as a patient...we're all wishing John Bayak a speedy recover from his recent heart attack.

Well, Mike Mair has been spending a lot of time on his back lately. But it's hard keeping him down or at least still while he's been down. Mike underwent back surgery to correct a problem and spent over a month recovering. During that "recovery" time Mike spent most of it working on completing his book.

## United States To Remove Oil From AO-59... Leaking oil poses threat to Ulithian People

The beginning of August 2001 found the USS Mississinewa, AO-59, marking her final resting place by leaking fuel into the Ulithi Atoll lagoon.

Chip Lambert was requested to help in the effort to stop the leak. His experience with having discovered the position of the AO-59 only months earlier made him invaluable to the team sent to Ulithi Atoll. The

leak was stopped with a temporary concrete patch and pumped an oil-and-water mixture from one ship compartment.

Then again on December 23, 2001, another leak was reported. According to an article published in the Pacific Daily News, Yap State disaster coordinator Jesse Raglmar-Subolmar said the oil had drifted away from the main fishing areas used by the

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approximately 700 residents of Ulithi but posed a great threat to their source of food and livelihood.

A slick of oil formed on the water's surface measuring about 500 yards wide and 1 mile long. It was estimated that the AO-59 was leaking oil at a rate of 350 gallons per hour.

The leak was repaired and nearly 2,500 gallons of "trapped" oil was removed. The ship did not have to be



Photo by: Dr. Rick Von Stein

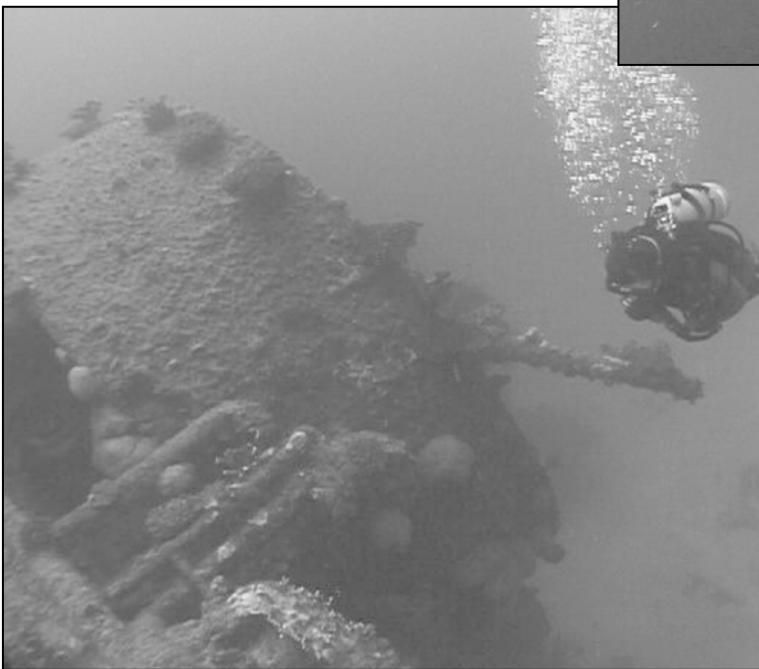


Photo by: Dr. Rick Von Stein

Lifted or moved therefore divers were not required to go inside the ship.

In January of this year, US Navy's Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William Fallon ordered that the oil be removed from the AO-59. The Navy will have to go to Congress to get the money but expects the request to be approved. This action will not be considered a disturbance of a war grave. Not disturbing the grave site is of great importance to the Navy Department and is believed to be not necessary.

Forward starboard storage compartment examined by Pat Scannon. (Photo rotated to show forward starboard hatch next to storage hatch.)



Photo by: Chip Lambert

### Information or Suggestions for future newsletters are needed !!!

Please send them to: Bob Fulleman

551 N. Ocotillo Lane • Gilbert, AZ 85233 • e-mail: azfull@usa.net

## **The Passing Of Our Crewmen - Continued**

children when Bob enlisted in the Navy at age 33. Already a diesel mechanic before enlisting, Vulgamore became a Fireman 1st class not long after boot camp at Great Lakes NTC. Vulgamore served a brief stint at the University of Illinois for Navy diesel school and shipped out for the Pacific on board the troop ship General Howze.

Vulgamore arrived at Manus in August, 1944 and was transferred to the Mississinewa where he stood watch in the aft pump room. Bob made the coffee daily for the fireroom and engineer room sailors on watch with him. Vulgamore escaped the burning AO-59 on Nov. 20, 1944 and was taken to the USS Pamasset AO-85. The Vulgamores had 3 more children after WWII raising all eight as Bob hauled cars for the automakers until 1954. He went to work for the Army Corps of Engineers until retiring on a medical disability in 1962. Bob and Helen moved to Florida because that's where the fishing was! Helen died on June 5, 1997 and was preceded in death by two of her children. Bob came to the Mississinewa's Corpus Christi, TX reunion in 1999 with daughter Judi and son-in-law Ed Lamere. Bob and Helen had eight children - Nancy, Ruth, Emily (deceased), Bobby(deceased), Larry, Judi, Gail and Sue. Mike and Nancy Mair visited Bob in a Florida hospital near his home just days prior to his death on October 30, 2001.

Lawrence H. Glaser SM1c

November 8, 1918 - October 22, 2001

Lawrence (Larry) Glaser was raised in Polk County Missouri and joined the US Navy in October 1939. He reported aboard the battleship USS Idaho after boot camp at Great Lakes NTC. By June 1941, Glaser was learning to be a signalman and saw the USS Idaho dodge a torpedo during a transatlantic convoy run.

Glaser was then assigned to the USS Sperry and then spent time on shore duty at the Navy's Bremerton, Washington submarine base. The Signalman 1st class was assigned to the USS Mississinewa upon return to the States. Glaser was awakened by the TBS radio squawking from the bridge radio room as he tried to sleep on a cot in the open on the starboard wing of the bridge. Glaser covered his head with a blanket to diminish the sound of the TBS radio which saved his life as fire engulfed him minutes later from the kai ten explosion. Glaser suffered serious injuries as he jumped from the top of the AO-59 bridge two decks above the well deck to escape the heat and flames. Larry's description of his escape and the witness of what he called the "most sincere prayer" he ever heard, "My God!"...is the title of the first chapter of the AO-59 book. Glaser became a Baptist minister after the war. Larry was also a psychologist, theologian, songwriter and the author of four books. Larry and his wife Wanda, attended the 1999 Mississinewa Reunion in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Larry is survived by his wife Wanda, six sons, one daughter and five step-daughters. He was buried in Missouri Veterans Cemetery, Springfield, MO.



Lawrence Del et-Kanic, S2c

October 26, 1926 - November 28, 2001

Lawrence Del et-Kanic was born in Courtland, Pennsylvania enlisting in the US Navy at Woolsboro, PA in late 1943 at age 17. Del et-Kanic was in forward berthing under the bridge when the Japanese kai ten struck the starboard side of the USS Mississinewa on Nov. 20, 1944. He rushed to midships as the heat and flames forward consumed the ship. A buddy with him told Del et-Kanic he couldn't swim. Larry replied, "Well, you're going to have to learn now!" Del et-Kanic helped pull the other sailor underneath burning oil, rising to the surface splashing to gulp for air. The pair swam 50 feet to flame free clear water near the fantail. Del et-Kanic served the rest of WWII at a Navy ammo dump in California joking to family and friends that "he had gone from one explosive situation

## The Passing Of Our Crewmen - Continued

to another." Del et-Kanic summarized his Navy experience to the youngsters in his family. "I joined the Navy, I took a swim, I came home!" Lawrence is survived by his wife Virginia, who resides in South Daytona, Florida. Del et-Kanic has two sons, Curtis and Russell and a daughter Robin.



Paul T. Upchurch, S2c

October 26, 1926 - November 28, 2000

Paul Upchurch was born March 4, 1926 in Benson, North Carolina. Paul entered the Navy in Bainbridge, NC, in 1944. Paul was almost assigned to the Mount Hood Ammunition ship. The Mount Hood exploded in Manus Harbor, Admiralty Islands with the loss of all hands on November 10th, 1944. After survivors leave he was sent to San Jose, California, serving aboard LST-13. He earned the rating of RDM3c while serving aboard LST-13.

Paul faced another battle, a battle lasting several years with Parkinson's disease. His illness kept him from attending the A0-59 reunion in Corpus Christi, TX in 1999. He died on May 31, 2000 and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, Section 65, Grave 2558.



Leo S. Cummings S2c

October 31, 1925 - April 17, 2002

Leo Cummings joined the Navy in January 1944 serving his boot camp time in Sampson, New York. Born in Cohasset, Massachusetts, the 18 year-old sailor had worked as a welder at Hingham Shipyards before the war and began working for his metal smith rating aboard the USS Mississippi as a striker under the tutelage of Al Bell, M1c. Cummings soon learned the duties of the C & R gang aboard ship. He also worked as a member of the Division One deckhands helping transfer aircraft AVG gas to carriers, battleships and cruisers that fueled on the port side of the A0-59. Cummings performed a dangerous assignment in October 1944 when Captain Beck ordered a platform welded for bos'n chair transfer by highline two days before the survivors of the crippled cruiser Houston came aboard while fueling. Cummings performed the hazardous assignment high above the potentially explosive AVG gas tanks despite a GQ that left him alone for 45 minutes while the deck cleared below, the crew rushing to battle stations. Cummings survived the Nov. 20, 1944 loss of the ship when he jumped overboard with buddy Bob Conners and was taken by small boat to LCI-79. Cummings stood next to Conners and Bell aboard the USS Tappahannock A0-43 and watched the "Miss" sink. Cummings was promoted to M3c and assigned to Seal Beach Naval Station in San Diego welding damage on ships hit by kamikazes during the invasion of Okinawa. Mustered out of the Navy in June 1946, Cummings was self-employed as a homebuilder with his sons joining him to form their family business Leo S. Cummings & Sons. Cummings retired in 1990. He is survived by his wife Mary, sons Raymond, Ronald and a daughter Diane MacMillan.

All-59

March 27, 2002 - Chip Lambert and Mike Mair received notice from Liese Carrington, Administrative Assistant for Proceedings/Naval History Magazines, that the story that they co-authored has been accepted for publication. It will be running in either PROCEEDINGS or NAVAL HISTORY. We'll get the word out as to exactly which issue as soon as it is determined.

Chip and Mike have very generously donated the earnings made from writing their article about finding the USS Mississippi to the A0-59, Reunion fund. It's that fund that helps to pay for the Scuttlebutts to be printed and postage.



## "We Stand With You".

- German Destroyer in Mediterranean shows support for USA with banner and flying US flag after September 2001.

German Destroyer in the Mediterranean. (Note the American flag flying in the top right portion of the photo.)

## News from the Quarterdeck:

Eaine Kelle is trying to locate anyone who knew her father, Gaston Cote, S1c, who passed away November 20, 1944. Please contact her by calling 603-899-6219 or email her at luv2so@surfbest.net.

Frank Wilcox, S1c sent along a photography taken during his recent trip to Austria and Germany. He visited Berchtesgaden, Germany and Hitler's Eagles Nest.



BERCHTESGADEN, GERMANY. EAGLE'S NESTS 2001

AU-59

This comes from the son of the grain division manager at Ag Partners coop, in Goodhue, MN, (Bill Ahlbrecht). His son is in the navy. Very inspiring.

This is an e-mail from a young ensign aboard USS Winston Churchill (DDG-81) to his parents. (Churchill is an Arleigh Burke class AEGIS guided missile destroyer.

Dear Dad,

We are still at sea. The remainder of our port visits have all been cancelled. We have spent every day since the attacks going back and forth within imaginary boxes drawn in the ocean, standing high-security watches, and trying to make the best of it.

We have seen the articles and the photographs, and they are sickening. Being isolated, I don't think we appreciate the full scope of what is happening back home, but we are definitely feeling the effects.

About two hours ago, we were hailed by a German Navy destroyer, Lutjens, requesting permission to pass close by our port side. Strange, since we're in the middle of an empty ocean, but the captain acquiesced and we prepared to render them honors from our bridge wing. As they were making their approach, our conning officer used binoculars and announced that Lutjens was flying not the German, but the American flag.

As she came alongside us, we saw the American flag flying half-mast and her entire crew topside standing at silent, rigid attention in their dress uniforms. They had made a sign that was displayed on her side that read, "We Stand By You." There was not a dry eye on the bridge as they stayed alongside us for a few minutes and saluted.

It was the most powerful thing I have seen in my life.

The German Navy did an incredible thing for this crew, and it has truly been the highest point in the days since the attacks. It's amazing to think that only half-century ago things were quite different. After Lutjens pulled away, the Officer of the Deck, who had been planning to get out later this year, turned to me and said, "I'm staying Navy."

I'll write you when I know more about when I'll be home, but this is it for now. Love you guys.



Photo by: Chip Lambert

(Above) Pam Lambert and Pat Scannon swim across damaged area toward stern. This is where the kai ten hit, on the starboard number 3 wing tank. The hole is 78' long and the ship broke from well deck to keel. Fuel in the bow tanks helped keep positive buoyancy. The Navy just completed a computer simulation using known fuel distribution and Sid Harris' photos and determined how the AO-59 sank and why she rests in the position she is in.

(Below) Starboard side, forward, hatches leading to the gun crew handling room and a hatch to the supply department storeroom.

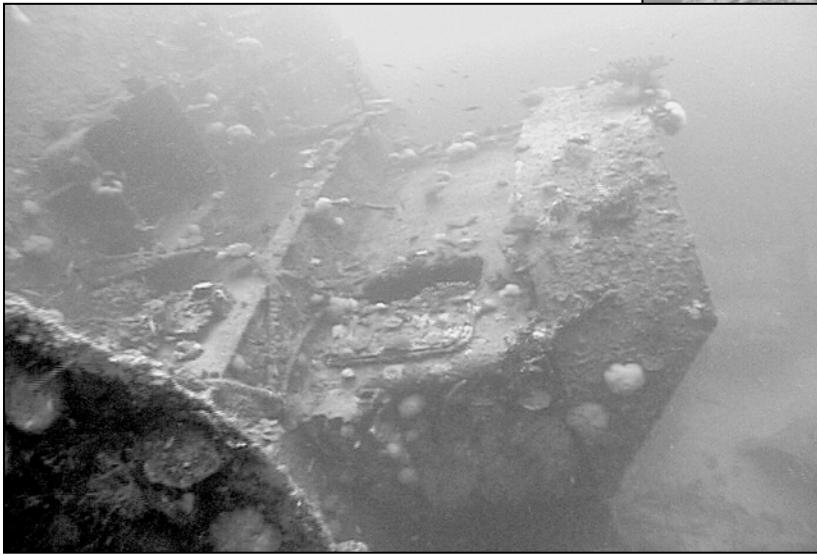


Photo by: Dr. Rick Von Stein

Phil Cohen from Camden, New Jersey is putting together a website honoring those men and women who were lost during WWII from that area. David F. Green, Y1c, from Audubon, New Jersey was one of the crewmen lost from the Mississinewa. If anyone has a photo of him, please either notify Phil Cohen, phil552@comcast.net or Bob Fulleman, azfull@usa.net or call Bob at 480-545-4599. Phil's website is [www.dvrbs.com/CamdenCountyNJ-WarMemorials.htm](http://www.dvrbs.com/CamdenCountyNJ-WarMemorials.htm).

(Below) Divers swim along the AO-59's keel toward the stern to examine its massive propellers. The majority of the ship lies on its back embedded into the sand.



Photo by: Dr. Rick Von Stein

Bruce Petty is gathering information for the sequel to his first book, SAIPAN: ORAL HISTORY OF THE PACIFIC WAR. The focus of his new book will be on the role of the U.S. Navy and allied navies in the Pacific during WWII. If any Navy veterans, spouses of navy veterans or their children might have any information and would like to help Bruce, please contact him...

Bruce Petty, 3327 Whitemarsh Lane,  
Fairfield, CA 94533, Tel: (707) 421-1334  
Email:[bruce.petty@pon.net](mailto:bruce.petty@pon.net)

**SPECIAL THANKS**  
goes to Chip Lambert and  
Dr. Rick Von Stein for providing and  
allowing us to display their photographs.

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For U. S. S. Mississinewa, AO-59  
current crew information,  
please contact  
<http://www.usssmississinewa.com>  
or call 1-800-236-4327.

# USS Lackawanna, AO-40 Reunion in Niagara Falls, New York September 29th thru October 4th, 2002

The AO-40's reunion will be coming up September 29th and running to October 4th. All you "East coast and Midwest folks should find this close. They've got another terrific schedule planned out for this year's reunion.

Sunday, September 29th will be check-in day at the Days Inn at the Falls, Niagara Falls, NY.

Monday, September 30th will be a US/Canadian Adventure Tour from 9am to 3pm. Included in the tour will be a tour of the Falls area both US and Canadian side, Maid of the Mist Boat ride, Floral Clock, Whirlpool Overlook, buffet lunch overlooking the Falls, Goat Island, Luna Island and more. If you've been to the falls before you know that this is an experience that you will never forget.

Tuesday, October 1st will be an optional tour of Buffalo Naval port along with a luncheon cruise. (Additional cost of \$48.00).

Wednesday, October 2nd will be another optional tour to Niagara-on-the-Lake. This tour will

include; the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture, admission to the Butterfly Conservatory and browsing through the unique shops of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Canada's first capital. (Additional cost of \$27.00).

Thursday, October 3rd will be a day relaxing finishing up with a banquet dinner at the hotel that evening.

October 4th, Saying Good-bye and checking-out.

The cost per person including:  
Accommodations for five nights, breakfast each morning, US/Canadian Adventure Tour with the Maid of the Mist Boat ride, buffet lunch overlooking the Falls, transportation and guide service, banquet dinner, and applicable taxes and gratuities for accommodations and meals is as follows:  
Single (One person in a room): \$479.00  
Double (Two people sharing a room, each pays): \$299.00

Contact Sue Woltz with Bedore Tours, Inc. at 1-800-538-8433 or 716-285-7550 for more specific information.

**AO-59 Ball Caps can be purchased by clicking on the "Merchandise" link on the website**

## !! Special Thanks !!

Our special thanks goes out to R. Joe Sharek from the U.S.S. Enoree (AO-69) for his generous donation, helping to keep the Scuttlebutt getting out to all of you.

Also a note of thanks to Frank Wilcox for remembering us while on vacation in Austria and Germany and sending along a terrific book about Hitler's "Eagle Nest".



**Sorry, AO-59 Polo Shirts are no longer available for purchase**