

U.S.S. Mississinewa

AO-59

SCUTTLEBUTT



2004 - Issue 7

<http://www.usmississinewa.com>

## 3rd AO-59 Reunion - Seeing Old Friends and Making New Ones.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S.S. Mississinewa (AO-59) crew reunion took place July 23<sup>rd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at the Johnson & Wales Inn in Seekonk, Massachusetts, just a few minutes away from Providence, Rhode Island. Similar to the previous reunion held in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1999, Mike Mair had shipped, and set up, about 400 lbs. of documents and other memorabilia related to the U.S.S. *Mississinewa* (AO-59).

Headquartered in the Diplomat Room of the Johnson & Wales Inn, Mike's information spread over 9 tables within the hospitality room, displaying information, some of which not available at the time of the previous reunion. There was an additional display provided by Ron Worthington of GPC, showing the actual equipment used underwater in the removal of the oil from the *Mississinewa*.

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## Farewell to a great friend...

### *The man who immortalized the U.S.S. Mississinewa's last minutes*

The AO-59 "family" has lost a great friend. A man of great humility, honor and courage. Simon "Sid" Harris has gone to his final resting place at the age of 88 on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Sid is survived by his beloved wife of 60 years Hilda (nee Schwartz) Harris, his children, Richard (Marilyn) Harris and Michael (Sonia) Harris, his sister Pauline Rosenberg and his grandchildren Eric, Lauren, Alison and Matthew.

Born in New York City, Sid lived in Cherry Hill for 50 years. He was a graduate of Rutgers University and a decorated Navy veteran for WWII and the Korean War. He retired from the Department of Defense as a computer analyst supervisor in 1974. He was a member of many

(Continued on Page 7)

## 2003 Reunion USS Mississinewa

Written by  
Ron Fulleman

The first day, Wednesday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, was a day for arrivals. The atmosphere was that of a family reunion, seeing many of the familiar faces from the Corpus Christi reunion. This reunion brought some new faces to the Mississinewa family as well. Along with some new crewmen, there were more family members, extending

### News from the Quarterdeck:

Jim Gleason is looking for anyone who knew his father aboard the AO-59. His father James John Gleason, S2c and was from Webster City, Iowa. James' father was 33 years old when he was drafted. If you knew James John Gleason, S2c, please contact James M. Gleason, at 28834 Indian Valley Road, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275. Email [jvgleason1@cox.net](mailto:jvgleason1@cox.net) or call (310) 544-2834

Our sympathy and prayers go out to Nancy and Mike Mair on the passing of Nancy's mother, Jean Stockman. Jean died at the age of 82 on May 17, 2004.

Strange but True! At the reunion in Providence, after the Memorial Service, Bob Fulleman received a 1944 penny as change from the gift store. That date seems familiar.

AO-59

down to Andy Johnson's children and grandchildren, Steve Katrenic's grandson, Thomas, and Timothy Chodzin, Eugene Chodzin's grandson. There were a few others there that were witnesses, from other ships, to the 1944 Mississinewa sinking, as well. We even had a veteran of the second U.S.S. Mississinewa, (AO-144), Ron Gillespie.



For dinner, several groups could be seen going out to explore the various restaurants in the area, such as the Grist Mill, and Gregg's Family Restaurant.

The "official" start of the reunion came at 10 a.m. on Thursday, the 24<sup>th</sup>. That's when Mike introduced the honored guests and elaborated on the planned schedule of activities. Later that afternoon, the guests who had signed up for the Newport Mansion tour boarded their bus for a fascinating glimpse of the splendor offered in the sights of the homes of Newport, Rhode Island. Those who had chosen not to attend the bus tour stayed and chatted in the Hospitality Room.

*During Thursday and Friday, the Eco-Nova Production Company carried out interviews on a good number of the crew who attended the reunion for use in a Canadian National Geographic production.*

*(Information on the availability of that film will be published in the Scuttlebutt*



**Navy Trivia:** See how much you know or forgot. Try to match up the numbers with the description.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ GRAVEYARD WATCH
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ HAND
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ HEAD
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ HIT THE DECK
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_ IRISH PENNANT
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_ JETSOM
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_ JUMPER
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_ JURY RIG
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_ KNOCK OFF
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_ LANDLUBBER
- 11. \_\_\_\_\_ LADDER
- 12. \_\_\_\_\_ LIBERTY
- 13. \_\_\_\_\_ LUCKY BAG
- 14. \_\_\_\_\_ MAN
- 15. \_\_\_\_\_ MAST

- A. A locker for the stowage of loose articles of clothing and person gear aboard the ship or station.
- B. To stop work.
- C. Goods which sink when thrown overboard at sea.
- D. A ships toilet.
- E. The middle (mid) watch from 2400 to 0400.
- F. A vertical spar supporting the booms, gaffs and sails on a sailing vessel or a hearing of cases of offense against disipline.
- G. A metal, wooded or rope stairway.
- H. The blouse of a bluejacket's uniform.
- I. Untidy loose end of a line (or loose threads on a uniform.
- J. Permission to be absent from a ship or station for a period up to 48 hrs.
- K. To put the proper number of men on a detail so that the work can be done.
- L. A makeshift rig of mast and sail or other gear.
- M. A member of the ships crew.
- N. A phrase used in rousing men from bunks at Reveille.
- O. Seaman's term for one who has never been to sea.



Glossary based on 1944 -  
Bluejackets Manual

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



From Left to Right -  
Top Row

- 
- Howard Bassingthwaite
  - John Bayak
  - Raymond Fulleman
  - Eugene Cooley
  - Bill Ruwell
  - Steve Katrenich
  - Seymour Golden

From Left to Right -  
Bottom Row

- 
- Andrew Johnson
  - Winston Whitten
  - Fernando Cuevas
  - James Lewis
  - Robert Jones
  - Jack Mair

as it becomes available.)

Thursday night, at 7 p.m., Jim Ruth (SUPSALV), and Ron Worthington of GPC, (who repaired the initial leaks on the Mississinewa and later removed the oil)



gave an interesting presentation on their repair efforts and the removal of the oil from the *Mississinewa*. Their presentation not only included a detailed explanation of the equipment used, but also included a great many pictures of the actual tasks performed.

Friday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, started out with a bus



trip to the Newport Naval Base where many of the Mississinewa crew had gotten their training. After a brief view of the area, our first stop was at the base's Guest Shop/Museum where we were able to view a number of exhibits and some remarkable model ships. We also had time to pick up a few souvenirs. Our next stop was the Officer's Club for lunch. The food was served buffet style and tasted terrific. After we polished off our lunches, we headed, via bus, to the Surface Warfare's Damage Control Training Department. There, Cmdr. Settlemyer, gave a very warm welcome to the AO-59 crew and their families. There, they gave a presentation on the evolution of the Navy's damage control strategies/procedures. After the



presentation, the entire reunion group was allowed to view the various classrooms there and see some of their current damage control equipment. At the end of our visit, each of the AO-59 crewmen were given a present of a Damage Control School's T-shirt from the commander.

Again, the day ended with dinner at the

## AO-59 2003 REUNION:

local restaurants and still a few more newcomers arriving at the reunion.

Saturday, July 26<sup>th</sup> started out with a trip to "Battleship Cove" at Fall River, Massachusetts. There, aboard the battleship, U.S.S. *Massachusetts*, we were treated to a tasty luncheon in the Mess Hall. After lunch, we headed to a covered area on the fantail of the ship where a memorial service was held. Lt. Frank Canavan's son and daughter, Jimmy and Lisa joined us for the memorial service.



A color guard ceremony opened up the services followed by Mike Mair acting as emcee for the event. Ron Fulleman gave the invocation. Following Ron was the irrepressible Sid Harris, recounting his experience when his ship, the U.S.S. *Muncee*, fought the blaze aboard the *Mississinewa* and how he became acquainted with the *Mississinewa* Reunion group. Jan Tracy, the daughter of *Mississinewa's* navigator, Lt. Robert Rowe, gave a moving speech about how she came upon Mike Mair and how she's finally been able to know more about the father she never really knew (Lt. Rowe was killed as a result of the torpedoing). She shared with the reunion group her story of growing up without knowing her father and how she came to know him better through the efforts of Mike Mair and the *Mississinewa* group.



Following Jan, was Mike Mair, recounted his "introduction" into the *Mississinewa* family and the very profound affect it's





had on his life and that lives of his family. Then, a special guest, Lt. Cmdr. John Carter spoke to the group, outlining his involvement in the recent removal of the oil from the *Mississinewa*. He shared with the group, his ship's commitment and respect for the men of the *Mississinewa*. He compared the sacrifices of the men of the *Mississinewa* to those in the Navy today.

After Lt. Cmdr. Carter addressed the group, a passing of a memorial wreath was performed when the AO-59 crew lined up and passed, man-to-man, a wreath that Andrew Johnson, MM1c, eventually slid over the side with Taps playing in the background. It was a very moving and emotional time for all. The memorial service concluded with the passing out of vials of oil that had been donated by Jonathan Boos, part of the approximate 2 million gallons that was removed from the *Mississinewa*.

After the memorial service, some of the group returned to the hotel to rest up a bit before getting ready for that night's

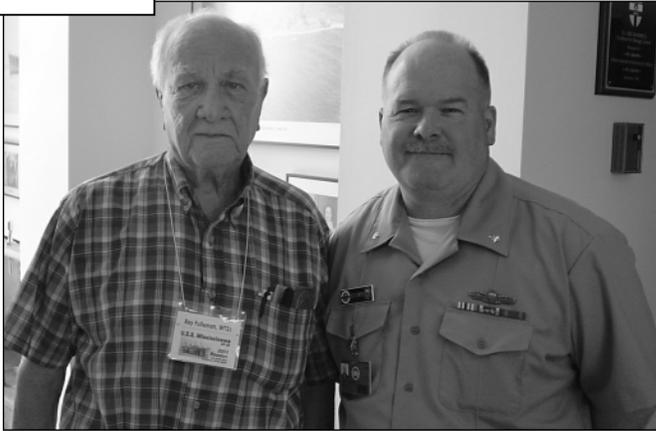
**Battleship Cove Lunch**

banquet. A smaller portion of the group stayed on and explored the various ships there at Battleship Cove in greater detail before heading back to the hotel.

That night, after the "official" pictures were taken for the reunion book, approximately 100 people gathered to attend the banquet. Again, Mike Mair graciously acted as emcee for the evening. Giving presentations were Sid Harris, Pam and Chip Lambert, and Lt. Cmdr. Carter. Sid cleverly narrated a slide presentation put together by Bob Fulleman of the amazing photos Sid took of the fire fighting efforts to save the *Mississinewa* and its subsequent sinking). Sid's wonderful sense of humor thoroughly entertained the crowd. Chip Lambert's presentation showed the efforts Chip and his wife, Pam, underwent in discovering the location of the *Mississinewa*. Chip also illustrated his assistance in temporarily stopping leaks in the *Mississinewa* before the oil was eventually removed. Pam gave a stand-up performance, singing a song that she had composed herself, describing their efforts in finding the elusive ship. They finished their presentation by presenting a flag to Jack Mair and Ray Fulleman. The flag had been held by fellow explorer, Pat Scannon,



**Newport Naval Base**



Cmder. Sidney R. Settlemyer

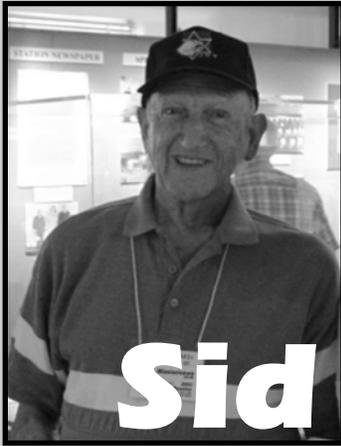
**Memorial Service**



**Banquet Dinner**



Lt. Cmder. John Carter



# Sid Harris

1915-2003

Association of Retired Federal Employees. He exemplified the values of honesty, sincerity, a strong work ethic, dedication, fairness, respect and loyalty. He had a great appreciation for the game of golf and loved to travel. He dearly loved his family and grandchildren and will always be remembered as a gentle, kind and compassionate man.

organizations: Veterans of Foreign Wars, South Jersey Hebrew Association, Jewish War Veterans Furer-Barag post 126 of Cherry Hill and the National

The thought of Sid's warm smile and lighthearted humor will continually give us the strength to go forward and be the best we can be.



Peter DeRosa, S1c

Peter DeRosa, S1c passed away late on Thursday October 9th, 2003. Ironically, he died on his 78th birthday. Peter enlisted into the Navy on February 21, 1944. DeRosa's funeral was held at Holy Rood cemetery in Westbury, Long Island, New York. The United States flag was given to Peter's wife by her son, Machinist Mate Chief Petty Officer, Thomas Bussi and three other Petty Officers present for the flag folding ceremony.



Frank Cybulski, S2c

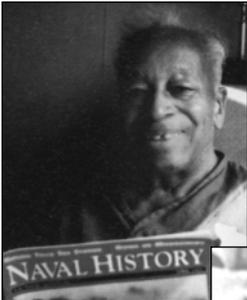
Frank Cybulski, S2c, died on February 17, 2003 at the age of 77. Cybulski reported aboard the AO-59 as a "Plank Owner" after obtaining the rank of Seaman Second Class at Newport Naval Center Pre-Commissioning Base. He is survived by his wife Louise.



Chester A. "Ches" Lardner, SF3c



Chester A. "Ches" Lardner SF3c, 84, died on Saturday, July 12, 2003, in Louisville, KY. Lardner reported aboard the AO-59 in May 1944 as one of the ship's "Plank Owners." As a Ship Fitter, 3rd Class, he worked out of the ship's fitters compartment in the bow performing tasks such as welding, metal working, fabrication and other duties as assigned by Mississinewa officers. Al Bell, Bob Maggianni, and Leo Cummings were among the sailors who worked closely with Lardner. An American Legion member, Lardner is survived by his wife of 64 years, Mildred, one son, two daughters, 6 grandchildren and 11 great grand-children.



Raleigh Peppers, StewardsMate (by Chip Lambert)

Many of you may not have had the opportunity to meet or talk with Raleigh Peppers, Steward, USS *Mississinewa*. While on deck, in the engine room or on the bridge, Raleigh was in the galley working on menus, organizing the food service, overseeing its operation and, occasionally, brewing beer. Unfortunately, you may have missed a chance to interact with an extraordinary individual. He was a gentleman who might have had positive impact on your life as he did on mine.



Coming from a farm in a small town in Tennessee with little formal education, Raleigh realized a chance to serve his country during a time the military afforded few prospects for black recruits. He clearly recognized the advantages the Navy offered over the Army and was soon departing Norfolk, Virginia on the USS *Earle* for a tour to Naples, Italy. While at sea, he lived and worked according to a doctrine that would carry him through his life; learn from

every task and, no matter what it is, do the best job possible. During the tour, he acquired many skills in the galley and upon his return, was assigned to the newly commissioned USS *Mississinewa*.

As the '*Miss*' wound its way through the Panama Canal and slowly across the Pacific, Raleigh was promoted to Steward and wore his uniform as proudly as any Admiral. He recognized the rigors of refueling the capital ships during engagements and always had food ready for the crew. Unfortunately, the ship and his naval career came to a violent end in the early hours of November 20, 1944. Rousting the galley crew to prepare breakfast, he went forward to discuss the menu with Captain Beck when the *kaiten* hit. Many of his shipmates were instantly lost in the explosion and fire. He remembers being frozen in a hatchway until somebody touched his hand and told him to follow him off the burning ship. He doesn't know who saved his life, but always wanted to personally thank them.

After being pulled from the water, he returned to the US and shortly left the service. Using his mustering out pay for a train ticket to Oakland, CA, Raleigh lived and worked by his philosophy at the Alameda Naval base, started his own upholstery business and raised a wonderful family. Felled by prostate cancer, he was confined to the Palo Alto Veterans hospital to await the inevitable. That's where I found him after an editorial appeared with his story in Naval History magazine.

One of the joys of WWII archeology is still having the opportunity to meet some of the people that survived the traumatic events resulting in ship or plane losses. Sitting beside Raleigh with my slides from finding the '*Miss*,' I was ready to recreate the events of Nov. 20, 1944. Four hours later, the slides still in their box, I had found a remarkable man. We talked about everything from his painful hemorrhoids to humanities. I returned often to his bedside, bringing my wife and son to listen to his sage wisdom. His positive outlook and homilies on living were more uplifting and poignant than any of my previous mentors. He kept asking why I came and the answer was it was such a pleasure to talk with somebody who had such an introspective, optimistic view of his life.

Pam, my wife, and I finally closed the circle. Armed with some beer and the slides, Raleigh narrated the events of November 20. Though weak, he bounced out of bed to point out where he was on the ship, vividly recounted the chaos of the day and many personal experiences. It was a wonderful afternoon of sharing feelings; each of us knowing little time was left.

A few days later, I brought him a Memorial Day card, thanking him for all he had contributed to our nation and my life. His gracious daughters, Norma and Edna, were both with him and the Chaplin was there. His eyes still sparkled but he was weak. We exchanged a few pleasantries, he read the card and we shared one more beer.

That was the last time I saw Raleigh, a new friend who loved God, his nation and everything he had accomplished in his 80 years.



**Banquet Dinner**



Fred Schaufus, MM2c

Fred Schaufus, MM2c, died in Tewksbury, MA on April 18, 2003

Fred Schaufus, MM2c, died in Tewksbury, MA on April 18, 2003 at the age of 86. Schaufus enlisted in the Navy in September 1942 at the age of 27. After initial training as an Aviation Machinist's Mate, Schaufus reported aboard the AO-59 in May 1944 as a "Plank Owner" earning a rank as Machinist Mate Second Class. Schaufus manned the engine room aboard Mississinewa often reminiscing years later about mischievous moments with Chief George Downing. Schaufus attended the 1989 USS Mississinewa reunion hosted by Bill Dennehy and reunited with many more shipmates in Corpus Christie, TX in 1999. Fred's wife Marie preceded him in death. He is survived by two son's including Donald who has attended the past two reunions, one daughter (deceased) and 14 grandchildren.



above the fo'cile of the *Mississinewa*, as it lay in the waters of Ulithi.

Lt. Cmdr. Carter should have gotten an award for perseverance that night. He had to miss a portion of the evening's events when the computer system he had intended to use wouldn't work properly. He took the time and to run out to an electronics store to purchase speakers so the attendees could hear the pre-recorded portion of his presentation. He showed the very moving and respectful memorial service his crew performed in the waters of Ulithi before removing the oil from the *Mississinewa*. Also, he shared with us photographs showing his crew constructing a permanent memorial on Mangmang Island, in honor of those sailors lost in the sinking of the *Mississinewa*.



Mike wrapped up the evening by awarding plaques of gratitude to Tomoko Nishizaki, Lt. Cmdr. Carter, Sid Harris, and Bob and Ron Fulleman, for their efforts to the *Mississinewa* survivors and their families.

Mike's presentations were followed by Ron Fulleman giving Mike a brass bell on a stand with the inscription, Mike Mair, "Official" U.S.S. *Mississinewa* Historian.



Throughout the next day, Sunday, the families attending the reunion said their 'good-byes' as they "hoisted the anchor and shoved off for home." It was a reunion that all those attending will always remember. We all learned a lot about when happened with the ship, its sinking, its discovery, and its giving up of its cargo of oil. We learned of stories that brought those who had lost loved ones some amount of closure. We learned of stories of men who put themselves in harm's way, some who didn't return and others who did. We learned of the men who made our country what it is today, men to whom we will be eternally grateful. Hopefully this reunion has helped all who attended to better understand and remember those heroes, the crew of *Mississinewa* (AO-59).

## Navy Trivia Answers:

- |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 11-11 | 12-12 | 13-13 | 14-14 | 15-15 |
| 6-6   | 7-7   | 8-8   | 9-9   | 10-10 |
| 1-1   | 2-2   | 3-3   | 4-4   | 5-5   |

**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](mailto:azfull@usa.net)

Send us stories and photos about what's going on in your life.

## Providence, RI - July 2003 Reunion Book Available

Our reunion book for 2003 U.S.S. Mississinewa, AO-59 reunion held in Providence, Rhode Island was printed by the Dunning Company. They notified us that still they have a few copies available. If you're interested in ordering a copy you may contact them at: Dunning Company - Reunion Services, P.O. Box 759, Theodore, AL 36590. Orders may be placed by telephone with a credit card. Call (251) 653-7486 and please remember to mention Job Number 03199 when ordering. They have a website for more information at:  
[www.photomemorybooks.com](http://www.photomemorybooks.com).

## Tanker Association Reunion Announcements

(more listings available at  
<http://hometown.aol.com/w71726/myhomepageindex.htm>)

### AO-40 USS Lackawanna

Sept. 26-30, 2004 Jacksonville, FL inf. L.D. Hawkins 337-824-3048 or [hb@mohaveaz.com](mailto:hb@mohaveaz.com)

### AO-43 USS Tappahannock

Sept. 12-15, 2004 Branson, MO inf. Philip Doss 903-562-1410 or [Zigzagusn@aol.com](mailto:Zigzagusn@aol.com)

### AO-47 USS Neches

Sept. 8-11, 2004 San Diego, CA inf. Ed @425-821-9456

### AO-48 USS Neosho

Sept. 24-28, 2003 Neosho, MO inf. Stevean Irving - [varidgerunner@cs.com](mailto:varidgerunner@cs.com)

### AO-49 USS Suamico

Sept. 13-15, 2004 Shreveport, LA inf. Orban Parker 816-257-5294 or Bob Sparling [BSPARL1801@aol.com](mailto:BSPARL1801@aol.com)

### AO-55 USS Elokomin

Oct. 7-10, 2004 St. Philadelphia, PA inf. Gene Lehner 603-569-1322 8to9pm or [paw@worldpath.net](mailto:paw@worldpath.net)

### AO-61 USS Severn

Sept. 16-18, 2004 Staunton, VA. inf. David Barber 614-837-1268 or [barberdn@aol.com](mailto:barberdn@aol.com)

### AO-62 USS Taluga

Oct. 6-10, 2004 Myrtle Beach, SC inf. James Young 302-234-7711

### AO-69 USS Enoree

October 11-15, 2004 Charleston, SC inf. David Neuenschwander 760-746-4075 or [daneu@nctimes.net](mailto:daneu@nctimes.net)

### AO-80 USS Escambia

Oct. 7-10, 2004 Lisle/Naperville, West Chicago, IL inf. Virgil Grier 316-943-0526 or [virjungrier@webtv.net](mailto:virjungrier@webtv.net)

## !! Special Thanks !!

Our special thanks goes out to:

• WINSTON WHITTEN • LISA CANAVAN • MARJORIE ROBERTS WEBB • SID HARRIS • ED KASALA  
for their generous contributions. Their support helps us to get the "Scuttlebutt" out to you.

Also a special Thank You to our special guests; LT. CMDR. JOHN CARTER, RONALD GILLESPIE, SID & MIKE HARRIS, CHIP & PAM LAMBERT, GORDON MCBRIDE & FAMILY, TOMOKO NISHIZAKI, JAMES PFEIFFER & FAMILY, JIM RUTH, RICK VON STEIN, RON WORTHINGTON for coming so far away to attend and making our reunion really special. Thank you all.

## Your Help Is Needed!

Ulithi Atoll and the neighboring islands have been hard hit by two typhoons in recent months. There has been some damage to the U.S.S. Mississinewa memorial and to the area around it. Some supplies are needed make repairs and help to maintain it for the future.

Donations would be greatly appreciated.

Please send them to:

USS Mississinewa - AO-59 Reunion Group  
c/o Mike Mair for Ulithi Atoll Memorial  
1525 Deborah Ct., Platteville, WI 53818

AO-59 ball caps are available via the "Merchandise" link on the website.