

2014 REUNION RETURNS TO CHARLESTON - SEE DETAILS INSIDE

# LAFFEY NEWS

THE USS LAFFEY DD-724 – THE SHIP THAT WOULD NOT DIE



**“I’LL NEVER ABANDON SHIP AS LONG AS A GUN WILL FIRE”: CO F. JULIAN BECTON**

**Dedicated to those who served in Battle...and those that Preserved in Peace**

**April-May-June**

**[www.laffey.org](http://www.laffey.org)**

**2014**

## **PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE MAY 2014**

We are getting ready for another trip to our second home...Charleston.

We were invited to participate in the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014. We have about 20 folks coming to give tours of the ship and answer questions about our ship.

Laffey is one of two surviving warships that were at Normandy. The other ship is the USS Texas. Both ships are museum ships.

Ari Phoutrides and Lee Hunt are two of our veterans from D-Day that plan to be in Charleston. I am sure they will be tired of signing autographs and answering questions by the end of the day. It is also Lee’s birthday.

Next up will be our reunion to be held in Charleston, Sept. 28 to Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014. We will be dedicating our memorial tree that was donated and planted by Bartlett Tree Service. Also we will unveil our new brass plaque and base that has all of the names of our heroes who died at Okinawa. We will then move to the ship for our memorial service. We hope everyone will enjoy seeing the ship and some of the changes made to the “Theatre Area” (After Officers Quarters). I must recommend going into Mount 53 for the new exhibit in there. It is very

moving. Patriots Point is working on a new exhibit for CIC. Hopefully it will be ready by September, remember I said HOPEFULLY!!!

Jill has worked really hard getting this one lined up. We are hoping for a good turnout again this year.

We are planning on an October work party. We won’t have any dates until I can meet with Alice Seabrook of Patriots Point to arrange for berthing space. We will let everyone know via e-mail when we can finalize it.

Thanks to all who attended the last work party. It seems to be getting harder and harder to get around to do the work but you can’t keep a Laffey Sailor down. We will continue to keep her looking good as long as our bodies will allow us.

See you all in September.

Sonny Walker

## **WORK PARTY RECAP April 13-19, 2014**

Another successful work party is in the books! We had about 20 Participants. A lot was accomplished even though the weather was iffy and raining some of the days. We also ran out of paint to finish mount 51. The work party was really special this spring because we had a bunch of father-son teams:

Mike Pereira brought his son Mike, Jr, or “Mikey” as was called by most of us. Mikey is a great worker and we are looking forward to having him back with us again.

Dave “Billy the Boot” Bossard had his son Jim, or “Steve” as he was called in jest. Jim is an EMT and he is really needed with all these old fogeys climbing around. Not only that, he works hard too!

John Hudak had his son, Jay, join us for the first time. It was good to see Jay again. Ari Phoutrides was accompanied by his son Stephen. These guys came all the way from Portland, OR. They will never know how special it is to us when Ari is able to “return home” for the work party.

And then there were “the old standbys” Ed Fitzsimmons and his sons Bill and Bob. There is no question as to how much work these guys do. They are the backbone of our work parties. Our friend Jeff Jacobs, a member of the Patriots Point Foundation Board of Directors, did a wonderful job “begging” for us. He is the guy that got the memorial tree donated. The donors even planted the tree too!

Jeff also contacted a steel company and had them fabricate a base for the plaque that will be dedicated during our reunion in September. The base is 3 inch square tubing that was galvanized so it will last in the salty air. Richard McKinney and Rod Morgan picked up the base in Columbia, SC and delivered it to Patriots Point. It just fit in the back of Richie’s vehicle. Good Job Richie.

Mike Pereira and his crew (Little Mikey, Bill & Ed Fitzsimmons and Harold Borton) did a great job painting outside. They did the bulkhead forward under the pilot house. Caulked around the windows and painted.

Don Watson, Hank Ashton and Barry Shugarts dug the hole, (actually Hank did the digging!) mixed the concrete and put in the base near the tree: It looks great! The plaque is being cast as you read this newsletter. Jeff has coordinated the entire operation. We can’t wait to get the plaque mounted so everyone in the association and all Patriots Point visitors will know what the tree means to all of us.

Patriots Point has expanded the “Theatre” (After Officers’) where they show the History Channel program to the public. The overhead was spray

painted by Don Watson and then the deck was painted by The Fitzsimmons gang and Little Mikey.

The chapel has been taken out and we are putting the personnel office back to the way it was. Chris Kirhagis ran a gang tearing out old bulkheads and junk to begin the process of restoration. His group included Homer Doster, John Miller, the three Fitzsimmons and Chris.

I am sure Barry Shugarts and Harold Borton got in there too. They cleaned and painted the old filing cabinets, were scrounging a desk from somewhere and replacing the missing porthole cover and glass. Donnie and Mike Pereira spray painted the offices. It will be a while until these are ready to be opened to the public.

While cleaning out the offices we found the old plaque that was posted on the main deck for years. This plaque identifies the battles that both Laffeyes were engaged in. We got permission from Patriots Point to put this plaque back outside where the visitors could see the ship’s history. It is now hanging at the aft quarterdeck where visitors who are waiting to see the exhibit in MT 53 can read it. Rich McKinney, Jim Bossard, Mikey Pereira, Bill and Bob Fitzsimmons prepared the area and hung the plaque under the supervision of Billy the Boot Bossard. After all, he is a retired chief.

The two Bossards shined the Tomkin Plugs on the 5” mounts. It was good to see the Chief up on a ladder doing some work! Barry Shugarts and John Miller did a lot of work cleaning up the Captain’s In Port Cabin. It was really a mess from someone doing work in there.

We had a flash back watching Dave Harhager and John Hudak fixing the coffee maker. It reminded us of Pete Lacore and Walt Harrington working on a vacuum cleaner.....However, the difference is Dave and John actually fixed the coffee maker!!

Dave and John also worked hard down below cleaning First Division and CPO berthing. Harhager and Miller swept the passageways and gave a clean sweep down fore and aft.

I am sure that Ken Rohloff did something but the only thing I saw him doing was a fresh water wash down. He must get paid by the hour. I told him we could wash down the Yorktown faster than that!!!! As I said, he must have done something because I saw him dirty most of the days.

Steve Smith is another one that I didn't see doing anything but he did show up to eat??? Do you think he worked where I couldn't see him? Of course he worked. But I guarantee it wasn't up the mast. He doesn't do high places.

Fred Nardei was "promoted" to head chef along with his mess cook Ari Phoutrides. These two did a great job keeping the crew well fed. It is really tough cooking when you can't use the grill. Duh. Someday we may get this changed but don't hold your breath.

This is probably the hardest job. You have to figure out what will be consumed, go buy it and then prepare the food. Good job Fred and Ari. Speaking of Ari, he was a huge hit speaking to 6 groups of fourth graders. The kids loved to interact with a real hero.

I had the privilege of speaking first to the kids. I felt like I was opening for Elvis or something. The kids really asked some great questions. This is what our work parties are for. We must get our Laffey history message out to the kids.

We were on channel 4 and 5 local news and CNN came by on Friday and interviewed Ari, Dave, Jim Bossard and me. We will be told when it will air. I will try to get an e-mail out in time for everyone to watch.

We have to thank our "ship's store supplier", member Dave Bossard for getting the Tee Shirts printed up for the work party attendees. They look great.

We also need to thank the folks at Patriots Point for their hospitality and the supplies they gave to keep us working. We look forward to our next work party in October.

We hope to get some of the steel patched up at the base of the superstructure on the main deck. It is beginning to rust away. This will require a lot of welding and riveting.

Thanks to all who attended this work party. It sure makes me proud to be affiliated with a fine bunch of guys like this.

Sonny Walker

President

## INSTALLING THE SHIP'S HISTORY PLAQUE



**Sonny leans against the plaque.....Hard work!?**

### A TRIBUTE AND MEMORY BY JOE FOLINO

As most of you know our shipmate Joe Folino has been experiencing health issues for several years and his most recent setback was a stroke. "Joey" is in "rehab" for both physical and speech problems.

Another shipmate, Donald T. Bennett, had kept an edition of the Laffey News from autumn 1993 that contained an article written by Joe Folino who was, at that time, on the Board of Directors of the USS Laffey DD724 Association. Don suggested it might be appropriate to reprint that article once more. We agreed and what follows are "Joey's" comments and tributes for those who served during "the forgotten war."

#### **40 Years after a "Forgotten War"**

#### **Memories...painful, proud**

**By Joe Folino**

*Dedicated to all those who have served aboard the U.S.S. Laffey, and to the many friends who help keep her history alive, especially the victims of the "forgotten war." God grant you rest.*

I take this time to try and recapture a piece of history that has gone unstated for over four decades. It involves a ship already rich in history, a group of men, and a time and place called Korea.

The ship was the USS Laffey DD-724, taken out of the Pacific Reserve Fleet, having been in "mothballs" since 1947. Her record was well recorded. Her plaques, citations and battle flags will forever be a guiding light for all who will follow in her wake.

But the story I tell is of a different kind of war, one that may well prove to be the first of the "unpopular" wars. It is a story of one ship and many men, all a part of the Forgotten War.

As the story opens, we see the Laffey in disarray moored at the San Diego Naval Base docks. It is December 1950 and the usually sunny skies of southern California are grey and overcast. There is a chill in the air. The wind rustles through palm trees that wait, as we do, for the sun to shine.

Men are busy at work, and equipment is stacked up on the dock and the ship's deck. The sound of chipping hammers and other pneumatic tools goes on endlessly. The officers and enlisted men are a sorry lot at this stage, mostly reserves who have been hastily called back to duty. They are confused and bewildered, strangers on a strange ship, with the strange task of bringing together a ship and its crew to prepare for an even stranger form of war: erroneously called a "police action."

The confusion slowly vanishes, to be replaced with pride, a pride that encompasses the uniqueness of this new entity of ship and crew.

It is a strange gathering indeed. The stories of other lives and other lifestyles etched on the faces of the men speaks mutely of men who have come together from all corners of the country for a common cause. The presence of these, and others who will gather for the days ahead, will have an everlasting impact on their lives and the lives of their families and friends. Lives that were disrupted for this "just and noble cause" will be forever altered.

The fact that we are not alone is of little consequence or solace.

The *Laffey* is recommissioned early in 1951. Once more she bears the Stars and Stripes from her

yardarm, once more she is a sleek, smooth warrior of the seas. The year will be filled with more new faces and complete refurbishing and modification of equipment. The officers and crew constantly drill, beginning to act and react as a team. A sort of marriage takes place when ship and sailor become one. Pride replaces uncertainty, courage AND DETERMINATION REPLACES FEAR AND HESITANCY. The tradition of the *Laffey* returns with renewed purpose, anxious once more to take her place in history.

A long series of training exercises prepares us for what lies ahead. The crew begins to anticipate the taste of battle that is inevitable. Filling the days and nights that are taking us half-way around the world are drills, drills and more drills. Each stop in port means more work parties, more supplies, more ammunition. Our time is filled with the discipline required to create the cohesiveness we need for military action.

Yet many of us, regardless of our dedication, ask seemingly unanswerable questions. "Why me? Why am I here? Does anyone really care?" The best answer comes from author James Michner, who wrote, "We do what we do in war, simply because we are here."

After a brief stop in Japan, the *Laffey* is assigned to the duties of plane guard with Task Force 77. She carries the Command Flag of Destroyer Division 26, and tries to set an example for others in the squadron.

Around the clock are a constant series of carrier chasing and drills. Either general quarters or a condition 3 watch is called every time aircraft are launched or land. Each time the radar picks up a blip, the alarm sounds and off we go. It's easy to lose track of the days. Meals often are eaten at battle stations or in shifts. Regular duty and battle station become as one. After several weeks, the strain begins to tell. Our war suddenly becomes a war of nerves. Sharp words and humorless replies replace jovial moods.

And the cold! The ever present damp cold finds its way through foul-weather gear. The chill finds its way into our very bones. I don't believe there is a

colder spot on earth than the windy deck of a destroyer plying the waters of the north Sea of Japan in winter. They say the winds emanate from Siberia. The memories of those extreme, biting winds will remain forever.

It is near the end of April 1952 and orders come through for *Laffey* to relieve the *Maddox*, which has taken a hit in her galley, killing one and wounding several men. When the word is passed, little do the men of the *Laffey* imagine what it means and what's in store? Our duties include shelling North Korean and Chinese Communist staging areas and supply routes for the front lines.

The action will take place in the enemy-held harbor of Wonson.

The *Laffey* enters Wonson on 28 April 1952 at about 1000 hours. There is a narrow channel we must pass through. As we stand at battle stations we can see enemy artillery units high above us in the mouths of caves. They track us the entire time it takes to clear the channel. We expect to be fired upon, because of our appearance as a slow-moving target. The enemy likens us to a floating duck in a shooting gallery. Despite our apprehension, not a shot is fired by either side.

Entering an enemy-held harbor under these strange conditions perhaps is symbolic of a new style of warfare. Maybe there are psychological reasons for what is taking place or a new game is being played. Whatever the reasons, our unscathed passage remains an unanswered question.

Once inside the harbor we begin to take stock of the situation. The barren shoreline seems to have villages or groups of buildings. There is a small island off in the distance, all alone. We learn the island is named Sad Sack because of its peculiar resemblance to a large duffel bag. A small contingent of American Marines use the island as an operating base. They monitor and report troop movements and spot convoys on the mainland. The *Laffey* then moves in and shells the troops or convoys with the 5-inch guns. Sometimes we venture in close enough to fire our 40-mm anti-aircraft batteries.

One problem with this seemingly simple operation is the fact that the harbor is heavily mined. We have a Republic of Korea naval officer who we hope is familiar with the mined areas. He plots strategic courses for us to follow during operations. This is all well and good, until reports from the Marines on Sad Sack inform us that the North Koreans venture out in small boats in the middle of the night to move the mines or lay new ones. Needless to say, this makes for some very restless sailors. The completion of each operation brings a collective sigh of relief from all hands.

The crew is altered to expect heavy action on the first of May, a major day of celebration for the Communist Party. Everyone is keyed up, including the enemy. They are so keyed up they couldn't wait. On 30 April, all hell breaks loose.

It's one thing to wage war on the open seas, and quite another to be surrounded on three sides by enemy shore batteries and to only be able to operate in waters that have been swept for mines. But that is Wonson. We stay and fight the longest ship-to-shore bombardment of the Korean War.

Day and night, the onslaught continues. Empty shell cases pile up on the fantail, leaving a grim reminder of this cold "police action." Concussions and near misses can be felt by all below decks, and damage control parties constantly check for water-tight integrity.

There is a gnawing uneasiness in the pit of every stomach. Being below decks offers some meager protection, but the desire to go topside to discover what is going on is difficult to overcome. It is raining shrapnel on all exposed decks, but the *Laffey* sustains only minor damage. One 8-inch piece of shrapnel shatters the bridge windshield but the luck of the *Laffey* holds and there are no casualties. An estimated 170 rounds of enemy fire fall around the ship during the skirmish. We fire about 450 rounds from the five-inch guns, resulting in heavy damage to enemy bunkers and warehouses.

In 28 days, the *Laffey* fires close to 6,000 shells. *Laffey* guns silence numerous enemy batteries.

The engagement is a fitting tribute to the proud record of our fighting ship.

Finally, we are relieved, but we have to run the gauntlet of the narrow channel. The *Laffey's* luck holds, and again we make it through with nothing worse than a bad case of the jitters.

On our way for well-earned R&R; at Sasebo, Japan, the officers and crew begin to put Wonson behind them. The Korean Conflict is winding down, there are constant attempts at peace talks, and rumors of rotation home dominate most conversations. Some crew continue on the ship's tour around the world, others are transferred for transport back to the states. It was time to let go all lines. Shipboard memories and mementoes are stowed away in the seemingly bottomless sea bag of memories. It is time to try to pick up where we had left off two years ago, or to start over again.

The Wonson engagement and others at Huangnam earns the *Laffey* two more battle stars and the Korean Presidential Citation. But our return to the States is uneventful, drearily so. The welcome home banners are missing. No ticker tape parades, no honking horns or confetti. I remember the end of World War II, a sailor returning to San Francisco in January 1946 when the cheers still rang out for servicemen. There had been a feeling of pride and satisfaction, the recognition of a job well done. No more. Now the streets are silent, we veterans almost invisible. Some find that many in their home towns are not even aware that they have been gone for two years. Little attention is paid to our "war" or to those of us who served our country in the time of need.

The memorial for the Korean War has yet to be built. Almost half a century has passed, and only vaguely do we hear of a proposed memorial. There are many veterans left to recall the glue-like mud and swarming insects of Korean summer and winters so cold that we couldn't bury our dead in the hard frozen ground.

Those of us from the *Laffey* are blessed: our ship still lives. She stands dignified, a symbol of ships dubbed "Tin Cans." Perhaps it is true, that a bit of our lives still remain locked inside her hull. I walk

the passageways and look at memorabilia of bygone days. In the quiet, soft light I can almost see the casings and the five-inch projectiles. I can almost hear the guns firing. With a little imagination, I can smell the cordite fumes. I step out the hatchway into what once was the living compartment of 40 crewmen. The essence, the smell of sweat, the raucous laughter, the camaraderie are still there. I climb the ladder to the main deck and I can almost feel the vibration of twin screws churning up the wake. Once again, I'm in the Sea of Japan.

The moment passes. Around me is the evidence of the wear and tear of almost 50 years. The old girl shows her age, much like the crew members who assemble every year. A little older, the shoulders sagging a bit, but heads held high with pride. We have known what it is like to feel this ship surging beneath us.

Editor's Note: The above shown article appeared in the *Laffey News* Autumn 1993 edition.

### **Dedication Week July 26-29, 1995**

President [George H. W. Bush](#) conducted the groundbreaking for the Memorial on June 14, 1992. The memorial was dedicated on July 27, 1995, the 42nd anniversary of the [armistice](#) that ended the war, by President [Bill Clinton](#) and [Kim Young Sam](#), President of the [Republic of Korea](#), to the men and women who served during the conflict. Management of the memorial was turned over to the [National Park Service](#), under its [National Mall and Memorial Parks](#) group. As with all National Park Service historic areas, the memorial was administratively listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) on the day of its dedication.

The Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC was dedicated in 1995 to 1.5 million American men and women who served in the Korean War. The expansive memorial includes a group of 19 statues that depict soldiers on patrol facing an American flag. A granite wall has a mural of the faces of 2,400 unnamed soldiers with a reading that states "Freedom is not free." A Pool of Remembrance honors all soldiers who were killed, wounded or missing in action.



**KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL**

## **NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND**

The Naval History and Heritage Command, located at the Washington Navy Yard, is responsible for the preservation, analysis, and dissemination of U.S. Naval history and heritage. It provides the knowledge foundation for the Navy by maintaining historically relevant resources and products that reflect the Navy's unique and enduring contributions through our nation's history, and supports the Fleet by assisting with and delivering professional research, analysis, and interpretive services. NHHC is composed of many activities including the Navy Department Library, the Navy Operational Archives, the Navy art and artifact collections, underwater archeology, Navy histories, nine museums, USS Constitution repair facility and the historic ship Nautilus. For more information, visit the NHHC website at [www.history.navy.mil](http://www.history.navy.mil).

### **“CIGS” NO MORE!**

From Stars and Stripes | Mar 26, 2014 | by Steven Beardsley and Jon Harper

NAPLES, Italy -- The Navy is considering a ban on all tobacco sales on ships and bases due to health concerns over the high rate of tobacco use among sailors, officials say.

The idea is "one option on the table" as Navy Secretary Ray Mabus explores ways to further curb tobacco use among sailors, said a Navy official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the subject. However, Congress is likely to weigh in on the matter.

Cmdr. Tamara Lawrence, a spokeswoman for the secretary, confirmed Mabus is taking a new look at tobacco use across the service.

"We've already taken one step by ending price subsidies for tobacco products, and Secretary Mabus has asked his staff to look at additional ways to improve the health and readiness of our force," she said in an email. "We are in the early stages of this process."

Navy Times first reported discussion of the possible ban.

Studies show military members use tobacco at higher rates than same-age civilians. A 2011 Defense Department survey showed 24 percent of troops smoked, compared with 20 percent of civilians of the same age. It also showed that more than 60 percent of Marines had used some form of tobacco in the previous 12 months.

Pentagon and service regulations on tobacco have tightened in recent decades after studies linked cigarettes, second-hand smoke and smokeless tobacco to health problems and poor fitness. DOD commissaries stopped discounting cigarettes in 1990s, and the Navy eventually limited their sale to exchanges on bases and ships.

The Navy has also tightened rules around smoking across the fleet. Beginning in the 1990s, it eliminated smoking breaks and required designated smoking areas be set up away from non-smokers in offices, surface ships and submarines. The Navy then banned smoking in submarines in 2010.

Still, pressure from the cigarette industry and the efforts of on-base retail outlets to lower prices have combined to keep tobacco products available, and generally cheap, on military bases, as well as Navy ships.

After the commanding officer of the aircraft carrier USS Theodor Roosevelt, Capt. Stanley W. Bryant, banned smoking and cigarette sales on the ship in 1993, a congressional subcommittee drafted language cementing cigarette sales on all ships, and handing over control of exchange stores on ships to the military's Morale, Welfare and Recreation program. The Navy then followed with a new regulation allowing smoking on all vessels.

Although the statute was overturned later by Congress, the story of the Roosevelt demonstrated the former power of the tobacco lobby and its interest in the military market.

Legislators on the MWR panel received higher donations from tobacco companies than their congressional colleagues, according to a National Institutes of Health study on the Roosevelt case. Internal documents from Philip Morris and its lobbying arm, the Tobacco Institute, showed that the Roosevelt ban was an industry target.

Critics say the military still encourages tobacco use by allowing discounted sales at its exchanges. DOD rules require that exchanges sell cigarettes at no more than the "most competitive" price in the surrounding community and no less than 5 percent below that price. Yet media reports have shown that many exchanges still price tobacco products well below those rates.

In 2012, the Navy required its exchanges to price cigarettes at no less than the "most competitive" price outside the gates, removing the 5 percent discount.

**QUOTE OF THE QUARTER**

“Glass, china, and reputation are easily cracked, and never well mended.” **Benjamin Franklin**

**DONATIONS**

**IN MEMORY OF WILBERT GAUDING:**

Dwaine & Marcia Gauding	\$25.00
Christopher & Jennifer Collier	\$50.00
Allan Stone Associates, LLC	\$100.00
James & Krystal Gauding	\$25.00
Stacie Russell & The Kentridge Team	\$25.00

**WORK PARTY DONATIONS**

Phyllis Cettomai	\$50.00
DT and GL Bennett	\$100.00
Robert Johnson	\$500.00

**GENERAL DONATION TO THE ASSOCIATION**

Judy L. Trout (Use wherever needed) \$500.00

The USS Laffey DD-724 Association would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of the above for their generous contributions. We can assure all of you that your gifts are dedicated to seeing that the USS Laffey remains “The Ship That Would Not Die” and we invite you to visit Patriots Point Naval Maritime Museum to see how great the ship looks.

**A STORY FORWARDED TO SONNY**

My Dad, William "Bill" Long, was on the USS Laffey DD-459. She was sunk on Friday November 13, 1942 at Guadalcanal. He survived the sinking and now, my son Cole Long is on a destroyer also. He is on USS Kidd DDG-100 serving in the Pacific Fleet.

Dad was still alive to see his grandson follow in his footsteps.

On a recent deployment, my son Cole, was fortunate to pass through Iron Bottom Sound. And there, his Captain stopped the ship so my son could honor the crew of the DD-459. While above her watery grave he re-enlisted. I thought that was so honorable.

Joel Long



**Bartlett Laffey, Medal of Honor Recipient – The Civil War - For his heroic actions at the battle of Yazoo City, MS on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1864**

**A LETTER FROM LaREINE KURTZ**

Dear Laffey family,

On behalf of Ira Kurtz, I want to share some thoughts with you.

I was accidentally introduced to you while Ira and I were on vacation in Charleston and he noticed and said “my ship is there in the harbor at Patriots

Point; and he asked if I would mind if we visited her. Of course I didn't mind.

The "top side" work party said there were others below. Well, ten minutes later some guy started screaming from the far end of the ship, running towards us, and continuing to yell Ira Kurtz, Ira Kurtz, where are you? This was my introduction to Sonny Walker...It was a Joyous moment!!

When we went below, there was "Cookie" and others. "Cookie" had bought Ira's car many years ago. Everyone present started with the memories. This was my opportunity to ask, nay – verify, some of the stories Ira had told me.

One story in particular was about a tense event when the Laffey, in response to an S.O.S., trained her guns on a British ship whose sailors were robbing a disabled ship. Laffey told them to cease and desist or we will fire!! My God, these were our allies! Ira's big tale was thus validated.

So began Ira's return to the Laffey and its "work parties". I truly appreciated the fun and the comradeship that Ira experienced with the old crew and new friends he met. You and these memories created a new chapter of joy and fun in Ira's life and therefore mine.

So, in his honor and memory, I am making this donation for the benefit of the Laffey Association.

There were many more stories to tell but I cannot list them all. I look forward to hearing some of them from you.

May I say I am part of a grateful nation that not only says thank you for your service but thank you also to your families and their many contributions. Thank you...Thank you again!

With great affection – LaReine Kurtz

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** LaReine's generous donation of \$500.00 was acknowledged in the October-November-December newsletter of 2013. Her husband Ira Kurtz served on the Laffey 1960-62 and he passed away on October 28, 2012. Ira is sadly missed by all of us who had the pleasure of knowing him.

## USS LAFFEY DD-724 ASSOCIATION OFFICERS AND STAFF

### Current Officers

Edgar "Sonny" Walker..... President  
(soncher724@verizon.net)  
Bob Wampler..... Vice President  
(rdwjcw@hargray.com)  
George Kessler..... Treasurer  
(gfkessler09@yahoo.com)  
Hillary Wagner.....Secretary  
Mike Pereira.....Membership Chairman  
(antiredsox@yahoo.com)

### Board of Directors

Ari Phoutrides  
John Langevin  
Francis LaSala  
Jim Spriggs  
John Hudak

### Website Manager

A. J. Tarquino

### Newsletter Staff

Bob Wampler.... Editor and Circulation Manager

## TAPS LIST

Gerald Bowman, MM2  
Served Aboard Laffey 1950-54  
Passed Away on March 8, 2014

Michael Millow, FT2  
Served aboard Laffey 1956-58  
Passed Away on March 18, 2014

Wilbert C. Gauding, MM2  
Plank Owner  
Survivor of Okinawa Battle

## Family Members

Joseph Belsito  
Son of Sal and Donna Belcito (Deceased)  
Passed Away on March 23, 2014  
Joe was only 39 years old

Penny Liebertz  
Wife of Jerry Liebertz  
Passed Away on November 27, 2002

Please say a prayer for those recently departed members of the Laffey family. May they rest in peace and may all surviving family members remember them forever in their hearts.

## SAVE THESE DATES

### September 28<sup>th</sup> through October 1<sup>st</sup> for the 2014 USS Laffey Reunion

The reunion is going to be back in Charleston, South Carolina.

It will be a Great time to catch up with some of your friends, retell some of those sea tales and have some fun. A nice visit to the ship is also in order. She has been back from the yards a couple of years now and is looking Beautiful and Proud.

We will be staying at the Quality Inn - Patriots Point Please call the hotel directly and make your reservations. (843) 856-8817

#### Room Rates:

Deluxe room with 2 Queen Beds - (95.99)

Queen Suite with 2 Queen Beds, mini fridge (105.99)

King Suite with sitting, mini fridge (109.99)

#### Sunday, Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>

1pm – 10pm

Stop by the Hospitality room to register and pick up your information packet.

7pm: We will be enjoying all of the food that **YOU** brought in the Hospitality room

#### Monday, Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>

9am – 3pm

Island Sip and See Tour: Ride the Low Country Loop Trolley out to visit the Charleston Tea Plantation, Firefly Distillery and Live Oak Winery at Irvin-House Vineyards. Lunch is included.

#### Tuesday, Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>

10 am Memorial Service onboard the USS Laffey then, the Tree Dedication

1-5pm Harbor Breeze for lunch and Fun

#### Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>

9am Board Meeting

10am General Meeting

630 pm - Let's have a Great send off at our USO Dinner at Omar's

#### SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT:

\*We are asking everyone to bring something to share with everyone at the Get-Together on Sunday night. (cookies, cakes, cheese trays, etc.)

If you are unable to bring something or would rather like to make a donation towards some trays of food, just send the extra money with your registration fee and we will pick up something that will be delicious. **\*\*BYOB** (bring your own bottle. We will have soda available but beer, wine, and other spirits you will need to supply.

\*\*\*We love and appreciate it when people bring something to be auctioned off or donations for door prizes at the reunion. If you think you will be bringing something, please give us a heads up (if possible) so we can have a drop bag set aside and a space for it on the table.

Hope to see you there!



**SHE MAY BE OLD, BUT SHE SURE IS PRETTY!**



**PLAN TO ATTEND**

**THE USS LAFFEY 2014 REUNION**

**EXPERIENCE THE COMRADESHIP ALL OVER AGAIN....JUST LIKE THE GOOD OLD TIMES!!**

**2014 USS LAFFEY REUNION REGISTRATION,  
CHARLESTON, SC**

**Reunion Dates: Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> – Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014**

Cost for Scheduled Activities: \$150 per person  
(Payable with this registration document)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number and names of persons  
attending: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E/Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

What Years did you serve on the USS  
Laffey? \_\_\_\_\_

What was your rate? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any young children attending: If yes,  
what are their ages? \_\_\_\_\_

What day do you expect to  
arrive? \_\_\_\_\_

Will this be the First reunion that you are  
Attending? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs /  
Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please let us know if you will NOT be attending  
a specific function during the reunion. We must**

pay per person, you will not be refunded but the  
money would stay in the Association instead of  
paying for something unused.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**This year we are starting BYOB (bring your own  
bottle – beer, wine spirits). We will have soda  
available, please give us an idea of what kind  
you would like.**

**Reminder:** Sunday night Get-Together we are  
having you bring something to be served. If you  
would rather send a few extra dollars, we will put it  
towards some trays of food for all to share.

Please let us know if you are bringing something to  
be raffled off so we will be prepared with a ticket  
drop bag.

Send Reunion Registration and check made out to  
“USS Laffey Association” to:  
Jill Michel, 26 Quaker Road, Mickleton, NJ 08056-  
1303

Contact: Jill Michel @comcast.net or call 609-870-  
0600 / 856-423-4263  
Please feel free to call with any questions or  
concerns.



**USS Laffey DD-724 Association**

Bob Wampler  
100 Landing Lane  
Bluffton, SC 29909-6060

