

LAFFEY NEWS

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



U.S.S. LAFFEY DD724 & DD459

“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

January-February-March

www.laffey.org

2016

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE SPRING 2016

If you live in or near the Mid-Atlantic *area* then you will never forget January, 2016. Wow, 32” of snow really gets your attention. What a blizzard! We really know how y’all in Buffalo and Wisconsin feel now. You can have it!!!!

We hope everyone had a great Christmas and safe New Year. Time’s passing has been a quick one for us. It seems like we just had our reunion and here we are looking at our Spring Work Party coming-up in April. We have had a great response from the membership for our April work party. Right now we have about 30 people signed up. We are planning for a program being held on the fantail on 16 April to show the visitors what happened to the ship on that eventful day. The program should last about an hour. I plan to tell everyone about the attack, plane by plane. The last time we did this for the visitors we had great response from the families, especially the kids.

While at our “mini-work party”, January 30 – February 6, 2016, I spoke with the folks at Patriots Point to see if we could get a little notice to the TV and newspaper people to advertise the fantail program. They assured me that they will get the word out.

After all of the trouble we had at the October 2015 work party (getting enough paint, or the right color too), we decided to see if we could purchase our own paint to do the fantail. There is nothing worse than having 20 able-bodied workers ready to go and not have enough paint. I met with Bob Howard and he thought it would be a good idea as long as the paint matched what was being used by Patriots Point. This, of course is expensive but it will keep our guys working.

We arrived on Saturday Jan. 30th. We went to work getting the water heaters turned on, cleaned the heads and berthing areas. Went shopping, got supplies and food.

We started working in earnest on Sunday and we noticed running rust on the port side amidships. After finding a drain pipe that dumped rusty water on the side of the ship we replaced the pipe and extended the discharge out over the water. We also noticed that there was a slow hot water feed to the washing machine. We remedied that situation and then washed sheets and blankets.

We added 4 new M-1 Garand replica rifles, 2 new replica Thompson sub-machine guns and 4 replica hand grenades to the small arms locker. These were purchased by our association for \$1300.00. These replicas look absolutely genuine to an unfamiliar eye. They are constructed of real

wood and steel and their weights are really approximate to the originals! Obviously, I was hoping that I wouldn't get stopped on I-95 headed to the ship with these articles in my trunk area. While at Patriots Point, I took a trip through the Yorktown's storage compartments with Melissa Buchanan, who is curator for artifacts, and found 4 helmets that went into the small arms locker also.

Our guys (John Hudak, Dave Harhager, Joe Luque and Don Watson) went to work repairing and/or replacing the drains and plumbing in the 1st Division Head and Shower. Also shower connections were replaced in the CPO Head.

Rich McKinney worked on the tile deck in CPO Berthing trying to get it level enough to re-tile. This deck had the tile taken up at the yards when the hull was replaced.

Harold Borton vacuumed and shampooed the carpet in the CPO Lounge. It sure looked and smelled better. He said he got enough dirt out of the carpet we could have planted tomatoes on the forecastle. It was too cold to plant though. Joe Luque and I took inventory of our 3 cages in the Bosun's Locker for Bob Langevin.

On Saturday the tools were put away, the spaces cleaned up, and some laundry was done. All hands then departed for home. I am writing this on Sunday and I've heard that all work party attendees arrived at their homes safely - all hands except Richie: We never know when he gets home. He has too many stops to make before he gets back to Houston!

While we were at Patriots Point, we were invited down into the after engine room to see the new exhibit. The folks at Patriots Point did a great job installing sights and sounds of an operational engine room. It starts in the berthing area with a kiosk with videos by John Hudak, Rich McKinney and others telling about how the engineering spaces work. They actually looked like they knew what they were talking about!

We have to give Patriots Point a Bravo Zulu for the job they did. They are currently working in CIC to get the new exhibit open for our reunion in September.

Finally, we are looking forward to a good spring and summer and plan on having the ship painted up for everyone when they come to Charleston for the reunion.

Please keep our shipmates in sick bay in your prayers.

Sonny Walker
President USS Laffey DD724 Association

LAFFEY WORK PARTY MOTTO:

"When a thing is done, it's done. Don't look back. Look forward to your next objective."

George C. Marshall

2016 REUNION DATES

Get ready, get set, and go.....forward with your plans to attend the USS Laffey DD-724 Association's 2016 Reunion that is being held in Charleston SC, the homeport of the USS Laffey. The dates of this reunion are Sunday, September 25, 2016 through Wednesday September 28, 2016 with hotel checkout/departure on Thursday the 29th.



PLAN TO ATTEND THE USS LAFFEY 2016 REUNION

Our reunion is currently a work in progress and we do not have additional details to provide at this time. The next edition of the Laffey News will contain an itinerary and registration form.

MORE PICTURES FROM THE 2015 REUNION IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA



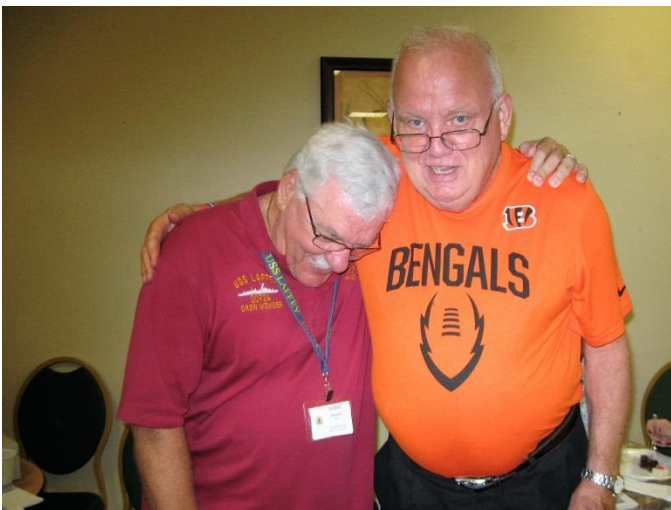
Membership Chairman Michael Pereira and VP Chris Kirhagis share some comments together



All together now.....Smile!



Fran LaSala expresses his allegiance to hometown Pittsburgh Steelers. Editor's Comment: I'm a "Stiller's" fan too!



The Ravens' fan Sonny Walker and the Bengals' fan Tom Klett "sadly" discuss their team's prospects



Someday.....Someday I'm going to become a US Navy sailor



Ron and Nancy Cossey found a quiet corner!



Looks like a USS Laffey family gathering to me!



Are you aware there is someone in a yellow shirt hiding/lurking in the background?



One, two, three.....Give us a smile!



Now that was one funny joke!



So tell me...When does the dinner buffet open?



We've been waiting so very long to be called to the buffet line – Hope something will be left!!



Ventriloquist Margaret Davis and friend entertain during the farewell dinner.



Let's all admit...This is one really pretty dress on one very pretty Laffey Reunion attendee!



John Hudak and Aggie Coleman take on new roles during the ventriloquist's presentation.

**2015 REUNION - AN UNFORGETTABLE EVENT!
(EARLIER MESSAGE FROM A MEMBER)**

"I left Cleveland on Thursday and drove to Augusta, GA to spend a few days with a friend. I left on Saturday and headed to Orlando, hooked up with old friends, and met others – Having a great time!

On Wednesday, after the reunion farewell dinner, I went to my room to get ready to leave for home. About 2:30 AM I began getting chest pains and I began sweating. I called 911 and a medical team showed up within 10 minutes. The next thing I knew I was on my way to the hospital.

I had a quadruple bypass and spent about three weeks in REHAB. Finally, I was discharged. My



Sonny Walker gives Jill Michel a plaque to recognize her efforts as Reunion Coordinator.

Brother-in-law flew from Cleveland to Orlando to drive me home. So, I get home and two days later I end up in a local hospital with kidney stones! Another week shot to Hell. **This is one reunion event I will never forget!!**

A special thanks with sincere gratitude goes out to Sonny Walker, John Hudak, Don Watson, and Jim Oddo for the special attention they showed me with some logistical issues.”

MEMBER JOE PAPAleo

“Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.”

Voltaire

**USS LAFFEY DD-724 ASSOCIATION
OFFICERS AND STAFF**

Current Officers

Edgar “Sonny” Walker..... President
(soncher724@verizon.net)
Chris Kirhagis.....Vice President
(MASH752@aol.com)
George Kessler..... Treasurer
(gfkessler09@yahoo.com)
Hilary Wagner.....Secretary
Mike Pereira.....Membership Chairman
(antiredsox@yahoo.com)

Board of Directors

Ari Phoutrides
Bob Langevin
John Langevin
Francis LaSala
John Hudak
Bob Wampler

Website Manager

A.J. Tarquino
(atarquino@columbus.rr.com)

Laffey News Quarterly Newsletter

Bob Wampler, Editor and Circulation Manager
(rdwicw@hargray.com)

AN ETHNIC EXPLANATION OF WORK!

“He who begins many things finishes but few.”

Italian Proverb



“AIN’T SHE SWEET”? IMPRESSIVE AT SEA!

TAPS LIST

Joseph J. Folino, SHSN
Past Treasurer and Board Member
Served Aboard Laffey 2/47 to 7/52
Passed Away on December 26, 2015

Elwood C. “Woody” Gedusky, SFP2
Served Aboard Laffey 1953 to 1955
Passed Away on November 18, 2015

Joseph Kavanaugh, LT
DASH Officer
Served Aboard Laffey 1963 to 1965
Passed Away on January 2, 2016

Family Members

Elizabeth “Lib” Cox
Wife of Member Jim Cox
Passed Away on November 25, 2015

June A. Setmire
Wife of deceased member Glenn Setmire, BM2
Passed Away February 22, 2015

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.

ATTENTION ALL HANDS:

Our spring work party will be held April 15 - 23, 2016. We will be arriving on FRIDAY April 15th.

On Saturday 16 April, we will be holding a type of seminar on the fantail. I plan to relate the battle of Okinawa to the visitors. We did this some years

back and it was really a big hit with the folks. They loved the stories about our shipmate heroes.

We are also having some Boy Scouts from North Carolina, staying on the Yorktown, coming to work on the Laffey.

The boys have been to the ship before and are really excited about helping out. I am sure we can find some work for the kids to do and learn something about shipboard life.

I have been told that the new exhibit will be working in the engine room. It will include videos, hands-on features and things that will bring the space alive. It should be exciting to see it in operation.

We will have plenty of work to do for the rest of the week. I will compile a work list closer to the work dates.

Please let me know if you will be attending the work party.

Sonny

APRIL WORK PARTY

We had a great response for the April work party.

We have all of the bunks filled on the ship plus some people staying in hotels.

Here is the list of attendees.

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Ari Phoutrides | Don Watson |
| Joe Luque | Rich McKinney |
| Ken Rohloff | Sonny Walker |
| Chris Kirhagis | John Hudak |
| Hank Ashton | Dave Harhager |
| Dave Tillinghast | Fred Nardei |
| Mike Pereira | Mike Pereira Jr. |
| Bob Johnson | Terry Miller |
| Ed Fitzsimmons | Bill Fitzsimmons |

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Bob Fitzsimmons | Mason Fitzsimmons |
| Tom Aust | John Miller |
| Steve Smith | Dan Essig, Jr. (H) |
| Dan Essig, III (H) | Anthony Damore |
| Bob Langevin (H) | Jill Michel (H) |
| Christine Essig (H) | |

We are looking forward to a great work party.

I heard from Mac at Patriots Point and the new Engine Room Experience is now open.

The new CIC hands on exhibit should be open by the time our work party starts too.

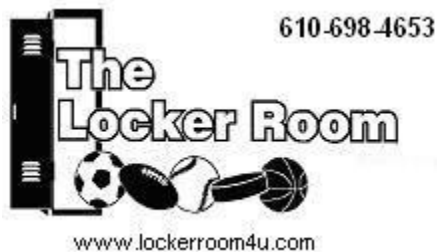
See you all in the spring.

Sonny

IT WILL SOON BE SPRING

Forget about the recent snows, the sub-freezing temperatures, the heavy coats, the freezing rain, the high utility bills, and everything else winter provides! Relief is on the way and it's called **SPRING!** We all know the benefits of SPRING – Warmer days, longer days, and thoughts about gardening and the bountiful harvests resulting from our labors. However, spring will also bring with it a lot of rain. Those May flowers don't just appear: They need rain-plenty of rain-and even more rain!

Association Member Dave Bossard maintains an inventory of "Laffey stuff" for the benefit of all of us. His Laffey Gear items can be obtained at the following phone and website:



www.lockerroom4u.com

So, what does Dave have for spring? Well, "dress up" with a Laffey rain jacket. Take a look

at what Dave suggests for those eventual rainy days ahead:



Products - USS Laffey Ship Store: USS Laffey Blue Hooded Rain Jacket

Laffey Item # 12 9675 Nor'easter J Available colors - Navy

- Breathable, wind & waterproof
- Great protection for those who work outdoors.
- Pair with Nor'easter Rain Pant style 9783.

Sizes XS-3XL Pricing includes Shipping.

Locker Room Laffey Ship Store Price:

S - XL **\$65.00**
2XL **\$68.00**
3XL **\$71.00**

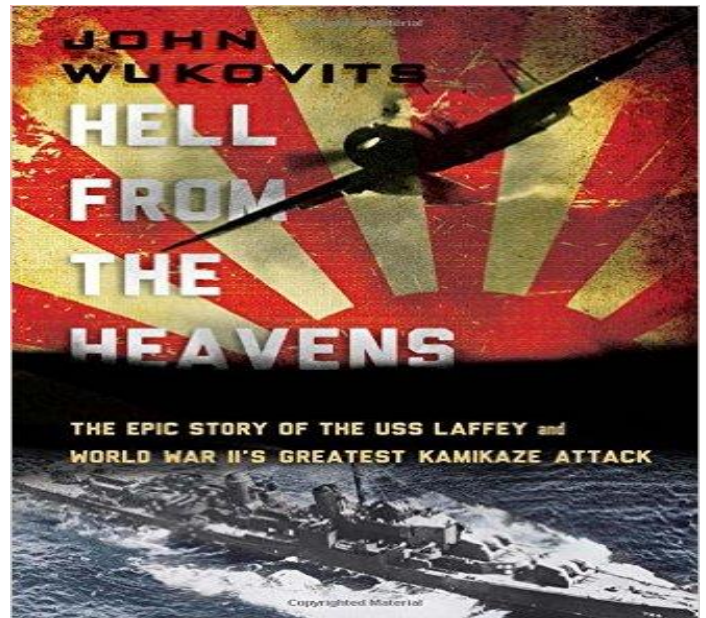
Give Dave a call to discuss purchasing a Jacket or any other inventory item – Just have a “chat”!

A NEW BOOK ABOUT THE USS LAFFEY

Hell from the Heavens: The Epic Story of the USS Laffey and World War II's Greatest Kamikaze Attack (Hardcover) – April 7, 2015

by John Wukovits (Author)

Available at Amazon.com



They had seen kamikazes purposely crash into other destroyers and cruisers in their unit and had seen firsthand the bloody results of those crazed tactics. But nothing could have prepared the crew for this moment—an eighty-minute ordeal in which the single small ship was targeted by no fewer than twenty-two Japanese suicide aircraft.

By the time the unprecedented attack on the *Laffey* was finished, thirty-two sailors lay dead, more than seventy were wounded, and the ship was grievously damaged. Although she lay shrouded in smoke and fire for hours, the *Laffey* somehow survived, and the gutted American warship limped from Okinawa's shore for home, where the ship and crew would be feted as heroes.

Using scores of personal interviews with survivors, the memoirs of crew members, and the sailors' wartime correspondence, historian and author John Wukovits breathes life into the story of this nearly forgotten historic event. The US Navy described the kamikaze attack on the *Laffey* "as one of the great sea epics of the war." In *Hell from the Heavens*, the author makes the ordeal of the *Laffey* and her crew a story for the ages.

On April 16, 1945, the crewmen of the USS *Laffey* were battle hardened and prepared. They had engaged in combat off the Normandy coast in June 1944. They had been involved in three prior assaults of enemy positions in the Pacific—at Leyte and Lingayen in the Philippines and at Iwo Jima.

On the morning of April 16, 1945, the crewmen of the USS Laffey saw what seemed to be the entire Japanese air force assembled directly above. Hell was about to be unleashed on them as they were about to become the targets of the largest single-ship kamikaze attack of World War II.

EDITOR'S NOTE: THE ABOVE SHOWN NEW BOOK ARTICLE ABOUT THE LAFFEY CAME TO US WITH THE BELOW LETTER

Sonny:

Please pass along to the Laffey Family. This was sent to me by our good friend, Diver Jack Lehman, who now lives up in Mass.

Here he is with the boots worn by George Patton (better known around here as Pat's grandfather) at a WWII Veteran Appreciation event from a few years ago.

Jeff Jacobs



“You will never do anything in this world without courage. It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor.” **Aristotle (Seems Appropriate!)**

ALL HANDS:

I just received this from Judy Harhager. Please keep Dave and Judy in your prayers.

Sonny

On Sunday, January 17, 2016 10:07 PM,

This is just a note to let everyone know that Dave has been in the hospital again. He has had some issues that were increasing and creating breathing problems and on Saturday morning it was necessary to take him to the hospital. Through an X-ray of the chest, CT scan and sonogram of abdomen it was determined that he had an accumulation of fluid in the abdomen and a little showing back in the right lung. He was admitted and 10 hours after entering ER he finally got to a room. His oncologist saw him today and ordered a CT scan of his chest and also to have the fluid removed from the abdomen cavity. He has been taken off the cancer pill and his further treatment will involve a chemo infusion of a new drug which we hope will be started next week. From what we were told it was pretty clear to us that the cancer is active again and possibly spread to the abdomen. Dave is very UP and continues to have a positive attitude about his situation. As before his faith plays a major part in how he looks at this. The doctor indicated that there should be no reason for him not to be discharged tomorrow (Monday).

Needless to say this was our first time to visit an ER at a major hospital in a large city and it was a real experience. I got a little jittery when I heard several times over the speaker system a call for Security. Those stories are for another time!

Sonny - Please forward to the crew of the Laffey.

Thanks – Jud

AN UPDATE ON HOMER DOSTER

I just got off the phone with Homer Doster (1-19-2016). He advised that the back surgery went well.

He has been flat on his back for 3 days and he is in a lot of pain

They are going to get him up tomorrow and possibly send him home on Saturday.

He wants to thank all of you for the e-mails, cards, calls and prayers.

Homer told me that he was never this close to anyone on the USS Loffberg as he is to his Laffey shipmates.

I told him that you reap what you sew and he really sewed some good stuff.

Keep up the prayers and stuff as he recuperates.

Love you all.

Sonny

DONATIONS RECENTLY RECEIVED

“In Memory of Joe Folino”

Lyle “Pete” Lacore	\$25.00
George Ploth	\$50.00
Bill & Tari Brink	\$40.00
Stan & Martha Van Winkle	\$35.00

“In memory of George Ploth”

Phillip & Evelyne Dwyer	\$75.00
Nancy & Edward Sena	\$50.00
Steve Zitin	\$25.00
Barbara Norris	\$50.00

“In Memory of Glenn Setmire”

Sharon Setmire (Daughter)	\$50.00
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General Donation

Paul Hope	\$25.00
Charles Meyer	\$100.00

Work Party Donation

Julian & Karen Winston	\$100.00
Larry Smith	\$25.00
Bob Volz	\$25.00
Dorothy Brandt	\$5.00

The USS Laffey DD-724 Association acknowledges and sincerely appreciates all donations and we can assure all donors that their generosity helps us to maintain and improve the USS Laffey at Patriots Point in South Carolina.

PRAYER REQUESTS

All Hands: I spoke with shipmate Ray Lippi this morning (2-20-2016).

Ray's wife Claire is going into the hospital tomorrow for a month. Claire has been fighting cancer for years. She is going to have chemo treatments and other treatments for 4 weeks.

Please keep Claire and her family in our prayers.

Sonny

All Hands:

We have lost another shipmate.

Elwood "Woody" Gedusky FP2 passed away on September 9, 2015. He died of Mesothelioma otherwise known as Snipe's Disease.

Woody served aboard 1953-55.

He loved to come to the work parties and ply his trade as a shipfitter. We always enjoyed being with Woody. He was a lot of fun at the work parties. He will be missed.

We honored Woody at the reunion memorial service in Orlando.

Sonny

All Hands:

We have been informed by Ken Rohloff, that we have lost another shipmate. Phil DuBois MR2 passed away on November 18, 2015.

Phil served onboard Laffey in the late 60's and early 70's. He served with Rich McKinney, Ken Rohloff, Pat Striplin and some others.

Let's keep Phil and his family in our thoughts and prayers.

Sonny

All Hands:

Sadly, I was informed by Bob Wampler that one of our shipmates from 59-61 passed away from cancer.

George Ploth, SOG3, passed away today, 12/8/15 at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. He died after a valiant battle against Lymphoma that included 4 months of chemo and a bone marrow transplant.

His wife Carol requested that any "In Memory of" Donations (by our members) should be made to the USS Laffey DD-724 Association.

Carol mentioned again that George loved the Laffey so very much and he appreciated receiving comments from his shipmates after the Prayer Request went out.

Her e-mail address is carolploth@gmail.com if you want to drop her a note.

I remember George from our 61 MED Cruise.

Please keep Carol and George and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Sonny

All Hands:

It is with a heavy heart that I bring you this news. We have lost one of the fine true Ladies of the South. Lib Cox, wife of Jim Cox passed away this morning.

Jim said she passed quietly and had the most peaceful look on her face that he has seen in months.

Jim and Lib are really good people.

Please keep Jim and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Sonny

All Hands:

I received a phone call today (2-17-2016) from Ari Phoutrides.

A WWII shipmate is having severe health issues and needs his shipmates to pray for him.

Fred Gemmell TM2 is fighting some very big health problems. We, as his shipmates, need to keep Fred and his family in our thoughts and prayers.

Thanks –

Sonny

ALL HANDS:

I was informed this morning (1-6-2016) of the passing of one of our DASH officers.

Lt. Joseph T. Kavanaugh, served aboard 63-65 passed away Jan 2, 2016.

We have no information on cause of death or any services or funeral arrangements.

If anyone has any DASH stories about Lt. Kavanaugh please let me know.

Sonny: 410-515-3223 home 410-960-5695
soncher724@verizon.net

ALL HANDS:

Please keep Chris Kirhagis' lady friend, Bernice, in your thoughts and prayers. Bernice is home and recovering from an operation. Hang in there girl!

Sonny

A SPECIAL NOTE

Dear Sonny,

I'd like to tell you that as a brand new bride from California, the apartment we found was just across the river from the shipyard where the Laffey was being overhauled, along with another ship. So we got to hear in the morning: "Reveille, Reveille, Up All Hands, Captain Departing or Arriving, and a few other commands. And I loved it - All, while many of my neighbors hated it! But of course they were civilians!! So they did not know that they should be proud!! Dorothy Brandt, Proud Navy Widow.

WISDOM WITH AGE

"I look to the future because that's where I'm going to spend the rest of my life."

George Burns

USS Laffey DD-724 Association

Bob Wampler

100 Landing Lane

Bluffton, SC 29909-6060

