

# LAFFEY NEWS

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



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

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July-August-September

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

2016

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## I'LL NEVER ABANDON SHIP AS LONG AS A GUN WILL FIRE: CO F. JULIAN BECTON

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I can't believe that summer is almost gone!! Where did it go?

We are getting ready for our upcoming reunion in Charleston this September 25-29. Jill has been working her head off trying to make this another one of her successes. We have been fighting confusion with the rooms. We found out today that we have booked 63 rooms. We only blocked 60??? The folks at the hotel are having a sales meeting on Monday (Aug 8) to try to come up with more rooms for us. This will all be water over the dam by the time you read this. This is just to let you know how we earn our "salary" for our really lofty positions.

As usual, we are having our fall work party October 15-22, 2016. We will be renting a man lift with an 85-foot boom to reach the upper decks. Big Mike and Little Mike Pereira will be handling this small job. (They are the only two who know how to operate the thing!) We hope to get the entire starboard side done. It will take scaffolding to do the port side. We will have to get that side in the spring. We will get measurements and figure out how much paint we need while we are at the reunion.

We do have about 10 gallons of paint left over from the spring work party so this should take a little off of the amount we need to spend for more paint.

I will be travelling to Virginia Beach, VA to attend Capt. John P. Tazewell's memorial service on Aug. 27. His wife Betsy passed away a couple of weeks after the captain. Her service will be held at the same time. Capt. Tazewell was to us (crew of 60-62) what Adm. Becton was to the WWII crew. A few years ago we threw a surprise party for the captain. We had 19 guys come in from all over the country to honor our captain.

There wasn't a dry eye in the house when he walked down the line of side boys. Everyone was lined up at the door as he entered. BMC Ralph Doll piped the captain aboard. Fred Nardei rang the bell and announced "Laffey Arriving". We presented him with an engraved crystal indicating that he turned boys into men and how we would have fought if the occasion warranted. I also mentioned that most of us were in front of him for many different infractions and had some disciplinary problems. He told us that "They make the best sailors!" It was a great night. Our captain will be missed.

Our Model Raffle Sales are on a good track. We have sold over \$4,100.00 in chances so far. Thanks and good luck to all who bought chances. Remember, this is our main source of funds for the work parties. We have decided to start buying our own paint and supplies for our work parties. This is intended to take a load off of Patriots Point who is working hard to pay back the 9 million bucks for the new bottom on our lady. It is through donations from all of our members that keep the ship looking her best.

I can't say enough about our work party attendees. We seem to be running into the problem of "too many birthdays". We have a lot of guys carrying clipboards now instead of paint brushes. I guess this happens. We have been lucky to have some younger guys coming to do the bull work. The problem is, when we walk aboard we think we are still 19 years old! We hit the sack at 9PM and fight the stiff muscles as we crawl out of the racks in the morning. But it is a beautiful thing to experience. The memories are worth all of the pain.

We hope to see you all at the reunion. We always enjoy sitting in the hospitality room and telling and listening to sea stories. Recalling old memories is always a lot of laughs: Just remember that laughter is what keeps us young.

Sonny Walker, President, USS Laffey Association

**RECENT DONATIONS**

**In memory of QM2 David E. Harhager:**

Ken Rohloff	\$100.00
Helen Mainhart	\$ 50.00
Anna V. Wampler	\$100.00
Sonny Walker	.\$100.00
Residents of Carlsberg Estates	\$100.00
Carolyn Sue Dean	\$ 80.00
Ed Pochatek	\$ 50.00
Harvey Peet	\$ 50.00

**In memory of Lee Ford**

Fred Bielsky	\$ 50.00
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**In memory of George Ploth**

Charleston Amateur Radio Society	\$ 25.00
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**In memory of Richard Kessler, Brother of our Treasurer George Kessler**

Tom Klett	\$ 50.00
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**Work Party and General Donations**

Tom Phelps	\$ 50.00
Jean S. Smith (Widow of Captain Paul Smith and Mom of James Smith)	\$100.00
John and Anna Hall	\$ 50.00
Beverly Lloyd	\$ 50.00
Joel Youngquist	\$100.00
(Note: Joel recently donated \$200.00)	
Robert S. Burnett	\$ 50.00
Charlie Meyer	\$250.00
Jack Strand	\$ 75.00
Robert C. Johnson	\$275.00
Harold Borton	\$175.00
James Hart	\$100.00
Arnold Goldberger	\$100.00

**SPECIAL DONATION:** Bob Langevin and family have donated food for the reunion.

They are supplying cheese platters, roast beef petite sandwich trays, croissant trays, boneless wing trays, big party shrimp trays, crab bites trays, pasta salad trays and cannoli classic trays.

We should have a fun night with those vittles!!

They have sent a \$500 deposit and will pay the balance just before the event. This is not the first time that family has done this. They are truly Laffey supporters.

Thanks to the Langevin family

**And (from Sonny on August 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

Teri Langevin, wife of John Langevin had open heart surgery today. The operation was a success and she will be in ICU for a few more days.

Please keep Teri in your thoughts and prayers.

## WE APPRECIATE YOUR GENEROSITY

The members and officers of the USS-Laffey DD-724 Association would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all who donate towards the maintenance of our ship. All donations assure the continued life of “**The Ship That Would Not Die**”. Visit her at Patriots Point in Charleston, SC!

### TAPS LIST

Captain John P. Tazewell  
Served as Laffey Commanding Officer 1960-1962  
Passed Away on May 31, 2016

Robert E. Weaver, GM1  
Served Aboard Laffey 1956-1962  
Passed Away December 19, 2013  
Retired From Navy as CWO-3

Fred Gemmell, TM2  
Served Aboard Laffey September 1944 through 1945, Okinawa Battle Survivor  
Passed Away July 1, 2016

Chief Wendell E. Calloway  
Served Aboard USS Rich and was a Work Party member during Rich work party sessions on Laffey  
Passed away on June 30, 2016

Vernon Lee Ford, BT2  
Associate Member and Patriots Point Employee  
In charge of Laffey maintenance – A great friend  
Passed Away on May 14, 2016, at age 58.

Mark K. Patterson, BT3  
Served Aboard Laffey 1973-1975  
Passed Away on May 7, 2016

Thomas A. Radzevich  
Served Aboard Laffey in Late 60's.  
Passed Away on May 8, 2016

### Family Member

Mrs. Elizabeth Tazewell, Ms. Betsy, Wife of the late Capt. John P. Tazewell (May 31, 2016)  
Passed Away June 23, 2016

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

## 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)

**ATTENTION ALL HANDS: Look for the story of the USS Ari Phoutrides in the next edition of the Laffey News – Complete with pictures!!**

### OUR SUCCESSFUL SPRING WORK PARTY!!



**Let's see what's under here!**



**Hilary takes a break from work to take a picture.**



**Lots of “good eatin goin on”!**



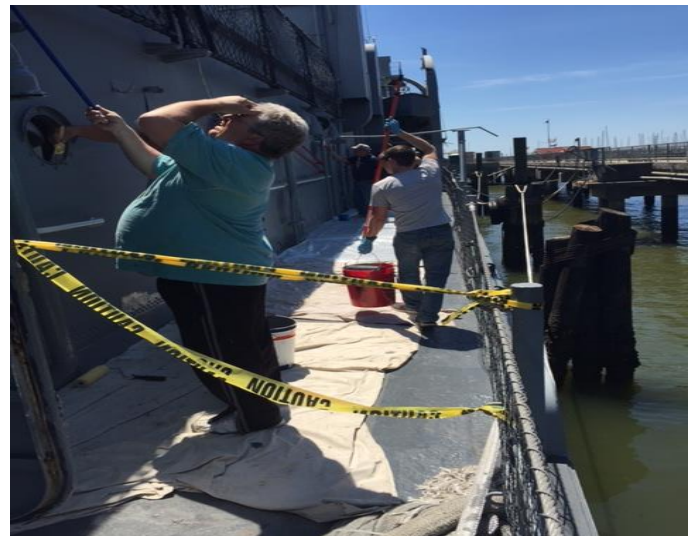
**Work Party Group Photo**



**Jill Michel – Watch that arm and hand!!**



**Now that was one great “Navy meal”!**



**We “really” do work at these work parties!!**



**Ditto to previous picture!!**



**This is too hard...I need an assistant!!**



**The Lady "yard bird" earns her pay!**



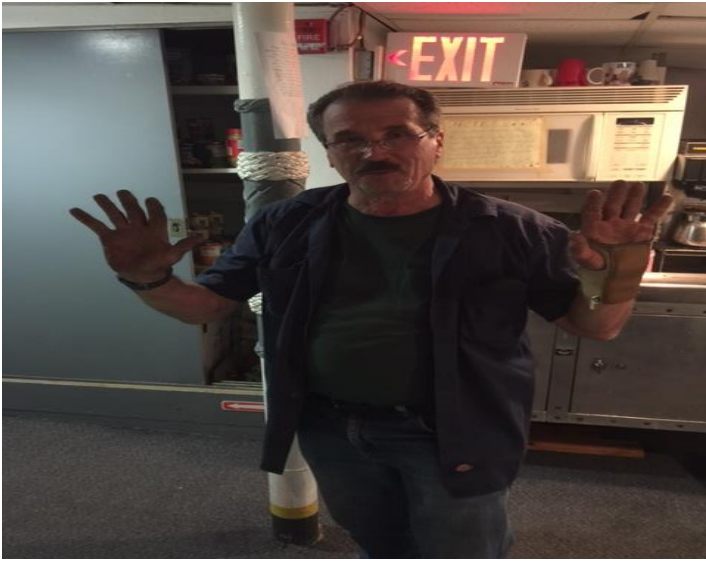
**This is great....I get to mix paint to Navy Specs**



**HMMMMM-This could be a great place to hide!!**



**Yes – I'm still painting the ship's side!**



**OK, OK I promise to get back to work Sonny**



**No need to bend with these long handles!**



**After this we take the ladder up and start over!!**



**Delicate work requires delicate hands**



**My pants were brand new before this exercise**



**I can't see anything down here.**



**We're actually "Mimes" entertaining the troops.**



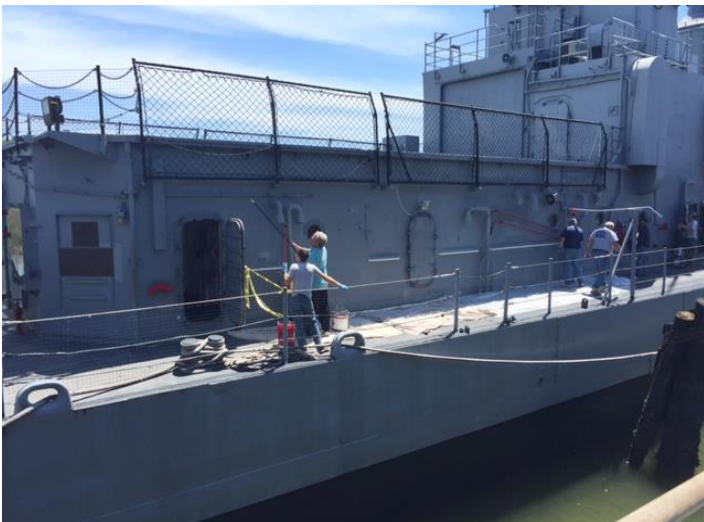
**Lots of men at work!!**



**Leaning against the hand rail – A tradition!**



**Another man at work.....Well, maybe not!**



**Men at Work**

### **SONNY FONDLY REMEMBERS HIS CAPTAIN**

Captain Tazewell was the captain of the Laffey 1960-62. I was told by many of his officers (after our service of course) how much they respected him as a gentleman and a great skipper. He was also very fair to those of us who stood before him at captain's mast.

I remember when we started 1A.S. There was the Captains' Net. Captain Tazewell called to Radio Central to have an RM sent up to the bridge: It happened to be me.

He made me a talker on the Captains' Net: Me - an 18 year old RMSN talking on the net with all the other captains. Captain Tazewell told me that he

had a ship to con and didn't have time to talk on the phone. We would give the other ship's our position on the target and what we were going to do. I also wrote on the board with a grease pencil as to where the contact was. It was cool to be up there and watch all of the action.

While in the Red Sea we got an "SOS" call from a passenger liner. We steamed all night and arrived at dawn. The ship was afire. There was a British destroyer on scene fighting the fire. Capt. Tazewell was bringing us in on our port side to assist in fighting the fire. The Brit captain told us to stand-off because they had the situation under control. They obviously did not. Capt. Tazewell told them that he didn't care what they said: We were there to help put out the fire. Very rarely did he make waves but he sure did that time.

The captain was transferred while we were in the yards for FRAM. One day everyone was buzzing that a "Four Striper" was aboard. I looked out of the Radio Central door and down the passageway came Captain Tazewell. I smiled and said "Captain Tazewell", He said "Are you still here Walker?" I told him that I had become a piece of the radio central furniture. He laughed and told me that he was glad to see me as an RM2.

A year or so after I was discharged I drove a bus load of kids from church to D.C. We rented bikes and were riding on the C&O canal trail. I was trailing the pack to keep an eye on a bunch of teenagers when I saw a familiar figure walking his dog. I slammed on the brakes of the bike and shouted "CAPTAIN TAZEWELL!" He looked up and said "Radioman from the LAFFEY". I told him my name and he remembered me.

I asked him if he had made Admiral yet and he told me that he was passing it up to become a civilian. We talked for a couple of minutes and I told him that I had to catch up to the group. It was years later when Dave Harhager and I drove to Norfolk to see him. We had a great visit.

We had a work party in 2004. Don Watson was working in the engine room painting. Captain and Mrs. Tazewell visited the ship. I took them below to

see the progress of the engine room. I hollered down to Donnie "Donnie, look who's here", Don looked up and smiled and said "Captain Tazewell, I'm still here working off that extra duty you gave me 40 years ago!!!" We all had a good laugh.

I think it was 2005 when we got an idea to give the captain a surprise party. I called him to see if he was going to be home. He said sure. I told him that Dave and I were going to the ship and would like for him to go to dinner with us. He was delighted.

I got on the phone and called as many of our shipmates I could. We ended up with officers and enlisted guys showing up. They came from California, Ohio, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Tennessee, Pennsylvania and all over. The night before the captain's party we had one of our own. It was really fun. Some of us played golf the next morning. It was hard for some of us to get up but we had fun.

That evening I drove to Capt. Tazewell's and picked him up, along with Mrs. Tazewell and Lt. Robison's widow.

We arrived at the hotel's restaurant. The doors opened and as we entered there was everyone lined up as side boys. Fred Nardei rang the bell and said "ding-ding, ding-ding, Laffey Arriving". Chief BM Doll (at 80 years old) piped the captain aboard. The captain turned to me and said "What is all of this?" I told him that it was all for him. There wasn't a dry eye in the place.

We presented him with a glass trophy with a nice inscription about how he turned boys into men and administered discipline to most of the guys that were there. I told him that most of us were discipline problems. He smiled and said "They make the best sailors!!!" It was great!

All I can say is he will be missed by all of us. Especially me as I really enjoyed the visits we had and the lunches too. It was special to sit and talk to someone that you totally respected.

Sonny



## USS LAFFEY ASSOCIATION 2016 REUNION ITINERARY

### CHARLESTON, SC

\*Note: Transportation **WILL BE PROVIDED** for all group activities listed below.

#### DAY 1 **SUNDAY - SEPTEMBER 25, 2016**

REGISTRATION: 6:00 P.M. – 10:00 P.M.

REGISTRATION WILL BE HELD IN THE HOTEL HOSPITALITY ROOM.

#### DAY 2 **MONDAY – SEPTEMBER 26, 2016**

**MORNING:** TRIP TO THE CHARLESTON CITY MARKET.

The City Market, or Centre Market, is a historic market complex in downtown Charleston, South Carolina. Established in the 1790s, the market stretches for four city blocks from the architecturally-significant Market Hall, which faces Meeting Street, through a continuous series of one-story open market sheds, the last of which terminates at East Bay Street. The Market Hall has been described as a building of the "highest architectural design quality." The entire complex was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as Market Hall and Sheds and was further designated a National Historic Landmark. **DON'T MISS THE SWEETGRASS BASKETS OR OTHER CERTIFIED AUTHENTIC HAND MADE IN CHARLESTON ITEMS!**

**LUNCH: *ON YOUR OWN***. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF GREAT EATING SPOTS CLOSEBY THE MARKET.

**AFTERNOON:** BOONE HALL PLANTATION TOUR. <http://boonehallplantation.com/>

Boone Hall Plantation was founded in 1681 when Englishman Major John Boone came to Charleston and established a lucrative plantation and gracious home on the banks of Wampacheone Creek. The family and descendants of Major Boone were influential in the history of South Carolina, the colonies and the nation. The McRae family is proud to present that history, covering over 330 years, on a daily basis.

Boone Hall Plantation is also one of America's oldest working, living plantations. They have been continuously growing and producing crops for over three centuries. Once known for cotton and pecans, they are still actively producing strawberries, tomatoes, and pumpkins, as well as many other fruits and vegetables for visitors to enjoy.

The McRae Family purchased the plantation in 1955 and it was Mrs. McRae who furnished the house with antiques and began giving tours. Today, the McRae Family still owns the property, and they continue to make improvements to the plantation so that visitors can experience what plantation life was like. The knowledgeable staff will help you understand the day to day activities of those who lived on plantations as well as the history of the people who lived here at Boone Hall.

**EVENING:** FUN NIGHT BACK AT THE HOTEL. **FOOD INCLUDED**

DAY 3

**TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 27, 2016**

**MORNING:** MEMORIAL SERVICE ON  
USS LAFFEY AT PATRIOTS POINT

**LUNCH:** ***INCLUDED.*** ON BOARD USS YORKTOWN. IN THE MESS HALL WITH OLDFASHIONED METAL TRAYS! 😊

**AFTERNOON:** AFTER LUNCH

Charleston Harbor Cruise

Board the classic, 85-foot Carolina Belle and cruise the scenic Charleston Harbor while hearing fascinating local stories and seeing more than 75 landmarks, some critical to our nation's history, including:

- Fort Sumter - Charleston's premier historic attraction
- Civil War Forts Moultrie and Johnson
- USS Yorktown: the famous World War II "Fighting Lady"
- St. Michael's Episcopal Church
- Stately homes on the Battery
- Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge - the largest suspension bridge in North America

Dolphin sightings are a thrill and may or may not be seen they often swim alongside the Carolina Belle. This tour captures the history of the Holy City from a unique perspective. Come Join Us!

**EVENING:** ***DINNER ON YOUR OWN***

DAY 4

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2016**

**MORNING:** BOARD MEETING FOLLOWED BY THE GENERAL MEETING

**AFTERNOON:** FREE TIME

**EVENING:** FAREWELL DINNER

**We hope you enjoy visiting with old and new shipmates and we further hope you appreciate how well the ship looks after all of the labors of our work party crew members. BRAVO ZULU to each of them!**

# 2016 USS LAFFEY REUNION REGISTRATION, CHARLESTON, SC

Reunion Dates: Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> - 29th 2016

## SPECIAL NOTICE

**ALL ROOMS AVAILABLE TO THE USS LAFFEY ASSOCIATION AT THE NORTH CHARLESTON DOUBLETREE HOTEL HAVE BEEN BOOKED BY MEMBERS FOR THE REUNION PERIOD. IF PLANNING TO ATTEND, PLEASE CONTACT JILL MICHELL DIRECTLY AND SHE WILL ADVISE YOU OF ARRANGEMENTS BEING MADE FOR OUR MEMBERSHIP AT A NEARBY HOTEL LOCATION. JILL'S PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL ADDRESS ARE SHOWN IN COLUMN TWO OF THIS PAGE**

**Cost for Group Activities: \$150 per person**

Names of attendees:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address of USS Laffey Member/Sponsor

\_\_\_\_\_

Total Number of persons attending:

\_\_\_\_\_

Email address of sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

USS Laffey Association Sponsor Phone:

\_\_\_\_\_

USS Laffey Sponsor Cell Phone:

\_\_\_\_\_

What Years did you (The Sponsor) serve on the USS Laffey:

\_\_\_\_\_

What was your rate:

\_\_\_\_\_

What date/day do you plan to arrive?

Will this be the first reunion that you are attending?

\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact (Not traveling with you): \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs / Allergies or Diets? Identify: \_\_\_\_\_

Please let us know if you will NOT be attending a specific function during the reunion. We must pay per person when a function/event is scheduled. You will not be refunded but the money would stay in the Association instead of paying for something unused.

Send Reunion Registration and check made out to "USS Laffey Association" to Jill Michel, 26 Quaker Road, Mickleton, NJ 08056-1303. **NOTE: Cut-off date for registration is September 11, 2016.**

Contact: Jill. Michel @comcast.net or call 609-870-0600 / 856-423-4263 (**NOTE dot/period after Jill**)

Please feel free to call with any questions or concerns.

## NEW THIS YEAR

You can email this reservation information to Jill Michel (See email address above) and then mail your reunion cost check to her at the above shown address. Prior to the check receipt you will get an "on the list" message and a "paid" message upon receipt of the check.



**Y'ALL PLAN ON COMING TO THE REUNION IN SEPTEMBER. SEE OUR SHIP AGAIN: IT LOOKS ALMOST BRAND NEW! NOW THAT CARRIER YORKTOWN IS BIG AND IMPRESSIVE, BUT OUR LAFFEY IS REALLY, REALLY PRETTY!! CONSIDER THE REUNION AS HOMECOMING!**

**SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE:** Please send (via mail) to Jill Michel (Address Above) or email to her a "baby" picture or a Laffey era picture (No Originals) of you and she will have them on display during the reunion "for all to see"! They can be returned at the end of the reunion.

**USS Laffey DD-724 Association**

Bob Wampler

100 Landing Lane

Bluffton, SC 29909-6060

