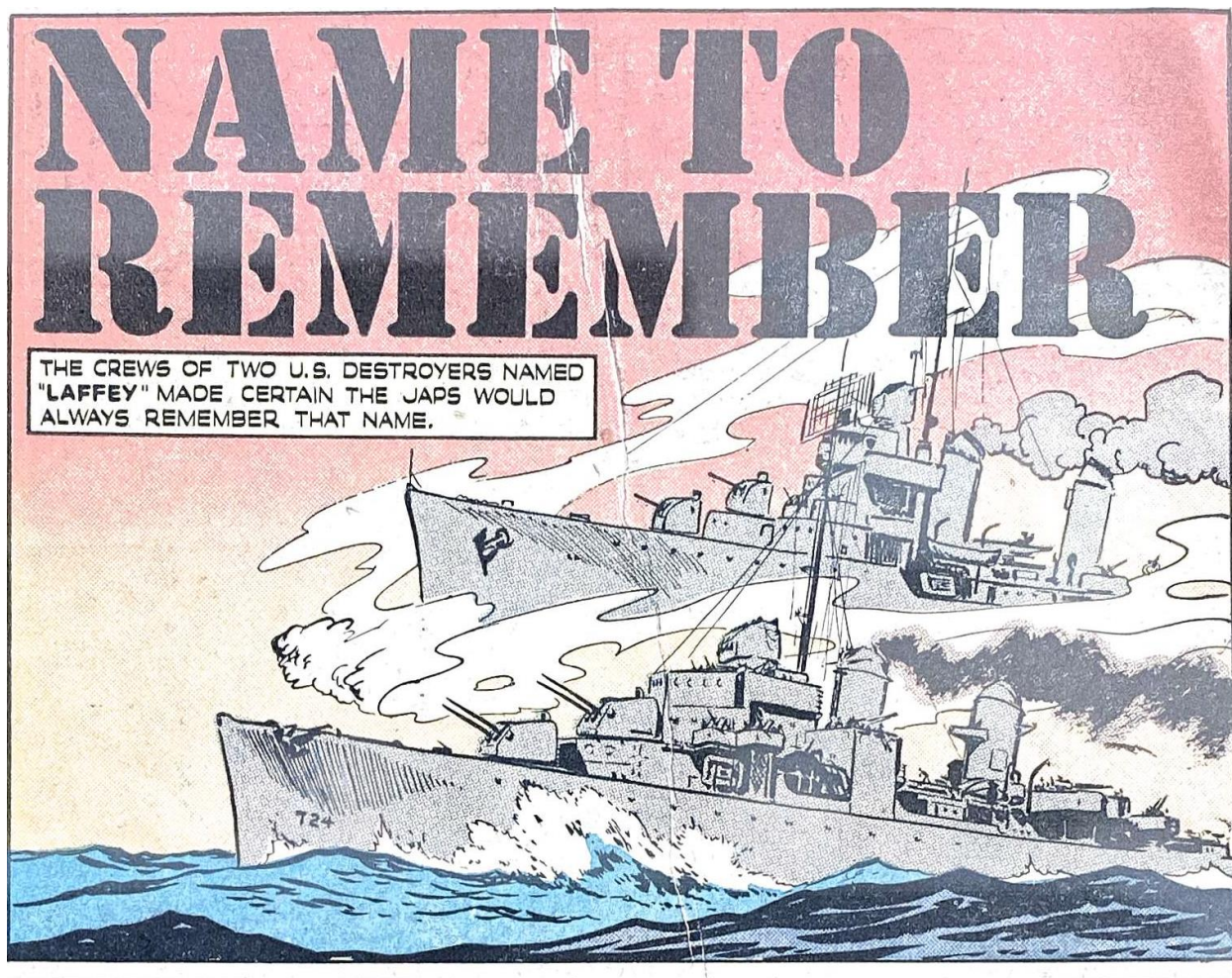


WWII Battle Illustrations USS Laffey DD459 and USS Laffey DD724

True Comics - Name to Remember Winter 1945, Vol. 5, No. 46, 48 pages

<https://www.kamikazeimages.net/books/comics/laffey/index.htm>



USS Laffey DD459 Top Illustration and USS Laffey DD724 Bottom Illustration above

"Name to Remember," a five-page story in the Winter 1945 issue of *True Comics*, tells the battle history of two destroyers named *Laffey*. During a large naval battle off Guadalcanal in November 1942, the first destroyer USS Laffey DD459 sank after fighting a Japanese battleship at close range.

A new and larger destroyer named *Laffey* DD724 was commissioned later in the war. This ship fought off many kamikaze planes for nearly two hours on April 16, 1945, and

made it back to the U.S. under her own power despite being hit by several of them. See pages 2, 4, 5 of the comic book.

Parents' Magazine published *True Comics* from 1941 to 1949 as an educational alternative to the superhero comics so popular at that time. *True Comics* had the following slogan on the front cover of each issue: "TRUTH is stranger and a thousand times more thrilling than FICTION." The comic book had monthly issues, except when government paper rationing forced the publisher to reduce its frequency to quarterly and its size from 64 to 48 pages. Most of the comics ran three to five pages, and they covered a wide variety of heroic individuals and historical events. Although World War II had already ended when the Winter 1945 issue came out, two stories in addition to the one on *Laffey* covered war topics: "Who Raised the Flag at Iwo Jima?" and "Flying Old Man" about Major John C. "Pappy" Herbst. As evidenced by *True Comics'* advertisements, this comic book targeted boys from ages 8 to 15.

The comic's last frame states, "The saga of the *Laffey's* two hours of heroism and agony is one of the greatest sea epics of the war." The U.S. Navy publicized *Laffey's* fighting off kamikaze planes by displaying the ship to the public for five days in Seattle in late May 1945 and having the ship's commander appear on a nationwide radio program, *We the People*. The ship's story also became the subject of a short publicity documentary and several magazine and newspaper articles.

Although this short comic captures the excitement of the final battles of the two ships named *Laffey*, the story provides only a few details. Some statements are inaccurate or misleading. The comic shows the first *Laffey* launching torpedoes against a Japanese battleship, which explodes in flames when the torpedoes hit. In actuality, the torpedoes bounced harmlessly off the nearby battleship since they did not run a sufficient distance to activate the arming mechanism [1]. One *Laffey* crewman in the comic says during the battle, "We've polished off two destroyers and a cruiser!" The comic implies that *Laffey* sank these ships during the battle, but this never happened. The statement possibly refers to battle action during the previous month (October 1942), when *Laffey* and two other American destroyers joined together to sink a Japanese cruiser and destroyer and damage another cruiser [2].

According to the comic, the second destroyer *Laffey* was commissioned one year later in November 1943. However, the ship did not actually get commissioned until February 1944, although it was first launched in November 1943. Seven suicide planes hit *Laffey* out of the total of 22 planes that attacked the ship [3], but the comic does not provide any numbers. The comic states that *Laffey* "fought on until the last Jap plane had crashed or fled." This implies the planes fled because of *Laffey's* gunfire, but in the actual battle only one Japanese plane got away after dropping a bomb on the ship [4].

This comic story about the two destroyers named *Laffey* presents a brief overview, along with drawings depicting battle action, of these two heroic ships. However, the story provides skimpy details, with some being incorrect or misleading.

Notes

- [1.](#) Becton 1980, 9.
- [2.](#) Dictionary 2006.
- [3.](#) Sumrall 2001, 62.
- [4.](#) Becton 1980, 248.

Sources Cited

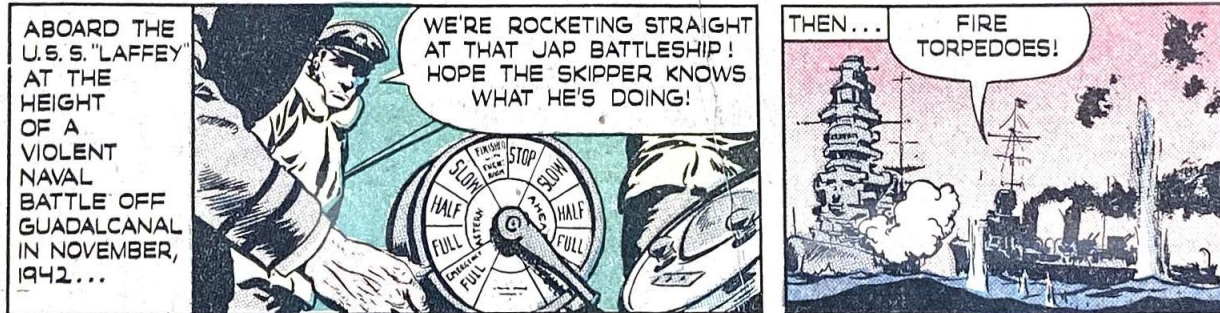
Becton, F. Julian, with Joseph Morschauser III. 1980. *The Ship That Would Not Die*. Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company.

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. 2006. Laffey.
<<http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/11/laffey-i.htm>> (May 26, 2006).

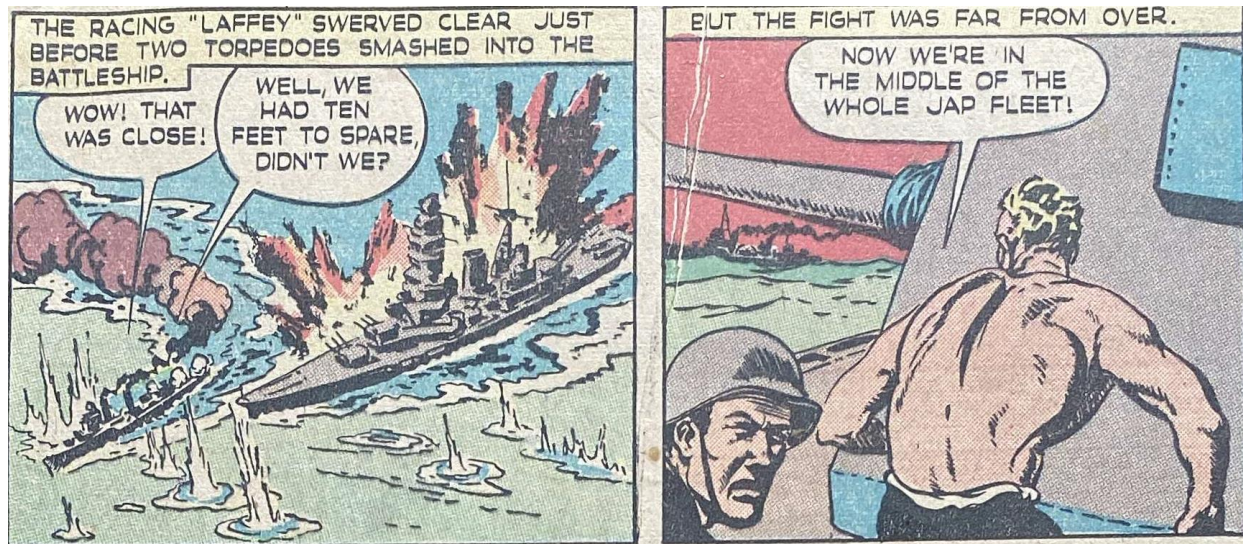
Sumrall, Robert F. 2001. *USS Laffey (DD-724)*. Somerset, MA: Tin Can Sailors.

Battle Illustrations USS Laffey DD459

USS Laffey DD459 was commissioned on 31 March 1942, Lieutenant Commander William E. Hank in command. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Laffey_\(DD-459\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Laffey_(DD-459))



Laffey missed colliding with the Japanese battleship Hiei in darkness and both ships headed at full speed for the same spot. They missed colliding by 20 feet (6 m).



Laffey fought the Japanese ships with the three remaining main battery guns in a no-quarter duel at point-blank range.



USS Laffey DD 459 Sunk 13 November 1942 in Naval Battle of Guadalcanal.



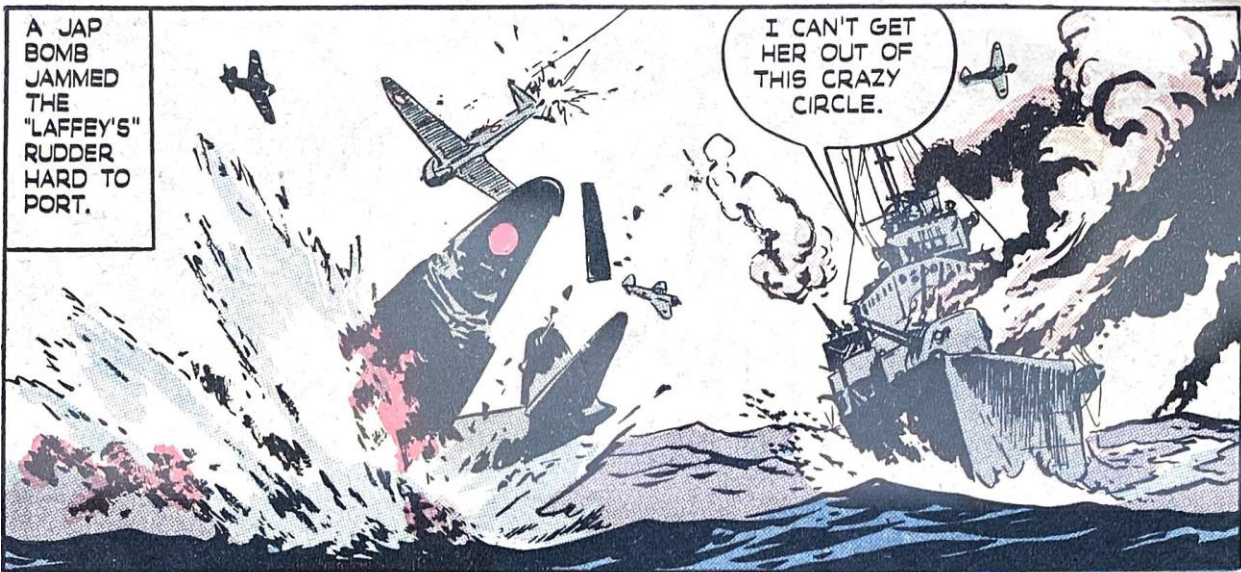
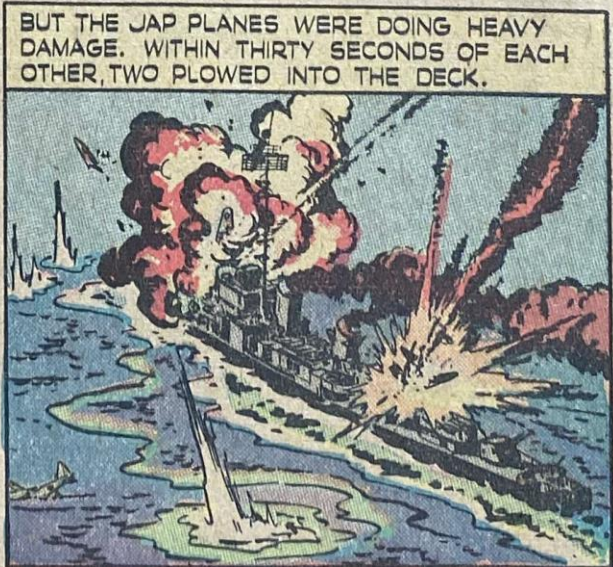
Of the 247 crew members aboard, 59 were killed, including the commanding officer, William E. Hank. The wounded in the engagement numbered 116.

Battle Illustrations USS Laffey DD724

USS Laffey DD-724, was laid down and launched in 1943, and commissioned in February 1944. The ship earned the nickname "The Ship That Would Not Die" for her exploits during the D-Day invasion and the Battle of Okinawa in the most unrelenting kamikaze air attack in history.

See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Laffey_\(DD-724\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Laffey_(DD-724))





CONTACT BETWEEN THE BRIDGE AND THE ENGINE ROOM WAS CUT OFF.



ON DECK, THE GUNNERS WERE STILL FIGHTING DESPERATELY.



MANY BRAVE SAILORS DIED AT THEIR GUNS RATHER THAN LEAVE THEIR STATIONS.



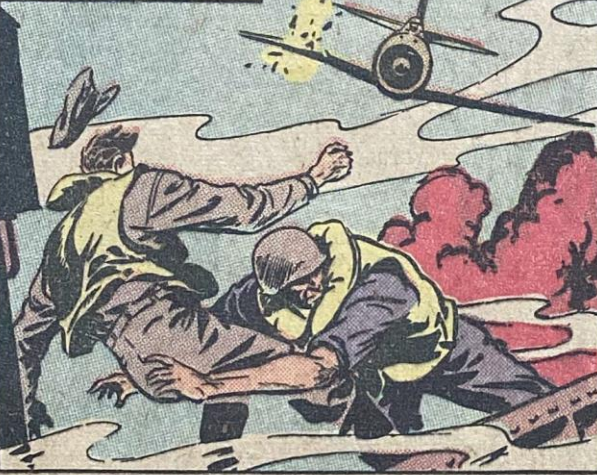
OTHERS TOOK THEIR PLACES.



THE SHIP WAS NOW A RAGING INFERNO, AND STILL THE JAP PLANES CAME.



ONCE, A SEAMAN KNOCKED DOWN THE SKIPPER, COMMANDER BECTON, TO SAVE HIM FROM A SUICIDE PLANE.



THEN... SHOULD WE ABANDON SHIP, SIR? I'LL NEVER ABANDON SHIP AS LONG AS A GUN WILL FIRE!



THE "LAFFEY" FOUGHT ON UNTIL THE LAST JAP PLANE HAD CRASHED OR FLED.



ALTHOUGH GRIEVOUSLY WOUNDED, SHE RETURNED TO THE STATES UNDER HER OWN POWER. THE SAGA OF THE "LAFFEY'S" TWO HOURS OF HEROISM AND AGONY IS ONE OF THE GREATEST SEA EPICS OF THE WAR.

Laffey survived despite being badly damaged by four bombs, six kamikaze crashes, and strafing fire that killed 32 and wounded 71. Assistant communications officer Lieutenant Frank Manson asked Captain Becton if he thought they'd have to abandon ship, to which he snapped, "No! I'll never abandon ship as long as a single gun will fire." Becton did not hear a nearby lookout softly say, "And if I can find one man to fire it."

Source: True Comics - Name to Remember Winter 1945, Vol. 5, No. 46, 48 pages <https://www.kamikazeimages.net/books/comics/laffey/index.htm>