

2012 REUNION RETURNS TO CHARLESTON – SEE DETAILS INSIDE

LAFFEY NEWS

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



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

April-May-June

www.laffey.org

2012

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE WELCOME HOME LAFFEY!

We just wish that everyone could have been there at the welcome home weekend celebration at Patriots Point: It was just absolutely fabulous!! I cannot say enough about the staff of Patriots Point and the job they did in setting up the entire weekend.

It all started on the evening of Friday April 13, 2012 at a "Welcome Home Party" having a great band, plenty of food and a variety of drinks, including "adult beverages"! We were all treated like heroes by everyone, even the press!!! It was good to see Gen. Hugh Tant, former Exec Dir of Patriots Point again. He is looking well in his retirement.

On Saturday, Laffey Association members conducted tours, signed autographs, answered questions and had a great time just hanging out with their shipmates. The stars of the show were our WWII guys, Dan Essig, Ari Phoutrides, Wilbert Gauding and a new-comer Frank Mayeda who joined the ship in Seattle...just in time to go to Bikini Atoll A-Bomb Tests. The public just marveled at their stories.

On Sunday the "Honor the Heroes" memorial celebration took place aboard the Laffey. Our WWII guys sat in a place of honor on the fantail in front of the flag while our assembled shipmates sat on the port side of the fantail. The US Marine Corps Band from the Recruit Depot at Parris Island, SC played

from the Drone Helo Deck. We also had the US Air Force Honor Guard from the Charleston AFB who fired the 21 gun salute from the main deck.

Patriots Point's Bob Howard was the MC for the event and he did a 4.0 job. As the proceedings were about to start one of our crewmembers spotted a MM3 in his dress whites from the Naval Nuclear Power School. One of our shipmates stood up and motioned for him to come and sit among the crew members on the ship. His face was red as a beet when everyone applauded as he came aboard the ship. Geez, did we look that young?

Ari Phoutrides read the history of the ship, Sonny introduced the WWII crews and their families with some personal stories about them. It was good to see Peg Fern back too. Bob Howard read the names of the rest of the crew that was present. Each stood as their names were called. We all received a great round of applause.

Sonny read an introduction of the guest speaker, Rep. James Smith, who happens to be the grandson of LT Paul Smith, the Gunnery Officer during the Kamikaze attack at Okinawa. James made a wonderful speech. I was told that everyone in the audience was hanging on his every word. He is such a great guy. We are lucky to have someone like James as one of our Association Members.

V.P. Bob Wampler then read the names of the men killed at Okinawa while Don Watson tolled the bell in their memory. The bugler played TAPS from the

Drone Helo Deck as the memorial wreath was cast into the water by Frank Mayeda and Wilburt Gauding. The Honor Guard then fired a rifle salute followed by the Marine Corps Band beautifully playing The Navy Hymn: It was very moving. The celebration came to a close as the band played Anchors Aweigh and The Marines Hymn.

I cannot say enough about the press coverage. When asked if there were any WWII guys that they could interview I always directed them toward Danny Essig and told them they could make a "Mini-Series" from his stories. Seriously, we were on the news every night. The new berth of Laffey, being front and center as you take that long walk to the pier, has done a lot for the attendance too: We hope that continues!

We had approximately 100 association members attending, including families. Mike Coleman taped the entire weekend and hopes to have DVD's available for everyone soon. Thanks for the hard work Mikey.

Our work party followed the celebration and about 20 of us were there at the beginning of the work party. I have to admit, in the beginning, we had a lack of organization and took a while getting started on Monday. I'm sure everyone that has come to work parties knows the problem getting started. It is even worse when we haven't been there for 3 years!!!

Bob Langevin brought a carload of tools and supplies donated by his VFW Post in Clifton, NJ. Thanks Bob and please pass this on to your friends at the VFW. We did get a lot accomplished by our dedicated group. Most of the work involved cleaning up the dust and dirt from the ship sitting idle all that time.

After much discussion, we convinced Patriots Point that we needed to cut the doorway back in to allow access to the after engine room. Hudak, with Phoutrides and Harhager as "firewatches" got this completed. We also needed to cut the coming away from the hatch going into the steam line. This was done to prevent visitors from tripping and falling down the ladder.

The mess deck was cleaned up. IC/Plot was cleaned by another first-timer Bob Lucey from the 60-63 crew under the supervision of Rod Morgan of course. Ken Rohloff, Rich McKinney and Bob Langevin worked hard in the mess deck cleaning and waxing the deck and putting up hand rails on the ladder. We had Scott MacCaskill and two of his

police buddies, John and Stephen, from Fairfax, VA with us. They worked very hard cleaning the after berthing area. This is really tough because we don't have water or sewage service aboard yet. They had to lug the water from the pier. I know his dad, Jack MacCaskill would be proud of his son carrying on in his name.

Old stand-bys John Miller and Barry Shugarts appeared everywhere and worked hard. Barry and Bob Lucey began the work clearing plexi-glass from CIC to allow Pats Point people to begin refurbishing that area.

We can't forget Fred Nardei who did the running to the store getting supplies (lunch and breakfast) to keep us from traveling out to eat so much. He cleaned the CPO lounge and galley and made it look more like home.

Pat Striplin continued his quest to get the gun mounts looking good. Another newcomer, Mike Pereira worked hard with Pat and anyone who asked him for help. Mike, being from Rhode Island, had to learn English from the rest of us. We taught him that you don't get a drink at a BAH...it is a BARRRR. I hope he remembers how to speak by the time he returns for the reunion.

Ari chipped and painted the hatch going down into the steam line. Each time I saw a tourist I told them to see "the man that saved the ship single handedly at Okinawa". Ari had a hard time working because he had to talk with everyone going past him!! Our First Lieutenant, Don Watson, could not stay this time due to his back surgery. We wish him a speedy recovery. His presence was missed by all.

Again, I have to thank all who participated during this April work party event and I hope to see everyone back when we have our next scheduled work party. I am going to pull for a late October date: I hope all who care to attend will be able to participate in these rewarding sessions. We always welcome newcomers!! Once more, I extend my heartfelt thanks for the tasks accomplished by each of you!

Sonny Walker President,
USS Laffey DD-724 Association

THE JUNIOR LAFFEY SAILOR PROGRAM: WE HAVE A NEW RECRUITMENT HIGHPOINT SET!

Since June of 2010 when the "enlistment program" for the Junior Laffey Sailors began, we've been encouraged by many of our membership "signing

up” multiple family members. Included among this group are Betsy Adler, Roland T. Graham, Ed Fitzsimmons, Linda Nordstrom Smith, Roby Karlie, Lawrence Sleurs, Dave Bossard, and Ray & Claire Lippi. Well, a new “recruitment record” was reached on March 28, 2012!

Now, don’t get me wrong on this: We sincerely appreciate the single and multiple recruitments received to date. However, we would like to challenge the rest of you reading this to top the new highpoint. The association’s treasurer, George Kessler, and his wife Barbara have just given their grandchildren membership into the Junior Laffey Sailor Program.

Yes indeed...we have just received **nine (9) new recruits for the Junior Laffey Sailors Program!** The ages of these wonderful additions range from 1-1/2 to 17 years of age! **Stated simply, what we have here is almost a complete work party!**



Pictured above are 8 of the 9 new recruits signed-up by George and Barb Kessler

The USS Laffey DD-724 Association would like to acknowledge the generosity of Barb and George and we would like to see that their new members develop the same pride of ship we all share. Well done Barb and George!

OK Then: Who among you can top this level of recruitment?! “Gitter done” and “sign-em up”! Contact VP Bob Wampler at 843-705-2296 with any questions.

DONATIONS RECEIVED

One of our members recently sent a check to the association to cover his life membership and the purchase of 2 Laffey Plate Frames. We were told to

keep whatever remained of the check for any purpose desired by the association. The person who sent that check was **Pete Didszuhn of Columbus, Ohio.** We are dedicating his check’s balance, **\$355.00,** to the Work Party Fund where we will be able to utilize Pete’s generous gift to see that the Laffey remains a showcase star at the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum. We sincerely appreciate your gift to the association, Pete. **Well done, lad!**

We also received a donation in the amount of **\$100** from **Harvey and Karen Peet of Roxbury, CT** and dittos on the above comments are sent to them as well! Thanks folks – Your generosity is certainly appreciated by the association.

The USS Cunningham (DD-752) Association sent a check in the amount of her hull number...\$752.00 and dedicated it towards material and supplies for our work party events. We thank them for their very generous donation: The donation will be well spent!

CAPT Charlie Peberdy, USN Retired donated \$100.00 after visiting the Laffey upon her return to Patriots Point in January. CAPT Peberdy “sharpened his teeth” aboard the USS Robert A. Owens, DD-827. We appreciate his kindness.

Bob Johnson, WWII 1944-46 sent a check in the amount of \$500...our WWII shipmates continue to help keep the ship looking great by providing work party funding. Thanks Bob, we appreciate your generosity and we’ll keep the Laffey looking like the showcase ship of Patriots Point!

IT’S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR!



President Sonny Walker recently sent out chances to win the ship’s model during **the annual reunion in Charleston this year.** The above photo of the model is representative of the quality and attention to detail that we provide the winner.

The drawing for this wonderful model is a primary means of fund raising for the association. We hope that you all recognize the needs we currently have and we trust you will buy the chance tickets (or more) when they arrive in your mailbox.

A LETTER TO MIKE COLEMAN-May 21, 2012

Dear Mike,

I can't begin to tell you how very much Bob and I appreciate your thoughtfulness and kind generosity in sending us the beautiful pictures and DVD of our dear ship, Laffey. I have to tell you, I fell in love with her the minute I saw her at the first reunion we attended in the early 80's. Bob loves his ship and has many good memories of his days on board (Even more than his times during WWII when he served on the LST's).

I have to tell you why I'm writing, instead of Bob. On March 4, Bob suffered a severe stroke and had to undergo brain surgery. He's been in the hospital and now the Rehab Center ever since. We're so lucky and blessed to still have him. Even though his whole right side was affected, he still can speak and remember things. That's why we appreciate so much seeing the DVDs and photo's. I was able to bring him home for the afternoon, yesterday, and our family was all here. We all enjoyed the DVD and played it several times. I have to say, it brought tears to our eyes, and of course, some laughter too. It was almost like being there in person (Except we didn't get to hug all of our Laffey Family).

Bob and I both thank you for your kindness and we're sending a small token of our appreciation to the Laffey Association in your honor.

Our best wishes to both you and Aggie and we hope you have a great summer!

Our sincere thanks,

Bob & Barb Volz

TAPS LIST

Betty Baker, Wife of Roger Baker, MM2, Served Aboard Laffey 1946-1947
Passed Away on April 7, 2012

Gordon Bodeo, Rate Unknown, Served aboard Laffey in early fifties.
Passed Away on April 20, 2010

CDR Henry Jackson Conger, WWII Veteran and Commanding Officer of USS Laffey 1951-1953. Passed Away on March 14, 2012 and was to be interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

Pastor Harlan Cox, RM3. Served aboard Laffey 1969-1972 (See Mrs. Cox's note in next newsletter)
Passed Away on February 11, 2012

Tom Hoobyar, DKSN, Served Aboard Laffey 1960-1962
Passed Away on September 25, 2011

Louise Hudgins, Associate Member of the USS Laffey DD-724 Association
Date of Passing Away not known

Margaret Klett, Mother of Member Tom Klett
Passed Away on April 6, 2012

William McAdoo, BM2, Served Aboard Laffey during Korean War.
Passed Away on June 12, 1985

James T. McClafferty, SN1/C, WWII Okinawa Battle Survivor
Passed Away on August 31, 2007

Frank O. McDougale, RD2C, Served aboard Laffey 1951-1953
Passed Away on March 10, 2011
Wife Wanda also passed away in March 2011

Walter A. Muckerman, Jr., WWII Okinawa Battle Survivor
Passed Away in 1997

Lillian Michel, widow of deceased Plank Owner John Michel, MM1, WWII, Okinawa Battle Survivor.
Passed Away on May 16, 2012 (Please See Below Comments from President Sonny Walker)

Anna Marie Nardei-Newman, Daughter of Fred Nardei, Membership Chairman Laffey Association.
Passed Away on April 22, 2011 at age 44

John R. Swann, Jr., BM3. Served aboard Laffey 1952-56
Passed Away on January 13, 2012

Bertram C. Watson, SK 1/C, Plank Owner, Served aboard Laffey 1944-1945, Okinawa Battle Survivor
Passed Away April 17, 2012

Please take a moment in silence to honor and reflect upon the memories of those who have passed away: May the departed rest in peace.

THE PASSING OF A GOOD FRIEND

Our association has lost another of its most senior members: Lillian Michel, widow of Plank owner John Michel MM1 of WWII and mother of our Reunion Chairperson Jill Michel, passed away in her sleep on May 16, 2012.

Lillian was a lady who loved her family, her country and the Laffey Association. She also was a lady who really loved a good time. Lillian would have been 90 on August 5, 2012.

I always teased Lillian about something...or anything!! If I had only known her first name was Gertrude, well, that would have been something else I could really tease her about. Lillian was always a joy to be around and we will never forget her big smile and her laugh. She will be greatly missed.

Cherie and I, along with John and Bob Langevin and Naomi and Joe Caccogli attended the funeral services in Mantua, NJ.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Jill and her sister and brother. Jill has asked anyone that wished to donate to the Laffey Association Fund in Lillian's name please do so. Please make out the checks to USS Laffey Association and mail them to Sonny Walker, 2951 Colchester Ct. Abingdon, MD 21009. Please mark the check that the donation is in the name of Lillian Michel. These donations are tax deductible.

Sonny Walker – President

IRA KURTZ & FAMILY PRAYERS REQUESTED

President Sonny Walker provided the following health update on association member Ira Kurtz:
All Hands:

Shipmate Ira Kurtz recently came home (in Tampa, FL) from a hospital stay of some duration.

Ira suffers from diabetes and had a very serious attack on his return from Israel. While in the hospital he had a heart attack. He was in intensive care for a couple of weeks. He was then moved to a step down unit.

The good news is that Ira was released from the hospital and is now working on his recovery. The bad news is he has to be on dialysis 3 days a week, probably indefinitely.

Please keep Ira and his family in your thoughts and prayers. Sonny (May 9, 2012)

NOW HERE THIS.....OFFICIAL INFORMATION

Please tell your crew that they cannot smoke on the Laffey at any time. The smoking lamp is out everywhere except on the pier behind the coke machines. Thanks. Bob

Bob Howard

Director of Operations – Patriots Point

Editor's Comment: Please honor the above restriction when visiting or working on the ship. I have it on good authority that Sonny will provide nicotine patches for all smokers.....Well, maybe not!!!

MARGARET KATHRYN CASADAY (CLOER) NEEDS SOME HELP FROM WWII VETS

Mrs. Casaday (Cloer) needs some assistance to resolve several issues and has been having some difficulties in her dealings with the Department of the Navy. She was the young "war bride" of Calvin Wesley Cloer who died of multiple wounds during the Okinawa Battle.

The major problem she is encountering is that the Casualty Report (CASREP) listed her as the next of kin while the Navy's Certificate of Death shows Calvin's father as the next of kin. Calvin's body was released to his father for burying in 1949 upon its return to the United States. Margaret was not informed of this, most likely because of the Certificate of Death. She would like to explore the re-internment of Calvin's body.

Margaret Casaday (Cloer) has written evidence that Calvin was one of our hero's during the battle and she is attempting to obtain a Certificate of Heroism that President Truman had issued. She is also a trying to obtain a Silver Star that Calvin had earned. There is also a question of entitlement to a Federal ID and a question of her possible entitlement to a pension for the many years she remained unmarried.

For our WWII veterans who might recall Calvin Cloer, Margaret has requested you contact her at 772-337-9522. Her address is as follows:

Margaret Cloer Casaday
1420 SE Delene Court
Port St. Lucie, FL 34952

A SPECIAL NOTE OF THANKS

The USS Laffey Association would like to extend many thanks for a job well done to our very own Dave Bossard. For those who attended the reunion in Savannah last October, you might recall that our Laffey gear/apparel supplier (Dave Bossard) was there with samples of his new "stuff". You might also recall that Dave became quite ill while there and had to be hospitalized.

Now, just to prove "how tough" he is, Dave was also at the recent (April) Patriots Point "Return of the Laffey Celebration". He loaded-up his SUV from floor to roof top with even more "stuff". At one point there were doubts that he could fit his wife, Mary, into the vehicle because of the amount he planned on taking to Patriots Point. I'm happy to report that Mary managed to squeeze into the SUV, too! I'm also happy to report that many, many of those who attended the celebration helped Mary get back into the SUV for the return trip home by buying one heck of a lot of "Dave's stuff"!

We are fortunate to have USS Laffey DD-724 Association long time member Dave Bossard as our new Laffey gear supplier. The amount and styles of his offerings are increasing and it is really nice having the items displayed when the association members are together: Dave will be at the September reunion in Charleston.....Bring money!!

Can't wait until then? Give Dave a call at 610-698-4653 to place an order. Another method is to fax your order to 610-488-5012.

John (Jack) Maxfield e-mail received - address: patmax8@att.net

I served aboard the Laffey DD724 from 1953 to 1956. I worked on the bridge, as a Signalman\ Quartermaster- rank 1st class seaman. I would like to hear from any one who was there at that time. Our phone no is 775-359-1322.

USS LAFFEY DD-724 ASSOCIATION OFFICERS AND STAFF

Edgar "Sonny" Walker..... President
Bob Wampler..... Vice President
George Kessler..... Treasurer
Julie Becton..... Secretary
Fred Nardei..... Membership Chairman

Board of Directors

Ari Phoutrides
John Langevin
Francis LaSala

Jim Spriggs
John Hudak

Website Manager

A. J. Tarquino

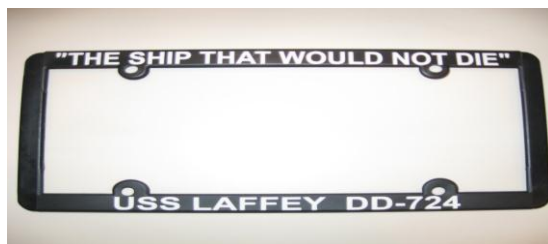
Newsletter Staff

Bob Wampler.... Editor and Circulation Manager

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Please be reminded that the Board of Directors of the USS Laffey Association voted to have all dues payable on the 1st of January of each year. This will help to eliminate the confusion surrounding when to send your membership dues. For those who have not yet paid their 2012 annual dues, please remit \$25.00 to Mr. Fred Nardei, Membership Chairman: **His address is as follows: Mr. Fred Nardei, USS Laffey DD-724 Association Membership Chairman, 13565 SE 93rd Court Road, Summerfield, FL 34491.**

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA HAVE OTHERS NOTICE YOUR FRAME!!



Let's make certain that you (**procrastinators and the many new members**) do your part in making everyone know that the Laffey lives! Install these plate frames around your auto tags and be noticed!! Remember, \$1.00 of each frame price goes to help fund the Junior Laffey Sailor Program.

The price for each custom frame is \$10.00 with shipping and handling included. Decide how many frames you might want, write a check made out to the USS Laffey DD-724 Association and send it to:

Bob Wampler, Editor Laffey News
USS Laffey DD-724 Association
100 Landing Lane
Bluffton, SC 29909-6060

We'll do the rest: Your car, truck, golf cart, boat etc. will be proud of your decision to purchase their very own plate frame!! Be noticed-It's a nice feeling!!

Editor's Comment: The Junior Laffey Sailor essay contest winner was Scott Bowman...More on this in the next Laffey News issue. Scott will be receiving a lot of nice "Laffey apparel stuff"!!



Welcome sign for the evening celebration



Let the party begin!



Now, isn't this just the nicest sign ever?!



Sonny and his OLD Radio Central Gang



We'll drink to that!!



Saturday duty for on hand Laffey Crew



Tents filled with food and drinks



Typical of the all-day crowds



Let me tell you what really happened in 45!



Laffey group photo on the fantail



Don't they believe in lunch breaks?!



Marine Corps Band from Parris Island, SC



The final event of the celebration weekend



Charleston AFB Honor Guard



Our WWII weekend guests of honor



Historic ship returns to where she belongs



Ari Phoutrides Relates the Laffey Story



Bob Wampler reads names of battle dead



Sonny Walker speaks to the crowd



Don Watson tolls bell for Okinawa victims



PP's Bob Howard Welcomes Laffey Back



Casting of the Wreath of Remembrance



SC Rep, James Smith-Keynote Remarks



In Memory of Laffey's Lost at Okinawa

Let's all go to Charleston, SC!

The 2012 USS Laffey Reunion will be held September 23rd – 26th

(This will be the 1st Reunion since the Ship's Return to Patriots Point)



Where will we stay? Just up the road from Patriots Point-Home of the USS Laffey!!!
We have rooms reserved at the following location:

Quality Inn & Suites at Patriots Point
196 Patriots Point Road
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464
843-856-8817

Room Rates: \$89 per Night for 2 Queen standards or \$99 per Night for Double Queen Suites

Sept. 23, Sunday Night

7pm to 10pm: Gather around the Pool for Reunion Registration, Appetizers and to Catch-up with Friends.

Sept. 24, Monday

Morning: Tour the CSA Hunley (Confederate Submarine) Museum

Lunch Downtown **(as a group)**

Evening: Gather by the pool for a Bar-B-Que and some FUN and GAMES

Sept. 25, Tuesday

Mid-Afternoon: Memorial Service honoring Okinawa Battle deceased and survivors - onboard USS Laffey
Board the Spirit of South Carolina for Dinner and Entertainment

Sept. 26, Wednesday

Morning: Board of Directors meeting followed by General Membership Meeting

Evening: ALOHA! We are taking a Trip to the Islands - Luau to be held at Omars adjacent to the hotel

Feel free to dig out those Tropical shirts/Hawaian shirts and join in the Celebration.

Departure on Thursday or plan other additional stops in the Charleston area

Editor's Comment: Specific event times will be shown in the final itinerary that will be given out on arrival/Sunday.....**Plan on having a wonderful time at the reunion!**

USS Laffey 2012 Reunion Registration Charleston, S.C., Sept. 23-26, 2012

Cost for activities: \$150 per person - Deadline to register: Aug. 20, 2012



Name: _____

Number of Persons Attending: _____

Names of guest(s)

Your Address: _____

Your E-Mail Address: _____

Your Home Phone: _____ Your Cell Phone: _____

What day you expect to arrive: _____

Special Needs / Allergies (List Any):

Send this Reunion Form and a check made out to "USS Laffey Association" to

Jill Michel, 26 Quaker Road, Mickleton, NJ 08056-1303

Contact: Jill Michel: jill.michel@comcast.net or call 609-870-0600 / 856-423-4263

Please feel free to call with any questions or concerns.

Amount Enclosed With This Reunion Registration Form: _____

Editor's Comment: It has been a long time since we have had the USS Laffey back in port at Patriots Point for our annual reunion. For those of you who have not seen the ship since her return this past January, you are in for a real treat! The Laffey looks absolutely great with her new paint job...she really stands out as you walk towards her down that long entrance pier. The Laffey is berthed in front of the USS Yorktown as you approach the ships and she really stands-out...This berthing arrangement should guarantee a much higher visitation rate when compared to where she was located previously. **So plan on attending the reunion: It will be just like going home!!**

USS Laffey DD-724 Association

Bob Wampler

100 Landing Lane

Bluffton, SC 29909-6060

