



# LAFFEY NEWS

*Dedicated to those who served in battle and those who pre-served in peace.*



*"I'll never abandon ship as long as a gun will fire"  
—F. Julian Becton, CO*

USS LAFFEY, DD724 & DD459  
THE SHIP THAT WOULD NOT DIE

July, August, September 2017

USS Laffey Association • [www.Laffey.org](http://www.Laffey.org)

Ελπίζω ο καθένας να έχει ένα διασκεδαστικό και ασφαλές καλοκαίρι

("I hope everyone had a fun and safe summer")

## President's Letter

From what I have seen over the years, this is the newsletter that is not full of too much information as we are all enjoying our summer vacations with our loved ones. Of course for the most of us, we are on a perpetual vacation. I took it upon myself today, 8/28/17, to look over the membership roster and reach out to everyone with a Texas address due to Hurricane Harvey. Out of the seven members I was able to identify, I was able to talk with two members, left a message with one, and found the roster to indicate disconnected numbers, and one was a bad number. You all know who you are, so please reach out to our Membership Chairperson Kathy Pereira and update your information.



*Chris Kirhagis*

Past President Sonny Walker has indicated to me that the ship's model raffle is going fine and he

also is getting "return to sender" as a result of members not updating their information. Even if you are not sure whether we have your correct information or not, please reach out to Kathy to be sure.

From what I understand, Ari Phoutrides meeting with Rosalind Ross was postponed until sometime in September. Looks like the screenplay is still in progress, at what pace is the question.

I would like to send out a Kudo to Harold Borton for initiating and securing a banner with "USS Laffey" on it. This banner will be displayed during our work

parties and at our reunions. Our new member Bill Blackstock also took one of his challenge coins and donated it for display at a memorial at a Florida airport. Thanks Bill.

Our reunion in Memphis, TN will be held from 9-12 October. From what I understand there are approximately fifty participants signed up. This is one of the smallest groups for a reunion that we have had in a long time, so please make it a point to attend and support your Association.

The fall work party will be from 28 October–4 November. As of

*continued on page 2*



*Harold Borton and his wife display the banner he donated*

this writing Sonny has fourteen people committed. We need an accurate count of our volunteers attending due to the limited berthing space aboard as I have to make early reservations in advance for overflow berthing on the Yorktown.

We get a lot done at these work parties, yet still manage to have a lot of fun. So please make it a point to participate, I know we are all getting older and slower, but we have plenty of things to do regardless of your physical limitations. While on the subject of work parties, I am going to start requiring that everyone who has a secured locker place his name on the outside of same. We are trying to identify who are the regulars who attend most of the work parties. The remainder of the locks will be cut off and the contents shipped to their identifiable owner. We will then start making room for the members who attend most of the work parties who do not have a locker. If you are not going to attend the next work party, but you are normally an attendee, please call one of the officers and identify the location of your locker so we can put your name on it.

Vice President Mike Pereira has ordered more deck paint, and from what I understand it may be in a *gratis* status. Mike must have a "Golden Tongue". Mike, Sonny, and I will be showing up on Friday before the work party to intercept the paint shipment and store it.

VP Pereira and I have initiated a raffle to generate additional funds for work party supplies. The raffle is to win an original piece of the Laffey's hull, mounted on a plaque along with an

inscription. The raffle tickets are \$5.00 each, and you can make as many copies of the tickets as you want from within this newsletter. There are three options for payment of the raffle tickets. You can send me the raffle tickets and the money, or send them to Treasurer George Kessler, or you may pay by our PayPal site ([www.paypal.me/usslaffeyassociation](http://www.paypal.me/usslaffeyassociation)). The raffle will be drawn during the April 2018 work party.

As far as the challenge coins are concerned, I will be selling them at the reunion as well as the October work party. For those who would like to purchase them by mail, there is a change in ship-

ping. I have sent about a half a dozen coins via USPS with only a .49 cent stamp plus the cost of the protective envelope. According to the clerk at the Post Office "I got over them" as the last envelope was kicked backed to me for additional postage of \$2.18. As a result, any mailed challenge coin will have to include \$3.00 service charge (\$2.67 postage + .33 cents for protective envelope. These charges are predicated on current postage. Thanks for understanding.

Respectfully,

*Chris Kirhagis, President  
USS Laffey Association*



## Vice President note

I like to fill people in on what we will try to get done at the upcoming work party. Patriots Point sent me a list of things they would like to see get done. As always it is a lot more than we can do. One thing is we my need volunteers to work a couple of hours after closing as they like us to touch up the inside of Mount 53 and put a final coat on the outside entrance. Also they would like us to paint the emergency generator deck after hours. But I think we may be able to get around doing that so late. Also on our list are to paint CO2 bottles in engine room, paint the deck in theater, repair opening on top of hanger (whatever that is). We also need to fix some holes in the deck, paint around the torpedo tubes, and paint the roll up hangar door.

So we have plenty of work in addition anything else we had planned to do. But we always get more done by our work parties than any other museum ship anywhere! I am very proud of all you people—not just those that can make it to the work parties but also to all those that make them possible with your generous donations of money, tools, materials, and food. You are the ones who keeps the Laffey looking great.



*Thank You  
Mike Pereira  
USS Laffey Association  
Vice President  
Sent from my iPad*

# Rita Maier Letter

Subject: Bill Kelly

Dear Chris,

I received your very nice letter yesterday, thank you. Thanks, too, for your compliment on my handwriting. (Palmer method in catholic school :-).)

As you suggested, I am exceptionally proud to have befriended Bill Kelly, a very kind and honorable man. I continue to be in awe of all that he and his shipmates have experienced and endured in the defense of our country. I am also very proud to call Ari Phoutrides a good friend. He has written many emails to Bill through me, and has shared lots of stories of himself and his wonderful family with me. Ari, too, is an amazing man and a talented writer. How very fortunate am I to know two plank owners of the USS Laffey. I thank God so very often for blessing me in this way. Thanks to you too, Chris, and all the other good men who served aboard the Laffey in the service of our country. God bless all of you.

My donation to be used for bridge supplies is made

IN HONOR OF PLANK OWNERS  
WILLIAM M. KELLY AND  
ARISTIDES S. PHOUTRIDES

whose duty stations were on the bridge. I would appreciate your making sure that will be noted in the newsletter. They deserve that and so much more.

Also, when Ari told me he would be making me an honorary member of the Laffey Association (a great honor), he asked me to send him a picture of Bill, my three dachshunds and myself, as

well as a short autobiography, which Ari synopsised. (See page 10 of the last issue) Ari included it on the Laffey website, located under Index to All Topics at the bottom of the main page, then scroll down to R and click on Rita Maier Article. (I still can't believe I'm on the Laffey website. Whoa!) Have you seen that yet? Ari also put two pictures of Bill on the website (one from 1945 and the other from 2015) that I sent to him. You can find that page under News & Latest Update at the bottom of the page, then click on 5/14/17 Added photo of Bill Kelly (plank owner & survivor RP#1).

I'm glad you liked the picture of Bill in his Laffey cap with my dachshund, Frankie, in his Laffey shirt. They really have a strong bond. I named one of my dachshunds Kellie for Bill Kelly with his permission. (How would you like to have a dog named after you?)

Bill has resided at Claremont since 2009 and will remain there.



He's comfortable and has a very nice roommate who also served in the Navy. Bill's side of the room is at windows overlooking a canal with pleasure boat traffic and lovely homes across the way. He also spends time on the large deck enjoying the sun and reading. Frankie and I visit with Bill at least once a week for an hour or two and then visit the other residents for a while. Bill has an excellent memory and is very interesting. Have you ever met him at a reunion? He'd be happy to hear from or see anyone who would like to write or visit him. Several years ago, Sonny was kind enough to put the message out there and a few people sent emails to him through me. If you or anyone else would like to send him a message, I'm sure he'd appreciate it. His address is William M. Kelly, Claremont Care Center, 1515 Hulse Road, Room 144, Point Pleasant, NJ 08742.

I like your business card. The ship looks great. My contact info is: 732-899-4598 (home), 732-539-0563 (cell), [rmaier@com-cast.net](mailto:rmaier@com-cast.net) (email, as noted above).

Thanks,

Rita Maier

We have sold \$3,665  
in raffle ticket sales.  
Keep them coming,  
as we need  
at least \$4,000.

Thanks for all of you  
who bought raffle  
tickets this year.





**Captain Thomas Randolph Cotten, Jr.** died in Virginia Beach, Virginia on March 12, 2009. He was born in Charleston, S.C. in 1927 as the eldest child of Thomas R. Cotten, Sr. and Mary O'Brien Cotten.

He leaves a wife of 54 years—Martha Lanier Reeves Cotten, two sons—Thomas Randolph Cotten, III and wife Sharon of Winston Salem, NC and Peter Tabb Cotten of Mount Pleasant, two sisters—Mary Ann Nelson and Martha Johnson both of Charleston and six grandchildren—Thomas Randolph Cotten IV and Lindsay Myers Cotten of Winston Salem—Strock Reeves Cotten and Matthew Sully Cotten of Bremer-ton, WA.—Chancelor Sox Cotten and Huntington Nandalyn Cotten of Lexington, S.C. He was pre-deceased by a brother, Joseph Walter Cotten.

Captain Cotten graduated from St. Andrews High School and attended Clemson University. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1952 and was assigned as Gunnery Officer on the USS Shannon. He spent two years on the USS Los Angeles before becoming Flag Secretary for Cruiser Division Five.

Following that tour he joined the faculty of the U.S. Naval Academy and later became Commanding Officer of the USS Nespelen, USS Earle B. Hall, USS Kirwin and **USS Laffey**. He served in Vietnam and later joined the faculty of the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, R.I.

Captain Cotten was awarded The Legion of Merit, a Bronze Star, World War II Victory Ribbon, Vietnam Service Metal, and Combat Action Ribbon. He re-

tired from the U.S. Navy in 1978 and worked for Delex Systems in Washington D.C. and Norden Systems in Virginia Beach.

Memorials may be made to the U.S. Naval Academy Foundation 291 Wood Road, Beach Hall, Annapolis. Md. 21402.

*{Editor's Note: Captain Cotten was CO when I reported aboard in 1969. I remember him as a true gentleman.*

—Craig Keith}



We received word from Ray Broll of a passing of a shipmate.

Barton R. Greene passed away 6/19/17 at age 75.

He was born in St. Louis, MO.

We don't know when he served aboard or his rate.

Does anyone remember him?

Let me know so we can honor him at our reunion memorial service.

—Sonny

## Own a Piece of The Laffey

The Association will be selling tickets at \$5.00 each to win a piece of the original hull of the Laffey mounted on a plaque. Our VP Mike Pereira owns the one seen her. The Association will be raffling off one approximately 10"x12" piece of hull with rivets which have been sandblasted and powder-coated. I have two unsigned and the rest were auto-

graphed by Ari Phoutrides. Make copies of the ticket and send in \$5.00 for each entry. The drawing will take place at the work party on Monday April 16, 2018



### USS LAFFEY HULL PLAQUE RAFFLE TICKET

#### Own a Piece of the Laffey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Copy and fill out copies of this ticket if you want to enter multiple times. Cut out ticket and send to:

Chris Kirhagis, 6714 Hudson Street, Baltimore, MD 21224.

Make check out to USS Laffey Association or pay through PayPal through *Laffey.org* site.

All funds will be used to support future work parties.

# Challenge Coins

Twenty Laffey Challenge Coins were sold at the April work party. Chris ordered 200 (150 gold and 50 silver) He picked more gold as we do brass in the Navy not silver, but silver coins are available for those who prefer them. Either style is \$20 each plus \$3.00 each coin for shipping.

You can purchase these coins through PayPal and make a notation what they are for. Or send your payment directly to George Kessler who will then inform me to release the coin(s). Proceeds will go to funding future work parties.



## 2017 USS Laffey Reunion

Memphis, TN • October 8-11

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

Names of those attending:

\_\_\_\_\_

Email:

Home Phone:

Cell Phone:

What years did you serve on the Laffey? \_\_\_\_\_

What was your rate or rank?

\_\_\_\_\_

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

Will this be the first reunion you have attended? \_\_\_\_\_

Special needs or allergies?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please let us know if you will NOT be attending a specific function that is part of the planned itinerary during the reunion. We must pay per person, you will not receive a refund, but the money would stay in the associa-

tion instead of being used to pay for something that is not used.

Activities charge \$150 per person. Send registration and check made out to **USS Laffey Association** to Jill Michel, 26 Quaker Road, Mickleton, NJ 08056-1303

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

Please contact the Memphis Sheraton Downtown directly at 901-527-7300 to reserve your room. Room rate is \$119 per night plus taxes. Make sure to mention USS Laffey to receive this special rate.

# Memphis Reunion

In just a couple of weeks we will be going to Memphis for our 2017 USS Laffey Association Reunion.

I hope you will be able to join us because there is so much to see and do there, not to mention catching up with friends.

We will be staying at the Sheraton Downtown located at 250 N. Main Street, Memphis. Phone number (901) 527-7300. The room rates are \$119 / night. Located just outside the lobby you can board the Main Street Trolley to FedEx Forum, the National Civil Rights Museum or the South Main Historic Arts District. Please make your reservation as soon as possible because the rate may not be available after the beginning of September.

As a group we will be nibbling on some appetizers during the registration process on Sunday evening. Monday we will be going to Graceland to tour the home and grounds that Elvis once called home.

During the time that we will be at Graceland there will be plenty of time to tour the Mansion, check out the Automobile Museum and browse through the archives. Transportation will be provided to and from Graceland. Lunch will not be provided but there are several places to get something there.

On Tuesday we will hold our Memorial Service at 10:30 a.m. at St. Mary's, across the street from the hotel. After the Memorial Service we will return to the hotel for lunch. After lunch plan on having fun aboard the Memphis Mojo Tour while our guide takes us through a musical journey featuring Memphis' greatest attractions. The tour is about 90 minutes long.

Wednesday morning we will hold the association meeting then you will have free time until that evening for the farewell banquet. Since we will be in Memphis, who knows, maybe someone will drop by to visit with us.

As you see there will be plenty of free time for you to explore the tastes and sounds of the city on your own. You may even want to consider staying a couple days either before or after the reunion.

Here are some of the things to do in the area:

Visit the Peabody Hotel for the Duck March. These ducks know how to live, they have their own replica of the hotel, ride the elevator, and strut their feathers during the March every day at 11:00 a.m.

Lansky Brothers, clothiers to the King, located inside the Peabody Hotel and also at the Hard Rock Café Complex on Beale Street.

National Civil Rights Museum is a complex of museums and historical buildings with exhibits that trace the history of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States from 17<sup>th</sup> century to present.

The tour through Sun Studios is very interesting and fun although if you have trouble climbing stairs it may be difficult to maneuver (beginning of tour starts with climbing to the 2nd level). Tours are offered at bottom of each hour from 10:30 to 5:30 pm. Sun Studios was opened by Rock & Roll pioneer Sam Phillips in 1950. Many artists have recorded there throughout the years, including Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, Charlie Rich, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, John Mellencamp, U2, Ringo Starr and many more. You can see where

recordings happened and stand where the artists stood.

The free shuttle stops at the Rock N' Soul Museum, which tells the complete story of Memphis music history. This museum tells of the musical pioneers who overcame obstacles to create the musical sound that changed the world.

Memphis Zoo and Aquarium have over 3,000 animals. It is divided into 3 zones, East, West and Central and each has unique exhibits. East Zone includes the African Veldt, denizens of the Deep South, waterfowl and Northwest Passage. Central Zone is comprised of the much-loved Primate Canyon, Hippos, China, Cat Country and animals of the night. Lastly, the West Zone exhibits include the aquarium, the farm, penguins, the tropical bird house and more.

Check out the fantastic view from the top of Bass Pro Megastore located in the Pyramid. This was previously the Great American Pyramid / Pyramid Arena. It has the tallest free standing elevator in America. It is so big! Well, how big is it? It has a restaurant at the top (Sky High Catfish Cabin) and an outside observation deck that allows you to see for miles on a clear day, Archery Range, Shooting Range Saltwater Aquarium, bowling alley and it has its own hotel (Big Cypress Lodge) located above the store. It is on the bank of the Mississippi River and is the 10th tallest pyramid in the world.

Mud Island River Park and Museum presents the history of the Lower Mississippi River Valley with a scale model from Cairo, Illinois to New Orleans.

Memphis Riverboats offer an 1½ hour tour daily and, during Octo-



ber, they have dinner and music cruises on the weekends.

St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital allows tours daily at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. If you are interested in touring the facility, please contact them at 901-578-2042 or 800-877-5833 to reserve your tour. Reservations are required and they do fill up fast.

You may be walking with your feet 10 feet off of Beale if it's music and food that you're looking for. This street is lined with restaurants and clubs on both sides of the street. As you stroll down the street you realize that you are actually dancing to the music spilling out of places like B.B. Kings Blues Club, Jerry Lee Lewis' Café & Honky Tonk, and Miss Polly's Soul City Café, just to mention a few. There are some other well known restaurants in the area that you may want to try. Rendezvous Restaurant serves authentic barbecue with a Greek twist. Rendezvous is a basement location, you must go downstairs to enter the restaurant. Huey's Famous Burgers and Gus's World Famous Fried Chicken (everything is fried in peanut oil so if you have allergies please be aware).

At this time, the number of people that have registered for this year's reunion is very low. Please contact your friends and see if they are planning to attend the reunion and encourage them to send in their registration and get their rooms booked. Hope to see you there.

Thanks,

*Jill Michel*

Questions? please call or text  
Jill Michel at 609-870-0600



## Received Donations

Robert C. Johnson .....	\$200
Charles Meyer .....	\$200
Harold Borton.....	\$100
Paul Bangs.....	\$75
Oliver Long.....	\$75
Grace Gemmell.....	\$75
Jerome Weber .....	\$75
Charles Cook .....	\$50
Ed Pochatek .....	\$50
Richard Klein.....	\$25
Dean Larsen .....	\$25
Tom Boyd .....	\$25
Julian Winston.....	\$25
Tom Moskie .....	\$25
Robert W. Johnson .....	\$25
Norman Ward.....	\$25
Janet Hatch.....	\$25
Richard Livingston .....	\$25
James Hart.....	\$10

### Work Party Donation

Andy Kohl..... \$100

### In Memory of August Englehardt

Maurine Englehardt..... \$100

### In Memory of Jack Strand

Mike & Aggie Coleman..... \$100

### In Memory of William Kachegian

Lucille Noraian..... \$25

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

## Laffey Website Update

The Laffey Association Website [www.laffey.org](http://www.laffey.org) is being updated by Ari Phoutrides and Richard Felsing. With a new look and feel, we have retained and expanded all previous content. The website was originally built by Ari Phoutrides and AJ Tarquino maintained it for many years. The site is dedicated to the destroyers USS Laffey (DD 459 and DD 724). We, of the Laffey, honor all ships and crews that fought and served in defense of world freedom. The site is organized into sections:

USS Laffey DD 459 in WWII, USS Laffey DD 724 in WWII, in Korea and the Cold War, and at the Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum and the USS Laffey Association. Click on the PayPal button on the Home Page to make donations and membership renewals. Click on <http://www.laffey.org/LaffeyAssoc/OfficersStaffDirectors.html> to see the current Officers Staff and Directors. Click on <http://www.laffey.org/2017update/NewsWebSiteUpdates.html> to view the latest Laffey Association News. Many thanks to the past and current webmasters: Ari Phoutrides, AJ Tarquino, and Richard Felsing. Send comments, documents, photos, videos, and stories to [webmaster@laffey.org](mailto:webmaster@laffey.org).

USS Laffey DD724 Association  
Craig Keith, Editor  
201 N. Fairfax St. #32  
Alexandria VA 22314

## Kamikaze—Movie about USS Laffey in World War II

**K**amikaze” is a planned movie about the USS Laffey, which survived an intense kamikaze attack during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. Google search “Kamikaze USS Laffey” to get the latest information. Ari Phoutrides, QM2, was on the bridge of the Laffey during the attack. He has had discussions with the movie personnel about the attack. The film has been given a working title of “Kamikaze” with Rosalind Ross hired to adapt from John Wukovitz’s book



“Hell From the Heavens: The Epic Story of the USS Laffey and World War II’s Greatest Kamikaze Attack.” Rosalind Ross, Mel Gibson, and their son Lars visited the Laffey on 29 April, 2017 and met with Chris Kirhagis and Sonny Walker.

Web Sources: <http://deadline.com/2017/07/kamikaze-movie-rosalind-ross-uss-laffey-hollywood-gang-1202126799/> and <http://variety.com/2017/film/news/world-war-ii-kamikaze-movie-1202492418/>.



*Ari Phoutrides in  
1943 US Navy  
Bootcamp*