



# LAFFEY NEWS

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



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

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

April, May, June 2018

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

Αρη, μπορώ μόνο να πω ότι είστε αληθινά κύριοι κύριοι. Σε σύντομο χρονικό διάστημα που σε γνώρισα, ήμουν πολύ εμπνευσμένος από τη συμπεριφορά σου και έχω επηρεάσει σε όλους που ήρθες σε επαφή με. Θα χάσετε πραγματικά. Απλά θυμηθείτε ότι πολλά από τα μέλη του πληρώματος σας είναι μαζί σας και υπάρχουν πολλά που δεν έχουν ακόμη προστεθεί στο "Το Πλοίο που δεν θα πέθαινε"

### TRANSLATION

(Ari, I can only say that you were truly a Gentleman's Gentleman. In the short time that I knew you, I was very inspired by your demeanor and the effect you had on everyone you came in contact with. You will be truly missed. Just remember that many of your crew members are with you, and there are many that have yet to join you in "The Ship That Would Not Die")

**D**ear Crew Members and Associate Members, it saddens me to learn of the passing of Ari Phoutrides. And it really saddens me that, as your President, I was not able to attend Ari's funeral services due to recently having a knee replacement. Sonny Walker will be doing a special tribute to whom he and other people would call "Papou." Sonny as well as John Hudak and Ken McCullough attended Ari's funeral and, from what I understand, it was a beautiful ceremony, especially having one of the eulogies done by Sonny. I also want to take the time to thank Sonny, Richard Felsing, and Jeff Jacobs for contributing to the website



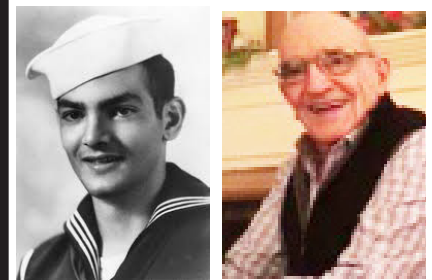
*Chris Kirhagis*

item of Ari's obituary and remembrance.

There is not much your President has to say in this newsletter other than I hope you are all enjoying the warmer weather and that all of you are safe from the crazy weather we have had over the past several months. Our V.P. Mike Pereira and Past President Sonny Walker cover the April 2018 work party as Bernice and I were in Thailand during that event.

The Laffey Association Reunion is right around the corner (September 30–October 4, 2018) as well as our Fall work party November 3–10, 2018. I am hoping most are able to attend both of them, if not please make an attempt to attend at least one.

Respectfully,  
Chris Kirhagis, President



1943

2017

## *In Memory of* **Aristides Stephanos Phoutrides**

Aug. 9, 1925–June 7,  
2018

**A**ri Phoutrides, as we all knew him, was a USS Laffey DD724 Plank Owner, Past President of the USS Laffey Association, Webmaster USS Laffey Associa-

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# Aristides Stephanos Phoutrides



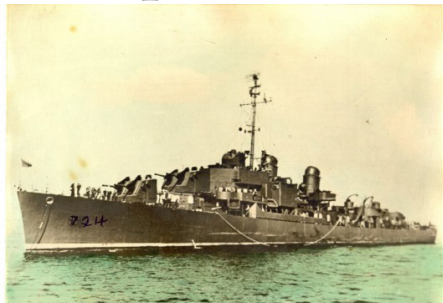
*USS Laffey launching 1943*

tion, and frequent participant in the Laffey Association reunions and work parties. His immense contribution to the Laffey and to the USS Laffey Association are beyond words.

Ari was born in Seattle Aug. 9, 1925. He was the youngest child of Reverend Stephanos and Presbytera Calliope Phoutrides. His father was a priest at St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church and, later, at the Church of the Assumption in Seattle. At 16, Aristides graduated from Broadway High School in Seattle and was admitted to Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

## **World War II on USS Laffey**

In World War II, at the age of 17, Ari entered the U.S. Navy. He went to Quartermaster School then reported aboard USS Laffey, commissioned 8 February 1944. At the time, Laffey was the finest, most capable destroyer in the world. He felt immense pride and anticipation for the future. Everything was new. As quartermaster, Ari had to ensure the ship's navigation charts were aboard, available, and up-to-date. When orders came to proceed east to England, it was with great excitement, anticipation, uncertainty, anxiety, and fear. Quartermasters must ensure all navigation charts and instruments are ready for



*Laffey before commissioning 1943*

voyage. Once the order “cast off all lines” was given, Captain Becton, the Officer of the Deck, the Navigator, and the Quartermaster are focused on the safety of the ship and crew heading for open ocean.

## **World War II D-Day Invasion of Normandy**



Aboard Laffey, Ari participated in the Allied Invasion of Normandy, as Laffey provided escort and shore bombardment. Ari often spoke of the D-Day Invasion: the immense number of ships, the sight of damaged ships, the closeness to the shore, firing on German positions. The Laffey was so close that they could see flashes from German guns. The Laffey fired and fired its 5” guns then returned to England for more ammunition. Ari spoke of the 8” German shell that hit the Laffey but did not explode. He recalled shells exploding close to the ship and he spoke of his respect, admiration, and gratitude for Captain Becton.

**World War II Battle of Okinawa**  
Laffey proceeded to an area near

Okinawa to support ground force landings. On 16 April 1945, Laffey was on radar picket station 1, about 30 miles north of Okinawa and joined in repulsing Japanese



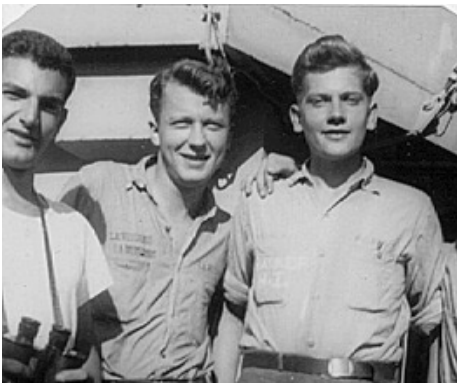
air attacks but was badly damaged. The Laffey withstood the most unrelenting kamikaze air attacks in history and earned the nickname “The Ship that Would Not Die.” Ari’s battle station was on the bridge with Captain Becton, the Officer of the Deck, helmsmen, and others. Ari remembered the of Battle of Okinawa and the relentless kamikaze and bomber attacks. He spoke of seeing a Japanese plane heading directly at the bridge and yelling for gunners to engage the plane. They shot the plane down. He spoke of how Captain Becton told him to go aft to check on the damage. He saw the death, destruction, and mayhem of the attacks. He also saw the gallantry, bravery, and selflessness of the gunners and fire fighting crews. He spoke of his pain and sorrow for the death of Laffey crew members. He spoke of his grief for the Navigator, Ensign Thomsen, who died assisting fire fighting crews. He spoke of the heroism of crew members drilling a hole in a bulkhead to run an air hose into a smoke filled com-

partment. He recalled a seriously wounded shipmate requesting to hold the American flag before he died. Ari clearly spoke of April 16, 1945 as if it were yesterday. While he spoke of the horrors of war, he miraculously was able to look positively to the future. When asked, Ari would always answer questions and recall his memories of April 16. He knew first-hand the sacrifices others had made to enable his safe return from the war.

After the battle, Laffey proceeded to Seattle for repairs. Ari spoke of the joy of returning to the United States. He recalled the astonishment of visitors seeing the devastation of the battle. Visitors praised the men of the Laffey for their courage, persistence, and patriotism. He visited Ensign Robert Clarence Thomsen's mother. He said "One of the hardest things I've ever done was



*Ari, CDR Waters, 1946*



*Ari, Charles Weygandt, Hans Walker*

to visit Ensign Thomsen's mother to tell her of her son's courage, bravery, and sacrifice." After repairs, Laffey resumed duties.

After the war, Ari resumed his studies at the University of Washington, graduating with a degree in Chemical Engineering. On Aug. 27, 1949, he married Betty Demas of Portland. They had three children, Stephen, Elaine; and Cynthia. Betty frequently came to reunions with Ari. Stephen, Elaine's husband Dana Banks and Dana's brother Paul Banks came to work parties.

### USS Laffey Association Officer



*In 2017, USS Laffey Association Current and Past Presidents: Chris Kirhagis, Sonny Walker, Bob Langevin, Ari*

As an early member of the Laffey Association in the late 1960's and 1970's, Ari worked to find his old shipmates. And he worked to preserve the Laffey as a national monument after decommissioning in 1975. He distributed early *Laffey News*. Early in the history of the USS Laffey Association, Ari was the Treasurer. Later he became the President. More recently he served as Webmaster, creating the [www.laffey.org](http://www.laffey.org) website. As webmaster he preserved and presented the history of the Laffey. He collected and published thousands of documents, pictures, videos, interviews, newsletters, cruise books, etc. for generations to come. His words "This 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."

### USS Laffey Association Work Parties

Ari frequently participated in the work parties. It was a marvel to see 90 year old Ari chipping, scraping, and painting at the April, 2017 work party. At work parties, Ari was a celebrity. Visitors would view the movie, then see Ari working on the ship.

*continued on page 4*



*2001 Fall Work Party*



*2008 Work party: Steve Phoutrides seated 2nd to Left, Ari seated in middle*



*2017 Work Party Richard Felsing, son in law Dana, Ari, son Steve*

They would ask “Was that you in the movie? Were you really on the ship in 1945? Were you terribly frightened? Ari would always smile and answer their questions. The most touching moments were visitors recalling a loved one who was lost in the war. Tearful, emotional comments like “My grandfather died in World War II, thank you for your service.”

**Laffey Association Reunions**



*1981 Laffey Association Reunion Admiral Becton middle, Ari 3rd row middle.*



*Betty and Ari Phoutrides at 2001 Reunion in Las Vegas*



*Ari and Betty at the 2005 Reunion*



*2003 Laffey Association Board of Directors: Left to right. Back row: Francis Lasala, Pete Lacore, Don Vorgity, Sonny Walker, Jim Spriggs, John Langevin Seated: Julie Becton, Ari Phoutrides. Missing: Al Csiszar, Joe Folino*

Ari and his wife Betty frequently attended the annual USS Laffey Association Reunion. They were always cheerful, gracious, and fun-loving.

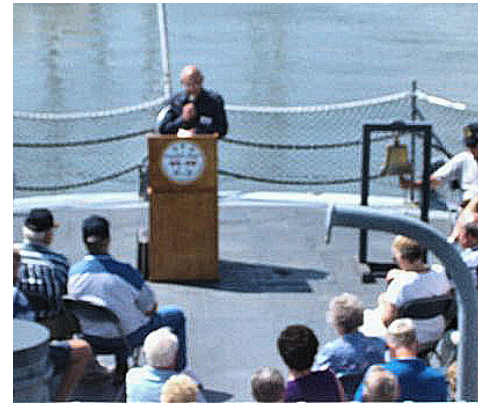
**Laffey Association Memorial Services**

Ari frequently lead the April 16th Memorial Service for the USS Laffey fallen shipmates. At this solemn ceremony, the names of the 32 shipmates who sacrificed their lives on April 16, 1945 are read. Ari worked to keep their memories alive and to express gratitude for their service to the country.

*One of Ari’s last communications with Association members was*



*Laffey Association President at 2000 Memorial Service*



*2006 Reunion Memorial Service*

*on 5 June, 2017 in commemoration of the D Day Invasion. “On this day, when we remember the events that unfolded on June 6, 1945. I wish to salute all of those who are not with us and those who have been involved with the restoration and maintenance of our beautiful ship. Putting out to sea with you guys would be a great experience. Again, my thanks to all of you.*

*The USS Laffey Association will commemorate Ari’s life, contributions, and service at the reunion, September 30–October 4..*



*2014 presentation of a plaque in memory of the men of the Laffey*

# Tributes to Ari Phoutrides

**Chris Kirhagis, President  
USS Laffey Association**

I have the greatest respect for Ari. He was the star and hero of the USS Laffey Association. Ari and I both had a Greek heritage. We always greeted each other and spoke a little Greek together. With this common heritage we had a special bond. Sitting in Chiefs' Quarters, we loved hearing his stories of the Laffey, his family, and his Greek heritage. He was gentleman's gentleman, worthy of our deepest respect.

**Sonny Walker, Past President,  
USS Laffey Association**

This is the saddest of all. Our leader and mentor has passed away. Ari Phoutrides has gone to meet his maker and join his shipmates. Ari was the gentleman of all gentlemen. He taught us all how to act like men and do our jobs. I can't say enough about him right now as it is too difficult. If you never met Ari, you missed a true legend in our time.



**Hilary Becton Wagner, Secretary  
USS Laffey Association**

He was an amazing man. He served under my father, Julian Becton, on April 16, 1945. They became best friends. Rest in peace my friend and enjoy eternity with Jesus and your shipmates.

**Richard Felsinger, Webmaster  
USS Laffey Association**

I have deep sadness on Ari's passing. He was man of courage, patriotism, love, and courtesy. Working with Ari on the USS Laffey Association website ([www.laffey.org](http://www.laffey.org)), I learned the value of dedication, helpfulness, and good spirits. He set a wonderful example of optimism, smiles and laughter. I say to myself "If I can be as positive and frequently laugh like Ari, I will extend my life".

Ari created the website from an idea to an immense website with over a thousand pages, documents, pictures, videos, etc. He scanned an immense number of old photos, documents, newsletters, and cruise books. He meticulously linked everything together. We salute US Navy Quartermaster and Officer Aristides Phoutrides. We offer "Bravo Zulu"—underway signal flags meaning "Well Done".



**Jeff Jacobs, President  
Patriots Point Foundation**

Anyone who met Ari Phoutrides was immediately drawn to him because he was so humble, unassuming and amiable. For someone who lived through both Normandy and Okinawa, he was remarkably at ease with it and welcomed the opportunity to talk of his shipmates and their bravery and accomplishments without a mention of himself. Ari, or Papou, as he was known, was everyone's grandfather, a man who lived a full life and shared his feelings for his beloved Laffey and shipmates with everyone whom he met. He was a hero in every sense of the word, yet never accepted that characterization of himself, saving it for his shipmates who perished in Okinawa. There are precious few men like Ari Phoutrides whom you get a chance to meet in your lifetime. Ari will be long remembered for his bravery, class, and love of all things Laffey. Our lives are forever enriched having met him.

*Send remembrances and tributes to Richard Felsinger, [webmaster@laffey.org](mailto:webmaster@laffey.org).*

Obituary: <http://obits.oregon-live.com/obituaries/oregon/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=189267052>

Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3mxNeE-haka>



# 2018 USS Laffey Reunion Mt. Pleasant, SC September 30– October 4

We will be staying at  
The Indigo Hotel  
(formerly Holiday Inn)  
in Mt. Pleasant, SC

Rooms will be  
\$119 per night.

Make reservations at  
1-843-577-5900.



**Arrival  
Sunday  
September 30, 2018**  
Hospitality room open. Sign in.  
Appetizers served.

**Monday, October 1**  
Travel to Patriots Point for ship  
tour with Memorial Service  
to honor those who have died  
since the last Memorial Service  
in 2017 and remember those  
32 heroes who gave their lives  
defending the ship at Okinawa.

Fun Night at the hotel  
7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, October 2**  
Bus trip to tour Charleston Area.

Lunch will be at Angel Oak Tree

There will be two buses, the first  
bus will go to which has been  
preserved to display the slavery  
era, then to the Tea Plantation.

The second bus will go to the  
Tea Plantation and then will go  
to McLeod Plantation.

**Wednesday, October 3**  
will be a free day  
The banquet will be Wednesday  
evening.

The price this year will be slightly  
higher due to the bus transpor-  
tation. That alone is \$2,300. The  
cost of the reunion will be \$175  
each.

We will be staying at the Hotel  
Indigo in Mt. Pleasant, near  
Patriots Point.

The cost for the rooms is \$119  
plus taxes.

**Call ASAP to reserve your  
room.**

Any questions please contact  
Jill Michel 609-870-0600.

The Ships Model Raffle tickets  
will be in the mail soon.

Some people are having trouble  
making trouble getting to make  
Hotel reservations. Apparently  
the hotel, still under reconstruc-  
tion, is having problems with its  
internet connection. Please call  
1-800-719-5540 or 1-866-884-  
8330 to make your reservations.  
Please be sure to tell them you  
are part of the Room Block for  
USS Laffey.

—Sonny Walker



McLeod Plantation

## Vice President's Report: April Work Party

Another excellent work party by the Laffey Association, family, and friends. We were able to get plenty done, as usual. We ended up getting the inside of the bridge and pilot house done by Ken McCullough, his grandson Nick, and Nick's step-dad Steve Sowers along with help from the Navy Nuke School students and others. We also got the deck around MT 52 mostly done but the 5 gallons of paint saved to finish the job disappeared. It was brought to Patriots Point and that's all I am going to say about that. Jim Bossard was everywhere as usual. Nothing like having a right hand man like him. He helped getting everyone

set up with prep and painting and prepped and painted himself and helped in the kitchen. Wish I had one like him working for me before I retired. Donny was the same old Donny, doing as much as he could along with painting the motor whale boat. I think his new name will be, "100 miles an hour", because everything he does is at 100 miles an hour—and that is a good thing! John Hudak started on the fire room. Bill Blackstock, our token Army Guy, was a big help to me in the kitchen. It made it a lot easier to cook and take care of the painting and other things I had to do. I would like to thank all the others who helped with the kitchen clean up. We also got other small things squared away—Richy worked on the 20 millimeter and more. The 20 is not done yet but will be soon. Jeff Jacobs brought

a friend of his, Greg Herald, the owner of Palmetto Shrimp Company. Greg brought a huge amount of the freshest jumbo shrimp you can eat, right off the boat. We cleaned them up and boy did we have a **great meal**. Thanks so much, Greg. I also want to thank those from the Nuke School who came to help: SN WARNER, ETN3 HEAD, SN DEMELLWEEK, SN PRINCE, SN MASON, SN SLEIGHT, and SN ANDERSON.

If I forgot anyone or anything I apologize. but will say thank you ALL for another great job. One last thing, and this is an inside joke for those who were at Okra's for our breakfast. Do **not** order the number 11 like Donny did. You had to be there to understand what I am talking about. I laugh every time I think about it.

—Mike Pereira  
Vice President

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## Challenge Coins

Twenty Laffey Challenge Coins were sold at the April, 2017, 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 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.



# APRIL 2018 WORK PARTY

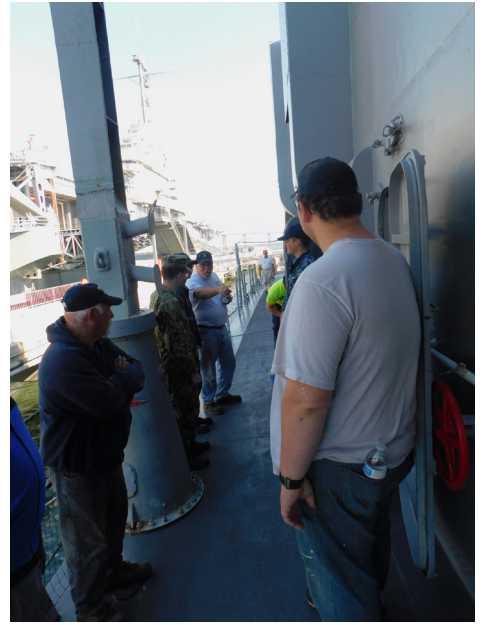
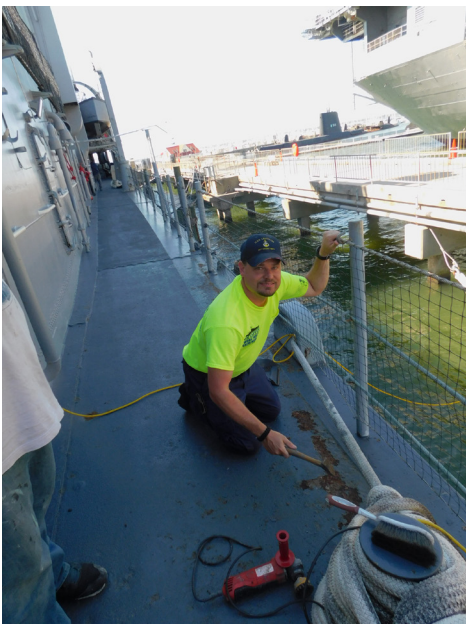
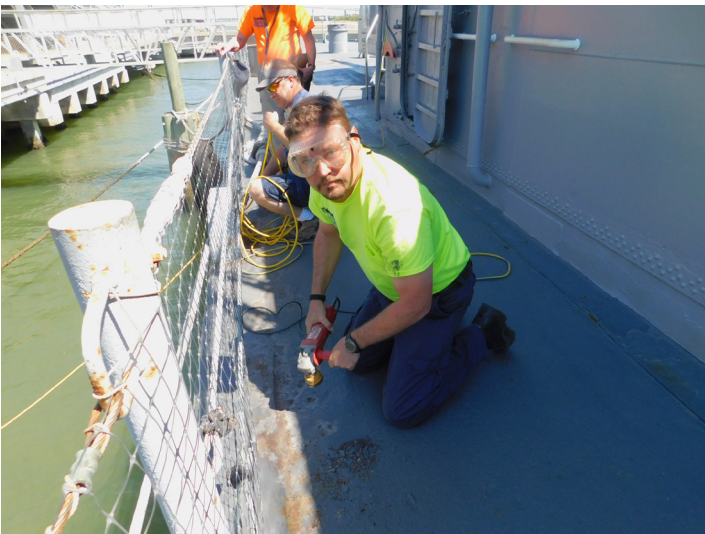




# APRIL 2018 WORK PARTY



# APRIL 2018 WORK PARTY



**ALL HANDS:**

Lyle, Pete, Lacore passed away June 1 at 5:50 pm.

Pete served aboard the Laffey as a TM3 from 1951-55 and was a veteran of the Korean War.

Pete, along with his right arm, Walt Harrington, were at many work parties.

We do not have any funeral info yet.

Keep Pete, his family and Walt in your thoughts and prayers.

We will miss him a lot and he will be honored at our reunion this fall.

Sonny



(See pages 1-5 for Ari Phoutrides obituary)  
Thank you for these kind words. They are a comfort to us all. As it has been for all of you an honor to call him your shipmate, it has been an honor for me to call him father-in-law. He was as fundamentally decent and good a person as I have ever known.

It was a great honor and joy for me to be with him and you, his shipmates, during what turned out to be his last visit to the Laffey. A piece of the Laffey (a section of expansion plate that he cherished) will be interred with him.

Best regards  
—Dana Bangs

**Donations**

(Received since previous News, compiled by Treasurer George Kessler)

**General Donations:**

- USS Allen M Sumner DD-692 .. \$500
- Steve Latour ..... \$ 50
- Greg Franklin ..... \$500

**Memorial Donations:**

- In Memory of Carl Cooper:
  - Allen & Tami..... \$ 15
  - Pete & Donna Miller ..... \$100
- In Memory of Ari Phoutrides
  - Tracy Sowers ..... \$ 50
  - Zoye Fidler ..... \$ 30
  - Sherry Willoughby..... \$200
- In Memory of Pete LaCore
  - Kelly Redmond..... \$ 50
  - Lisa Feedback..... \$ 20
  - Barry & Betty Eiffert ..... \$100



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USS Laffey DD724 Association

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USS Laffey,  
May 26, 1945.

*Official Navy  
photo showing  
bomb and kami-  
kaze damage to  
the fantail.*

