



LAFFEY NEWS

Dedicated to those who served in battle and those who preserved 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*

July–December 2018

USS Laffey Association • www.Laffey.org

President's Messages

Editor's Note: Since this is a double issue, we have two messages from Chris.



Chris Kirhagis

July–September Message

Hello shipmates and associates!

I hope that everyone had an enjoyable summer and that no one was affected by the crazy weather we have been experiencing nationwide.

I know that Baltimore, where I live, experienced a record high of nineteen inches of rain just in the month of July. That's the most since weather has been record-

ed. It seems like there was less than a week of ninety five plus temperatures, and that we went straight from spring to fall.

There is not much to report from my end other than i am still recovering from knee replacement and feeling better each day. I wish I could say the same for our membership at large. Each time i see an e-mail from our Past President Sonny Walker, I am afraid to open it as the majority of the time it is sad news of a shipmate, their spouse, or an associate member passing away. Sonny will be acknowledging those at the reunion memorial services which will take place aboard the Laffey on Monday, October 1.

I am also sad to inform you that our Past President Bob Langevin will be stepping down as one of the Board of Directors. Bob will also be giving up his position as Supply Officer. It was a tough decision for Bob to make, for various reasons he chooses not to divulge. He will still be in our loop.

Now comes the decision of who to pick for Bob's replacement. I currently have two sailors in mind. If this newsletter gets out prior to the reunion and anyone has a person they would like to nominate, please do not hesitate to let me know. A decision will be made at the conclusion of the reunion and the announcement will be made at the farewell dinner.

October–December Message

I want to take the time to wish each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous New Year.

Our reunion, which was from September 30, through October 4, took place in Mt. Pleasant, SC. (home of the Laffey) but did not start off without a glitch. It appears that the Indigo Hotel had a labor dispute with management

and, as a result, more than half of the housekeeping staff walked out. No one suffered residual effects of this action except the customers—US. I have written a lengthy letter as well as attached e-mails from those of you who cared to share their discontent to Indigo Hotel corporate offices. I have spoken to an individual at the Indigo but I refuse to deal with Hussein, the General Manager of Indigo for the reason he had dealt with the situation from

the start. I have commended the two young ladies who worked tirelessly to accommodate us as smoothly as possible. In addition, I would also like to commend the three ladies who tended to our banquet. As a matter of fact, I returned to the hotel during our November work party to visit with these ladies. During our banquet I chose to recognize Jeff Jacobs, Richard Felsing and Peyton "Fish" Warner for going

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up and beyond the call of duty to assist us in anyway asked.

As a result of Bob Langevin resigning his position as the Board of Directors and the vacancy made by the sad passing of Ari Phoutrides, this left us with two Board of Director vacancies. The Executive Board as well as the current Board of Directors nominated Sonny Walker and Richard McKinney to fill these positions. The general membership unanimously elected both individuals.

Our next reunion will take place in Newport, RI. The dates as well as reunion information will be forthcoming

Our November work party, which took place from the 2nd through the 9th was very successful. We had almost twenty people attending. Your President was able to unclog a shower drain aft of the galley. It had been stopped up for over five years. Max Saus and Ron Spencer were able to fix the shower in the same head. So both heads are totally open. They were also able to correct numerous electrical issues throughout when found by a member. Gary Barylski and son Chris prepped and paint the deck around the port side of the carousel of mount 52, where the fire control locker is, in order to stop a leak into the aforementioned head that was leaking into electrical box. They were also able to start athwart ship passageway starboard side where they noticed water under some underlayment. Well, that opened a can of worms of things that really needed to be done. We identified the issue and advised Patriots Point what needs to be done prior to our

return so we can finish the job. Well done Gary and Chris.

With the help of outgoing Patriots Point Foundation President Jeff Jacobs and incoming President Greg Kitchens, the foundation donated \$1,000 towards the purchase of various sizes of steel products necessary to start which I will call "The Hudak Project". It is top secret!!! The steel was delivered during the work party, cut up in PP's yard and stored on the Laffey. In a short period of time, Hudak and Watson were able to erect a "Dog House" to get the project started. Excellent work guys! Mike Pereira (son) along with JoJo (Jose Cortez, our VP's grandson) and Jimmy Bossard were instrumental in preparing the main deck aft starboard side. Our VP Mikey was also instrumental in getting the deck prepped and painted on the wings of the bridge. Ken McCullough had the opportunity to rearrange the tools in the HT shop and has some good ideas for the future. Our Harbor Freight bench grinder went up, so I purchased a 8" Delta with two grinding wheels. I also purchased two additional grinding wheels along with two wire wheels. This will prevent us from running all over Charleston to find one and keep the others on hand. I spoke with Ken and he will mount the new grinder.

Our energy to perform all of these tasks could not have been accomplished without the nourishment of fine dining performed by Mike Pereira "Chef Ramsey" You'll have to give both Mike and me kudos for keeping the clams away :) We could not sleep

at night if it were not our ships serviceman Mary Bossard who performed yet another great job in keeping up with the sheets needing to be washed dried and folded. Mary wore her SH3 patch proudly while aboard the Laffey. I only had to scold her one time when I caught her without the patch on. GREAT JOB MARY, THANKS. I would also like to give thanks to Bill Blackstock for his bugling and helping Mary. Both Bill and Jimmy Bossard also helped in the kitchen. Dave Bossard tended to the store and at the same time gave a little history lesson to our visitors. We had, I believe, a first-timer named Bruce Mari who came with our VP. Bruce appeared to have a lot of fun and we hope that he is a repeat as he was very helpful in all aspects of the work party. Another individual I had a chance to meet was Josh. This was Josh's second work party and he is a very important asset with his mechanical abilities. Josh lives in SC and is a heavy duty operator instructor at a college.

Our next work party will be February 2-9, and we already have approximately eighteen people committed. Our main work party will be during the week of April 13-20, so please, we need commitments from everyone who wishes to reserve their bunk space on the Laffey, otherwise I will have to look into the Yorktown for overflow.

Thank all of you for making my job a little easier,

Respectfully,
Chris Kirhagis, President
USS Laffey Association

2018 USS Laffey Reunion

The Fall 2018 USS Laffey Association Reunion, 30 September–3 October, was a great success with over 70 participants at the Indigo Hotel in Mt. Pleasant SC.

Memorial Service on the Fantail
 Sonny Walker led beautiful ceremony, reading the name of each of the 32 crew members lost in the April 16, 1945 Okinawa attack. Chris Kirhagis rang the bell for each crew member lost in the attack. Association members lost in the past year were also honored.



Judy Trout and John Hudak



Rod Morgan *Sonny Walker and Dave Bossard*



Charlie Meyer and Kathy Pereira



(at right) The family of Aristides Phourides (August 9, 1925 – June 7, 2018) flew in from the west coast for the ceremony. Ari was a Laffey plank owner and Past President of the USS Laffey Association.

2018 USS Laffey Reunion

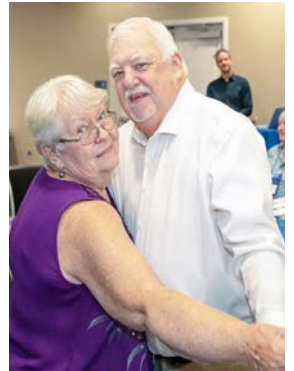
Reunion Banquet



Tom (brother) and John Schneider



Barbara and George Kessler, Joan and Bob Wampler



Tom and Kathy Kish



Cherie Walker and Rose LaSala



Jerry Weber and the bear "Bartlett" after Bartlett Laffey



Barbara and Charlie Meyer



Kip Campbell (in red shirt)



Judy Harhager, Joan and Bob Wampler



Sonny with members of Ari's family



Shipmates from 50's Rod Morgan (1st row 2nd from right), Fran LaSala (2nd row 2nd from right), John Hudak (back row 1st on right), Chris Kirhagis 2nd row middle); 60's most, 70's Mike Pereira (back row 2nd from left), Charlie Meyer (1st row red tie), and Chris Kirhagis (2nd row middle)



Rod Morgan, Sonny Walker, Fran LaSala



Fish Warner and John Hudak



Daniel Essig, Jr with hull plaque won in raffle



Sonny Walker and Ken McCollough



George & Barbara Kessler



Rod Morgan & Miranda Wagner



Richard McKinney



Sonny Walker, Deb Michel, Richard McKinney, Bill Townsend, Jill Michel



Fran LaSala, Rich McKinney, Sonny Walker, Jill Michel (contest judge)

2018 USS Laffey Reunion



2018 USS Laffey Association Board of Directors. From left: Richard McKinney, Sonny Walker John Hudak, Francis LaSala, Bob Wampler, and David Bossard. John Langevin and George Kessler are not in the photo.

New USS Laffey Association Board of Directors Congratulations to the new board members: Richard McKinney, David Bossard, and George Kessler.

Many thanks to all current board members of the association: Francis LaSala, John Hudak, Bob Wampler, John Langevin, Sonny Walker, Richard McKinney, David Bossard, and George Kessler for your service to the USS Laffey



Chris Kirhagis promoting Mary Bossard to Navy Storekeeper



Chris Kirhagis and Bernice Broadway



Family of Danny Essig with Barbara Meyer (dark hair) and Deb Michel in back



Jill Michel, Reunion Coordinator



Everybody had a good time including ladies from the hotel staff



Fish Warner, Mike and Kathy Pereira



Robin and James McEwen



John Hudak and "Goldie"

ALL HANDS:

We were informed by Patriots Point that **Waitman Kapaldo** passed away in August.

Waitman had a great last visit to the ship in July. It was the first time he had seen the ship since 1945. He was overwhelmed by all of the attention he received.

He was honored at our memorial service October 1, aboard the Laffey in Charleston.



Bob Hill reports that **Louis Delavina** died on April 10, and was buried on April 16.

Our friend **Ginny Smith**, our Georgia Peach, passed away in early August after a long battle with cancer. Ginny was a very beautiful person. She is definitely in heaven and has no more pain. Ginny was the wife of Steve Smith SOG2. Please keep Steve and their 2 kids in your prayers. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church Music Program Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 1400 Killian Hill Rd., Lilburn GA 30047

Edwin Konopka FTG2, passed away August 14, after a long illness. He loved his ship and was so proud of being a member of its crew. He often spoke of his time on the ship and had fond memories.

Ed served aboard 1958-61. We will miss him, but know that he is in a better place

Daniel Zack SO3

Plank Owner

Served aboard 1944-46
Survivor of Okinawa and Normandy

Passed away August 13, 2018

Donations

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

General Donations:

Doug Ward \$75.00
W. L. Smith..... 25.00
Robert C. Johnson 200.00
Terrance Tyler..... 25.00
Paul Anderson 10.00
Harold Borton..... 150.00
James Hart..... 100.00
Charles Cook 50.00
Janet Hatch..... 50.00
Olive Long 75.00
Linda Smith 25.00
Robert Burnett 25.00
Lynwood Rankin 25.00
Joyce Hanau 25.00
Gary Barylski..... 125.00
Ronald Chamberlin 25.00

Carl Cooper 25.00
Dave & Mary Bossard/
ships store 80.00

Work Party Donations:

Charles Cook 50.00
Richard Klein..... 100.00
Robert Cannon 25.00
Tom Phelps..... 50.00
DL & PA Terhune 50.00
Kip & Kathy Campbell... 4,000.00
Acey Terhune..... \$50.00
Ronald Kohler \$25.00
Robert Klimesh..... \$25.00
Rita Maier..... \$25.00
Larry Ubil \$25.00

Reunion Donation:

Charles & Barbara Meyer. 100.00
Bill Townsend 100.00
Bob Petralia..... 200.00
Boiler Room Restoration
Donation: Judy Trout..... 500.00

Memorial Donations:

In Memory of Ari Phoutrides:

Stanford Health Care Cyto
Genetics Laboratory 200.00
Paul Bangs..... 200.00
Geri Pochatek..... 50.00

In Memory of Pete LaCore:

Marilyn Anholt 30.00

In Memory of Jim Deckman:

Louise Deckman..... 25.00

In Memory of Deceased Members of
the USS Harold J Ellison DD864:
USS Harold J Ellison DD864
Association..... 100.00



FALL 2018 Work Party, November 3-10

Thanks to all who came out to keep the Laffey clean, shipshape, and beautiful with our scrapers, sanders, paint brushes, brooms, and mops.



Gary Barylski, John Hudak, Greg Kitchens, Chris Barylski, Chris Kirhagis receiving a donation. Many thanks to the Patriots Point Foundation -



Richard Felsing, Jose Cortes, Chris Kirhagis, Don Watson, Peyton "Fish" Warner in Chiefs Quarters



Boiler Tender John Hudak and Boatswain Ken McCullough in After Fire Room. Good to visit the snipes. John has great plans for opening the Fire-Room to visitors.



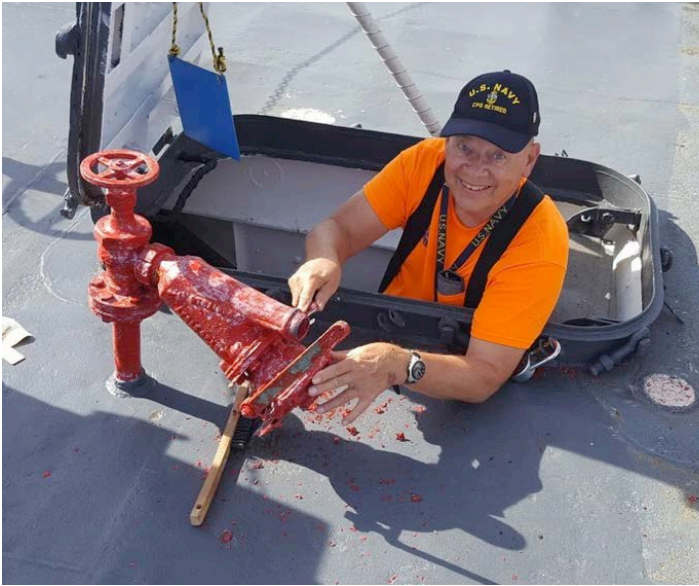
Mike Pereira, Bruce Mari. Jose Cortes, Mike Pereira VP Laffey Assoc, Chris Kirhagis, Ken and Arlene McCullough. Chief Cook Mike fixing a healthy salad for working sailors.



Jimmy Bossard and Don Watson in the After Fire Room



Boatswain Ken McKullough "Now this is the way we do it in Navy"



Dave Bossard working on the fire valve.



Chris Kirhagis, Dave Bossard, Retired Chief and wife, and Bill Blackstock in Chief's Quarters



Dan Gary Barylski instructing son Chris Barylski in the passageway



US Navy Chief, SN Peyton "Fish" Warner, and Ken McCullough after Evening Colors on fantail



Ken McCullough and Don Watson by bridge

Original Laffey vet returns to ship a lifetime later

This article by Bo Petersen appeared in the July 6, 2018 Post & Courier and is reprinted with permission

The kamikaze planes divebombed one after the other, a dozen in as many minutes, battering the Navy destroyer Laffey as the forward turret gun hammered away at them.

The assault is considered the one of most intense air attacks in history.

Waitman Kapaldo was in that forward turret. On Friday, 72 years after the World War II battle for Okinawa Island, he came back to see the ship for the first time since he mustered out of service.

Kapaldo, now 97, was wheeled down the ramp at the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum in Mount Pleasant, where the ship is on exhibit.

The forward turret gun where he fought now points over Charleston Harbor, with pelican swooning by, landing at the Crab Bank rookery. The insignia he painted on a tower of the ship, a panther with an enemy fighter in its jaws, still is there.

This time his boarding was different.

About 300 people, young and old, lined the ramp applauding with respectful pride before erupting in hurrahs. A Navy band serenaded Kapaldo aboard to a hero's welcome complete with the presentation of a presidential unit citation hat that belonged to a shipmate now deceased, as well the ceremonial tossing of a commemorative wreath for the fallen.

When asked why he never talked about the war, Kapaldo used to tell his family, "It wasn't very good. People don't want to hear about it."

His son, Waitman Kapaldo Jr., said his father once told him that when he was in battle he was in the dark, couldn't hear the noise and it seemed like it lasted forever.

His wife, Nancy Kapaldo, and family had prodded him for years to return to the ship. The retired instrumentation worker for Allis Chalmers resisted, for whatever reasons, they said. When he got out of the car Friday morning, he told a bystander, "I'm going to be on the Laffey before I get there."

When he was wheeled around at the toe of the ramp to face his old ship for the first time, he took a second from waving to the throng to give it a single sharp, appraising glance. Once the handlers wheeled him onto the stern, he stood and walked with some help to his seat.



"Sometimes it happens when you don't think it will," he said. "You just hope for the best."

Kapaldo is what the Navy calls a plank holder, one of the ship's original crew and one of maybe a dozen still surviving. He is frail now and somewhat bent over with age. Nancy and he are expecting their 28th great grandchild. They traveled a long way from DeMotte, Indiana.

Their visit came a little more than a year after Hollywood star Mel Gibson toured the ship, looking to make one of those historical action movies.

Because of the crew's actions during the Okinawa dive bombing, as well as earlier during the D-Day invasion in France, the Laffey became the "ship that would not die." But 32 of Kapaldo's fellow crewman died in the monumental April 1945 air attack that never seemed to stop. Kapaldo was a serviceman first class who served as the ship's barber when not in combat.

Sonny Walker, who served on the ship later and is a former president of its commemorative association, told Kapaldo, "Without you shooting, we wouldn't have had a ship to sail on."

When asked to speak, Kapaldo said to the crowd, "We kept going all the time and never stopped. We just did what seemed to be right and it seemed we did OK. If you didn't do it you never know what might happen." But, he kidded, they never did the laundry.

Zachary Whitlock, 11, of Chesapeake Beach, Md., accompanied his great-grandfather down the ramp and sat next to him during the honor ceremony, with Kapaldo occasionally grabbing his hand.

"It's cool," Whitlock said. "He can have a good experience on the ship instead of a bad experience."

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.



Fran and Rose LaSala at reunion.
For more reunion photos, see pages 3-6



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USS Laffey DD724 Association

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NTHI

(November Tango Hotel India)

Laffey's call letters