



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*

January–March 2019

USS Laffey Association • www.laffey.org

President's Message

I am hoping that everyone who reads this had a uneventful first quarter of 2019, and that everyone's health is stable. I am sure that a lot of you have endured some inclement weather these past three months. I myself, here in Baltimore, Maryland, had a rather mild winter.



Chris Kirhagis

We had what is called a "Mini Work Party" in early February, however, it was not so "Mini" in that fifteen members showed, in addition to our adopted son Peyton "Fish" Warner from Nuclear Power School, who was also able to recruit five additional students to help us eight hours a day the entire time we were there. These guys, and gals were terrific in that they took on an abundance of responsibilities that otherwise we would have had to do.

There was a lot accomplished. Patriots Point just purchased a thirty-two foot "Genie" lift that

we were able to use, and we did so on the outer bulkhead of the port side, midship. The lift was very handy and we will be using it again next month. We also had two new Fitzsimmons with us, Bill and Casey. They were both great contributors to our goal. Especially Casey who is young and is able to climb like a monkey as he did with the Genie. Casey, you make an excellent "Deck Ape." Our Friday night dinner (last dinner amongst the work party) was held again at the VFW Post in Mount Pleasant. We had a nice turn out and Post Commander Bill King was our host, and again the kitchen staff did a great job serving pork chops, string beans, fried okra, mashed potatoes, salad, and dessert. It looked to me like everyone had a good time, especially wetting their whistles. I spoke with Commander King the other day, and the meal on Friday, April 19, will be a fish dinner.

On Friday, February 9th, Patriots Point coordinated the festivities of the 75th anniversary of the

USS Laffey's commissioning, and they pulled out all of the stops—the entire fantail was draped in red, white, and blue bunting. At the end of the ceremony there was an anniversary cake to be had by all. Several dignitaries were on hand, and yours truly started off the festivities followed by Sonny Walker who helped walk the attendees down memory lane on the Laffey.

Let's talk about membership for a moment. It appears to me that the organization known as TCS or "Tin Can Sailors" were under the impression that once the Laffey came back from the yards, they were not allowed to work on her any longer. Wherever that rumor started, it stops here! I received a call from a TCS member named Jim Sehy who was the first TCS to show that it was a rumor. Jim came to our February work party and quickly adjusted to "Our Way". Jim told me he was elated as to how he fit in. Jim is an excellent worker, took charge of our Nuke students, became a Laffey member, and will be here next month. By the way, did I mention he is only 55 yrs old, good to have young blood!



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Welcome aboard, Jim! Another TCS sailor called Sonny, and he will be here next month, his name is Ron Keller, welcome, Ron!

John Hudak has started on the Fireroom Tour Route which I have dubbed "The Hudak Project" and ran into a couple of glitches that we will be able to overcome and continue.

We have two "Honorary" members added to our roster. Janet Bussert, who is the daughter of Seaman First Class Karl Bussert, and Mark Kersey, Karl's grand son of Karl Bussert. Karl served on the Laffey in 1944-1945 and was in the battle of Okinawa, April 16, 1945. According to Mark, his grandfather received injury to his neck from shrapnel. Karl passed away in 1982 at the young age of 57. A substantial donation was made in Karl Bussert's memory. Welcome aboard Mark Kersey and Janet Bussert.

Challenge coins are still available, sales have slowed down considerably, and I have eighteen silver, and sixty-eight gold left to sell before I order additional ones.

Our next work party will be April 13-20, so the majority of you will probably be at the work party when this newsletter arrives at your home. So far there is a total of 24 people showing up at the work party, and we are hoping to have yet another successful one.

*Thank You,
Chris Kirhagis, President*

2019 USS Laffey Reunion NEWPORT, RI

SEPTEMBER 29, – OCTOBER 3

QUALITY INN, 936 WEST MAIN RD
MIDDLETOWN, RI 02842

(401) 846-7600

Hotel reservations must be made by 29 May to get the group rate.
Reunion registration form with costs will be published in the July 2019 Laffey News and on the website.

Call the hotel directly and let them know you are part of the USS Laffey reunion group.

Arrival Date: September 29,
Departure Date: October 03,
Four nights:

10 Single King Bed \$108.30

20 Two Queen Beds \$113.05

Located just 3 miles from Historic downtown Newport & the famous Newport mansions.

Quality Inn & Suites® Middletown offers easy access to Newport Navy Base, NUWC, Burma Road and attractions like:

- Easton's Beach & Snack Bar (a.k.a. First Beach)
- Sachuest Beach (a.k.a. Second Beach)
- Cliff Walk
- Newport Vineyards
- U.S. Naval War College

This smoke-free hotel is centrally located in Middletown, offering

easy access to numerous landmarks, historic sites, fascinating museums, parks, unique boutiques, galleries, restaurants and entertainment venues. Additional amenities include, free cookies available at check-in, 24-hour coffee during your stay, a business center, guest laundry facilities and:

- Free full hot breakfast
- Free WiFi
- Free parking
- Indoor heated pool
- Fitness center with cardio and weight training equipment

We invite you to relax in the guest rooms, all of which feature flat-screen HDTVs, microwave, refrigerator, coffee maker, iron and ironing board, and hair dryer. Upgrade to a deluxe room for a private, in-room, 2-person hot tub. The junior suites offer extra space and a sofa sleeper.

If you have not paid your 2019 annual dues, time is running out. Annual dues are \$25. Checks made out to the USS Laffey Association can be sent to Kathy's attention at 92 Elmdale Avenue, Warwick, RI 02889. If you have any questions regarding your status, contact Kathy at 401-481-1954.

75 Year Commissioning Ceremony

held Friday 8 February at
11 a.m. aboard Laffey at
Patriots Point Naval &
Maritime Museum.

USS Laffey was commis-
sioned on 8 February 1944,
with Commander Frederick
Becton in command.



Donations

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

General Donations:

Paul Hofe..... 10.00
James Sehy 125.00
David Bumb 200.00

Work Party Donations:

William & Linda Townsend 75.00
Jim & Theresa Bossard 150.00
Julian & Karen Winston ... 100.00

Memorial Donations:

In Memory of Robert Kennedy:
Patricia & R L Wilson... 100.00
In memory of all deceased.....
members of the Ellison family:
USS Harold J Ellison DD864
Association 100.00
In Memory of Robert P Lucey:
Robert Lucey (Son).... 1,000.00
In Memory of Karl Bussert:
Mark Kersey (Grandson)
..... 10,000.00



Fall Reunion to Battleship Cove

During the Fall Reunion we will visit the historic Battleship Cove featuring the world's largest collection of World War II naval vessels, it is home to the highly decorated battleship USS Massachusetts, USS Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. (DD-850), a Gearing-class destroyer similar to the Laffey, USS Lionfish, Hiddensee, PT boats, and USS Fall River.

Contact Us

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USS Laffey DD724 Association

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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.

