



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 2020

USS Laffey Association www.laffey.org

President's Message



Chris Kirhagis

Hello Everyone!

I hope everyone is enduring the lockdown and the fact that most of this Country is starting to come out of their shells. It has been one hell of a past four months during these trying times. As much advancement as our society has gained over time, that we get a chance to reunite with family members that we only see during our flight out the door. COVID-19 sure placed a spin on family and social life.

I would like to give an award to the most posted social media information related to jokes, factual topics and stories. And this award goes to George Kessler. George, when in your company or observing actions in your company, I can't get two

words out of you. Nor do I believe anyone else can. But I have to give it to you; I've never heard so much out of you as I have during our COVID-19 lockdown. You must have been very bored??

Then, when you thought nothing else could happen, the George Floyd incident occurs. Most of us have our views and opinions as to the actual incident as well as the aftermath. So, please respect everyone's opinion, in the event this subject matter comes up for debate amongst us.

In the previous Laffey Newsletter, it was mentioned about our adopted son SN Peyton "Fish" Warner. Excuse me, I believe that since the last Newsletter "Fish" has been promoted to Third Class Petty Officer and that "Fish" has his new duty assignment. Since then, I have learned from him that his departure date from Charleston, SC will be on June 17, 2020, if the Military travel ban is lifted. I also asked and encouraged everyone who read this information on the website to please give "Fish" a warm Bon Voyage. We will miss you dearly.

As far as our Reunion, I understand that it is on schedule, and what our Reunion Coordinator Leigh-Ann Zerden has planned for us will be very nice. With all of the hurdles she has to tackle with the Reunion, employment and personal life, as well as the country shutdown, she has handled everything diligently.

The 4 1/2" flap disc. drive that was implemented by VP Mike Pereira, was very well received by all. I have had close to 100 of them mailed to my house. Who knows with the reunion and the November work party, we very well may exceed 200 of them. That will last us a couple of years. Thanks Mikey

There is not really much for me to report that will not be posted by the Executive Board and /or the Board of Directors.

See all of you at the Reunion in October!

Respectfully,
Chris Kirhagis, President
USS Laffey Association
president@laffey.org
410-633-9936

Upcoming Association Events



Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum including USS Laffey DD724 is open for visitors. There are new safety measures to reduce the opportunities for transmission of Covid-19 including floor signage at ticket window and gift shop areas to encourage visitors to maintain social distancing. Additional (more than a dozen) hand sanitizers are placed at key points. UV (ultraviolet) light air purifiers have been installed in all of YORKTOWN's air conditioning units. These units deactivate surface or airborne contaminants like mold, bacteria, and viruses. Custodial staff follows protocols to ensure that tour routes and restrooms

are clean and sanitized. For latest updates, see <https://www.patriotspoint.org/>

Fall 2020 Work Party 7-14 November

After a discussion with Vice President Mike Pereira, it was decided to conduct our fall work party 2020 in the second week of November 7 - 14. Please notify Mike and/or Chris if you have any intention in participating. It is very imperative that we have a concrete commitment from those attending on or before our reunion date Oct. 4th. This information is needed so VP Pereira can make up a work "Wish" list, determine the amount of food that will need to be purchased, and so that we have sufficient berthing spots (overflow berthing on the Yorktown needs to be coordinated with Patriots Point).

4-7 October USS Laffey Association Fall 2020 Reunion in Mt Pleasant SC Leigh Ann Zerden

This will be a very handicap friendly reunion! We will be staying at The Harbor Beach Resort this year. The cut-off date for booking a room is passed (June 1). If you booked a room, but decide to cancel now, you are responsible for the FULL payment of your reservation.

The cost of the reunion will be \$200 per person. The schedule is as follows:

Sunday: Meet 'n Greet

Monday:

Memorial (morning) Poolside games, bingo and corn hole competition (afternoon) Beach Part/Luau (evening)

Tuesday:

Board meeting followed immediately by a general membership meeting (morning) Banquet on the Yorktown (evening)

Please let us know if you will NOT be attending a specific function that is part of the itinerary during the reunion. We must pay per person when a function/event is scheduled. You will not be refunded, but the money will stay in the Association instead of paying for something that will not be used. We are also asking each person to bring a donation item / basket for the Chinese Auction. 50/50's will be going

all week and called at the banquet.

Send reunion registration form and payment (check payable to USS Laffey Association) to:

Leigh-Ann Zerden
2 Albright Way
Quarryville, PA 17566
Note: Cut-off date for registration is September 1

Or call / email anytime for Information. Leigh Ann Zerden
302-249-5591
reunions@laffey.org



Chris Kirhagis submitted an announcement for the reunion into the May issue of the American Legion Magazine and also submitted an announcement to Tin Can Sailors (<http://www.destroyers.org/>).



146, Duluth, MN, 9/10-13, Marign Dynesius, (651) 346-9403, mddynesius@hotmail.com; *Kilauea* AE 26, Milwaukee, 9/16-19, Kurt Julsen, (907) 632-9961, aesakj@yahoo.com; **Laffey DD 724**, Mount Pleasant, SC, 10/4-7, Leigh-Ann Zerden, (302) 249-5591, sweeten2780@aol.com; ~~Lake~~ *Champlain CV/CVA/CVS 39*, Charleston, SC,

2020 USS LAFFEY REUNION REGISTRATION

Reunion Dates: October 4-7, 2020 Mt Pleasant, SC

Cost: \$200 per person (regardless of activities attended). Send reunion registration form and payment (check payable to USS Laffey Association) to: Leigh-Ann Zerden 2 Albright Way Quarryville, PA 17566. Note: Cut-off date for registration is September 1, 2020

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Number and name of persons attending _____

Email: _____ Home Phone _____

Cell Phone: _____ What years did you serve on the USS Laffey? _____

What was your rank/rate? _____

What day do you expect to arrive? _____ Will you have a car at the hotel during your stay _____

Will this be the first reunion that you are attended? _____

Emergency contact name and number (not traveling with you) _____

Special Needs / Food Allergies? _____



Seaman 1/C John B. Evans Flag Case. From his granddaughter Holly Zicker and his daughter Robyn Zicker. John B. Evans (7 April 1925 - 4 June 2011) was a plank owner and participated in the Battle of Normandy and Battle of Okinawa in War War II. He served on the Laffey from 1944 - 1947. He was a lifelong member of the USS Laffey Association and contributor to the restoration of the ship. He and his wife Theodora were married over 50 years.

Weather Forecast
 VIRGINIA: Mostly cloudy and a little warmer with scattered thunderstorms Saturday, and possibly Sunday.
 Local Data on Page 2

Richmond Times-Dispatch

On the Inside
 Agriculture ... 12 National ... 4
 Amusements ... 20 Maritime ... 14
 Arts ... 10 Radio ... 8
 Comics ... 10 Religion ... 11
 Editorials ... 6 Sports ... 11
 International ... 2 State-City ... 5
 Industry ... 12 Women ... 8

85th Year Volume 81 Number 116
 Entered January 26, 1905, at the Post Office Richmond, Virginia, as Second Class Matter

Richmond 11, Virginia, Saturday, May 26, 1945
 Dial 3-4242 Calls The Times-Dispatch

Five Cents

Jury Fixes Harrison Sentence At 2 Years

Manslaughter Verdict Returned After Long Debate

By Nita Morse

Walter Paul Harrison, on trial the second time for the murder of his wife, was convicted yesterday of involuntary manslaughter by a Hastings Court, Part II jury which fixed his punishment at two years' imprisonment.

The jury deliberated for two hours and thirty-five minutes before deciding the fate of the man who was previously convicted of murder in the first degree and sentenced to the electric chair.

Latter Brenner, of defense counsel, asked that Judge Willis C. Pulliam delay passing sentence until this morning so that counsel may have time to decide whether any motions will be made. In the meantime, he had asked and Mr. Brenner asked the court to request to take the defendant in charge.

The jury retired from the courtroom at 2:40 P. M. with a copy of the instructions and forms for four possible verdicts. A flurry of excitement ran through the room at 3:30 P. M. when the jurors signified they wished to see the court sergeant, but instead of being ready with a verdict, the ministers asked for all exhibits.

The verdict was brought in at 3:50 and handed by the foreman to Clerk Charles Purdy, who read to a hushed group of onlookers:

F. H. Norris Resigns Post With Richmond Schools

Forbes H. Norris, assistant superintendent of public schools here, last night announced his resignation from the Richmond school system. Mr. Norris, who next month will receive his doctor's degree from Harvard University, said that he has accepted a superintendency, but was not yet ready to divulge the name of the city. It was thought here that the position is in Massachusetts.

In accepting the resignation, Superintendent Bissard said, "It is a compliment to the Richmond school system that three of my very capable associates have left for posts of higher work during the past year. I regret that I must lose these valuable men."

Dr. R. C. Nelson, assistant superintendent of elementary schools, recently resigned to become superintendent of schools in Mariaville, and Dr. Francis C. Lanford, Jr., director of research, left to become a professor of education at the University of Virginia. Mr. Norris will leave by July 25.

The School Board last night postponed action on Superintendent Bissard's recommendation for a successor to Dr. Nelson, whose resignation will be effective May 31. The board also put off the election of a director of vocational education. (Details on Page 2.)

After teaching for five years in Indiana, Mr. Norris came to the Richmond school system in 1928, just after he received his master's degree from Harvard. He was principal of Robert E. Lee Elementary School until July, 1933, when he became assistant superintendent.

Mr. Norris was considered the best candidate for the post.

Continued on Page 9, Column 2.

Churchill Announces His Cabinet

Bracken Made Admiralty Head

LONDON, May 25.—(AP)—Prime Minister Churchill retained Anthony Eden in the key post of Foreign Secretary in a "save-laker" Cabinet he organized tonight to carry on the British government until the general election July 5.

Sir James Grigg also was re-appointed Secretary of War in the Cabinet, which temporarily broke up two days ago by a split between Churchill's Conservative party and the Labor party. The latter is campaigning for a British Socialist commonwealth.

Two major posts, important to the war against Japan, were shifted to new hands, however. The Prime Minister named Brendan Bracken, former Minister of Information, as first lord of the admiralty and gave the air secretary post to Haring MacMillan, former cabinet minister in North Africa.

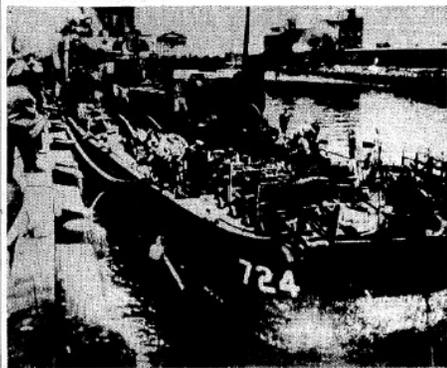
A. V. Alexander, former first lord of the admiralty—who directs naval policies—and Sir Archibald Sinclair, former air secretary, were among the 20 Labor and Liberal ministers who dropped out of the coalition government with which Churchill had prosecuted the war since 1940.

Conservatives Predominate

It was the Labor party's refusal to stay in the coalition government until the end of the Japanese war which resulted in Churchill's resignation Wednesday and the forming of the first national election in 20 years.

Churchill was immediately re-

Japs Damage Eleven U. S. Ships In Fierce Attack Off Okinawa; 116 Enemy Aircraft Destroyed



American Pilots Strike At Ryukyus

GUAM (Saturday), May 26.—(AP)—Eleven light American naval ships were damaged in a strong 18-hour Japanese air attack on American's Okinawa forces Thursday night and Friday. Free Admiral Chester W. Nimitz announced today.

At the height of the attack, Japanese made frantic attempts to land ground-armed forces on Yontan Island in West Central Okinawa. One bomber actually landed troops, but all were killed shortly.

One hundred and eleven Japanese planes were shot down during the prolonged Japanese assault and five more were destroyed in attempts to land small groups of assault forces in Yontan.

Casualties Reported

Nimitz's action-packed communiqué, one of his longest, also reported:

American army and marine casualties on Okinawa from the April 1 invasion to Thursday totaled 25,875, of whom 5,527 were killed or missing and 21,343 were wounded. This was exactly 1,000 killed or missing in the past week. Last Wednesday reported 25,000.

Destroyer Laffey Arrives at Seattle After Battling 22 Jap Planes off Okinawa Ship Survives Hits by Eight Kamikaze Craft, Sails Home a Mass of Gaping Holes

For full article see <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bdh1MIRQ96k-gY1C6AS42nwHhIMub6-m/view?usp=sharing> and https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oy0zsMR_wRCZLcgOM_28g4vDT4gsUUIr/view?usp=sharing

Passing of Shipmates This Year From Sonny Walker, Past President USS Laffey Association

This has been a tough year for all of us but tougher for these family members. I knew all of these guys personally. It really strikes close to home.

William A. Kelly SM2

Served 44-45

Normandy and Okinawa survivor

Passed away Jan 10, 2020

William "Bill" Kelly (1925-2020) SM2 Plank Owner and Survivor April 16, 1945 Attack



Bill Kelly, 1942



Bill Kelly, 2019

It was my honor to accompany Chris Kirhagis to New Jersey for Bill's memorial service. He was the

guy that gave a dying shipmate the flag that had been knocked down by a Kamikaze. The wounded sailor, Fred Burgess, had his leg blown off and was bleeding badly. He saw Kelly carrying the ensign and asked if he could have it. Bill gave him the flag and he clutched it to his chest with all of his remaining strength. He died holding the flag of his country. He was another of our great heroes.

Robert Knippenburg EM2

Served aboard 57-60.

Passed away Feb 26, 2020

Knip was a good friend and shipmate. Again, Chris and I drove out to Western MD for his viewing. We were welcomed by his family as if we were family. Actually, we were family of sorts.



Thomas Kocsis QM2

Served aboard 60-62

Passed away May 1, 2020



“Cochise” served aboard the same time I did. Dave Harhager and I went home with him one weekend to NJ. We went to Palisades Amusement Park and had a blast. It was really great to see Tom a couple of years ago for the first time since 1962.

Robert Volz GM2

Served aboard 50-52
Passed May 16, 2020



“We have lost another Korean War Vet on Saturday evening May 16, 2020, Bob Volz QM2, served aboard 1950-52. Bob passed away at 95 years old. Barb, his widow, is still with us. I will always remember them at our reunions, on the dance floor tripping the light fantastic. He always had a great smile on his face and was happy with the world. He will be remembered at the memorial service on board his beloved ship at our reunion in Charleston in the fall. Bob will be missed by his shipmates and association friends.”

<https://usobit.com/obituaries-2020/05/robert-louis-volz-september-1-1924-may-16-2020-age-95/>.



RM3 Richard William Young.
U.S. Navy Veteran Richard ("Dick") W. Young, 78, passed away on June 5, 2020 surrounded by his loving family after a courageous battle with cancer. Dick attended Phoenix Central School and served in the Navy aboard the USS Laffey from

1962 to 1966. Dick, along with his wife Bev, enjoyed attending the annual USS Laffey reunions and staying connected with his Navy buddies.

Historic US Laffey Flag flown during Okinawa Battle

will be on display at Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum. This is flag that SM2 Bill Kelly SM2 retrieved and gave to a dying shipmate to hold in his arms during the battle.

In the US Navy, when the ship is under way, the ensign is flown at the gaff (the diagonal spar projecting aft from the mast). When the ship is anchored or moored between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and sunset, it flies its ensign at the flagstaff

on the stern of the ship and the union jack at the jack staff on the bow of the ship.



75th Anniversary The Greatest Kamikaze Attack of WWII Video.



<https://www.facebook.com/PatriotsPoint.org/videos/242679470188760> April 16th is the 75th anniversary of the attack the USS Laffey sustained while off the coast of Okinawa during World War II. Thirty-two men were killed in the most concentrated attack of Kamikaze during the war. In honor of the men who made the ultimate sacrifice., please watch this video and share it to keep their memories alive.

See Ari Phoutrides Video on 16 April 1945 Attack.
<https://www.facebook.com/PatriotsPoint.org/videos/1068995320136204>



See Facebook Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum Videos for several USS Laffey videos.



Recollections of Captain Vernon Honsinger, US Navy Retired.

I served in LAFFEY for three good years in her life, 1956-59. She still had many scars then from WWII, things that had

never been repaired correctly, just hurriedly in 1945 to get her back into the fight. Our shipfitters and electricians had their hands full. We sailed in a lot of waters — the Mediterranean, Red Sea, North Atlantic above the Arctic Circle, and Caribbean Sea. We won the red engineering E for two years in a row and painted it on our stack. We snipes flew our own pirates' flag aft of #2 stack when we were in the Med. We suffered just about every casualty in the book including some unusual ones, but we always managed to recover and never missed a sailing date. Twice we limped into port — Holy Loch and Charleston — after storm waves carried away the starboard ventilation trunk to the aft engine room, flooded #2 main switchboard, and pitched half of the ship into darkness. I was the Chief Engineer as an ensign; we had a very young wardroom.

Our Captain Jack McTighe was the best, the largest man in the ship, about 6'4" and 250-300 pounds — played football at the Naval Academy. There was no doubt who was captain! LAFFEY was his fifth command. Our next captain was a short naval aviator who knew very little about destroyers, a big change for us. He stood on a wooden box so that he could see better over the bridge bulwark!

We were the squadron flagship with a commodore (Captain Leverton) who was a grump and not very

popular. In the Med he would sunbathe in front of #2 5" gun mount, which was off limits to everyone else. He would emerge from his cabin on the 01 level in his underwear shorts and hang them on the rail while he bathed in the buff out of sight. One day his shorts blew overboard, and he had to retreat to his cabin in the buff! Everyone thought that was pretty amusing, and here I am 62 years later remembering it like it was just yesterday.

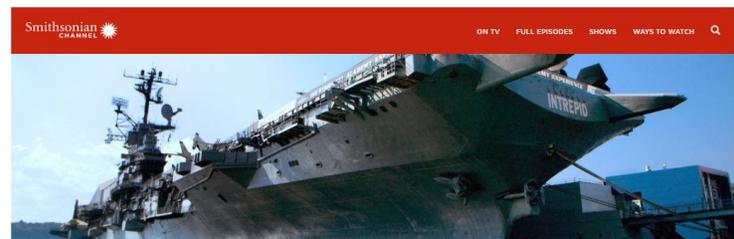
Commissioning Crew member wounded in Battle of Okinawa S1c Karl E. Bussert newspaper interview



June 1945 in hometown newspaper found. "Sailors died strapped to their gun seats on the Laffey. These gunners fired until they were swallowed up in the searing flames of

exploding Japanese suicide planes and bombs." Note: Photo in news article was incorrect! See https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ShWmS5TfWY1EI59QeDzzd_ekvcNDRx9T/view?usp=sharing and https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oy0zsMR_wRCZLcgoM_28g4vDT4gsUIUr/view?usp=sharing

Smithsonian Channel Combat Ships will feature USS Laffey in a planned upcoming episode. See <https://www.smithsonianchannel.com/shows/combat-ships/1004831>.



COMBAT SHIPS

Announcements

BM3 Peyton “Fish” Warner Good News. Fish was recently promoted to BM3 (Boatswain Mate 3rd Class) and received orders to report in July to his first ship an LPD (amphibious transport dock, also called a landing platform/dock) homeported in San Diego, CA. He has been a tireless worker and contributor on the USS Laffey. Bravo Zulu (Well Done) BM3 Warner on your promotion and orders.



Annual Dues Reminder from Membership Chairperson Kathy Pereira. Annual dues need to be paid on the 1st of each year to keep the USS Laffey Association functioning. Mail your check to Kathy Pereira 92 Elmdale Avenue, Warwick, RI 02889. Telephone 401-481-1954 or email membership@laffey.org. Annual members (renews every January 1st regardless of when you join): \$25/year. Life membership (one-time payment): 55 years old and younger \$375; 56 to 60 \$250; 61 to 64 \$225; 65 and older \$125. You may also pay using PayPal. Click on the PayPal icon on the USS Laffey home page www.laffey.org. Be sure to include your name and the words “Annual Dues”.

Donations Update from Treasurer George Kessler. All donations are greatly appreciated. Anyone wishing to make a donation, should make the check payable to the USS Laffey Association and mail to George Kessler 9686 Baughman Rd Harrison Ohio 45030

You may also make a donation on PayPal. On <http://www.laffey.org/HomePage/LaffeyAssociation.html>, tap on the PayPal icon at the bottom of the page. Enter the donation amount and comments, e.g. In Memory of.....

Donations:
William Bivin —————\$100

Work Party Donations:
Michael & Ann Laffey —\$25
Charles Cook —————\$50

Paper Laffey News US Postal Service (USPS). Currently we are publishing the Laffey News on the website <http://www.laffey.org/HomePage/LaffeyAssociation.html>, emailing the Laffey News pdf file to all members with an email address, and USPS mailing paper copies to all USS Laffey Association. Per Chris Kirhagis, starting with the next Laffey News about 1 July 2020,

we will only mail paper Laffey News to members who have requested the paper Laffey News. We will continue to email the news, and have it available on the website. Please contact the Membership Chairperson Kathy Pereira 401-481-1954 membership@laffey.org to be **added to the USPS mail list** if you would like.

Many Thanks to the USS Laffey Association Board of Directors: David Bossard, John Hudak, John Langevin, Francis LaSala, George Kessler, Sonny Walker, and Bob Wampler. See <http://www.laffey.org/HomePage/LaffeyAssociation.html> - tap on USS Laffey Association Officers, Board of Directors, and Staff.

USS Laffey Website
<http://www.laffey.org/HomePage/LaffeyAssociation.html>
Send inputs to Richard Felsing
webmaster@laffey.org
843-367-2208.

Laffey News Send inputs or comments to Pam Barylski
Newsletter Editor
newsletter@laffey.org

USS Laffey DD724 Association
Chris Kirhagis, President
6714 Hudson Street
Baltimore, MD 21224

FIRST CLASS
US POSTAGE
PAID
ALEXANDRIA, VA
PERMIT#565

