



# 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*

January, February, March 2020

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

## President's Message



Chris Kirhagis

Good day members!

It is with sorrow as well as reluctance that a decision has been made to cancel the April 14 - 21, 2020 work party. Obviously COVID-19 being the main factor, there were other mitigating factors that had a domino effect of COVID-19.

Even though there was one member who held out until yesterday and myself, I want to thank all of the members who would have been there. The line up looked like it was going to be entertaining. Hopefully, we can recreate the same line-up for November's work party (TBD). Gov. Hogan (R) Maryland, just locked down the State, effective 8:00 pm tonight and only essential personnel are permitted out of quarantine, which means Sonny & I

could not travel if we wanted to :)  
Be Safe.

On behalf of the entire association members, the executive board as well as board of director's hope you had a healthy and prosperous first quarter of 2020. It did not start off very well with the tragic loss of 25+ lives in Nashville with the tornado devastation and then now the corona virus.

We conducted a mini work party February 1 – 8, 2020 with nine attendees, well ten, when you count our stepson Peyton "Fish" Warner. Talking about Fish, as reported to me and the website, Fish had his medical evaluation hearing to determine whether he was able to continue his service with the US Navy, and with a congratulatory heart I report that the results were favorable and Fish looks like he will be a "lifer". Fish received orders and will report in July to his first ship USS John P. Murtha (LPD 26) homeported in San Diego, CA. See <https://www.facebook.com/USJohnP.Murtha/> Vice President note "We will miss all the great things Fish has done helping us with work and bringing people from his base to help. Also he always

was there when we needed him to check something out when we weren't there. All we had to do was give him a call and he did what we asked as soon as he could. So from all of us, we wish him all the best and can't thank him enough."

There was not a lot of work to be done, but a lot of prep, and administrative functions to perform to get ready for the November 2020 work party (exact date to be determined). John Hudak continued working on the "Hudak Project" concentrating on the exit ladder opening to the aft. Boiler room port side. He was assisted by our "water boy", Sonny Walker, who stood fire watch the entire time, as well as John Miller who assisted John in the steel used to fabricate the combing for the opening. Max Saus & Joe Luque were running around continuing to correct & improve the electrical integrity of the ship, especially in the aft. boiler room. Ken McCullough, of course, took care of the tool room (HT shop). Ken brought a lot of tools and material to replenish older equipment. And as usual, Ken watched the inventory of what was borrowed, and if not returned, Ken

would hunt you down like a dog to get it back.

Jim Sehy ran around jumping in to do anything that was asked of him, and at the end of the work party Jim and your president were promoted to sanitation engineers. We scrubbed and cleaned three heads which should be clean for the November work party. I saved the best for last, our vice president Mike Pereira outdid himself yet again in his culinary concoctions. If you went home hungry, that was on you. Good job Mikey. Next time please make sure you make more chicken dishes. That was an inside joke between us and another member 😊. Again, Mikey was able to continue his wooing with our paint supplier in that the shipment we received from them during the work party was substantial and also gratis.

On February 4, 2020 I finally had a meeting with the executive director of Patriots Point, Larry Murray. VP Mike Pereira, and past president Sonny Walker were also in attendance. The meeting lasted approximately half an hour. I walked away with the impression that Mr. Murray is PRO VOLUNTEER and a friend of the Laffey. That is what we really need right now.

Rumor control is that the Clamagore should be leaving Patriots Point before years end as a reef? The Laffey is scheduled to go up river to dry dock in 2021 for a bottom paint job. Exact date not known at this point, but I am hoping that it would be done between late April and mid-October to prevent any interruption in our work parties. Of course this is predicated upon what the yards have in their scheduling. From what I have seen and been told, the fact that the Laffey does float and when the tide goes out, does rest in mucky waters, this constant movement with the river's bottom causes an abrasive action. That, along with the salinity of the water, is causing the coating to wear much faster than it would if it constantly floated.

There is another concern as to the Laffey's resting place upon its return, so I am going to leave it at that as I do not have any definitive answers at this time, nor do I wish to speculate and cause a slew of rumors to be started.

On February 29<sup>th</sup>, Sonny and I drove two and a half hours to Cumberland to pay our respect on behalf of the Laffey Association to Robert Knippenburg. We were well accepted by Bob's family upon our arrival. Judy Harhager was there and Sonny found his little place in the corner with Judy to yap yap and

catch up on their lives, exchange phone images, etc. Bob will be missed.

VP Pereira was instrumental in obtaining needed parts to be put on display at the Laffey from Battleship Cove, Mass. Some of the items were the D.A.S.H. (Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter) control box, light off torches for the boiler room, nautical chart parts, etc. They were stored by me for four months until this past work party and transported to the Laffey. Many thanks to Jeff Jacobs and Ken McCullough for arranging the \$1500 Deck Sander "aka" "knuckle buster" donation from the Aurand Manufacturing Company.

On April 16th, 2020, let's all individually honor the 32 sailors who lost their lives in Okinawa on April 16, 1945. A public remembrance ceremony will be scheduled by Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum in the near future. Date to be determined.

See you all at the Reunion in October and the Work Party in November (Date TBD).

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

## Upcoming Association Events

### 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. There will be strict dates that we must adhere

to and there will be NO EXCEPTIONS due to the strict contract with the hosting hotel. **There will be a limited room block and a strict cutoff date to**

**book by June 1st** so you want to book early. Key things you need to know if you decide to cancel your reservation. Prior to June 1<sup>st</sup>, you are free to cancel without

penalty. However, AFTER June 1st you will be responsible for the FULL payment of your reservation. The hotel makes us guarantee our room block so please make sure you pay attention to these dates. You may book days at the beginning of your trip for up to 2 nights at the going rate that day minus 20%. The room block rates for Oct 4-7 are as follows: Harbor side Resort \$129.00 a night Beach Resort \$199.00 a night. This is a resort so there is also a resort fee of \$28 a day.

The cost of the reunion will be \$200 per person. Detailed itinerary will be shared later, but the banquet will be taking place

on the Yorktown. 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, 2020

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



## 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? \_\_\_\_\_

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



Bill Kelly, 1942

Bill Kelly, 2019

From Sonny Walker, Past President USS Laffey Association “January 10, 2020, we lost one of our plank owners and surviving hero of Okinawa. Bill Kelly SM2 is the hero that retrieved the national ensign from the main deck that was knocked down by a Japanese Kamikaze. A wounded shipmate was laying outside of the wardroom with his leg blown off. He asked Bill, who was on his way back up to the signal bridge with the flag, if he could have it. Bill

gave him the flag and he died clutching the flag to his chest. Bill was quite a guy and it was a pleasure to have known him. He passed quietly with some family members with him.” We are all honored and appreciative of Bill Kelly’s service to the US Navy and the USS Laffey Association. Bill Kelly Obituary. <https://orenderfamilyhome.net/book-of-memories/4072870/Kelly-William/index.php>.

**Taps**

**Shipmates Passing 2020**

William M. Kelly SM2  
Served 44-45  
Plankowner  
Normandy and Okinawa Survivor  
Passed away Jan. 10, 2020  
Jill Michel and Sony attended Bill's viewing.

Robert E. Knippenburg EM2  
Served aboard 57-60  
Passed away Feb. 26, 2020  
Chris and Sony attended Knip's viewing.

**Robert E. “Knip” Knippenburg EM2** Served aboard 57-60 Passed away Feb. 26, 2020. Bob was the past president and trustee of the Maryland State Firemen’s Association. He was a member of the Allegany Garrett Counties Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association, and the Midland Fire Company #1, Inc. Bob was a long time member of the USS Laffey Association.



Engineman Striker Bob Knippenburg (glasses) in 1957



Chief Bob “Knip”Knippenburg about 2000

**Announcements**

**New Laffey News Editor**

Our Laffey Association Editor, Craig Keith, has resigned for personal reasons. For nearly 5 years he has done a superb job distributing the Laffey News. He always maintained the high standards of Laffey News Editors

as his distinguished predecessors: Cy Simones (1<sup>st</sup> Newsletter 30 November 1975), Ari Phoutrides (plank owner/WWII attack survivor/past president), Joe Folino, Gemma Mcluckie, and Bob Wamper. Well done, Craig.

I would like to thank Richard Felsing for stepping up and taking charge of the Newsletter for the past two issues as well as assisting Craig Keith during his tenure. Upon learning that Pam Barylski had been assisting Richard on the website, I had a

conversation with her in reference to the possibility of becoming our new Laffey Editor. I was expecting a "well, let me give it some thought". Instead I received a "SURE!". To my immediate surprise the "Sound of Silence" was replaced with a sigh of relief.

**Harbor Freight 99 Cent Disc Sale until 30 April**

From President Chris Kirhagis and Vice President Mike Pereira: Harbor Freight has a sale until 30 April on 4-1/2" Aluminum Oxide Flap Discs, 36 Grit, which we use extensively during work parties to maintain the USS Laffey decks. We need as many of these discs as feasible at the \$.99 price. Online you can order 8 discs \$.99 apiece for a total of \$7.94 plus estimated shipping \$6.99. You may be able to ship the discs directly to Chris Kirhagis at 6714 Hudson Street Baltimore, MD 21224.

[https://www.harborfreight.com/4-1-2-half-inch-36-grit-flap-disc-67639.html?cid=hpcpn040320\\_r11c4&ccdenc=eyJjb2RlIjoiMzYx](https://www.harborfreight.com/4-1-2-half-inch-36-grit-flap-disc-67639.html?cid=hpcpn040320_r11c4&ccdenc=eyJjb2RlIjoiMzYx)

So ladies & gentlemen, I give you our new Laffey Association Editor, Pam Barylski, email address newsletter@laffey.org.

Congratulations & Thanks You Pam

Chris Kirhagis, President  
USS Laffey Association

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[SIsImlzljoiLjk5In0%3D](https://www.harborfreight.com/4-1-2-half-inch-36-grit-flap-disc-67639.html?cid=hpcpn040320_r11c4&ccdenc=eyJjb2RlIjoiMzYx). You

may visit your local Harbor Freight with the coupon. Ask for part numbers 61500 or 67639 shown in the coupon. While the limit is 4 per customer, manager may allow you to purchase more at \$.99 per disc. Chris visited his nearby Harbor Freight – manager authorized him to purchase 14 discs at \$.99 per disc. Please bring the discs to the reunion in October and / or to the November work party. If you are not attending either one, then please give them to an Association member you know who is attending either affair. If that is not feasible, then mail the discs to Chris Kirhagis at 6714 Hudson Street Baltimore,



Gary (USS Laffey MM2 1966 – 1970) and Pam Barylski (USS Laffey Association Newsletter Editor)

MD 21224, and he will make sure they make it to the ship. Harbor Freight coupon code is 99507704, Valid through May 31



**Photos from the Mini Work Party February 2020**



Fish Warner on USS Clamagore (SS 343) Midnight requisition for parts before Clamagore trip to reef



Sonny Walker, Mike Pereira, Ken McCullough, John Hudak, John Miller "Where's the chow?"



Sonny Walker and John Hudak in the After Fireroom  
"Ready for inspection Sir"



Jim Sehy, Chris Kirhagis, and Joe Luque "Head looks great,  
guys. Now Liberty Call."



Sonny Walker, Joe Luque, Richard Felsinger, Fish  
Warner in Chiefs Quarters "Oh no! Sweepers,  
Sweepers Man Your Brooms"



John Hudak, Sonny Walker, and Max Saus in Chiefs Quarters  
"We have a serious problem here!"



"I hear the chow is better over there"



Max Saus and Mike Pereira "Not here in galley!"



Joe Luque Scullery Duty just like the old days on  
active duty



John Hudak cutting access into After Fireroom for visitors soon



Ken McCullough in Wardroom  
“Decommissioning Invitation March 29, 1975 from the CO”



SN Peyton “Fish” Warner Good News. After a Medical Board Review, Fish has been authorized to remain in the US Navy.

**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. Make check payable to the USS Laffey Association and send to George Kessler 9686 Baughman Rd Harrison, Ohio 45030. Telephone 513-738-4484 for questions. 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....

**Work Party Donations:**

William Townsend \$75  
Vernon & Mary Honsinger \$100  
Julian & Karen Winston \$100

**Memorial Donations**

**In Memory of Mike Pollack:**

Henry & Linda Lovelace \$50  
Saundra Williams \$20

**In Memory of Emil & Rose Jakubic:**

Nancy Powell \$25

**In Memory of John B. Evans:**

Thomas & Robyn Zicker \$100

**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

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Friday night dinner at Page's Okra Grill from right starting with John Hudak, Joe Luque, Sonny Walker, Chris Kirhagis, John Miller, Malcom Jenkins, Jim Sehy, Ken McCullough, Mike Pereira.