



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 2021

USS Laffey Association www.laffey.org

President's Message



Chris Kirhagis

Hello Everyone!

Again, I hope this message finds everyone and their families in good health, and those that are fruitful in their labor continue to better their lives. And the ones that have retired are taking advantage of their children's inheritance ☺

With all of that said, most of the country is starting to open up from this nasty pandemic. I said most, as of this writing, Baltimore City has yet to do so. We all know that places that have yet to do so in my opinion are power playing?

We had a very successful April work party! A lot had been accomplished by so many people. I do not want to steal Vice President Mike Pereira's thunder, so I will let him give you a detail as

to what jobs were performed and who performed them. Mikey will also explain about the two individuals that are new to our Association that have developed a board game about the Laffey.

As some of you may know, I have been corresponding with the CEO of Sherwin-Williams as well as Director of Sales, Marine Division Mike Vollman for over a year in reference to materials needed for the fantail restoration project that we would like to perform during the April 22' work party. I am trying my best to obtain the material gratis, if not at least a deep discount. The material alone costs approximately \$7,000.00.

During our April '21 work party all three Fitzsimmons' as well as two welders prepared the decks of both starboard and port side wings off the bridge. All of them did one hell of a job. We had purchased two five-gallon pails of a rust preventative chemical for this project. Thanks to Jeff Jacobs for smoozing a discount and free shipping of the material to Patriots Point. Dave Coates (Patriots Point Maintenance Supervisor) had some of the aforementioned Sherwin-Williams product to use on the wings. His crew applied

the topcoat as well as the non-skid coat. Let me tell you that it turned out beautiful. So, we were able to get a firsthand look at what the fantail will look like.

Jeff Jacobs, who is a member of the Association and is very fond of us, was also the past President of the Patriots Point Foundation as well as our Liaison with the Foundation. We had a substantial expenditure list at the last work party. We purchased a pressure washer, some replacement tools, i.e., drills, sanders, and much needed welding equipment and material for the Fire Room. The cost for all that we acquired during the work party was paid for 100% by the Patriots Point Foundation. Many thanks to them for their continued support as well as the support they have given us in the past. Jeff, thanks from the entire Association, especially the April '21 work party, for your involvement in securing these funds.

I had an impromptu meeting with Mike Hastings, Executive Director of Patriots Point. The main topic dealt with preparing the fantail for the April '22 work party. I requested that the "decoy" spool be removed as well as the human

shield just forward of it. I cited several reasons in that there was no access to get under the spool to repair the leak going into our tool shed, when visitors come on board they hardly ever go toward the fantail, it would give us more space for ceremonies, etc.

Mr. Hastings was very receptive of the idea, and before the end of the work party, there was a crew grinding off the mounting bolts.

Within a week I was sent a photo of the spool gone and stored in the "boneyard".

Before you know it our Reunion will be here. I am hoping that there will be a nice turn out.

I also want to give a special thanks to our Webmaster, Richard Felsing. Over the past six months Richard has been bombarded with a slew of articles,

pictures, etc. from me and I know from other individuals to place these things on the Laffey website and/or the Newsletter. Richard, you are doing a spectacular job, Thanks !!
Respectfully,

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

April Work Party Report from VP Mike Periera

Another good job done by all at the work party. I am not going to post what each person did, just the work that was performed.

We stripped most of the paint off the decks on the wings outside the bridge and had them repainted with a special long-lasting epoxy. Patriots Point supplied the materials. We put the primer down and then did the nonskid. We also had some welding to do up there. We got some bulkheads painted and some just needed a good power washing. We also power washed Mt 51. There was a lot of the main deck that needed to be done and we got done as much as we could. We concentrated on the worst sections. There was some rust damage that needed attention, so we had to cut out the old, rusted section and weld a new plate that needed to be bent around a corner and welded on. John and Donny continued to do their thing down in the boiler room. We got ourselves our own pressure washer and that will help us a lot. Our 2 chefs Mark Maresca & Mike Honsinger did a fine job with the meals and more.

I would like to thank Mark Maresca, one of our chefs, for the wonderful donation of new induction burners and the pans to be used to cook with them. Real quality stuff. I went and donated a nice, new digital crock pot with timer to go along with the other ones we have, so our galley is well equipped.

We took on 2 ex-Laffey crew members that served on the Laffey. Steve Doyle and Dave Stoner. They fit right in and did some fine work. Thank you all that came. You all get a Bravo Zulu.

Upcoming Association Events

3 – 7 October 2021 USS Laffey Association Reunion in Gettysburg PA October. Contact Leigh Ann Zerden Reunions Coordinator (reunions@laffey.org) if you have any questions.

6 - 13 November Fall 2021 Workparty – If you plan to attend, contact President Chris Kirhagis president@laffey.org 410-633-9936 or Vice President vicepresident@laffey.org Mike Pereira 401-787-3014.

11 November Veterans Day 2021. As a federal holiday Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum typically provides free admission for veterans. Typically, special exhibits and a large number of visitors aboard Laffey.

21 November 2021 Anniversary of the USS Laffey DD-724 Launching 21 November 1943. See <https://www.laffey.org/HomePage/DD724WWII.html> .

Message from reunion coordinator Leigh Ann Zerden:
I hope everyone is doing well and getting excited for our reunion in Gettysburg PA in October.

I want to give you all an update on our activities and events. Pennsylvania has reopened!! Woo hoo!! With this we are able to do so much more than we would have a few months ago. I hope by now everyone has booked their hotel and sent in their activity fees.

I have secured a bus for us to get to all our tours on Monday and Tuesday. We will be visiting the Battlefield as well as the visitors center, cyclorama and museum on Monday after the memorial

service. Tuesday we will be traveling to the field hospital, having lunch and visiting the Jenny Wade house and the Orphanage.

Our hotel is conveniently located within walking distance to all the shops, restaurants and Ghost tours if you dare!! O'Roukes Irish Pub is one of my personal favorites on Steinwhar St., Soldiers Cemetery is directly behind the hotel for anyone who would like to take a stroll through and look at the old tomb stones and who knows, maybe see a ghostly soldier roaming around.

We will be having our banquet on Wednesday evening at the VFW hall in Gettysburg.

We will once again be doing the 50/50, and Chinese Auction so we ask for everyone to please bring a donated item. We have had a lot of amazing items over the past 2 years. I can't wait to see what you guys bring this year!! These items can be turned in the night of registration and the auction will start Monday evening and be called the night of the banquet. We will be playing games on Monday night also and start the 50/50, and Chinese auction ticket sales.

This year we will be doing something different in the hospitality suite. It will be BYOB (Bring your own booze). We will still be providing soda and water and snack foods.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at 302 249 5591!! **Hotel Update: As of July 1st the Comfort Inn and Suites Gettysburg is sold out for the reunion. Please contact Leigh Ann if you need help finding accommodations.**

See you all in October

Leigh Ann

<https://www.choicehotels.com/pennsylvania/gettysburg/comfort-suites-hotels/pa553>



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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Comfort Inn and Suites Gettysburg | Gettysburg National Military Park |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

Registration:

<https://www.laffey.org/LaffeyAssoc/LaffeyReunionRegistration.pdf> or on the next page

National Soldier Factory in Gettysburg, PA from Chris Kirhagis

I was in Gettysburg this past Wednesday with Bernice just visiting and doing some pre-reunion research. During the visit I came across a Military Surplus store that may be of some interest to some of you. They have a vast amount of goods from mostly all eras of this country and some uniforms and relics from other countries. Appears to be only approximately three miles from the hotel. So go visit the National Soldiers Factory during your lax time at the Reunion. 23 Chambersburg St, Gettysburg, PA 17325 Phone: (717) 253-5864

USS Laffey Plaque Hung at the Museum of the Pacific War The plaque was donated and hung in the Museum of the Pacific



<http://pacificwarmuseum.org/> in Fredericksburg, Texas. Many thanks to USS Laffey Association members Ken Workley who suggested the plaque and to Charles Meyer who visited the museum and assisted with the plaque. Mike Heiman who was at our April work party from Alaska, and is also the developer of the USS Laffey board game, has relatives near Fredericksburg, TX and visited the Pacific War Museum, found the Laffey plaque, and took a photo of it.

Patriots Point Free Admission for Former Laffey Crew Members.

Free Entrance to National Parks for Veterans and Gold Star Families In national parks that charge an entrance fee, a veteran will need to present one of the following forms of identification where entrance fees

are collected: Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC), Veteran ID Card, Veterans designation on a state-issued U.S. driver's license or identification card.

2021 USS LAFFEY REUNION REGISTRATION

Reunion Dates: October 3-7, 2020 Gettysburg, PA

Cost for Group Activities: \$200 per person. 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 July 1, 2021

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? _____

Remembering Lt Paul B. Smith Gunnery Officer in Battle of Okinawa

Served on board USS Laffey (DD724) 2/44 - 6/45
Passed away on April 16, 2004



Jean Smith age 103 widow of Lt Paul B. Smith sent a beautiful letter to Kathy Pereira Membership Chairperson. Lt Paul B. Smith was the Gunnery Officer during WWII . She recalls attending the Laffey's commissioning ceremony on 8 February 1944 in Boston, Massachusetts. She recalls her anxiety and fear during the wartime years with their infant son. Lt Smith was awarded the US Navy Silver Star for heroism, bravery and gallantry during WW II especially during the April 16, 1945 Battle of Okinawa. He later became Captain Smith. He passed away on April 16, 2004. See <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/56463>, <https://www.laffey.org/Shipmates/PaulBSmith.pdf>, and <https://www.laffey.org/Shipmates/TedRunk.pdf>

Jean Smith

May 25th - 2021

Dear Kathy, —

I have decided to apply for a lifetime membership to the U.S.S. Laffey Association. It is time - as I am nearing 104 years in March.

The U.S.S. Laffey has been a deciding factor in my life as I followed my husband, Lt Paul B Smith to Bath, Maine that cold January in 1943. I sat behind the skipper's wife at the Commissioning ceremony in April, always remembering the cherries on her hat! I followed the ship to Boston on her "shake down" cruise. Then headed back home to Atlanta with our 9 month old "Skippy" to wait out the war in the Pacific. A year of anxiety, fear, few letters, and fewer hints as to the Laffey's participation in the series of battles there.

Now finally came of the disastrous battle of Okinawa! Luckily, Lt. Smith, survived the carnage and was on his way to Georgia to weeks later. The memory of that day never left our memories. Our hearts are always with the families who lost loved ones - and we continued to watch over the ship as she was re-built.

Later - our grandson was instrumental in having the ship repaired for further service at Patriots Point. On visits there we proudly show our friends the "Story of Okinawa"

My congratulations and praise go to all those "giving" people who spend time and talents to keep that great ship in the forefront. —

And, I thank you, Kathy, for taking up the leadership of keeping us all informed.

— fondly — Jean Smith —

you will please forgive the errors in penmanship, etc. in this note. Somehow the pen is faster than the brain!



Jean Smith (Left) with Lt Paul B. Smith Picture and Pat Runk with Lt Ted Runk Picture about 1944. Both Lieutenants were decorated WWII heroes. Both later became Captains.



Jim Smith Son of Paul and Jean Smith about 1945

March 1989 Edition of the Naval Institute Proceedings “Do You Have a Hero” on Captain Paul B. Smith, U.S. Navy (Retired).

The skipper of the Laffey 724 in 1945, Captain F. Julian Becton, U.S. Navy (Retired), points to his gunnery officer then a lieutenant, who had trained his gun crews so well that they performed flawlessly throughout an 80-minute attack by 22 kamikazes.

“The five-inch gunners shot down three of the first four planes and combined with other ships to splash the fourth. The 40-mm and the 20-mm gunners shot down the next four planes. The ninth kamikaze struck amidships and fires in the vicinity of the 40-mm gun mounts. Two more planes both packing bombs crashed into and wrecked the after five-inch mounts; two more crashed into the adjacent after deckhouse; and another dropped a bomb on the ship’s stern.

Near the end of the action, a plane came in on the starboard beam. Lieutenant Smith, in the gun director above the bridge, noticed his gunners at five-inch mount #52 were aiming too low and cranked in an “up 50 yards” spot to elevate the guns slightly. The next salvo destroyed plane 1,000 yards from the ship. By this quick action Lieutenant Smith averted disaster, and today the Laffey is still float as a museum ship.” Frederick Julian Becton”

Jean, we greatly appreciate your wonderful support for the USS Laffey Association. We are touched by your thoughtfulness and memories. We honor Lt Smith’s service and heroism. We greatly appreciate the support of your son Lt James E. “Jim” Smith, grandson James E. Smith, Jr, and other family members for the USS Laffey Association.

Highly Successful April 2021 Work Party Completed. The Remembrance Ceremony was held for 32 men killed and 71 wounded in action on 16 April 1945. Many thanks to everyone at the work party.





Bob McCullough (Ken's brother), Mike Pereira, Ken McCullough, Ken B. McCullough (Ken's son) at Remembrance Ceremony



Chip Vernon Honsinger Age 86 Captain, USN (Retired) and son Mike Honsinger



Tim Densham (USMC), Mike Pereira, Chris Kirhagis, and Mike Heiman (USMC)



Amish Family whose father served aboard the Laffey



John Hudak, Mary Bossard, Melissa Buchanan, Ken B. McCullough, Mike Heiman, Mike Pereira, Ken McCullough, Bob McCullough, Mark Maresca, Steve Doyle, Dave Bossard, Don Watson



Bill and Ed Fitzsimmons

For additional photos go to <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Mh87u87khH3W9XY9>

Captain's Chair Reupholstery






Old



In progress





Done!

| | | |
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|  |  |  |
| <p>Chris Kirhagis</p> | <p>Harry Stoner,, Ken McCullough , Rich McKinney</p> | <p>Many Thanks to Bridgette from SO Canvas for beautiful reupholstery</p> |

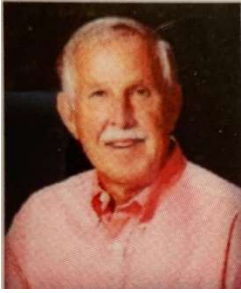
A recent visitor, Richard Graham, commented on the poor condition of the Captain’s Chair and offered a donation for reupholstery. In researching local upholsterers, a local vendor, SO Canvas (<http://socanvasllc.com/>), was more than interested in doing the job. The owner, Bridgette, explained one her relatives was a bomber pilot in WWII, and she couldn’t wait to show her appreciation and respect for the Laffey Family. She volunteered to donate the entire job. She explained that she was going in for her second knee surgery in a few days, but she would do it when she recovered. A big thank you to Bridgette from SO Canvas. Many thanks Richard Graham. His donation will be repurposed for a future project need. Thanks Jeff Jacobs coordinating with SO Canvas. See <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yY83gOZIMiVi3zySOpE04uIT1aOVQgF/view?usp=sharing>

DASH (Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter) Controller now installed aboard USS Laffey

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|---|--|
|  |  |
| <p>Chris Kirhagis and Brian Parsons with DASH Controller</p> | <p>DASH Helicopter in USS Laffey Hanger Bay</p> |

The DASH was a small drone helicopter built by Gyrodyne Company of America for use as a long-range anti-submarine weapon on ships. It remained in production until 1969. The DASH's control scheme had two controllers: one on the flight deck, and another in the combat information center. The flight-deck controller handled take-off and landing. The controller in the Combat Information Center (CIC) would fly DASH to the target's location and release weapons using semiautomated controls and radar. The CIC controller could not see the aircraft or its altitude and occasionally lost operational control. During the 2019 Reunion in Newport, RI, Chris Kirhagis was able to get this controller for the USS Laffey. Patriots Point staff installed the controller in the DASH Hanger Bay.

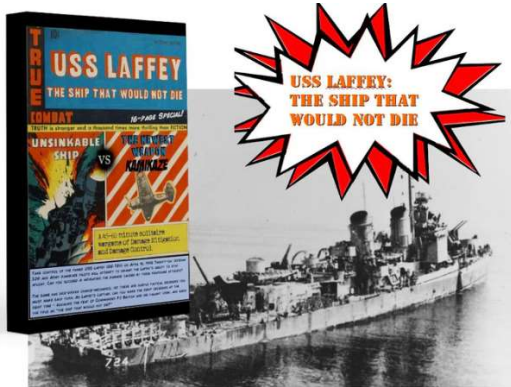
In Memory of Robert “Bob” Toleman



Former shipmate, Bob Toleman passed away on October 2, 2020. Bob’s wife Carolyn Toleman sent a beautiful note, and said that when Bob was at the ship, everyone he saw meant so much to him.

USS Laffey: The Ship That Would Not Die Board Game

is a solo game of damage control as you desperately scramble to survive the most determined Kamikaze attacks of World War II. You will re-enact the harrowing 80 minutes of terror and mayhem the crew of the Laffey went through as they fought off 22 Japanese planes. The Japanese aircraft you face in the game are the same four types (Val, Judy, Kate, and Oscar) in the same order of attack.



Click on <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/usslaffey/uss-laffey-the-ship-that-would-not-die-game> . To order, click on “Back this project” to view the order info.

Contact Catastrophe Games Grand Rapids, MI Tim Densham catastrophegames.net for additional info.

Annual Dues Reminder from Membership Chairperson Kathy Pereira. 2021 Annual Dues are due 1/1/2021. Mail your check made out to the USS Laffey Association to: Kathy Pereira (Membership Chairman) 92 Elmdale Avenue, Warwick, RI 02889. Annual members renew every January at \$25/year. Lifetime Membership, which is a one-time payment, is as follows: 55 years old and younger \$375; 56 - 60 \$250; 61 - 64 \$225; and 65 years and older \$125. If you are unsure as to your status or need to update our records if you have moved or changed your phone number or Email address, contact Kathy Pereira at 401-481-1954.

or email membership@laffey.org. 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 the Laffey homepage www.laffey.org, 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:

- Robert Wilson ----- \$100.00
- Max Saus ----- \$100.00
- Henry Brooks ----- \$ 50.00
- Patriot’s Point Naval and Maritime Museum Foundation – work part expense
- reimbursement ----- \$1567.81

In Memory of Ken Mercer:

- Lou Mercer (wife) ----- \$50.00

In Memory of Lonnie “Bill” Eastham:

- Norma & Donna Ward ----- \$100.00

Paper Laffey News US Postal Service

(USPS). Currently we are publishing the Laffey News on the website www.laffey.org. Tap on Laffey News at the bottom of the page. We are also emailing the Laffey News pdf file to all members with an email address, and USPS mailing paper copies to all who have requested it. Please contact the Membership Chairperson Kathy Pereira 401-481-1954 membership@laffey.org to be **added to the USPS mail list.**

USS Laffey Website www.laffey.org 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

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World War II Veteran at Remembrance Ceremony