



# 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 2022

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

## President's Message



Chris Kirhagis

Good day ladies and gentlemen! I am hoping that everyone has enjoyed these past three months and that everyone has been left unscathed in their lives and that we are all relatively healthy and continue to prosper in our own ways.

There is not much for me to say during this time, as even my last three months, though busy, left me with more responsibilities in numerous areas.

As you may know by now, there has been a change in lodging that had to be made for the reunion in

Mt. Pleasant, SC. As a result of some integrity issues that I will not elaborate on. But Leigh-Ann Zerden (our reunion coordinator) was able to rectify the issue with comparable accommodations.

We had a very successful work party this past April, whereas nearly twenty people had attended, and a lot of work had been completed. I will not steal any of VP Mike Periera's thunder to further describe what kind of work had been accomplished. But I will tell you that the Laffey is getting better looking every time I go there. About a year ago I was able to convince Patriots Point for the acquisition of the parts storage room, located on the port side of aft berthing next to aft steering. Restoration of this room was completed in April, and it does look nice, and badly needed to alleviate the overcrowding of Ken McCullough's tool room.

In the event you have not heard, I will not be attending the reunion in October, as Bernice and I will be spending a month in Barbados. I will miss the comradery as we all do during this venue.

This is also the year for officer's elections. I still plan on hanging in there if I am not voted out, so someone call me and let me know the results of all positions?

VP Pereira approached me with a suggestion pertaining to changing of dates for our reunion as well as our work parties. VP Pereira will explain what the association plans on doing. Hopefully the new scheduling will be received unanimously.

Respectfully,

Chris Kirhagis, President  
USS Laffey Association  
[president@laffey.org](mailto:president@laffey.org)  
410-633-9936.

## Upcoming Association Events

2022 Reunion at Patriots Point – October 2-6,  
2022 (see below)

2022 Fall Work Party – November 5-12, 2023  
2023 Reunion in Atlantic City, NJ – April 2023  
2023 Spring Work Party – May 6-13, 2023  
2023 Fall Work Party – September (dates TBD)

## Vice President's Message: Mike Pereira Work Party Report

Once again, we got done more than expected. Harry Stoner and Steve Doyle did a great job fabricating and welding repairs on some very bad rusted out holes on the ship. John Hudack and Donny continued their work in the fire room. The Fitzsimmons crew did their usual excellent work painting. Chris got the extra storage room painted and ready. Our chefs Mark Maresca and Mike Honsinger once again did an excellent job keeping all happy with their meals. Ken McCoullough kept our tools and equipment working fine. My brother Tony cleaned out and organized the paint locker and helped run that when I was busy and helped where needed. There were many others that came and worked hard to make this yet another successful work party. If I left anybody out, I am sorry. We did so much my memory could not keep up.

As for a night out there were 9 of us that went to the Charleston Rays Ice Hockey game. We had great seats at center ice. It was a good game and fun for all.

Thank you all for coming!

Mike Pereira

Vice President Laffey Association

Many thanks to all who completed many deck and bulkhead restorations, painting, and other projects to preserve the ship as the premiere US Navy Museum ship.

## Reunion Update from Leigh Ann Zerden

Hello Everyone, it's that time of year again! We are closing in on our next reunion in Mt. Pleasant, SC. If you have not made your reservation, please make sure you are following all the dates you have to book by. The link for the hotel expires on August 30th so please make sure you have made your reservation to get your room rate. I cannot activate the link after the 30th.

Please make sure all non-refundable registration fees are in by September 1st. I will NOT be able to except late registrations this year as the caterer has given me a date I will not be able to change due to the shortages we are facing in the food world.

This year will be visiting a distillery after our memorial and having a nice lunch. Our banquet is going to be held on the USS Yorktown. As per requested you will have a lot more downtime to enjoy each other's company! We will be having a game night and our Meet and Greet as per usual. We will also be doing the Chinese Auction so don't forget to bring a donated item. You guys are so creative every year I can't wait to see what you come up with this year!!!

I would like to put a little information out about our reunion in 2023 to keep you all updated. Our reunion in 2023 will be in Atlantic City, NJ. However, the dates will be changing for our reunions and we will now be hosting them in April. What this means is after our

Reunion in October this year we will have our next reunion April 2023. I am currently working on a location and dates and will update the website as soon as possible.

### HOTEL INFORMATION:

Holiday Inn Express & Suites **\*This is NEW\***  
Patriots Point  
350 Johnnie Dodds Blvd, Mt Pleasant, SC 29464  
Phone Number: (800) 465-4329  
Group Code: USL

Booking Link: [USS Laffey Reunion Booking Link](#)

*\*click the link > enter dates > under Rate Preference, click drop down and verify that the group code is USL > ignore the lata # (that is a generic #) > Click Search > Select Room > If dates chosen include weekend and weekday, you will see an average rate until you complete the booking > once you complete, then you will see the rate breakdown by the day.*

Any questions please call Leigh Ann at 302-249-5591. This is the best way to get ahold of me.

17566. Note: Cut-off date for registration is September 1, 2022. There will be no late registrations accepted this year!

2022 USS LAFFEY REUNION REGISTRATION  
Reunion Dates: October 2-6, 2022 Patriots Point, SC  
Cost for Group Activities: \$175.00 per person is nonrefundable. Send reunion registration form and payment (check payable to USS Laffey Association) to: Leigh-Ann Zerden, 2 Albright Way Quarryville, PA

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 attending? \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact name and number (not traveling with you) \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs / Food Allergies? \_\_\_\_\_

## Current News

### Change of Dates for Work Parties and Reunions

It has been decided to try some new dates for work parties as well as the reunion. Future reunions will be held during the week of April 16, to pay homage to the lives lost at Okinawa. We realize that there will be only six months separating this fall's reunion from the 2023 reunion, but we felt that was better than skipping 2023. So yes, there will be a reunion in October 2022 at Patriots Point and the next will be in April 2023 at Atlantic City. After that there will be no more October reunions.

The next work party will be November 5-12, 2022. After that there will be no more November work parties. Fall work parties will be held in September (2023 dates are TBD). The spring work parties that

are typically held in April will move to May starting in 2023. The next spring work party will be held May 6-13, 2023. February work parties are not changing and will continue. 2023 dates are TBD.

There are several reasons for these changes – weather, daylight, reunions coinciding with the kamikaze attack to pay homage to the lives lost, etc. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Chris Kirhagis, 410-633-9936. / [president@laffey.org](mailto:president@laffey.org) .

Please note: if attendance drastically decreases, we will readjust the following year.

## Good News on USS The Sullivans Repairs

See latest from the Buffalo Naval Park from Chris Kirhagis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVm6NmPN69k>



Weeks Ago



Ship Now Stabilized

## 5 - 12 April 2022 April Work Party



**Back Left to Right:** Ken McCullough, Don Watson, Steve Doyle, Ed Fitzsimmons, John Hudak, Bill Fitzsimmons, Mark Maresco, Ed Fitzsimmons, Joe Luque, Mike Honsinger, Mike Pereira, Tony Pereira.

**Front Left to Right:** Tom Aust, Joe Reyes, Chris Kirhagis, Bob Fitzsimmons, Harry Stoner



**Left to Right:** Bill Fitzsimmons, Bob Fitzsimmons, Chris Kirhagis, Ed Fitzsimmons, Tom Aust, Ed Fitzsimmons



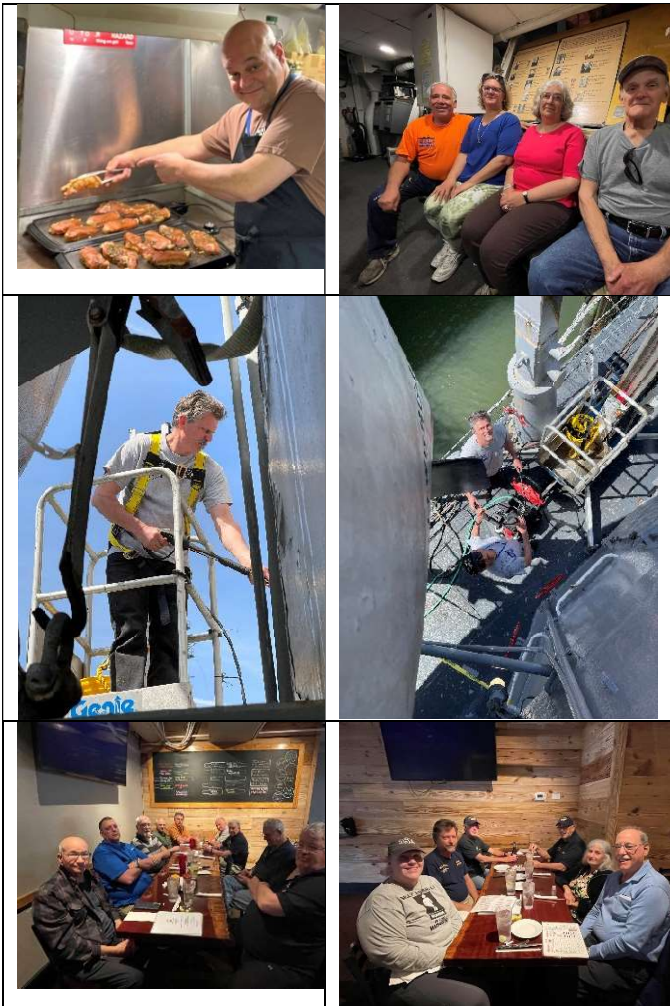
**Mike Pereira, Mike Heiman, Richard Felsing, Jeff Jacobs, Chris Kirhagis**



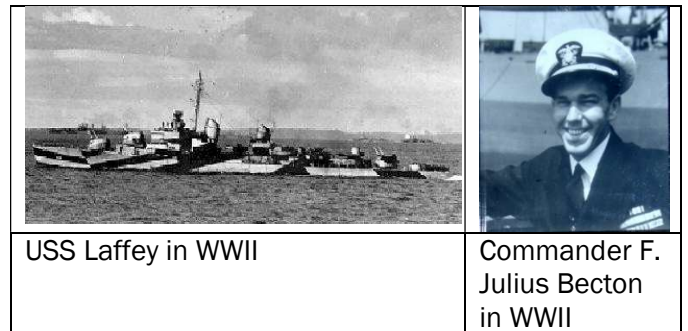
Motor Whaleboat – Captains Gig Left to Right: Bob Fitzsimmons, Bill Fitzsimmons, Ed Fitzsimmons



For additional photos see:  
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/qYXHKA1CDu8LK1EB6>



Remembering D Day June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944 USS Laffey in the Normandy Invasion. See Captain Becton's [Chronology from 3 – 17 June 1944](#) and Ari Phoutrides "[The USS Laffey's Role at D-Day 1944](#)" video. USS Laffey was part of the over 5,000 ships that participated in the Normandy Invasion to restore democracy in Europe. USS Laffey was credited with destroying two 88mm German guns to save US troops on the beach. While many ships were sunk, USS Laffey only received minimum damage. An 8-inch shell hit the ship but did not explode. We honor the heroism of the USS Laffey and all allied participants in WWII.





USS Laffey D-Day Flag at Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum

### Taps for Fallen Shipmates



- |                          |           |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| BT/1 Bob Hill            | 1951-1953 |
| Jack Mathews             | 1953-1956 |
| Art Busalacchi           |           |
| Kenneth F. Mercer        |           |
| Engineman Dennis Davis   |           |
| TE 2/C James Cox         |           |
| FP/2C Donald Nicholson   |           |
| PF2 Walter H. Harrington |           |

### Passing of Bob Hill from Sonny Walker

"I was told today of the passing of a good friend and shipmate, Bob Hill. Bob passed away in April 2022. Bob served aboard 1951-53 as a BT1. He was a willing member of many work parties. It was a pleasure working with Bob. He also had a good choice in women when marrying a girl from Baltimore. Irma is a charm, and we wish her well."

### Laffey Men: A Documentary of 5 Survivors from April 16, 1945 on The USS Laffey

[Laffey Men: A Documentary of 5 Survivors from April 16, 1945 on The USS Laffey](#)

From Sonny Walker RM2 1960-63 Very well done. I miss those guys. I was honored to have known them.

Also see "52 Kamikazes Attack Single Destroyer USS Laffey, 1945 - Animated" on YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Us-AvuSg9Fc>

### Early WWII USS Laffey Photo Dress Ship Visitors Day



Thanks Jeff Jacobs for finding this photo. On national holidays and on other special occasions US Navy ships often "dress ship" using International Code signal flags.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS\\_Laffey\\_\(DD-724\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Laffey_(DD-724))

### Website Volunteers Needed from Chris Kirhagis

Every organization, including ours, must have a plan to ensure its future. Part of our plan deals with the maintenance and expansion of our website. As we transition through the years, we need more than one individual who has the experience, knowledge, and commitment to be able to continue the operational aspect of the website, i.e., information sharing, honoring USS Laffey veterans/family, telling the Laffey stories of heroism, death, sacrifice, injury, recovery, .... maintaining our website [www.laffey.org](http://www.laffey.org) into 2040s and beyond. When we're all gone, the physical USS Laffey will be available at Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum with tours, videos, and stories from volunteers. The USS Laffey website [www.laffey.org](http://www.laffey.org) will continue to be the lasting memorial to USS Laffey veterans. We need help from you to continue the website into the 2040s and beyond. We need help from someone with some knowledge of web pages, photo editing, and similar skills.

Currently the website is maintained and kept current by Richard Felsing with advice from Jeff Jacobs, Advisor. We need one or more enthusiastic computer savvy volunteers to work with Richard, learn the

current coding format from him and work together to maintain and expand the website. We need to tell the incredible Laffey story for all future generations. We need you to walk in the footsteps of Ari Phoutrides the first webmaster. We need you uncover hidden and lost stories of Laffey heroes. Contact me if you have some time to contribute and become a USS Laffey Association volunteer. We are looking for one or more volunteers. Coding knowledge is a big plus, but not a necessity. Richard has a comprehensive web maintenance manual to guide you and you will be able to learn from him to hopefully take control one day as we transition into the future. Chris Kirhagis [president@laffey.org](mailto:president@laffey.org) (410) 633-9936

One way to honor our fallen Laffey heroes is record their records in family history genealogy sites, e.g., FamilySearch, Ancestry, other family history sites.



Contact Richard Felsing 843-367-2208 [webmaster@laffey.org](mailto:webmaster@laffey.org) or [rfelsing@gmail.com](mailto:rfelsing@gmail.com) if you are interested in assisting to collect and submit records to family history sites.

**Annual Dues Reminder from Membership Chairperson Kathy Pereira.** 2022 Annual Dues are due 1/1/2022. 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](mailto:membership@laffey.org). You may also pay using PayPal. Click on the PayPal icon on the USS Laffey home page [www.laffey.org](http://www.laffey.org). Be sure to include your name and the words "Annual Dues".

**Paper Laffey News US Postal Service (USPS).** Currently we are publishing the Laffey

News on the website [www.laffey.org](http://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 the paper Laffey News. Please contact the Membership Chairperson Kathy Pereira 401-481-1954 [membership@laffey.org](mailto:membership@laffey.org) to be **added to the USPS mail list** if you would like.

**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](http://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.....

**Memorial Donations:**  
In Memory of Ralph R. Doll BMCM  
Frank Doll (son) ----- \$100.00  
In Memory of Jake Matthews  
Florence Hoffman ----- \$ 50.00  
Arlene, Paul & Dana Schule ----- \$ 50.00  
Deborah Dautrich (daughter) ----- \$200.00  
Theodore Benson ----- \$ 50.00  
Tom & Nancy Patik ----- \$200.00  
In Memory of Jake & Ronald Matthews  
Maureen Ciaglo ----- \$ 75.00

**General Donations:**  
Dan Isaacs ----- \$125.00

**USS Laffey Website [www.laffey.org](http://www.laffey.org)** Send inputs to Richard Felsing [webmaster@laffey.org](mailto:webmaster@laffey.org) 843-367-2208.

**Laffey News** Send inputs or comments to Pam Baryliski Newsletter Editor [newsletter@laffey.org](mailto:newsletter@laffey.org)

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**USS Laffey April Work Party**