

USS Laffey Association President's Messages



USS Laffey Association President Mike Honsinger

President's Message November 2024

In January we will have our Winter Workparty from 17-25 Jan. If you want to arrive on Thursday the 16th of Jan, you can probably stay aboard that night also, but please be sure to ask me about that when you confirm your participation via email.

We now have the ability for women to stay aboard the USS Yorktown aircraft carrier, a 5 minute walk from our Laffey Chiefs Quarters. Having women stay on the Yorktown will require some specific planning and commitment- call me if you think you might be interested.

We have a specific list of projects that we will be working on in January, which are primarily in the aft fire room: cleaning, painting, light metal work (grinding filing), and welding/fabricating (John, Harry & Ernie will be there). We are continuing to work towards getting the aft fire room open to the public in the foreseeable future. We are getting close! As always, we also have less vigorous work for those who would like to contribute in these ways: meal prep/cleanup, supply-run errands and administrative paperwork. So, regardless of your skill set or strength, we do have many meaningful ways for everyone to contribute. Males over 18 may stay on board the Laffey. Meals for all workers are paid for by the Association. Call or email Mike (President@Laffey.org) with any questions or suggestions that you have.

When you email me (President@Laffey.org) to confirm that you plan to join us in January, I will add you to the "Frequent Worker" email distribution list. If you plan to attend in the future and would like to be added to the "Frequent Worker" email distribution list now (you will receive multiple emails during the weeks leading up to a Workparty, rather than just a single email), please let me know. The "Frequent Workers" emails will include our current attendance count for the upcoming Workparty, indicating your ability to attend. This attendance count is very helpful for meal and bunk space planning as it lists what dates you will be onboard to work and shows whether you will be staying on the Laffey, the Yorktown, in a RV at Patriots Point, or in a hotel.

Folks... the future of our Association and our work contributions to the Laffey are in your hands! We really need for each of you to take an active role in recruiting new workparty participants. We are down to a pretty small and finite group of our original crewmembers that are still able to attend workparties. If every member of our Association could recruit just one son, daughter, or grandchild of a crewmember to come join us, we could continue our work into the future. If relatives are not available, think about Veterans you know or patriotic friends who would like to give back and ask them to contact me via phone or email.

Please send these links to friends:

<https://www.volunteermatch.org/search/opp3843713.jsp>

<https://laffey.org/wordpress/index.php/work-party/>

Our Spring Workparty will run Tues, 8 April through Monday, 14 April. Our reunion will run Monday, 14 April - Thursday, 17 April. More details to follow.

Regards,

Mike Honsinger

President, USS Laffey Association

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President's Message Spring 2023

Before you begin to read this newsletter, please grab a cup of Joe or your favorite adult beverage because we have a lot to tell you about what has been going on with our ship! I would like to begin with a number of news items, then I will tell you about our recent work party accomplishments.

I want each of you to know that your Association Officers are working together diligently towards the common goal of keeping our Association, and our ship, going for many years into the future. Our VP, Jim, is a workhorse at our work parties and is doing an outstanding job keeping corrosion at bay, with the help of former VP, Mike. Corrosion, and specifically keeping water out of the interior of the Laffey, is our highest priority mission. George keeps tight books as our Treasurer- you can feel confident that our money is being carefully watched. Recently joining our team, as our new secretary, is Jill Vorgity, who has been a tremendous help to me with administrative and logistical issues, as well as supplementing the website team. Jill Vorgity's assistance to us leaves our former Secretary, and current Reunion Coordinator, Jill Michel, to concentrate on the many aspects of putting together our reunions, with which she does a wonderful job. Joyce, as our new Membership Chairperson, has been a big help to me by expanding and improving our membership database. Richard, along with help from Jeff and Jill, puts in a tremendous number of hours to build and maintain our website. Unfortunately, Richard needs to reduce his pace, so we have been trying to recruit, to no avail, a new webmaster. If we have missed any potential replacement webmasters, please do let Richard or me know. In the absence of a volunteer, we will hire a webmaster and already have a couple of potential excellent candidates. As you can see, Pam does a great job keeping us all connected via our newsletter. Speaking of our newsletter, I want to let you know that we have decided to reduce the number of annual newsletters to only two, rather than quarterly as we have been doing. Since much of our news stems from our work parties, we will publish one newsletter just after our Fall work party, then a second one just after the Winter and Spring work parties. In recent years our annual cost to publish and mail hard copy newsletters has cost us about the same (\$1,000 +/-) as it does to feed an entire work party. Because your officers feel that our money is better spent on work parties, beginning in 2024, we will only mail hardcopy newsletters to former Laffey crewmembers. All other members of the Association will only receive newsletters via email or our website. Please keep your email address current by sending your info to membership@laffey.org, or call or text Joyce Hanau, Membership Chairperson, at 347-439-2452.

Let's talk about money. This January I visited Tin Can Sailors DesRon 3 (TinCanSailorsOfGooseCreek.org) for their monthly meeting in Goose Creek, just outside of Charleston. I spent 10 minutes speaking to the group about our efforts on the Laffey. When I finished, a DesRon 3 member stood up and proposed that they write us a check for \$1,000. It went to a vote and passed unanimously! Next, with the assistance of Jeff Jacobs, during the Spring work party, I met President Phyllis Sheffer, of the Patriots Point Foundation (PatriotsPointFoundation.org), which is one of two foundations that specifically fund programs at Patriots Point. Phyllis then spent several hours aboard the Laffey to see what we have accomplished and listened to a 1-hour briefing in the CPO Lounge by the new Patriots Point Director of Collections and Curatorial Affairs, describing her vision for the direction of the Laffey over the next few years. Phyllis took her Laffey experience, along with my written request for funding support, to a Foundation meeting a couple of weeks ago. Afterwards, she was very pleased to let me know that their Board of Directors has approved a \$5,000 donation to our Association, which they will present to us at our Fall work party.

Patriots Point has a group of about 130 volunteers who serve as guides. This group recently asked, and we agreed, to sell them our "USS Laffey DD724" banners that we have historically hung on the gangway during work parties. The banners will now hang year-round and will be maintained by the local volunteers. Dave Bossard has previously negotiated substantial discounts for our gatherings with the Comfort Suites right down the road from Patriots Point. Recently the Comfort Inn agreed to provide these same deeply discounted rates to our members year-round. Details are posted to our website [FreeStuff](https://www.laffey.org/HomePage/LaffeyAssociationDiscounts-FreeStuff.pdf) (see <https://www.laffey.org/HomePage/LaffeyAssociationDiscounts-FreeStuff.pdf>). For those who serve at our work parties, you may not have realized that having your Patriots Point security badge not only allows you free access to Patriots Point year-round, but also gives you free access to nearly 50 tourist activities in the greater Charleston area. The "Reciprocity List" showing these 50 places will also soon be posted to our website, along with information on how all Laffey Association members can obtain free admission to Patriots Point, which we

provided in our last newsletter. Dave and Mary Bossard recently shut down their shop that used to provide our work party T shirts, but Dave has helped us transition to a new provider with similar excellent quality products. Secretary Jill set us up with a new vendor and handled our first order, which turned out perfect. The new shirts, and sweatshirts (good for Winter work parties) are fluorescent green. They will be given and sold to work party crewmembers in accordance with this policy: If you do not have four serviceable work party T shirts, we will issue you one free at each work party, until you do have four serviceable T-shirts. During any work party you may purchase unlimited additional T-shirts for \$10 each, or sweatshirts for \$20 each.

Over the last year two specific areas were refurbished with joint efforts from a Patriots Point volunteer and Laffey work party crewmembers: The Signal Bridge and the Wardroom Pantry. John Hudak has recently completed ten years of constructing walkways, stairs and handrails in the Aft Boiler Room. Just after the Spring Work party, John and I joined several key Patriots Point folks for a 3- hour evaluation and planning meeting in the Aft Boiler Room. We have now mapped out a written plan to move forward towards opening that area to the public, possibly within a year or so. I am currently working on a written plan to refurbish the Gun Director, located just forward of the Signal Bridge. I have three local volunteers committed to helping us with this, two of whom were radar operators in the gun director, on other destroyers. I am also working on a written plan to refurbish, and open to the public, the aft crew head (for viewing purposes only). This is a project that we have already begun some electrical and plumbing work on, during the last three work parties. We could really use some new members at our work parties to help with these three big projects, along with chipping away at the long list of miscellaneous ongoing repairs that we have, so please email me if you would like to join us.

Both our Winter and our Spring Work parties did accomplish mountains of work. In both cases, we had several folks arrive Friday night, then begin work early Saturday morning, so we had seven good workdays with cooperative weather 98% of the time. The Winter Work party was seven men strong, then we topped out with twenty men and women in the Spring. Since the specifics are too numerous

to list here, I will just hit the highlights. Please take a look at our website to see the many work party pictures posted there.

Winter Work party:

We cut, transported, welded, then installed a stainless-steel galley sink and counter, salvaged from the Yorktown, into the Laffey Wardroom Pantry. We cut out the upper metal panel on the Wardroom Pantry door, then replaced it with Plexiglass. This heavy lift work supported ongoing efforts by PP volunteer Bill Casassa to fully restore the Wardroom Pantry. We provided logistical support and supplies for PP volunteer Frank Shorter to scrape, then paint passageway walls by the radio and radar rooms, torpedo deck level, port side. We intend to continue to build partnerships like these with local Charleston residents who already volunteer at Patriots Point as guides, but who also have a desire to put some sweat equity into the Laffey. During heavy rains, we marked water leak pathways into the interior of the Laffey as a first step towards future repairs to stop leaks. We installed PVC drainpipes & repaired scuppers on upper exterior decks and repaired (cut, ground, welded plates, painted) holes in the lower few inches of the superstructure, just above the outer main deck. We repaired (sheet metal, caulk & paint) the Signal Bridge port door to stop significant rainwater from entering the Signal Bridge, then installed a canvas bunk in the Signal Bridge to reflect the proper historical configuration of that room. We installed a non-functional urinal and repaired several light fixtures in the aft crew head, main deck, which is a room that we intend to open to the public in the coming year. Our crew swept and vacuumed a number of passageways and rooms throughout the tourist access areas and made extensive repairs to a bulkhead hatch door. The following improvements were made to our Chiefs Quarters, where our work party crewmembers live: Repaired/ modified A/C duct work, vents and filters. Installed a urinal (salvaged from the Yorktown) in our berthing space. Installed several combo-lock key storage boxes and began efforts to mark all locks and keys in concert with PP's lock/key system. All Laffey keys will now be stored on board the Laffey.

Spring Work party:

We prepped, then painted a large portion of the main deck, all three gun mounts, their barrels and hardware, as well as the deck under gun mount 52. This was a huge undertaking! We painted red all firehose racks on the exterior deck, then added canvas firehoses and secured them into place. We painted blue all freshwater deck hardware. Efforts to repair holes in the lower few inches of superstructure, just above the outer main deck, were continued. That involved grinding away rusty steel to find good metal, then welding on a steel patch, then priming and painting the area. We built a replacement step on the port bridge wing, further addressed the leaking port door on the Signal Bridge and repaired a Bridge doorknob. We repaired a number of light fixtures throughout the ship, particularly in the crew's mess. We welded two plates on the Gun Mount 52 deck that were leaking down to the main deck, refurbished hardware on several deck hatches, and repaired scuppers & drains on upper exterior decks. We made the following improvements to the Chiefs Quarters: Our CPO lounge bench seating and the Captain's chair on the Bridge were upholstered by volunteers Vanessa & Bill Umbel, kin to John Hudak, who drove up from Florida (see pictures later in the newsletter). Although the Captain's chair had been reupholstered only two years ago, unfortunately, tourist traffic had already damaged it. A very unique lock was created to allow one-way access to the crew's mess from the CPO Quarters via the Plexiglass door. The functionality of A/C ducts and vents in our aft berthing space was improved. All bunks, individual storage lockers, community storage lockers, and loose personal gear were inventoried and labeled. Owners are being contacted to determine their intentions to return to future work parties. The new urinal in our aft berthing space was made fully functional. The week before the work party began, I escorted a contractor to repair our washing machine. The concrete floor and ceiling insulation were repaired in our forward head. A fan was installed in the exhaust vent duct to better evacuate air from our galley.

Mike Honsinger

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Presidents Message 12 January 2023

Our Fall Workparty was very productive and we had a pretty good turnout. The workparty actually spanned 10 days during which we had between 7 and 20 workers in place each day. The specifics are too numerous to list here, so I will just hit the highlights. Our fabricators/welders built walkways and stairways in the After Fire Room. The ship's arch welder (a particularly valuable and useful model) was moved from the maindeck passageway down to a shop for repair. It will be a huge help once John Hudak gets her repaired. The Damage Control electrical junction box was removed from midships in order to reconfigure the stairway leading to After Fire Room. A number of lightbulbs were replaced throughout the ship and some fixtures were transitioned to LED bulbs. Both these tasks are much more manpower intensive than they sound since cabling is brittle and light fixtures have corrosion and age issues to be dealt with. The Laffey has many holes (large enough to put your hand through) where the base of the bulkhead meets the main deck. Several of these holes were patched, which involves grinding away rusty steel to find good metal, then welding on a steel patch, then priming and painting the area. On much of the 51 and 53 gun mounts our crews removed rust, prepped, primed, then painted the "roofs" (keep in mind that your former Air Force President is still learning proper Navy terms), sides, barrels and even the "724" numbers. The Aft

Berthing Compartment was cleaned up and we have begun the task of turning this area into a clean, well organized storage area for metal stock, hoses, wood, chain, etc. We completed the task of turning the room next to the Boiler Technician ("BT") Shop into a well lit, clean, organized storage area for cords, lights, ladders and other bulky tools that had Ken's tool room filled to the brim. Now Ken has a little elbow room to repair and issue tools. A couple of our guys installed a historic BT shop sign that lists the names of crewmembers assigned to the BT shop many moons ago. Many of the drains on the exterior decks, used only to clear rainwater today, have seen a lot of deterioration over the years when they also cleared seawater. Many of these drains have been repaired, expanded, and improved during recent workparties so that they dump water entirely overboard, keeping that water from finding its way into the ship. We braced deck grating on the bridge so that it no longer makes a loud clang as people walk across it. We will continue this effort throughout the ship on other walkways. Not to be discouraged by a couple of rainy days, we thoroughly cleaned, repaired and improved many of the exhibit rooms, including the Ship Store, Post Office, Laundry, Fire Control, Electronics Technician, both Captain's Cabins, Chart Room, Radio Room, CIC, Bridge, and the Wardroom. We did a major cleanup and provided power to the Auxiliary Radio Room (starboard side, midship, main deck level) to be used as a welding and fitting shop. The Chiefs Quarters (where our workparty crews live, eat and sleep) were cleaned top to bottom. The lounge/dining area of the Chiefs Quarters got a thorough facelift-rearranging storage, equipment and wall memorabilia.

Upcoming Association Events

2023 Winter Mini Work Party: Sat-Sat, 28 Jan - 4 Feb

2023 Spring Work Party: Sat-Sat, April 1-8

2023 Reunion in Atlantic City, NJ: Sun, Sept 10

(Arrival reception) – Wed, Sept 13 (Final Dinner)

2023 Fall Work Party: Sat-Sat, Oct 21-28

New Membership Cards

Our new Membership Chairperson, Joyce Hanau, is busy preparing new membership cards for those with annual memberships. You should see them soon in your mailbox.

Update Your Contact Information

We would like to begin adding cell phone numbers to our membership database, particularly if you will be attending any of our workparties. Since we only publish an abbreviated copy of our database on our website, phone numbers cannot be viewed there.

(<https://www.laffey.org/LaffeyAssoc/LaffeyAssocMembersWeb.pdf>) In late January we be emailing all members a PDF copy of our complete membership database. The email will provide instructions about specific items that we would like you to verify and update. This PDF will also serve as a directory for each member. To provide corrections at any time, please contact Joyce Hanau at membership@laffey.org or 347-439-2452.

Access to Locked Chiefs Quarters

The combination to the hidden lockbox has been changed so that we can do a reset on the number of folks with access to the Chiefs Quarters outside of workparty timeframes. If you require access to the Chiefs Quarters, please call President Mike (281-923-4969) or VP Jim (484-824-1117) for access to the lockbox.

Eliminating Snail Mail Improves the Laffey!

In our mission to maintain the physical and historical legacy of the Laffey, we strive to utilize all donations to their maximum. We all know prices are going up and that includes our newsletter expenses. In recent years it has been costing us more to mail paper newsletters than it costs to feed a 30 man work party for a week! For those who pay for an annual membership, one third of your fee is spent on your newsletter if you choose to receive a hardcopy. So, we are asking members to provide their

email address, so we may keep you up to date about Laffey news at no cost to the Association. A recent postcard campaign resulted in many folks switching to email- Thank You to those who did. Please keep your email address current by sending your info to membership@laffey.org, or call or text Joyce Hanau, Membership Chairperson, at 347-439-2452.

Join us at a workparty!

If you have an interest in helping us out during the upcoming 28 Jan - 4 Feb November workparty, please email Mike as soon as possible at President@Laffey.org . Please help VP Jim Bossard and me to maximize our productivity during work parties. As cook, I can tell you first-hand that it is very helpful to have an accurate count of mouths to feed at each meal. Jim and I are collecting and documenting the extensive list of projects that we would all like to see addressed in the coming years. For each project it is my goal to do our best to anticipate the manpower, tools, supplies, permits and financing required so that when our work crews show up, we can put everyone to work and keep you busy while you give of your time, energy, and finances to join us. Whether you are able to serve at work parties or not, please email me with your thoughts on how the Laffey can best be preserved, repaired, expanded or have her experience with the public improved. If you can attend a work party, please do your best to commit to specific dates when you will be aboard to eat, sleep and work. Please try to email those commitments to me at least a week prior to the work party. Thank you for all the work so many of you have put in over the years to preserve the USS Laffey for America's citizens.

Patriots Point policy on Laffey Association Free Admission Exception

Footnote: Laffey workparty members who possess a Patriots Point security badge have the ability to escort others aboard the Laffey by simply entering via the security gate, but, we ask that, to the extent that

is convenient, please do comply with the following procedures when bringing guests aboard.

Free admission is granted to the following individuals for Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum, per a standing Patriots Point policy letter: 1. USS Laffey Association members and former USS Laffey Crewmembers and their "Immediate Family", which are defined as a person's parents, siblings, spouse, child by blood, adoption or marriage, grandparents and grandchildren.

2. Those with a Historic Naval Ship Association or Tin Can Sailors Association membership are entitled to one free admission ticket.

Ideally, those listed above would present their membership card, however, this policy is guided by the honor system, so if you have forgotten your card, simply explain your eligibility and ask for the free admission. If you are a former USS Laffey crewmember, please contact the Patriots Point Director of Visitor Services, Gina Zahran, at gina.zahran@patriotspoint.org or 843-971-5044 so that she can provide a special welcome, to include some photos and a short filmed interview.

Upon arrival at Patriots Point, please park in the largest parking lot where all the tourists park, which means you will have to pay a small fee to park your car. No free parking is provided in this lot. If the purpose of your trip is to attend a Laffey workparty, you may continue to park in the employees/bus parking lot as you have in the past. This parking lot can be extremely full, particularly during the current major construction that is going on at Patriots Point so we need to limit our use of it to just during workparties. Also, the employees/bus parking lot will be changing location and configuration during the ongoing Patriots Points construction.

After parking, proceed to the covered pavilion on the river side of the gift shop. Under the pavilion there is a ticket window on the exterior wall of the gift shop. At that window, present your membership card

and ask for the appropriate number of tickets. You will receive tickets that say "complimentary", rather than showing a ticket price. As you approach the pier, there is a turnstile adjacent to the "Photogenics" photo booth. At the turnstile, a "Photogenics" rep will take your ticket. Complying with this procedure allows Patriots Point to gain an accurate head count on the number of daily attendees, which is a good thing for all of us. If you choose to have a photo taken by the Photogenics rep after they take your ticket, you will be pleased to know that part of your photo fee goes back to the museum. Keep your ticket with you for the entire day- with it you can leave Patriots Point and return the same day, using the same ticket again. If you have any hiccups in the process, feel free to call Gina Zahran at 843-971-5044 for assistance.

If you have Veterans in your party, that do not fall within the above policy, they can receive a Veterans discounted ticket.

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President's Message 14 October 2022

I would like to thank Chris Kirhagis and Mike Pereira for their leadership over the last six years. They have handed off a strong organization to Jim Bossard and me.

Last week, at the reunion, I was elected as your new President. I have served as a cook for three work parties since I joined the Laffey Association as a life member two years ago. I was also a guest aboard

the Laffey when I was just a tiny guy. My father was assigned to the Laffey from August of 1956 through May of 1959. I was born in November of 1959. You do the math.

Having ridden aboard the USS Hunley (AS-31) for a week in 1974, at age 14, from Pearl Harbor to Bremerton Naval Shipyard, and having grown up in Navy shipyards much of my life, I do have some sense of life aboard a Navy ship. Those experiences led me to believe that a life in the military was not for me. So, I joined the Air Force instead. After 33 years flying helicopters and airplanes for the Air Force, then the US Customs Service, I retired 12 years ago. For the last 12 years I have been guiding snowmobile adventure vacations in Maine each winter. I am active in four other volunteer organizations and currently serve as the President of my property owners association, a group of 400 homes near Houston, Texas.

Our new Laffey Association Vice President, Jim Bossard, whose father, Dave, served aboard the Laffey from 1962 – 1964, also offers a lifetime of experience to our leadership team. Jim is a Critical Care Registered Nurse living near Birmingham, Alabama. He has been an unpaid professional fireman and an Advanced Emergency Medical Technician for 26 years. He has been serving as the Deputy Chief of his fire district for over two years now. Jim has given a lot of his time to many Laffey work parties over the last couple of decades. He brings to the table a deeper understanding of the ship and her needs than I currently have, and, as such, will serve as our work party daily foreman. My goal is to provide him with all the logistical, financial, and manpower support that his teams need from Patriots Point and other sources. I will do my best to have those resources at his disposal before the first day of each work party.

I am sure there are some salty Laffey sailors wondering if two guys that never served on the Laffey, or on any other Navy ship, are up to the task of keeping the Laffey afloat for many more years. Let me assure you that Jim and I and many other descendants and friends of Laffey crewmembers are committed to preserving what you men have worked so very hard to create, maintain, repair and expand over the last few

decades. It is incredible to me to see what the Laffey Association has created for our citizens to enjoy. Last week I had several lengthy conversations with the top leadership of Patriots Point and was assured repeatedly that the USS Laffey will be open to the public for many decades into the future. Those promises were backed up with reassuring financial numbers and logistical specifics. I feel very comfortable saying that my great grandchildren will have the opportunity to attend Laffey work parties.

Towards that end, I hope that each member of the Laffey Association will help us to reach our goals. What can you do to help? Good question. We are sitting pretty well financially at the moment, thanks to the generosity of many of you and our friends over the years. That said, Patriots Point has a pretty tight budget. Their leadership is very thankful for the time and finances we have contributed, but they, and we, see some substantial projects coming up over the next few years. So, please do encourage our expanded Laffey family to keep the financial momentum going. Manpower is a second area that you can help us with. Since our former crewmembers are not getting any younger, we have to find ways to recruit from the next two generations. If you have children or grandchildren (age 18+, please) that have a strong back and willing hands, please ask them to contact me about attending a work party. I have already recruited several friends, that have no connection whatsoever to the USS Laffey, to attend work parties, so those kind of folks are out there. Please talk it up and help us to recruit workers.

Finally, I would like to ask our volunteer work force to help Jim and me to maximize our productivity during work parties. As cook, I can tell you first-hand that it is very helpful to have an accurate count of mouths to feed at each meal. Jim and I are collecting and documenting the extensive list of projects that we would all like to see addressed in the coming years. For each project it is my goal to do our best to anticipate the manpower, tools, supplies, permits and financing required so that when our work crews show up, we can put everyone to work and keep you busy while you give of your time, energy, and finances to join us.

Whether you are able to serve at work parties or not, please email me with your thoughts on how the Laffey can best be preserved, repaired, expanded or have her experience with the public improved.

If you can attend a work party, please do your best to commit to specific dates when you will be aboard to eat, sleep and work. Please email or call those commitments to me at least a week prior to the work party.

Again, thank you for all the work so many of you have put in over the years to preserve the USS Laffey for America's citizens.

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