

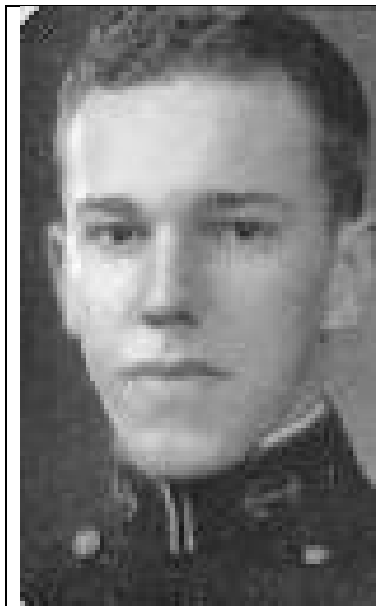
# Admiral Frederick Julian Becton

## WWII Commanding Officer, USS Laffey

May 15, 1908 – December 25, 1995

Rear Admiral Frederick Julian Becton was a decorated United States Navy officer. He is probably best remembered for commanding the destroyer USS Laffey (DD-724) in World War II during an intense Japanese kamikaze attack.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick\\_J.\\_Becton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_J._Becton)



**Midshipman Becton**



**Commander Becton WWII  
2<sup>nd</sup> from Left**



**Commander Becton WWII**



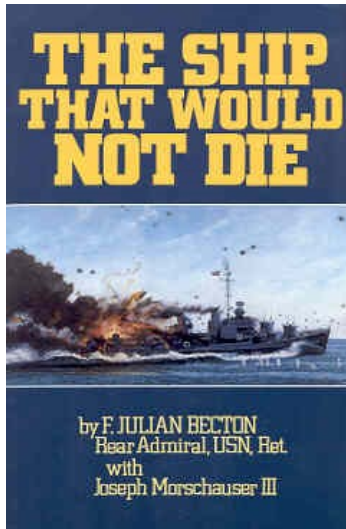
**Wife Elizabeth Reuss Becton**



**Rear Admiral Becton**



**April 16, 1945 WWII Battle of Okinawa**



**Admiral Becton Biography and Decorations:**

<https://www.laffey.org/FJ%20Becton/Page1/fjbecton.htm> , **Book**

<https://www.laffey.org/F.%20Julian%20Bectons%20Book.htm> , **Silver Star Award**

<https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/20208>

## Silver Star Award for Heroism Battle of Okinawa 16 April 1945

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the NAVY CROSS to

COMMANDER FREDERICK JULIAN BECTON, UNITED STATES NAVY

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. LAFFEY in action against enemy Japanese forces off Okinawa, on April 16, 1945. With his ship under savage attack by thirty hostile planes, Commander Becton skillfully countered the fanatical enemy tactics, employing every conceivable maneuver and directing all his guns in an intense and unrelenting barrage of fire to protect his ship against the terrific onslaught. Crashed by six of the overwhelming aerial force which penetrated the deadly anti-aircraft defense, the U.S.S. LAFFEY, under his valiant command fought fiercely for over two hours against the attackers, blasting eight of the enemy out of the sky. Although explosions of the suicide planes and two additional bombs caused severe structural damage, loss of armament and heavy personnel casualties, Commander Becton retained complete control of his ship, coolly directing emergency repairs in the midst of furious combat, and emerged at the close of the action with his gallant warship afloat and still an effective fighting unit. His unremitting tenacity of purpose, courageous leadership and heroic devotion to duty under fire were inspiring to those who served with him and enhanced the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For the President,

JAMES FORRESTAL

Secretary of the Navy

## Silver Star Award for Meritorious Performance Battle of Okinawa 25 June 1944

In the name of the President of the United States, it gives me great pleasure to award this Silver Star Medal to:

Commander,  
Frederick J. Becton,  
United States Navy

CITATION

"For meritorious performance of duty as Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. LAFFEY during the amphibious assault on Normandy, France in June 1944 and the bombardment of enemy defenses at Cherbourg, France, June 25, 1944.

Commander Becton maneuvered his ship through heavily mined waters and under heavy and accurately controlled gunfire from enemy shore batteries, protecting vessels in the Western Task Force Area from enemy surface forces and submarines. During the bombardment of Cherbourg, though the USS LAFFEY suffered light damage from superior enemy gunfire and was subjected to further heavy and accurate fire, Commander Becton courageously maintained a continuous fire on the superior batteries to cover the retirement of the minesweepers and battleships, and by daring and effective handling of his ship interposed himself between the shore batteries and the other units of the bombardment group to divert the fire of the shore batteries from those units. Later in the action when again subjected to heavy enemy fire that straddled the U.S.S. LAFFEY, Commander Becton skillfully maneuvered his ship to evade the fire and placed his ship in a position to cover with gunfire or smoke the battleships then retiring out of range of the enemy batteries.

His courage and determination to fulfill his protective mission despite ever present danger and regardless of cost was an inspiration to his entire command, and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States naval service."

HAROLD R. STARK,  
Admiral, U.S. Navy,  
Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe.

Certified to be a true copy.

*F. J. Becton*  
F. J. BECTON, Comdr., USN.

Enclosure (B)

## Profile

# Battle-Tried Skipper

THE USS Laffey, a destroyer commanded by Frederick Julian Becton, won her place in the proudest annals of the Navy in a historic stand against an attack by 22 Japanese Kamikaze planes off Okinawa in April, 1945.

The action was the high point of the fighting career of Capt. Becton and earned him a Navy Cross and his ship a Presidential Unit Citation. The 2200-ton Laffey suffered five direct hits but shot nine of the suicide planes out of the sky and steamed proudly into Seattle harbor a month later.

Her skipper had commanded the same vessel at the Normandy invasion in June of 1944. He had also commanded the destroyer Aaron Ward in the Solomon Islands campaign, in which he also served aboard the destroyer Nicholas—another ship that earned a Presidential Unit Citation.

Capt. Becton's personal decorations, in addition to the Navy Cross, include a Silver Star with three additional gold stars in lieu of second, third and fourth awards, and a Commendation Medal with a star in lieu of a second award.

His most recent sea command, before assuming his present post in Washington, was as commander of the USS Glynn, an attack transport.

The USS Iowa, of which Capt. Becton will assume command about mid-December, was launched in 1942, the first of a new class of super-battleships that were hailed as the greatest sea-going fighting machines ever built.

The 45,000-ton dreadnought was sent into bat-



CAPT. BECTON

tle against the Japanese, bombarding Kwajalein and Eniwetok in the Marshalls prior to invasions early in 1944. She pursued Japanese ships fleeing a February attack on Truk.

In July, 1945, the Iowa moved close inshore at Hokkaido to wipe out the great Nippon steel works and Wanishi iron mills with a barrage of more than 800 shells.

After earning the title, "Scourge of the Pacific" in the Second World War, the Iowa was assigned to the moth-ball fleet in 1948. Three years later, she was reactivated and played a vital role in maintaining around - the - clock bombardments of strategic targets in North Korea.

## Becton to Take Bridge of Iowa In December

Capt. Frederick Julian Becton, USN, of 212 Cherry lane, Wynnewood, has been ordered to assume command of the USS Iowa, one of the mightiest battleships in the world, it was announced yesterday.

Capt. Becton, who is now serving in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington, is the husband of the former Elizabeth Hilary Reuss, of Wynnewood. They now temporarily reside at 1103 Beverly dr., Alexandria, Va.

### DISTINGUISHED RECORD

Mrs. Becton is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward H. Reuss, Jr., of "Pen-y-Bryn," Wynnewood. Mr. Reuss is a mechanical engineer.

Born in Des Arc, Arkansas, in 1908, Capt. Becton is the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. John E. Becton. He was educated in Hot Springs and was graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy in 1931. He made a distinguished record in the Second World War, serving in the European and Pacific theaters.

### MARRIED IN 1949

Mrs. Becton was graduated from the Agnes Irwin School and made her debut in 1938. She and Capt. Becton, then a commander, were married March 12, 1949, in the chapel of the Philadelphia Naval Base. At that time Cmdr. Becton was serving as executive officer of the cruiser Manchester.

They have two daughters, Hilary, 6, and Julie, 10 months old.

Since Nov. 6, 1954, Capt. Becton has served as head of the planning and general surface requirements branch of the Surface Type Warfare Division.

He is expected to assume command of the Iowa at the Norfolk Naval Base about the middle of December.



Elizabeth and Admiral Becton in front of USS Iowa DD-61. Captain Becton was the Commanding Officer USS Iowa December 1956 – February 24, 1958.





First Reunion aboard USS Laffey 1966 Naval Base Norfolk VAI





1981 Laffey Association Reunion Admiral Becton 1<sup>st</sup> Row Middle.



**Admiral Becton at 1985 USS Laffey Reunion.** Left Side: Betty Phoutrides, Adm Becton, Frank Hoag, Bob Dockery. Right Side: Cy Simonis, Ari Phoutrides, Charlotte Simonis, Gloria Hoag, Jean Dockery, Bill Kelly

## **Admiral Becton and Family Support for USS Laffey Association**

Admiral Becton, his wife Elizabeth (<https://www.laffey.org/inmemoriameb.htm>), and daughters Hilary and Julie have been significant supporters of USS Laffey crew members and the USS Laffey Association. After he left the ship, Admiral Becton assisted crew members whenever he could. He assisted them getting US Navy and Veterans Administration benefits. He communicated with them to collect their stories of WWII. At USS Laffey Association events, he supported and praised them recalling their service on the ship. Admiral Becton was instrumental in saving the USS Laffey to become a museum ship. He was instrumental in

organizing the USS Laffey Association. Admiral Becton and his family were frequent attendees at USS Laffey Association Reunions in Norfolk, VA, Charleston, SC, and other locations.

His daughters Hilary and Julie submitted many historic WWII photos and documents to the USS Laffey Association. They were the association secretaries for many, many years. The USS Laffey Association greatly appreciates Admiral Becton and his family support for the USS Laffey.



Hilary Becton Wagner aboard USS Laffey



Julie Becton and Admiral Becton



The Ship That Would Not Die T-shirt



Elizabeth and Julian Becton



Elizabeth and Julian Becton - 1993



## Frederick Julian Becton (1908 – 1995) In Memoriam

**New York Times Obituary** Adm. F. Julian Becton, who was at the center of a dramatic two hours of naval history when his destroyer survived a swarm of Japanese kamikaze planes off Okinawa in 1945, died on Monday at his home in Wynnewood, Pa. He was 87.

The 2,200-ton U.S.S. Laffey, guns blazing, battled an onslaught by 22 suicide planes, 6 of which struck the ship. Two bombs also hit the ship; one jammed the rudder of the Laffey, whose deck was a mass of flame.

The Laffey's crew shot down eight or nine of the planes, but it paid a high price: 31 crewmen were killed or unaccounted for, and 60 were wounded. Admiral Becton, then a commander, escaped injury. His deft maneuvering and the skill of his engineers were credited with bringing the Laffey, riddled like a sieve above the waterline, back to Seattle for repairs. He received the Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism. It was not his first close call. He was in command of the destroyer Aaron Ward when she was part of an Allied convoy that was attacked off Guadalcanal in April 1943. The Aaron Ward and two other vessels were sunk, but the enemy lost 39 planes. Admiral Becton was also decorated for the Laffey's support role in the invasion of Normandy and other wartime action. He received four Silver Stars, two commendation ribbons, two Presidential Unit Citations and the Croix de Guerre.

Frederick Julian Becton was born in Des Arc, Ark., and graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1931. He served on battleships and destroyers, rising to the post of executive officer before being put in command of the Aaron Ward. He retired in 1966 and told the story of the Laffey and her crew in a book, "The Ship That Would Not Die" (Prentice-Hall, 1980).

Admiral Becton is survived by his wife of 46 years, Elizabeth Reuss Becton; two daughters, Julie B. Becton of Wynnewood and Hilary B. Wagner of Warrington, Pa.; a brother, John, of Hot Springs, Ark., and two grandsons.

## **Elizabeth Reuss Becton (1920 – 2001) In Memoriam**

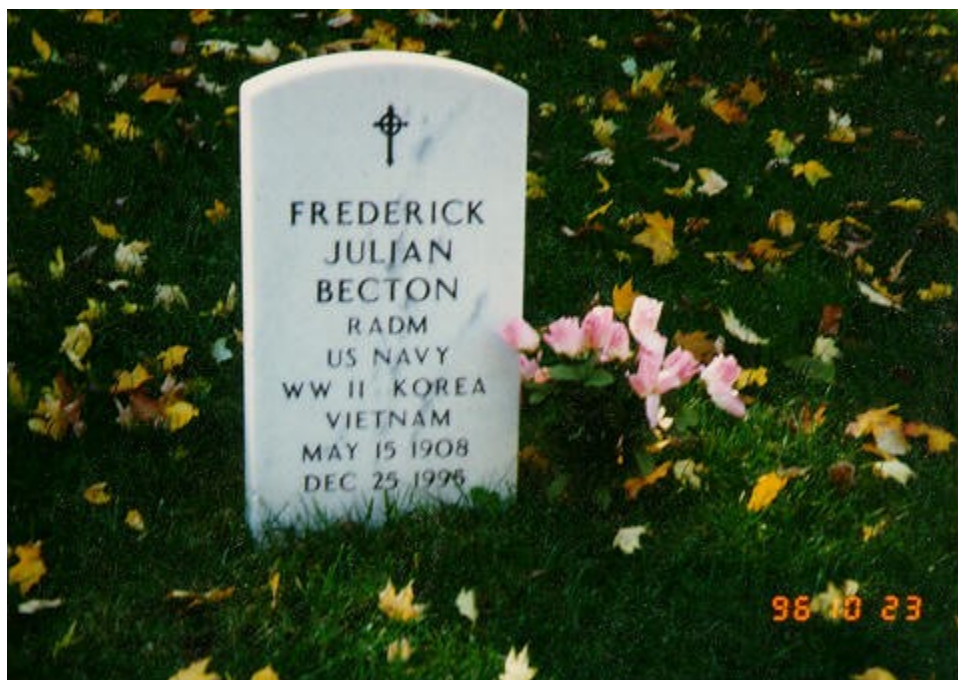
<https://www.laffey.org/inmemoriameb.htm> and  
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/60757444/elizabeth-hilary-becton>

## **Burial Place of Admiral Becton**

Arlington National Cemetery

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/49120311/frederick-julian-becton>





For corrections or updates, contact President, USS Laffey Association  
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