

Fireman 1st Class Paul Butler Johnson



Fireman 1st Class Paul Butler Johnson. He died in the USS Laffey kamikaze attack on April 16, 1945. He is interred in Burlington, New Jersey.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/102649223/paul-butler-johnson> (Beverly National Cemetery)



Paul served as a Fireman First Class, U.S.S. Laffey (DD-724), U.S. Navy during World War II.

He resided in Burlington County, New Jersey prior to the war.

Paul reported for duty on the Laffey on May 7, 1944.

The Laffey on April 16-17, 1945, while assigned to radar picket station 1 about 30 miles north of Okinawa, was successful in repulsing an air attack which downed 13 enemy aircraft.

During this attack, however, the Laffey was badly damaged by four bombs, six kamikaze crashes, and strafing fire that killed 32 and wounded 71. And still the "U.S.S. Laffey" survived the attack!

Paul was one of those "Killed In Action" in this attack during the war.

He was awarded a "Bronze Star" and the Purple Heart.



Service # 8128264

He was originally interred in the 6th Marine Division Cemetery in Okinawa and was later repatriated here on May 11, 1950.

(Bio by: Russ Pickett)

Family Tree

<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/GMWN-9F7>

Historical Notes from Russ Pickett at :

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56112119/john-albert-johnson>

The Laffey earned the nickname: " The Ship That Would Not Die " !

The Laffey, after the April 16th attack, was then taken under tow and anchored off Okinawa on 17 April 1945 and eventually, with some repairs, arrived at Tacoma, Washington on May 24th where it was fully repaired and returned to service on September 9, 1945.

The Laffey went on to participated in Operation Crossroads, the atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll, took part in the blockade of Wonsan in Korea during the Korean War, and participated in what was known as the Cold War and finally decommissioned on March 9, 1975. She was the last of the Sumner class destroyers to be decommissioned.

The Laffey received the " Presidential Unit Citation " and " 5 battle stars " for World War II service, the Korean " Presidential Unit Citation " and " 2 battle stars " for Korean War service, the " Meritorious Unit Commendation " during the Cold War, and the Battle " E " during all three conflicts.

The U.S.S. Laffey (DD-724) was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1986, at which time she was recognized as the only remaining US-owned Sumner-class destroyer, and for her spirited survival of the kamikaze attack in April, 1945. She is now a museum ship at Patriots Point in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, alongside two other US National Historic Landmarks: the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Yorktown and submarine U.S.S. Clamagore.

Also Note: In 2007, the attack on Laffey was recreated using computer graphics for the History Channel series Dogfights. The episode first aired on July 13, 2007.

In May 2018, it was officially announced that Mel Gibson would direct a major feature film about the attack on Laffey titled Destroyer.

Send comments/corrections to president@laffey.org and
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