



69th Edition



October 2015

The Rolling Stone

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The Rolling Stone is a Triennial publication of the USS Whetstone LSD-27 Association, INC. The Association is a non profit, historical and educational organization dedicated to promoting fraternal, civic, patriotic and historical memories of those who served aboard.



USS LAFFEY (DD-724)

an Allen M. Sumner-Class Destroyer
Launched: November 21, 1943
Length: 377' Area: 43,560 ft.
Decommissioned: June 30, 1947
Recommissioned: January 26, 1951
Stricken on March 9, 1975

Currently a museum ship at Patriots Point in Charleston, South Carolina

Kamikaze Assault

Commander Frederick Julian Becton, captain of the destroyer USS *LAFFEY* (DD 724), took the radio message his communications officer handed him on April 12, 1945, but the concerned look on the young officer's face made Becton suspect that it was not good news. *Laffey*, had been screening the heavy fleet units that were bombarding Okinawa in close support of the ground forces ashore. The message told Commander Becton to detach his ship from the screening force and proceed at once to the huge naval anchorage at Kerama Retto, where he was to go alongside the destroyer *Cassin Young* and take aboard her fighter-director team. That could mean only one thing: *Laffey* had drawn duty on the radar picket line, the most dangerous, deadly and unwanted assignment in the Okinawa campaign as far as Navy personnel were concerned. Shortly after dawn on April 13, Becton brought his ship into the crowded harbor at Kerama Retto. Many of the ships anchored there had been battered by kamikazes while on radar picket duty. Although *Laffey's* crew had encountered suicide bombers at Leyte, Mindoro, Luzon and Iwo Jima, they had never before seen so many damaged ships in one place. The crewmen began to imagine what might happen to them when they went out to their assigned picket station. Morale was low, and it only got worse when they received news that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died the day before. As soon as *Laffey* tied up alongside *Cassin Young*, the fighter-director team of two officers and three enlisted men reported aboard, carrying with them special electronic gear. 300 rounds of 5-inch ammunition were also loaded aboard so that *Laffey* would sail with full magazines of all calibers. As *Laffey* prepared to depart, the skipper of *Cassin Young* offered some advice to Becton: "Keep moving and keep shooting. Steam as fast as you can and shoot as fast as you can." A gun captain from the destroyer *Purdy*, which was anchored nearby, also offered his thoughts about picket duty. The *Purdy* had been struck by a kamikaze on April 12, killing 13 and wounding 270. He told *Laffey* crewmen: "You guys have a fighting chance, but they'll keep on coming till they get you. You'll knock a lot of them down, and you'll think you're doing fine. But in the end there'll be this one bastard with your name on his ticket." After all the horrific stories the crew had heard while in the anchorage, they were almost relieved when *Laffey* steamed north toward her assigned area, radar picket station No. 1. *Laffey*, accompanied by LCS 51 (landing craft, support) and LCS 116, arrived on station 51 miles north of Point Bolo on south-central Okinawa, which was used as a reference point in aligning the 16 picket sectors. *Laffey* relieved the destroyer-minelayer J. William Ditter (DM 31), whose skipper informed Becton by radio that during his time on station no kamikazes had entered the area, nor had any been detected by radar. Becton hoped his ship would be as lucky, but at the same time he felt he should speak to his crew about the battle that was bound to come. He pressed the microphone button, and throughout the ship boomed the familiar words, "This is the captain speaking." Becton warned his crew not to expect the same kind of luck Ditter had had. He told them that he expected to see plenty of Japanese, but that he had confidence in the crew's ability. They had tangled with the enemy before and won. They were now going to make the Japanese wish they

(Continued on page 4)

Deceased Shipmates



TAPS
the sun,
From the
lakes,
the hills
From the
sky
All is well,

The names below are received from family and confirmed. Please advise if you know of anyone that may have passed that we need to add to our database of deceased shipmates

Note: Due to the length of our deceased shipmate list, we are no longer printing the complete list in the newsletter. If you would like a complete list, please contact Kay Goble at mariongoble@comcast.net or (239) 768-1449.

We have been notified of the passing of the following shipmates since the June 2015 newsletter was published:

- BM 1951-54 Floyd Pennal
- SN 1950-54 Clinton R. Smith
- MM3 1965-68 John Scharnhorst

Floyd Pennal, Jr. (BM 1951-54)

Floyd Pennal Jr. of Woodstown, NJ passed away on Sunday June 21, 2015 at the age of 83. He was the son of Woodstown's first chief of police, Floyd Nelson Pennal and Jessie Green Pennal, and was predeceased by his sisters, Doris Fithian and Francis Kite. Floyd was born and raised in Woodstown, graduating from Woodstown High School in 1949. After graduation, he co-owned and operated a pool room on Main Street in Woodstown until 1950. He then enlisted in the United States Navy, where he served stone during the Korean War. After discharge in 1954, he met while working as a later a claims adjuster at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. He then worked for 37 years as a linesman and er. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Jane (Langley), whom in 1960 he met while working in the Woodbury office of NJ Bell where she was also employed. Floyd was a loving father to his three children, SaRae, Charlene, and Floyd, and also leaves behind his son-in-law Curt Catalano and daughter-in-law Angelica Pennal, along with 10 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Floyd was an avid golfer and bowler with his wife Jane, and he also enjoyed camping, skiing, traveling, and spending time with his family. Military graveside services will be held June 27, 215 at the Salem County Veterans Cemetery.



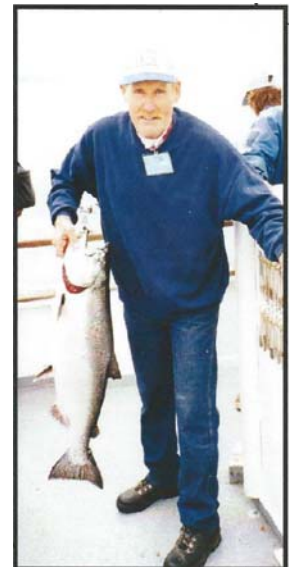
Picture (L to R) Charles Pierce, Floyd Pennal, Joe Kirby and Marion Goble at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

CLINTON R. SMITH (SN 1950-54)

Born: February 15, 1931 --- Died: January 31, 2015



We received the obituary for Clinton R. Smith from his wife, Ethel, who we met at the Astoria, Oregon reunion. Clinton and Ethel brought their children and grandchildren and we were honored to acknowledge their grandson who had recently enlisted in the service. We are sharing a few of the pictures of Clinton's obituary. Following is a portion of his obituary from his Celebration of Life in Park, Idaho. Clinton was born at his family home in Leland, Idaho and grew up there attending the Leland school through the 8th grade. Then continued onto high school in Kendrick, Idaho where he played football and participated in track. After graduating in 1949, he went to work at Potlatch Forests until enlisting in the Navy in December 1950. In October 1954, he was honorably discharged and returned to Lewiston to resume his work at the Lewiston Mill. It was 1955 when he rekindled a friendship with Jerry Smith, which led to him meeting Ethel Smith. Clinton and Ethel were married 6/10/1956. They have two daughters, Kathryn (Kay) and Leah, and made their home in Lewiston until moving to their farm in Park, Idaho where they lived for 42 years. Clinton is survived by a brother and wife, grandchildren, Nathan and Nicholas Stout, Zachary, Kyle and Courtney Johnson., son-in-laws, nieces, nephews and cousins. Military honors were held at the Park Cemetery in Park, Idaho on June 6, 2015.



May the wind be forever
at your back
And the fish always find
your hook
Rest in Peace Clinton



The Chaplain's Corner

I write this article just after September 11th when our nation paid respect and prayers for those families who lost loved ones in the tragic events of that day.

I just recently discovered that Israel has a memorial for the 9/11 events. It is called The 9/11 Living Memorial Plaza. It was completed in 2009 for 2 million dollars and it sits on 5 acres of hillside, 20 miles from the center of Jerusalem. The memorial is a 30 foot, bronze American flag that forms the shape of a flame to commemorate the flames of the Twin Towers. The base of the monument is made of melted steel from the wreckage of the World Trade Center. It includes engraving in Hebrew and English. Surrounding the monument are plaques with the names of the victims of 9/11. It is the only memorial outside the United States that includes the names of all who perished in the terrorist attacks, including 5 Israeli citizens. The site solemnly overlooks Jerusalem's largest cemetery, HarHaMenuchot. The monument is often used for memorial and commemoration services. This is a powerful memorial from a powerful ally. I would suggest you google it and see this beautiful tribute to the United States of America.

The weather is cooler and football season is here again. Our Cornhuskers are struggling under our new coach and so many injuries. We are hoping to get healed up and back in the winning column again.

Blessings to all.

Chaplain Marv Watson (RM-3 59-63)



Greetings from Your President



Well, let's start this letter on a happy note. "Will the crew members who are sickened and tired of all the lies, finger pointing and mudslinging that is going on from the very same people (Congress, Senate, Presidential Candidates) who want to run this country, please raise your hand!" Come on, Klebacher, get that hand up. I just don't know what to do with that boy.

The Donald is telling the truth as to what has to be done to get us back on good footing. All the other candidates have developed lockjaw and are jumping in foxholes. They know that John Q Public wants answers to what he is asking, but our current career politicians are incapable of giving a truthful answer. Unfortunately, everything that comes out of their mouths is a lie and even sadder, they believe their own lies. In the following months, we will see some pretty fancy tap dancing, and I'm already tired of watching the recital. The above is solely my opinion and not meant to offend any crew member. I just can't help to say what I think, as you know. So let's switch gears and get to the important stuff.

I am hoping all the shipmates are enjoying a beautiful summer. I, myself, couldn't be better, sitting on the deck, reading, and watching planes heading into Logan Airport. You just wonder, "How the heck do they stay up there?"

Kay and Marion inform me that things are going along smoothly in planning the reunion. By having an event planner like we did in Branson, it takes a lot of pressure off Kay and Marion. But don't get me wrong, they still put in a tremendous amount of time, planning and energy. And when we say thank you to them for all their hard work, it comes from the bottom of our hearts.

God Bless and Support our Troops

Bill Coakley
USN 1958-1962

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A Veteran is someone who, at one point in his or her life, wrote a blank check made payable to "The United States of America" with no restrictions. Thank you to all that have and are serving.

Voluntary Dues

Again, we **thank you** to all for your contributions (i.e., dues, donations and purchasing ship store items). Your support helps publish "The Rolling Stone," maintains the Website and assists with reunion events. Dues are \$25.00 a year, are tax deductible, and are **voluntary**. All dues are applied for one year (using date of check as beginning point (i.e., 01/01/15 check applies until 01/01/16). Dues received to date for 2015 are listed below. An asterisk designates additional year(s) paid. If anyone has paid and your name is not listed, please accept our apology and contact Kay Goble at 6200 Emerald Pines Cir, Ft. Myers, FL 33966, 239.768.1449 or e-mail (mariongoble@comcast.net). Please make checks payable to: **USS Whetstone Association**.

Please use this list as your receipt.

Alsleben, Keith L.	Berry, Dewey*
Anderson, Robert*	Bisping, Neil A.
Arata, Sil*	Blenkhorn, Charles W.
Barnes, Andrew	Bommer, David R.
Bell, Charles*	Bradow, Russell*

Brameyer, George A.	Holleman, Jimmy	Remington, Richard
Brown, Beryle*	Jones, Dale	Richey, Albert D.
Bryan, Otto "Coy"	Junco, Hector*	Richter, Herbert
Buchanan, Kenneth*	Keen, Charles*	Sandwich, Larry*
Carrell, Zane*	Kirby, Joe*	Savala, Manuel
Carson, W. Grant	Klebacher, Gene*	Savoie, Donald
Cickavage, Joseph J.*	Kreashko, Frederick	Seaton, Walter*
Coakley, Bill*	Kuchynka, Ed	Sharkey, Robert L.
Coatsworth, Robert J.	Lee, Romaine	Shimmell, Thomas*
Conover, Jan*	Leopold, Vince	Shrader, Daniel
Cox, Millard	Lister, Jerry L.	Skelley Jr., Daniel
Croxtton, Mike	Maness, Jack	Smith, Donald
Dewalt, Gary B.	McClellan, G. A.	Smith, Harry J.
Doerr, Gary T.	McCray, David	Stanford, Roy*
Dougherty, David.	McDowell, Allen*	Stergeos, Jim
Dunn, Jim	McGrew, Joseph R.	Stevens, William
Durnil, Allen L.	McNitt, Russell*	Stief, Bernard D.*
Edwards, Homer	Meisner, J. C.	Ward, Everett*
Fayard, Gary L.	Michels, James E.	Watson, Marvin*
Frans, Jack	Milton, Douglas*	Weight, Earl*
Fraser, Douglas*	Mitchell, Burley*	Widrig, Lewis
Fry, Stephen	Moree, John	Winslow, Leonard*
Goble, Marion*	Mueller, James W.	Wood, Gerald W.
Gordon, Eddie*	Myers, Warren*	Zordich, John
Gross, Richard	Nichelson, Joe*	
Grubb, Jack*	Nichols, Wylie D.	
Hager, Robert*	Pearson, Ray	
Hall, Charles	Pierce, Charles*	
Halvorson, Gunnard*	Piersee, Charles	
Hammons, Willis	Pilgreen, Vince	
Harrison, Burlin C.	Raymie, Jerry D.	
Haynes, Earl R.	Reid, James P.	
Hickie, John H.		

(Continued from page 1)

had never heard of USS Laffey. In conclusion, Becton said: "We're going to outmaneuver and outshoot them. They are going to go down, but we aren't." A short while later three bogeys appeared on the radar scope, but Laffey had no Combat Air Patrol (CAP) planes with her. Fifty miles to the east, however, there was a group of CAP planes with the destroyer Bryant (DD 665) on picket station No. 3. Becton requested their assistance, and the fighter-director team sent them toward the Japanese. All enemy planes were shot down. Not long after that, the radar operator reported eight more enemy aircraft approaching, and again Becton requested Bryant's CAP planes. The fighter-director team vectored them in, and they destroyed all the aircraft. By the end of Laffey's first day on picket duty, 11 planes had been shot down, but Laffey's gunners had not yet fired a shot. No enemy action occurred the next day, Sunday, April 15. The crew's routine was broken only when Laffey was ordered to steam a few miles east to investigate a patrol plane's report that a downed Japanese aircraft was in the water. The plane was found with its dead pilot still strapped in the cockpit. Monday morning began quietly on radar picket station No. 1. The whole crew was able to eat breakfast without any interruptions from the enemy. Then, at 8:25 a.m., the radar operator reported a solid cluster of pips too numerous to count approaching at 17,000 yards. It was a group of 165 kamikazes and 150 other enemy aircraft coming in fast from the north. The fighter-director team's two officers requested more help from CAP. They were informed that fighters would be sent to intercept the huge onrushing formation, but it would take time for the CAP planes to arrive in the area. Meanwhile, Laffey and her two support craft would have to deal with the enemy on their own.

At 8:30, four Aichi D3A 'Val' dive bombers broke off from the oncoming group and headed for Laffey, which was steaming along at flank speed. Two came in from the bow and two from the stern in a coordinated attack. Becton ordered hard left rudder, bringing the destroyer broadside to the planes, and the two forward 5-inch guns downed two of the Vals at about 3,000 yards. The stern 5-inch gun shot down the third kamikaze, and the 20mm and 40mm mounts downed the fourth with an assist from the gunners on LCS 51. There was no time to rejoice over that success, however, because two more attackers, Yokosuka D4Y 'Judy' dive bombers, were coming in fast—one from the starboard beam and one from the port beam. When the Judy on the starboard side got within range of the 20mm and 40mm guns, it was torn apart by converging fire and crashed into the sea. The gunners' attention then shifted to port to assist with the second Judy, as it came in bobbing and weaving. The Japanese pilot strafed the ship, peppering the superstructure and wounding several men. The 20mm and 40mm guns finally downed the plane about 50 yards out, but just before hitting the water, the pilot released a bomb that sent shrapnel flying everywhere, wounding several more men and knocking others off their feet. The explosion also knocked out the SG radar, which was needed to detect low-flying aircraft. The next attacker, another Val, came streaking in on the port beam. All three 5-inch guns opened fire, and as the plane came closer, the 20mm and 40mm mounts joined in. It looked as if the pilot was aiming to slam into the aft 5-inch gun, but he came in just a bit high and only grazed the top of it before smashing into the sea off the starboard side, killing one man in the gun crew. The eighth attacker, a Judy, came skimming in low over the water on the starboard beam. The 20mm and 40mm guns were hitting the plane, and finally, after a hit in the gas tank, the Judy burst into a fireball and crashed into the sea. Laffey's crewmen

(Continued from page 4)

felt as if they had been battling the enemy for hours, but it was only 8:42, just 12 minutes since the attacks had started. There was a respite of about three minutes before the next attacker, another Val, came boring in off the port bow. The portside guns raked the plane, which shuddered and twisted but kept coming, even as gasoline poured from one wing tank. The pilot cleared the portside 20mm and 40mm mounts and crashed into the 20mm mounts amidships, killing three gunners before sliding into the sea. Flaming gasoline was everywhere, and black smoke engulfed the area. Two 40mm mounts were wrecked and out of operation, as were two 20mm mounts. The ammunition racks around the gun tubs were filled with clips of shells, which were in danger of exploding due to the heat. Damage-control crewmen began to heave the clips over the side of the ship. Some of them were so hot that the men had to protect their hands with rags. As some of the ammunition exploded and blew holes in the deck, flaming gasoline poured into a magazine below. Fortunately, the ammo was packed in metal cans that resisted the heat until a damage-control party arrived and hosed down the containers, thereby avoiding disaster. Communications were knocked out in the forward engine room, but that did not present a problem for the moment. The engineers decided to adjust the ship's speed according to the sound of the gunfire they heard. If it was loud and fast, they would increase the speed. A more immediate problem was the smoke and fumes being sucked into the engine rooms by the ventilators. Machinist's Mate John Michel, in the aft engine room, shut down the supply fans. The temperature soon reached 130 degrees and kept climbing as Michel worked his way through the dense smoke, located the controls for the exhaust fans and turned them on. The smoke began to clear and the temperature began to fall. Knowing that the smoke would undoubtedly attract more kamikazes, Becton reduced the ship's speed to avoid fanning the flames. Just as the crew was beginning to get the situation under control, two more kamikazes, both Vals, struck. One came in from astern low and fast, just a few feet above the water. The gunners of the three after 20mm mounts hit him with accurate fire, and parts of the plane broke off, but the pilot kept boring in. He plowed through the three mounts, killing the gun crews, and rammed into a 5-inch gun. The bomb he was carrying exploded, causing the plane to disintegrate and throwing gun captain Larry Delewski clear of danger. Fortunately, he was unhurt. Another man was blown overboard, but he was picked up by LCS 51, along with another crewman who had gone overboard earlier. Flaming gasoline covered Laffey's fantail and aft gun mount, sending more black smoke billowing into the air. The fires threatened a magazine below the mount, so firefighters flooded it, preventing an explosion that could have torn the ship apart. The situation was about to get worse, however, because the 11th kamikaze came crashing aboard at almost the same spot. That plane's bomb wiped out the mount's gun crew and wounded several others. The damage-control parties had no time to take a breather. About two minutes later, another Val came gliding in from astern, probably because the guns were out of commission there. The pilot dropped his bomb and sped away. The bomb detonated on the stern just above Laffey's propeller, severing the electrical cables and hydraulic lines that controlled the ship's rudder mechanism. The rudder jammed at 26 degrees left, and the ship began to steam in a circle, still able to maintain speed but without control. Although crewmen began to work on it at once, their efforts were fruitless. The rudder was jammed tight and could not be moved. The smoke and flames must have indicated to the attackers that Laffey was nearly done for, but they did not ease off. Two more planes came roaring in from the port quarter, and every gun that could be brought to bear on the attackers poured out a steady

stream of flak, but to no avail. The first plane slammed into the aft deckhouse, exploding in a ball of fire. Seconds later, the other plane crashed into the ship in almost the same spot. Gasoline from both planes produced roaring fires that covered the whole aft part of the ship. Machinist's Mates George Logan and Stephen Waite, who had been battling fires in the aft living spaces, became trapped when the escape hatches buckled. They went to the emergency diesel generator room and secured the watertight door behind them. There was no light or ventilation and no way out, but there was a telephone that still worked, and they got through to the aft engine room. John Michel went to work again, this time with some help from Machinist's Mate Buford Thompson. They chiseled a hole through the bulkhead and passed an air hose in to the trapped men. Meanwhile, Machinist's Mates Art Hogan and Elton Peeler used cutting torches to make a hole in the deck and then pulled Logan and Waite to safety. At the same time, a Nakajima Ki-43 'Oscar' was streaking in from the port bow with a CAP Vought F4U Corsair on its tail. The port side 20mm and 40mm mounts were sending up a steady barrage while trying not to hit the Corsair. This Japanese pilot did not drop down and ram the bridge but zoomed up and over it, shearing off the port yardarm on Laffey's mast, which came crashing down to the deck, taking the American flag with it. As the Corsair zoomed by, it hit the air-search radar antenna and knocked it to the deck below. After he cleared Laffey, the Japanese pilot lost altitude quickly and crashed into the sea, while the Corsair pilot managed to pull up and bail out before his plane hit the water farther away. Signalman Tom McCarthy saw Laffey's colors fall to the deck and wasted no time in remedying the situation. He grabbed a new flag from the flag locker, shinnied up the mast and attached the new colors with a piece of line. As he watched the Corsair chase the last attacker, Becton realized that his CAP planes, which had been spread thinly and even lured out of position at times, were now beginning to furnish some close support. That did not mean that Laffey was out of trouble, however. As if to prove the point, another Judy came in fast on the port beam, with a Corsair hot on its tail. The portside 20mm and 40mm mounts and the Corsair were hitting the Judy, which splashed into the water about 50 yards away from Laffey. Shrapnel from the Judy's bomb severed all communications to Laffey's two remaining 5-inch guns, as well as wounded the crews who were still working the hot 20mm and 40mm guns. Three gunner's mates were also wounded. Ensign Jim Townsley quickly jury-rigged a substitute system for communicating with the gun mounts. With a microphone strapped around his neck and plugged into the ship's loudspeaker system, he climbed atop the pilothouse, from where he could see the onrushing attackers, and directed the gunfire from there. The 17th attacker was eliminated as he bore in from the starboard side. The plane took a direct hit from a manually trained 5-inch gun, with an assist from the 20mm and 40mm mounts. Two more kamikazes, both Oscars, came streaking in, one from the starboard beam and one from the starboard bow. The attacker on the starboard beam was hit with a 5-inch round head-on in the propeller and engine and blew apart. Mount captain Warren Walker shouted: "We got the SOB! What a beautiful sight!" Meanwhile, another gun had the other attacker in its sights as the plane came diving in. Even though the electrical controls were out and the gun was being operated manually, it took only two rounds to finish off the attacker. As the plane exploded, the gun's trainer, Andy

(Continued from page 5)

Stash, yelled excitedly: "We got him! We got him! Did you see that bastard explode?" In the brief lull that followed, assistant communications officer Lieutenant Frank Manson arrived on the bridge to report to the skipper. When Mason finished talking, he hesitated a bit and then added: "Captain, we're in pretty bad shape aft. Do you think we'll have to abandon ship?" Becton quickly replied: "Hell no, Frank. We still have guns that can shoot. I'll never abandon ship as long as a gun will fire." Relieved, the lieutenant went back to his duties. The battle was not over yet. The 20th attacker, another Val, came gliding in from dead astern. Both the sun and the thick smoke helped to conceal the plane from the gunners. The pilot dropped his bomb, blasting an 8-by-10-foot hole in the already battered fantail. As he passed low over the length of the ship, he clipped off the starboard yardarm. He didn't get far; a Corsair seemed to come out of nowhere to shoot him down several hundred yards off the starboard bow. Shrapnel from the bomb hit the emergency sick bay that the ship's medical officer, Lieutenant Matt Darnell, had set up topside. Fragments severed the tips of two of the doctor's fingers. Bandaging the bloody stumps, he calmly asked the astonished pharmacist's mate who was assisting him, "Who's next?" The 21st attacker, another Val, strafed the ship as it came in off the starboard bow, aiming straight for the bridge. Seaman Feline Salcido, the bridge lookout, did not think that the captain saw the plane coming. He put his hand on the back of Becton's neck and shouted, "Down, captain, down!" As they both crouched low, a violent explosion rocked the bridge. The plane had dropped a bomb, killing one 20mm gun crew and wounding members of another nearby crew. That Val did not get away either; a Corsair pounced on him and finished him off. The last plane was a Judy, which strafed Laffey as it came in from the port side. Although the port 20mm and 40mm guns put out a steady stream of fire, the attacker kept getting closer. Just when it seemed that the gunners were goners, a Corsair came roaring in with all guns blazing and blew up the Judy in midair. By the end of the 22nd attack, the situation aboard Laffey was critical. The fires still raged, the stern was down due to flooded aft compartments, many guns no longer functioned and the rudder was still jammed at 26 degrees. Amid all the confusion and noise, Becton heard what sounded like many planes diving at once. Sonarman Charlie Bell, Becton's telephone talker, provided him with the encouraging news he so desperately needed. "Captain, look what's up there," he said, pointing skyward. The weary skipper looked up to see 24 CAP Marine Corsairs and Navy Grumman F6F Hellcats just arriving to lend a hand to the few planes already on station. The Japanese had had enough and were hightailing it out of the area with the CAP planes in hot pursuit. Laffey's crewmen could not contain their jubilation. Shouts of "Get the bastards! Rip 'em up! Nail 'em!" rose above the din of the receding battle. It was finally over, and the grim toll was staggering: 80 minutes of continuous air attack, 22 separate attacks, six kamikazes crashed into the ship and four bomb hits. But Laffey's gunners had shot down nine attackers. The ship's casualties totaled 32 dead and 71 wounded. Amazingly, eight guns were still able to fire. LCS 51 came alongside to help fight the fires, but the little vessel had also been hit and could only offer limited help. The destroyer-minesweeper Macomb took Laffey in tow and headed for the Kerama Retto anchorage little after noon. The tugs Pakana (ATF 108) and Tawakoni (ATF 114) were dispatched to bring in Laffey. Using pumps, they got the flooding under control aboard the badly damaged ship. The jammed rudder caused towing problems, but it was still possible to maintain a forward speed of 4 knots. The following morning, April 17, Laffey entered the harbor at Kerama Retto. Men gazed in amazement at the battered newcomer. It just did not seem possible that a ship could have taken

so much punishment and survived; one kamikaze hit was often enough to sink a ship. Laffey's escorts on radar picket station No. 1 had also suffered during the agonizing ordeal. LCS 51 had a 7-foot hole in her port side amidships, and three of her sailors had been wounded. LCS 116 had suffered topside damage, along with 17 dead and 12 wounded. Shortly after sunrise, when Laffey was safely at anchor, the crew went aboard the tug Tawakoni for breakfast, their first real meal in almost 24 hours. Later that morning, a chaplain came aboard to conduct services for those killed or missing in action. By April 22, six days after her ordeal on the picket line, Laffey had undergone enough repairs to depart for Saipan. At Saipan more repair work was performed, especially on the battered fantail. Laffey's next stop was Pearl Harbor, where the crew was warmly welcomed and entertained while the ship underwent further patching to ensure its safe passage back to the West Coast. On Friday, May 25, 1945, Laffey moored at Pier 48 in Seattle, Washington, 39 days after her fight for survival on radar picket station No. 1. Before additional repairs were begun, the battered ship was thrown open for viewing by the public. Some naval officials believed that defense workers had been easing off in their production efforts since V-E Day on May 8, and they had been searching for a way to remind everyone that the war was far from over. After seeing Laffey's condition, everyone got the message loud and clear.

For her outstanding performance on the picket line, Laffey was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. Eighteen members of her crew received Bronze Stars, six received Silver Stars, two received Navy Crosses and one received the Navy Commendation Medal.

**Memories from David Paulus
(MM3 1956-57)**

Thank you for sending the Rolling Stone. I enjoy reading it and keeping up with shipmates. I, unlike many, did not spend my whole active Navel career on the Stone, but the time I spent on the Stone was memorable, especially our Far East Cruise. We started out going to Hawaii to pick up a sea going tug which we dropped off at Midway. Then we headed for Manila. Our stay was short lived as we had to leave port ahead of a Typhoon and played sub for a couple of days on our way to Japan. We went to three ports: Kobe, Yahkuska and Sasebo. We didn't stay long in Sasebo as we were asked to leave by Military Police. It seems some of our crew got into too many disagreements with the Army stationed there. So we headed to Hong Kong and then back Yahkuska. Along the way we participated in a mock evasion of Iwo Jima. We then stopped at Okinawa before heading home. We also picked up a UDT (early Seals) Team and gave them a ride to Japan. The one thing that stood out on that trip was that I ran into a couple of high school buddy's, one in a bar..he was a Marine, and the other on a street corner..he was a Submariner. I was a 3rd class MM and I had the Port Evaporator before I transferred to the USS Chikaskia AO 54. We went around the world through the Panama Canal twice in the same direction (west to east). After that I went on board the USS Bushnell AS15 out of Key West. Prior to coming aboard the Stone, I was attached to Task Force 7.3 Atomic Test Group Operation Wigwam.

I'm sorry I took so long to write but I'm Master of our Masonic Lodge in Houghton Lake and I have been busy with the Lodge. A side note...I have a close friend up here in Houghton, Lake Michigan, who's name is Marion Goble (age 78 from Georgia).

Regards and Go Navy

LAUGHING LAMP

Devastating Effects of Cutting Down too Many Trees!

Look what happens when we cut down too many trees. See below what is happening as we continue to clear our forests! We must curtail our logging! This is getting serious!



LOST GIRLFRIEND

A soldier serving overseas far from home was annoyed and upset when his girl wrote to break off their engagement and ask for her photograph back. He went out and collected from his friends all the unwanted photographs of women that he could find, bundled them all together, and sent them back with a note saying, "I regret that I cannot remember which one you are."

NAVY/ARMY GAME

At the beginning of the Army-Navy football game, the coin toss is made. The Navy captain shouts, HEADS followed by the Army captain shouting LATRINES.

The following article was received from **Bob Hager (RD2 1951-1955)**. Bob's son gave him the link to his father-in-law, Lindsey Williams' website. Lindsey was a journalist and prior to his passing wrote about his experiences aboard the USS-McAnn DE-179 from its commissioning until the McAnn was sold to Brazil. Bob thought you might enjoy reading this article. Lindsey Williams' wife, Cona, lives in Punta Gorda, Florida and is a bit over 92. Bob thought you might enjoy reading about the USS McCann from Lindsey Williams' perspective in 2000.



USS

McCANN DE-179 SHAKEDOWN By Lindsey Williams

A few U.S. Navy "tin can" sailors gathered at Punta Gorda's Veterans Memorial Garden the other day to commemorate shipmates and a unique class of ships that helped win the World War II battle of North Atlantic. Having served briefly, and proudly, in the Destroyer Escort fleet, I attended the ceremony to share memories - convoys, German submarine encounters and shakedown cruise mishaps.

World War II began in 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. None of the allies were prepared. France surrendered. Russia and Britain retreated. The United States geared up for war production to aid the beleaguered nations. Most immediate need was protection of ships carrying munitions to Britain, an island country accessible only by sea. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt "loaned" it 50 overage destroyers to protect war shipping. He also began a crash program to build "escort destroyers."

This new type of fighting ship -- designated DE for Destroyer Escort - was smaller, thinner skinned, driven by slower diesel-electric engines and carried less top-side armament. Nevertheless, DEs were fitted with the latest anti-submarine equipment and could be produced in eleven months for one-third the cost of a regular destroyer. The ships varied slightly in dimensions but generally were 308 feet long, 36 feet wide and 12 feet in draught. Average complement was 15 general officers, 20 petty officers and 180 seamen. In all, 563 DEs were built. Seventy-eight were transferred to Britain. Three were

given to China, six to the Free French navy and 12 sold or leased to Brazil. The latter maintained a critical staging area at Recife for convoys to Dakar and the allied North Africa campaign. As new DEs were completed, crews for them were transferred from other duties, or from boot camps, to six weeks at the Norfolk Destroyer School to get acquainted with the specifics of a particular ship.

The USS McCann Commissioned and Set for Cruise

Thus, it was a green crew that took possession of the U.S.S. McCann DE-179 at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in October 1943. As a petty officer, yeoman first class, I was one of three assigned to prepare and safeguard the mountain of records necessary to a modern fighting ship. My battle station was the bridge. My duty was "captain's talker" to relay orders via an inter-com system to stations beyond the bridge. DE 179 was commissioned - "given life" by Navy custom - on Nov. 10, 1943. We immediately set to sea for a shakedown cruise.

Those of us who had never seen the ocean were astonished at the beautiful, dark blue color of the deep sea. We arrived at the Bermuda fleet maneuvers and firing range for battle practice. "Piece of cake," we told each other. Our drills were cut short to carry out our first assignment - escort a crippled Liberty Ship freighter to Norfolk. We came abreast of our charge by early evening in a gathering storm. By moonless midnight we were fighting for our lives in the worst North Atlantic storm of record. It was reported that 13 ships sank. We lost sight of the Liberty Ship and never learned its fate. Our conning bridge was open to the elements - a cost-saving arrangement but damned uncomfortable for sailors required to stand duty there. The bridge parapet was 65 feet above the water line, and we were taking waves into the bridge. Every Navy ship during fitting out is tested for its capsizing point measured by a plumb bob hanging over a protractor. The McAnn's capsize was 47 degrees. We exceeded capsize several times - once "losing feet" which is an eerie, floating feeling signaling roll over. We were saved by sliding down the back of the wave. In the midst of the storm fury, our entire electrical system was disabled - lights, intercom, radio, radar, SONAR, depth finder, gyro compass - everything. The only navigating aid available was our magnetic compass and hand-held sexton. At daylight, we determine by sexton that we were far south and east of our intended route. The captain ordered due west 270 degrees to find shore line. All hands maintained battle stations, four hours on, four hours off. As we proceed at half speed, the forward lookout reported,

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

"Object dead ahead." "Aye, aye," acknowledged the officer-of-the-deck as he turned his binoculars forward. For a half-hour we watched the object - a huge 40-foot sea-buoy - as we drew near. The helmsman became alarmed and kept asking for a repeat of the heading. Each time the answer was "Steady as she goes." As we were about to crash head on, the deck officer ducked behind the parapet, buried his head in his arms and cried, "Oh, my God!" At that moment, the captain came on the bridge, saw the problem and yelled, "Hard right!" I was only a half-syllable behind the captain in repeating the order, and the helmsman was only a half syllable behind me in obeying. The ship veered just enough to side-slip a direct crash. However, it took a glancing blow from the buoy which left a dent and long, red streak on our hull. The hapless officer - formerly a pay officer at a shore base -- said he had been afraid to change the captain's order for a 270-degree course. The captain chewed him out with a wide range of explicit language and confined him to his quarters. Next morning we ran into dense fog. The captain ordered idle speed, bells and a sharp lookout. Pretty soon the aft lookout reported our screws were "kicking mud." "All engines stop," the captain ordered. "Throw a lead line." There was barely a foot of water under the keel. While pondering the situation, we heard rhythmic, rowing noise. Out of the fog came a fisherman in a skiff, his back to us. "Ahoy," shouted our captain. The fisherman turned his head and did a double-take at seeing our huge vessel. "We are disabled. Which way to Norfolk?" After getting directions, the captain backed the McCann slowly into deeper water and waited for the fog to clear. With clear visibility, magnetic compass, and sexton our navigator set course for the Norfolk area to try and reconnect with the Liberty Ship. We sailed all day and well into the night. About 3 a.m., a lookout reported a lighthouse beam. The navigator was called to the bridge to match the beam pulse to chart descriptions. In the dark, and too far out to sea, we overshot Norfolk and reached Cape May, New Jersey. "To Hell with it," said the captain. "Let's go on to Brooklyn for repairs. The Chief Boatswain Mate set up a \$1 pool for the exact time our Union Jack at the bow passed under the leading edge of the Brooklyn Bridge. One of the cooks won \$154. We arrived at night and signaled by light flashes for a pilot. He took us to a T dock where we secured after four hectic days. The captain put on his dress-white uniform and disembarked to report to the yard's commanding officer. Distracted, and in the dark, our immaculate captain walked off a short leg of the dock. "Help, damn it!" he shouted. The gangway watch fished him out, speckled with green algae; but he didn't seem grateful.

The USS McCann's U-Boat Chase

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priority convoy of Marines and munitions on its way to the Pacific. North Atlantic DEs took the ships to the Panama Canal. South Pacific DEs on the other side escorted ships to their destinations. As we approached Palm Beach, Florida, all ships went to general quarters. The stretch of waterway beyond that, and past the Keys, was "U-Boat Alley." German submarines waited there - silent and motionless - to torpedo passing ships. Not far south of Miami, our SONAR operators detected a sub. We chased it while the convoy moved on. We made two runs over the target, bracketing it with depth charges by roller racks, side throwers and forward-throwing "hedgehogs." On the second run, the sub's engines fell silent. We stopped also. The convoy commander ordered us to hover for 24 hours to make sure the sub was not playing cat and mouse. As the convoy moved over the horizon - about 15 miles away - one of the rear echelon ships exploded in a tremendous fire ball. This indicated a munitions ship rather than troops. Nevertheless, the crew deaths must have been horrendous. Our quarry did not move in 24 hours so we scattered a few more depth charges for good measure and returned to Norfolk for further orders. We were credited with a "probable" kill. The McCann made two runs to Recife without incident then was sold to Brazil. Crew members were transferred to other ships. I was assigned to the frigate U.S.S. Eagle 27 at the Key West Submarine Base. We helped train SONAR operators by playing electronic hide-and-seek with Free French submarines. My sea duty was tame, but many DEs were in the thickest of fighting.



**USS WHETSTONE LSD-27 ASSOCIATION REUNION
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
September 7, 2016 -- September 11, 2016
Holiday Inn Opryland Airport
2200 Elm Pike, Nashville, Tennessee 37214**

The Holiday Inn Opryland Airport is in the process of renovating their hotel. and we can expect spacious up-to-date guest rooms for our reunion. The hotel is conveniently located in the Opryland/Airport area of Nashville and has 14 floors with approximately 385 guest rooms which include handicap accessible rooms. There are a number of amenities available for guests which include a relaxing 5-story atrium with an indoor fountain, along with wireless internet connection and a business center. There is a whirlpool, indoor pool and children's pool available, along with a sauna and fitness room. A full service restaurant with breakfast, lunch and dinner is available at Jackson's Veranda. The Ivories lounge features live entertainment nightly for your enjoyment. Complimentary parking and shuttle service to and from Nashville International Airport (2 miles from the hotel) is available. The shuttle runs every 20 minutes from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. A block of rooms (2 queen beds) at the affordable rate of **\$125.00** per night plus prevailing city and state taxes for single or double occupancy has been arranged. A deluxe breakfast is included in the room rate and the rate is available 3 days prior and 3 days after the reunion based on availability.

When you make reservations, call **866-871-1171** and use the name **U.S.S. Whetstone Reunion** so you receive the special rate. You may begin making reservations **November 1, 2015**. All individual guestroom reservations must be guaranteed. For guarantee of an individual reservation, the hotel will accept an advance deposit (by cash, certified check, cashier's check or money order) or acceptable credit card number with valid expiration date at time of reservation.

RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE BY AUGUST 7, 2016. ROOMS AFTER THAT DATE WILL BE PROVIDED ON A SPACE AVAILABLE BASIS AT PREVAILING RATES.

***MAKE PLANS NOW TO ATTEND THE
USS WHETSTONE REUNION IN
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE.
YOU ARE GUARANTEED A GREAT TIME!***

We are very excited about our reunion in Nashville, Tennessee. The city and area offer a variety of venues for you to enjoy.

We have contracted with Gatherings Plus for this reunion and based on our reunion in Branson, Missouri, we feel confident that Pam Brown will provide a great reunion for our group. The following page provides the registration form for you to complete and forward to Gatherings Plus. A reunion website is available (www.reunionpro.com) for you to click onto and view list of attendees. The registration sheets must be completed and mailed with a 50% deposit prior to July 7, 2016, with final payment due on August 15, 2016. We highly recommend renting a vehicle so you can take in events in the city that are not being provided by the Association.

Bill Coakley, President; Gene Klebacher, Vice

REUNION ITINERARY

Wednesday, September 7:

Hospitality Room Opens at 12:00 pm
Registration: 3:00 p.m.
Welcome Aboard Reception: 6:00 pm.

Thursday, September 8:

Hospitality Room Open 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.
Explore Music City Tour: 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
(Historic RCA Studio B Admission & Guided Tour
and Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum)

Friday, September 9:

Hospitality Room Open 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.
Dinner at Sante Fe Cattle Company: 5:30 p.m.
The Grand Ole Opry: 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 10:

Hospitality Room Open 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Memorial Service: 9:00 a.m.
Business Meeting and Women Meeting: 10:00 a.m.
Final Evening Banquet: 6:00 p.m.

All tours, meals and banquet are included in the \$275.00 fee per person. All fees are paid to Gatherings Plus as indicated on the following page. **DO NOT SEND ANYTHING TO KAY GOBLE** (although you may contact Kay with any questions at 239.768.1449 or sectreas@whetstone.us or mariongoble@comcast.net).

**USS WHETSTONE
Nashville Reunion
September 7-11, 2016**

NAME _____
GUEST/SPOUSE _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
TELEPHONE _____
EMAIL _____
Any physical disabilities? _____
Any dietary restrictions? _____

HOST HOTEL:: THE HOLIDAY INN OPRYLAND AIRPORT
Call 866-871-1171 for room reservations and mention you are with the USS WHETSTONE Reunion. The room rate is \$125.00 per room per night plus tax. A deluxe breakfast is included in room rate and rate is available 3 days prior and 3 days after the reunion based on availability. Rooms not reserved by AUGUST 7, 2016 will be dropped from the group block.

Reunion Activity Package: \$275.00 per person

_____ # of Attendees x \$275.00 per person = \$ _____

Banquet Meal Choice: ___ Chicken ___ Salmon ___ Sirloin

TOTAL DUE: \$ _____

A 50% deposit is requested by July 7 with final payment due August. No refunds can be given on activity package after August 15, 2016.

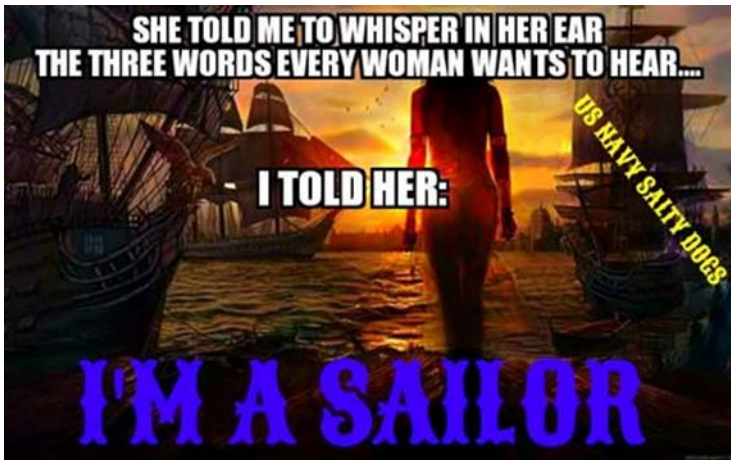
**MAIL REGISTRATION FORM AND CHECK PAYABLE TO;
GATHERINGS PLUS
P.O. BOX 1023, BRANSON WEST, MO 65737
417-338-4048...pam@gatheringsplus.com**

Reunion Website: www.ReunionPro.com, click on "reunions" link, type in USS Whetstone, enter, then click on your logo to get to the reunion website. You can order discounted tickets to additional shows and attractions as well as see a list of attendees!!!!



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SHIP'S STORE



To order any Ship's Store item please contact Marion Goble, 6200 Emerald Pines Circle, Ft. Myers, FL 33966, (239)768-1449 or e-mail mariongoble@comcast.net When submitting an order, please make checks payable to **USS Whetstone Association**. All jackets and golf shirts are navy blue with gold lettering. T-shirts are navy blue with gold lettering. Hats are navy blue with gold silhouette of ship, white with navy blue silhouette of ship or red with gold silhouette of ship .

Items for Sale:

Ball Caps (With Silhouette)	25.00
Cruise Books (57, 61,66,67/68 & 69)	20.00
DVD of Reunions	5.00
Golf Shirts (S,M,L,XL)	43.00
T-Shirts (S,M,L,XLG, XXL)	32.00
Jackets (S,M,LG,XLG)	57.00
Jackets (XXL & XXXL)	59.00
Yosemite Sam Patches	8.00
Zippo Knives w/Ship Silhouette	15.00
Zippo Lighters w/Ship Silhouette	15.00
Whetstone Picture on Canvas	25.00

Note: All Prices Include Shipping

Burglary in Florida

Sometimes things that really happen are funnier than stuff made up. When southern Florida resident Nathan Radlich's house was burglarized recently, thieves ignored his wide screen plasma TV, his VCR, and even left his Rolex watch. What they did take, however, was a white box filled with a grayish-white powder (that's the way the police report described it.)

A spokesman for the Fort Lauderdale police said that it looked similar to high-grade cocaine, and they'd probably thought they'd hit the big time. Later, Nathan stood in front of numerous TV cameras and pleaded with the burglars: "Please return the cremated remains of my sister Gertrude. She died three years ago."

The next morning, the bullet-riddled corpse of a local drug dealer known as Hoochie Pevens was found on Nathan's doorstep. The white box was there too; about half of Gertrude's ashes remained. Scotch taped to the box was this note which said, "Hoochie sold us the bogus blow, so we wasted Hoochie. Sorry we snorted your sister. No hard feelings. Have a nice day."

And you thought California was the land of fruits and nuts.