


The Compton at war

USS Compton Organization

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Letter From The President:

We just returned from a great navy city and a great navy reunion—124 Compton sailors and guests.

Charleston, SC is a wonderful town with a rich history and a strong connection to the sea.

Patriots Point is also the place to visit if you love our navy and its service during WWII. The Yorktown CV10 with its many battle stars and victories during the war made the Compton sailors very proud to be a part of the United States Navy

The only disappointment during this reunion was that our sister ship, the USS Laffey, DD724 was closed due to the deteriorating condition of its keel and hull structure—What the Japanese could not sink in WWII, the salt water is doing today.

Jack Heidecker

REUNION SYNOPSIS FROM JOE:

We just celebrated our 20th reunion in Charleston, SC. We had a large turnout, 124 people, and the largest reunion in years. In fact, so many people came a day early the hotel was nice enough to let us open the Hospitality Suite the night before the reunion started. (Due to contract limitations that is not always possible.)

We had a very large Hospitality Suite which our hospitality committee kept well stocked with snacks and refreshments. Our shipmates gathered in the

Memento from the first reunion—Charlie Jakob



Hospitality Suite to tell sea stories for the 20th year, I am sure the they will be just as interesting in the years to come, every once in a while you hear a new story. I don't think any other branch of the service has the bonding and closeness we old Navy men have.

This year we welcomed three shipmates that have never been to a reunion before, Martin DeGasperi, James Griffith and Andy Kelly.

A gift was given to each shipmate attending the reunion, a limited edition pewter model of the USS Compton. Shipmate Paul Woodbury had the models custom made for our special 20th reunion. Once again shipmates and guests were given souvenir "Button Type" nametags.

On the second day of the reunion shipmates and guests went on a motor coach tour of Historic Charleston, visited the museum Naval Ships at Patriots Point and even ate lunch off metal trays on the USS Yorktown. The weather for the tour, and our entire stay in Charleston, was fantastic.

On the last day of the reunion we held our General Meeting and Memorial service at the hotel, the Town & Country Inn, later that evening we had our farewell banquet. Shipmates enjoyed a nice meal, music, dancing and each other's company. (continued-page2)



There she is shipmates—in port!!!

Notice the gantry in the background- It looks like there is a much larger ship to the picture's starboard side-check the height of that gangway.

Does anyone recognize where the Compton is docked? Circa, 1951-1953

Picture was sent by, Bill Gardner in memory of his Dad, LtJg James K Gardner Jr who passed away on January 21, 2009

(synopsis)

Check in the reunion section, for Charleston pictures, future newsletters will also contain reunion pictures.

Next year we head to Warwick (Providence area) RI. Details will be posted shortly but mark your calendar; Friday April 30, Saturday May 1 and Sunday May 2, 2010.



Joe and Rose Napoli
There is no where to hide on this sub

At the **General Meeting**, Secretary Mike Taylor took the following Minutes:

1. 10:33 AM- President Jack Heidecker officially opens meeting.
2. Invocation given by Charlie Jakob.
3. Introduction of Association Officers by President Heidecker:
 - a. Vice-President: Bud Foley.
 - b. Treasurer: Joe Napoli.
 - c. Secretary: Mike Taylor.
 - d. Eastern Region Officer: Joe Bonaventura.
 - e. Northern Region Officer: Bob Ott.
 - f. Western Region Officer: Jim McKelva.
 - g. Southern Region Officer: Paul Woodbury.
4. Officers not present:
 - a. Editor of the Newsletter: Maurice Rickard.
 - b. Association Chaplain: Joe Farry.
5. Reading of the 2008 General Meeting Minutes in Branson, MO. by Mike Taylor.
6. Treasury Report by Joe Napoli: The Treasury is healthy. We try to keep a good working balance.
7. Newsletter report by Jack Heidecker. Jack said that we shall be trying some new things with the Newsletter.
8. Report on next year's reunion by Joe Napoli.
 - a. Will be in Warwick, RI.
 - b. To be held in the Crowne Plaza Hotel.
9. Friday, April 30 to May 2, 2010.
 - d. \$109.00 per night with three days before and after at the same rate.
 - e. Free breakfasts in the hospitality room.
 - f. Tour of Fall River (USS Kennedy) and Newport.
9. Special thanks to Paul Woodbury for choosing this year's site and for
(continued next page)



3 Amigos
Johnny Hulon, Lenny Bronk
And Larry Farnham
Boston's Revere Beach
May 21, 1959



First Timers—Jim and Sue Griffith
checking the map-can't be lost???



Chris Ott and Ann Foley at registration table



Bud Foley
 Our vice-president and early pioneer of the Compton association has decided to retire from "active duty". Here he is receiving a plaque from Jack Heidecker naming him a "Founding Captain Emeritus- USS Compton Association".

- (minutes continued)
- The arrangements for the pewter models of the USS Compton.
10. First time Reunion Attendees recognized:
 - a. Andy Kelly of Winston-Salem, NC.
 - b. Martin DeGasperi of New Baltimore, MI.
 - c. James Griffith of San Antonio, TX.
 11. Letter to the USS Compton Association read by President Jack Heidecker.

A letter was written to us by Mr. Sigward Pohl, a native of Germany. Sigward served a short time on the USS Compton during the Med cruise of 1962 as a German Midshipman.

He said that he has always had fond memories concerning his duty on the Compton and wished everyone well.
 12.
 - a. Special Election Bud Foley, due to health reasons, chose not to run for reelection as Vice-President.
 - b. Edward "Cappy" Capozziello was the only nominee. He was elected as the new Vice-President of the Association.
 - c. The rest of the officers were re-elected by acclamation.
 13. A special plaque was given to Bud Foley for his long service to the Compton Assn.
 14. A motion was made to send Sigward Pohl a pewter model of the Compton. It passed.
 15. Closing prayer by President Jack Heidecker.
 16. 11:05 am. Meeting adjourned.



Ralph and Gloria Breitenbach
 No matter where we have a reunion they have a house nearby



Bill and Betty Pierson
 Good friends of the Breitenbach's
 They live in North Carolina-the middle of most of our reunions

Compton hats are back in stock:
 USS Compton Association, PO Box 6621,
 Monroe Township NJ 08831-6621
\$15.00 delivered.

Reunion Attendees—Charleston SC

Len and Donna Ashline (SFP 3/C Nov.1959 to Sept.1963) of Valparaiso, IN.; **George and Eleanor Bailey** (SN Oct.1961 to Oct.1963) of Denver, PA.; **Steven and Edwina Bednarz** (FTSN Sept.1961 to Sept.1963) of San Rafael, CA.; **Earle and Brenda Bissonnette** (BT 2/C July 1957 to May 1961) of Carver, MA.; **Joe and Cathy Bonaventura** (GM 1/C Sept.1948 to June 1956) of Pennndel, PA.; **Ralph and Gloria Breitenbach** (FT 3/C Nov.1961 to Sept.1963) of Groton, CT; **Ed and Nancy Capozziello** (MM 3/C July 1961 to Aug.1964) of Franklin Square, NY.; **Luke and Louise Carlisle** (SK 2/C Nov.1961 to June 1964) with **Robert Carlisle and Geraldine Brock** of Wendell, NC.; **Hubert and Heide Cheek** (MM 3/C Dec. 1953 to May 1956) of Baltimore, MD.; **Michael and Virginia Close** (RM 3/C June 1957 to June 1959) of Chicago, IL; **Boyd and Eva Crannell** (SMSN June 1958 to June 1960) of Battle Creek, MI.; **John Cupp** (BT 3/C 1962 to 1966) of Kettering, OH.; **Martin and Sylvia DeGasperis** (RM 2/C May 1959 to Sept.1961) of New Baltimore, MI.; **Vince and Barbara DeGasperis** (MM 2/C Apr.1959 to Oct.1962) of Shelby Township, MI.; **Bob DiMonte** (EM 1/C July 1971 to Oct.1972) of Pensacola, FL.; **Emile and Marilyn Duchemin** (FN Sept.1964 to Oct.1966) of Sag Harbor, NY.; **Vernon and Susan Duke** (IC/FN Aug.1961 to Aug.1963) of Cleveland, MS.; **Charles and Mary Elliott** (RD 3/C Apr.1954 to Dec.1955) of Madison, WI.; **Ron and Evie Erwin** (MM 3/C Dec.1961 to Nov.1963) of Rochester, NY.; **Larry and Millie Farnham** (MM 3/C Sept.1958 to Feb.1961) of Brownfield, ME.; **Mike and Patricia Flannery** (BT 3/C Mar.1964 to July 1966) of Monroe, NY.; **Michael and Patricia Flynn** (FTSN June 1953 to Sept.1954) of Dedham, MA.; **Bud and Anne Foley** (TM 3/C Sept.1951 to Mar.1955) of Hamilton Square, NJ.; **Roy and Beverly Fuller** (SK 3/C Dec.1962 to Aug.1964) of Altus, OK.; **Richard Gentile** (SHSN July 1961 to Feb.1963) of Tampa, FL.; **Sam and Pauline Giordano** (GMSN Feb.1961 to Nov.1964) of Rochester, NY.; **James and Sue Griffith** (RMSN Sept.1958 to May 1960) of San Antonio, TX.; **Albert and Evelyn Haley** (SN June 1960 to Dec.1962) of Calabash, NC.; **Jack and Donna Heidecker** (IC 3/C Oct.1960 to Sept.1963) of Hazle Township, PA.; **Michael and Joyce Heider** (MM 3/C Sept.1963 to Nov.1965) of Chicago, IL.; **Charles Jakob** (FT 2/C Mar.1952 to Dec.1955) of Philadelphia, PA.; **Bill Judge** (SMSN Nov.1956 to Oct.1958) of Collinsville, IL.; **Andy Kelly** (LTJG Jan.1968 to July 1970) of Winston-Salem, NC.; **Duane Linden** (SO 2/C Feb.1952 to Oct.1954) with son **David Linden** of Orland Park, IL.; **John and Judy MacDougall** (FN Jan.1963 to Jan.1965) of Danbury, CT.; **Charles MacKay** (MM 3/C Oct. 1954 to Feb.1956) of Wappingers Falls, NY.; **Richard and Sara McFarland** (BT 2/C Sept.1961 to June 1964) of Ponte Vedra, FL.; **James and Carrol McKelva** (SFM 2/C 1959 to 1961) of Arlington, TX.; **Frank and Linda Milanese** (SN Nov.1957 to July 1961) of Marion, VA.; **Charley and Sue Minor** (BT 2/C Sept.1965 to Apr.1959) of West Palm Beach, FL.; **Ron and Rosa Moody** (SFP 3/C Dec.1961 to Jan.1963) of Church Road, VA.; **Joe and Rose Napoli** (RD 3/C Nov.1961 to Nov.1963) of Monroe Township, NJ.; **Joe Nowakowski** (SH 3/C May 1960 to Mar.1963) of Clackamas, OR.; **Bob and Clarissa Ott** (MM 2/C Nov.1951 to Oct.1954) of Blasdell, NY.; **Jack and Debra Overla** (GMG 3/C Feb.1961 to Mar.1963) of Inglis, FL.; **Bill and Betty Jo Pearson** (EM 2/C Jan.1962 to Oct.1964) of Raleigh, NC.; **John and Jeanette Phelps** (MM 2/C Aug.1961 to Aug.1964) of Largo, FL.; **Gerry and Eleanor Pierce** (SN 1/C Mar.1949 to June 1949) of Schenectady, NY.; **Richard and Vera Post** (MM 2/C May 1959 to Oct.1962) of Boyne City, MI.; **Phil and Eileen Prekel** (EM 2/C Dec.1968 to Dec.1971) of Wayne, NJ.; **Jerry Sample** (MM 2/C Oct.1961 to Sept.1963) of Hickory Creek, TX.; **Thurman Sanders** (GMG 3/C Apr.1960 to Sept.1963) with **Gloria Fisher** of Abilene, TX.; **Herb and Bertha Sellers** (EM 2/C Jan.1945 to Dec.1945) of Riverside, CA.; **Don and Phyllis Sheldon** (RD 2/C Feb.1962 to Feb.1965) of Ness City, KS.; **Bill and Sandy Strahl** (SK 2/C Jan.1961 to Nov.1964) of Winchester, KY.; **Byron Strayer** (MM 3/C Feb.1960 to Feb.1962) with son **Dan Strayer and Sandy Stilp** of Newport, PA.; **Fred and Kathy Summerville** (SN Oct.1962 to Mar.1964) of Butler, PA.; **Mike Taylor** (SN Oct.1961 to Feb.1963) of Elizabeth, WV.; **Willie Thompson** (MM 3/C Sept.1955 to June 1959) with **Harvie Green** of Kannapolis, NC.; **Wayne Thornburg** (QM 2/C Nov.1944 “Plank Owner” to Apr.1946) with son **Doug Thornburg** of Wichita, KS.; **Dan Turklay** (SM 3/C Apr.1956 to Aug.1960) with **Tammy Bland** of Moundsville, WV.; **Jack and Pamela Valentine** (DK 2/C Apr.1953 to June 1954) of Monroeville, PA. (Note: Unfortunately, Jack and Pam had to return home the second day of the reunion due to illness); **John Weingartner** (FP 1/C Aug.1952 to Apr.1956) of Orange, CA.; **Herman White** (SN Jan.1961 to Nov.1962) with **Linda Perry** of Louisville, KY.; **Paul and Judy Woodbury** (GMSN Aug. 1958 to July 1960) of Palm Beach Gardens, FL.; **Tony Zagame** (BMSN Sept.1958 to Feb.1961) with **Joan Hennigan** of Bellingham, MA.

“USS Laffey: Attacked Off Okinawa in World War II”. I am concluding this story that had been sent to me by President Jack Heidecker. This will be the last in the series of this story. The original article had been written by Dale P. Harper for the March 1998 issue of World War II magazine:

“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 deck-house, 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 K1-43 '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 port side 20mm and 40mm mounts and the Corsair were hitting the Judy, which splashed into the water about 50 yards away from the 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 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 Manson 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 Sallcido, 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 jammed at 26 degrees. Amid all the confusion and noise, Becton heard what sounded like many planes diving at once. Laffey could not absorb any more punishment. 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 shortly 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.

At 6:14 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, Wash. - 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."

Editor's Note: Commander F. Julian Becton, who was the skipper of the USS Laffey, wrote a book that was titled: "**The Ship That Would Not Die**". He was assisted in writing this book by Joseph Morschauser III. The book, in paperback edition, was published by Pictorial Histories Publishing Company of Missoula, Montana. It was copyrighted in 1980 and first published by Prentice-Hall in that year. A revised printing occurred in 1987 and a second printing in 1989. The book has numerous photographs that show the horrific damage that was suffered by this ship. I was quite surprised to read on page 1 of this book, his explanation of why a destroyer is referred to as a "can". He wrote this: "*The first Laffey was a destroyer, a DD in naval terminology, a can in naval slang. Some think the latter means tin can, because destroyers have no armor and very thin plates. Actually, to those who know the history of destroyers and value their accomplishments, the word is a compliment. It stands for 'Can do,' the traditional reply of a destroyer skipper to any and all requests or orders.*" Captain Becton retired as a Rear Admiral in 1966. During his World War II career, he received four Silver Stars, two commendation ribbons, two Presidential Unit Citations and the Croix de Guerre. He died at his home in Wynnewood, Pa. at the age of 87 on December 28, 1995.



Chuck and Mary Elliot on the Yorktown. Their son Captain Michael is now stationed on the west coast. Chuck mentioned that if Mike is fortunate to get a cruiser command, in the future, we possibly can finagle another ship visit!!!



Herb and Bertha Sellers
If you saw this couple on the dance floor during our banquet, without any rest, you had to figure he taught dancing to Arthur Murray.

Bits and Pieces from the Reunion:

- A. This year, we welcomed three shipmates who have never attended a reunion before: **Martin DeGasperis, James Griffith** and **Andy Kelly**.
- B. (**Note from Rick**) Since I was unable to attend this reunion (my wife had broken her hip at the end of last July and, although she has made great strides in regaining her ability to walk, I was apprehensive about leaving her alone), Treasurer, Joe Napoli has given me the following information:
- C. **The Hospitality Room:** The following people took care of maintaining the drink and food supply for those who were present: **Jim and Carrol McKelva, Len and Donna Ashline**.
- D. **The Memorial Service.** **Bud Foley** (Vice-President) had set up the following arrangements in holding this event.: **Posting of Colors** carried out by **Michael Flynn** and **Michael Flannery**. **Pledge of Allegiance** led by **John D. Phelps**. **Scripture Readings** given by **Leonard and Donna Ashline**. The **In Memoriam Readings** were done by **William F. Judge, Richard W. Post** and **Michael J. Heider**. **The Memorial Booklets** had been provided by our **Chaplain, Rev. Joseph Farry** (SM 2/C Nov. 1944 "Plank Owner" to Dec. 1945) of Reynoldsburg, OH.

Welcome Back The Association welcomes back to its membership roll, **Earle Bissonnette** (BT 2/C July 1957 to May 1961) of Carver, MA. Earle had been a previous member until February 2003. We are happy to have him aboard once more.

Association E-Mail Address Information: The following men have new e-mail addresses: **Caesar Cipolla** (RDSN Sept. 1946 to Jan. 1948) of Paradise Valley, AZ. (first time): caesar@cecipolla.com **James S. Johnston Jr.** (SN Mar. 1970 to Apr. 1970) of Sanbornton, NH. (first time): ae18@localnet.com; **David D. Davis** (RDSN Jan. 1951 to Aug. 1952) of Concord, CA. now has: dajevu@aim.com.

Delete the e-mail addresses for the following men: James K. Gardner Jr., Douglas "Kip" Hughes, Roland Gooding, Michael J. Decker, Donald B. Day.



Eastern Region Officer Joe Bonaventura and his bride Cathy. We have not received the chemical analysis report to see if he dyes that hair.



Is that Phil Prekel guarding Eileen or explaining that this ship is co-ed and a little hug is OK??

Material from Association Members. On Feb. 14, 2009, **Michael P. Olson** (IC 2/C June 1966 to Oct. 1969) of Thompson, CT. e-mailed me a series of photos. He was responding to my question (in the February 2009 Issue #52) if anyone remembered John Emanuel Knox? Mr. Knox was in certain of these photos. I forwarded the photos to President Jack Heidecker. On April 2, 2009, **James S. Ely Jr.** (LTJG Supply Officer from Oct. 1950 to June 1952) of Rutherford, NJ. sent me a very interesting book with the title: **“The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors”**. Its sub-title is: *The Extraordinary World War II Story of the U.S. Navy's Finest Hour*. The author is James D. Hornfischer. It was copyrighted in 2004. The Bantam hardcover edition was published in February 2004 and the paperback edition in April 2005. The book focuses on the Naval battle that took place on October 25, 1944 off the island of Samar in the Philippine Islands during the invasion of Leyte by American forces. It contains maps and many photographs of this famous naval battle.

In Issue #51, November 2008, Page 5, I had mentioned that our Honorary member, **Angus Walsh and his wife, Mena**, had sent me a photo of Angus holding a ceramic set consisting of salt and pepper shakers, napkin holder and spoon holder bearing the Pittsburgh Steeler logo. Much to my surprise, on February 24, 2009, that same set was delivered to me ! It came all of the way from Australia without a bit of damage ! Thank you Angus and Mena !



It is sad to start our
“In Memoriam”
 Section with a picture of the
USS Laffey DD724
 but, she is indeed going to pass into
 history, the last of the Sumner class
 destroyers who honored her sister
 ships with such bravery and
 strength during her WWII service
 to our country...

On **February 1, 2009**, I found the obituary for **James K. Gardner Jr.** on the Internet. Mr. Gardner had served on the DD-705 as a LTJG Engineering Officer from August 1951 to June 1953 and had been an Association member. His obituary (slightly edited) reads as follows (from the Boston Globe): "*James K. Gardner Jr. of Norwood, died at home January 20, 2009, due to complications of Multiple Myeloma. He was a hero in his battle. Jim was born in Belvidere, N.J., graduated from Rensselaer Polytech Institute and earned an MBA from Harvard Business School. He served as Lieutenant JG aboard the destroyer, USS Compton (Korean War). He had a lengthy career in management, including the positions of Vice President of Plastics & Synthetics of Norton Co.; President of Butler Automatic and recently, as a Market Analyst for the Data & Strategies Group. He was instrumental in developing the Mylar space blanket and the material that covered the lunar landing module. His passion was sailing. He is survived by his loving wife, Jean Gardner, sister Betsy Bowman of Eldorado, NM, three sons from a previous marriage, James K. Gardner, III of Rockport, Garrett Gardner of Coral Gables, FL., William Gardner of Medford and seven grandchildren.*" **Editor's Note:** On February 9, Bill Gardner sent an e-mail to President Jack Heidecker that stated: "*It is with regret to inform you that my dad, James K, Gardner Jr. passed away January 20, 2009. He was very proud of his service aboard the Compton and had a large picture of her next to his bed. I've attached a few pictures that my dad took himself (between 1951-53), which I scanned. Thanks for running the Association. Best regards, Bill Gardner.*" A donation has been made by the USS Compton Association to the Tin Can Sailors Thomas J. Peltin Destroyer Museum Grant Program in the name of James K. Gardner Jr. The Association expresses its condolences to the Gardner family for their loss of a loved one. Mr. Gardner's name has been added to the USS Compton web site's In Memoriam list.

On **February 2, 2009**, I found the obituary for Association member, **David H. McKee** (BT 3/C July 1954 to August 1957) on the Internet. It had been published in the Nashua-Telegraph newspaper on January 31, 2009. The obituary (slightly edited) reads as follows: "*Mr. David Henry McKee, a resident of Nashua, New Hampshire, formerly of Lowell, MA., died unexpectedly, Thursday, January 29th, 2009 in Burlington, Ma. age 72 years. He was the husband of Frances R. (Connolly) McKee, with whom he would have celebrated 20 years of marriage next April. A United States Navy Veteran of the Korean War. Born in Lowell, August 30, 1936, the son of the late Frederick W. and Marie H. (Porter) McKee. He received his education in the Lowell School system and attended Lowell High School, enlisting in the United States Navy at age 17. He served on the USS Compton as a boiler operator during the Korean War and was the recipient of the Navy Occupation Service Medal with a European Clasp and the National Defense Service Medal. Honorably discharged April 1962. He was a member of the USS Compton Association. Returning to Lowell, after the war, he became affiliated with the Tewksbury State Hospital as an engineer in the boiler room working there for 37 years, retiring in 1998. David enjoyed fishing and camping, having traveled the United States and Canada, with his beloved wife, Fran. One of his true joys in life was spent with his precious grandchildren, and great-grandchildren whom he adored. David was a true gentleman, who had many friends and wonderful neighbors and he will be sadly missed by many.*"

On **February 14, 2009**, I found an obituary for **Benjamin Franklin Reid** on the Internet. He was not a member of the Association but had served on the DD-705 from November 1944 when the ship was commissioned until, I assume, the end of WW 2. He was a "Plank Owner". His obituary was published in the Tallahassee Democrat newspaper and reads as follows (slightly edited): "*Benjamin F. Reid, 82, went to be with the Lord Tuesday, February 3, 2009. He was a Thomasville, Ga. native and a lifetime resident of Tallahassee. He was a loving husband to his wife, Dorothy Reid. March 26, 2009 would be their 60th wedding anniversary. His wife was his best friend. He was a wonderful father and grandfather and was always willing to give to his family's needs. He loved the mountains and spent time in Brevard and Balsom Grove North Carolina. He was a veteran of the US Navy serving in World War II aboard the USS Compton and a member of Wacissa United Methodist Church. He leaves behind, with his wife Dorothy, a son, Pat Reid (and wife Terryann) of Tallahassee; daughter, Benjie D. Young (and husband Douglas) of Carrabelle; brother, Jim Reid of Tallahassee; six grandchildren, Larry and Ben Driggers and Tanya, Heather, Justin and Alyssa Reid and six great-grandchildren.*" Mr. Reid's name has been placed on the In Memoriam list of the Association's web site.

On **March 21, 2009**, I received the following e-mail from a Mr. Robert Glynn: *“Dear Sir, my name is Robert Glynn. I regret to inform you one of the members of your association, **Frederick C. Buttner**, passed away this past November. As executor of Mr. Buttner's estate, I can tell you he took a great deal of pride in his association with the USS Compton. He had pictures of the Compton in prominent places in both of his residences. I wish you and your association continued success. Robert Glynn, Executor Estate of Frederick C. Buttner.”* I obtained the obituary of **Frederick C. Buttner** (SKSN July 1951 to September 1954) of South Weymouth, MA. that was published in the Boston Globe on December 5, 2008. The obituary reads as follows (slightly edited): *Frederick C. Buttner Jr. of Weymouth, formerly of Dorchester, died Nov. 21, 2008 at the South Shore Hospital in Weymouth. He was 78 years of age. He was raised and educated in Boston and graduated from Northeastern University. He was an accountant in the import & export industry. He also served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War.*

On **March 22, 2009**, I found the obituary of **F. William Hirt** on the Internet. It had been published in the Wittenberg University publication for the Spring 2008, Vol. 10 No. 1. The University is located in Springfield, OH. Mr. Hirt had graduated in 1947 but had served in World War 2. He was not an Association member. The obituary reads as follows: *“F. William Hirt of Erie, PA. died July 13, 2007. During World War II, he was an ensign/radar officer aboard the USS Compton in the Pacific Theater with the U.S. Navy. In 1949, he began a 41-year career with Erie Insurance Exchange,*

On **April 2, 2009**, via an e-mail from President Jack Heidecker, I received an obituary for **Michael John Decker** (CSSN 1960 to 1963) of Waverly, NY. from his wife, Marilyn Decker. Mike and Marilyn had attended four of our reunions over the years. The obituary had been published in the Sayre, PA. Morning Times newspaper. It reads as follows (slightly edited): *“Michael John Decker Age 67, went to be with his Lord, surrounded by his loving family, on Monday, March 23, 2009 after a brief illness. He was born on March 10, 1942 in Virginia, the son of the late Edward and Helen Decker. Mike enjoyed spending his time with his family, and especially enjoyed attending and coaching his grandchildren's athletic events. Mike was a long time baseball and softball player. He was employed by Waverly Central Schools and Leprino Foods until his retirement. He was a U.S. Navy Veteran and enjoyed attending his naval reunions with his special navy friends. Mike was a lifetime member of the Waverly V.F.W. He leaves behind his loving wife of 43 years, Marilyn (Thompson) Decker. Flowers were sent to Mike's Funeral by the USS Compton Association and both President Jack Heidecker and Vice-President Ed Capozziello attended. The Association expresses its heartfelt sympathy to the Decker family for their great loss. Mike's name has been placed on our In Memoriam list on our web site*

On **May 5, 2009**, I found an obituary on the Internet for **Donald B. Day** (MM 3/C November 1952 to June 1956) of Springfield, MA. Don and his wife, Lois, had attended five of our reunions over the years. His obituary was published in The Republican newspaper on May 5, 2009. It reads as follows (slightly edited): *“Donald B. Day, 76, passed away peacefully in the company of his devoted family after a long illness at Mercy Medical Center. Don was born in Springfield on February 1, 1933 the son of the late Raymond and Edna (Bellevue) Day. Don was educated in Springfield Schools and was a 1952 graduate of Technical High School. After graduating, Don enlisted in the U.S. Navy and proudly served aboard the USS Compton, DD 705 during the Korean War. Don served in the Mediterranean and was honorably discharged in 1956 as a machinist mate third class and received the Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal and the Navy Occupation Medal w/ European Clasp. he married, Lois A. (Powers) and the couple recently celebrated over 53 years together. Don was a member of the Tin Can Sailors and enjoyed hunting and fishing with his son. He was an avid Red Sox and Patriots fan. Don was the vice president of sales for Warren F. Hoye, Inc. in East Springfield and retired in 1995 after completing over 35 years with the company.*

On **May 13, 2009**, the Association was saddened to learn of the death of **Patrick O. Becker** (BTC Sept. 1948 to January 1957) of San Jose, CA. I received an e-mail from Michael Becker of Carlsbad, CA. , the son of Patrick, and he informed me that Patrick passed away in the Hospital after a lengthy illness. Patrick's wife, Theresa (“Terry”) passed away in June 2001. Prior to her passing, Patrick and Terry attended six of our reunions. After 2001, Patrick attended three reunions along with Michael and his wife, Susie. The last reunion that Patrick attended was in Norfolk, VA. in 2006. Everyone knew Patrick as “P.O.” on the ship. He was highly respected and he will be missed. The Association has made a donation, in the name of Patrick O. Becker, to the Tin Can Sailors Thomas J. Peltin Destroyer Museum Grant Program. His name has been added to the In Memoriam list on our web site. The USS Compton Association offers its condolences to the family of Mr. Becker.