

USS FRANK E. EVANS (DD 754) Association, INC.



Newsletter 73
2nd Quarter
2019

www.ussfee.org

Foot Locker Talk - Newsletter

AHOY SHIPMATES, FAMILY & FRIENDS

The majority of this newsletter was prepared prior to this year's 50th Remembrance gathering in Long Beach. We decided to go ahead and publish this newsletter even though it is a little after the end of the second quarter. We will be producing another newsletter with all the high-lights from the 50th real soon.

As most of you already know Senator Cramer of North Dakota introduced Senate Bill 849 into the Energy committee. This is a stand alone bill instructing the Department of Defense to add the names of our 74 killed onto the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. The bill was introduced on June 19, 2019, 50 years 16 days after the collision, the bill seemed well received. Our hope is a companion bill will be introduced into Congress and a bill will also be written into the next NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act.) Each of us now need to insure our representatives are well aware of the importance of supporting these bills.

At this years board meeting Del Francis requested to step down as Vice President due to continuing medical problems. At first we were reluctant to accept this request, however Del had compelling reasons as to why it was in the best interest of the membership and the Association that he step down. Del indicated should something happen to the President he would be unable to step in as president. If this situation was to arise it would cause disruption to the Association. I am pleased to announce that Terry Vejr was voted in as your new Vice President for the next 2 years. Rich Alverdes was appointed the Secretary's position until the normal elections take place in 2020. I am pleased with both selections by the members and know we have a strong team in place ready to serve the Association.

Steve Kraus

Steve Kraus

USS Frank E. Evans Association President

FROM OUR CHAPLAIN

By His Grace
Chaplain Al Collins

As a reminder, reunions and memorial services are important, especially when there has been a tragedy that has taken lives. Reunions provide an invaluable ingredient to the healing process. There have been many incidents of fears, tears, and release of the pain and suffering because of the sharing and caring by fellow shipmates. You have made it your eternal promise that you shall not forget them. And you that are left to grow old, age shall not weary you. You will always persevere in courage, be bold in courage, and shed truth in courage.

Prayer is more than giving thanks at the dinner table. It takes **prayer** to be led into each Chaplain Message every quarter. I seek the Holy Spirit to be my guide in the Invocations and Benedictions. And I give thanks for those who have stepped up in **prayer** while I was absent. Thank you again, for "you yourselves are God's Temple that God's Spirit dwells in your midst", 1 Corinthians 3:16. "My house will be called a house of **prayer**", Isaiah 56:7.

"Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord", Romans 12:11. And **prayer** is supported by many different venues during these difficult times. One is His 24 Prayer Team, consisting of men dutiful in supporting **prayer** requests around the clock. One such man, Brian Gibson, was responsible for this years continued resolve for the Lost 74.

When our whole heart is gripped with the passion for **prayer** and the life-giving fire descends, only the most earnest man gets access to the ear of God; and that is the purpose of **prayer**. We must **pray** in the name of Jesus placing the glory on God; it glorifies Him through the Son and pledges the Son to give to men whatsoever and anything they ask. He who **prays** much, studies much, loves much, and works much, does much for God and humanity. The execution of the Gospel, the vigor of faith, the maturity and excellence of spiritual graces waits on **prayer**. Therefore, we ought to **pray** often, with both energy and perseverance.

Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?", Luke 18:7 NIV. Does not the sound of justice create a **praying** heart for the Lost 74? Men must cry out day and night unto Him. God hears every one of our cries in the busy hours of daytime and in the lonely watches of the night. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. I desire therefore that we **pray** everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without fear and doubt.

James declared that "the effectual fervent **prayer** of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16) The seraphim, burning, sleepless, adoring, is the emblem of **prayer**. (See Isaiah 6:1-7) God's House is the House of **Prayer** (See Isaiah 56:7); God's Work is the Work of **Prayer**. It is the zeal for God's house (See Psalm 69:9) and the zeal for God's Work that make God's house glorious and His Work abide.

Bill Thibeault Recognition Tour



Bill Thibeault is on a mission. He's a Vietnam Veteran and survivor of the worst naval disaster of the Vietnam War. He lost 74 of his shipmates when his ship USS Frank E. Evans collided with the Australian aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne on June 3, 1969. At about 3:15 am the Evans accidentally crossed the bow of the carrier and was sliced in two, with the front half sinking in 3 minutes.

This year will mark the 50th Anniversary of the sinking and Thibeault will be attending the 50th Anniversary Reunion and Memorial Ceremony in Long Beach, CA on May 31 - June 3. Even though they were in the Vietnam War, the 74 names are not on the Vietnam Wall because the collision happened outside the combat zone. In 2018 Congress passed an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act to get the names on the wall but it did not pass in the Senate.

Hearing this news frustrated Thibeault, and being a singer/songwriter, he wrote a song in July 2018 called "Recognition" about the Evans and the lost 74.

His tour will be called The Recognition Tour and will include appearances in Mayville NY, Butler PA, South Bend IN, Waterloo IA, Omaha NE, Denver CO, Las Vegas NV, Long Beach CA, Phoenix AZ, Albuquerque, NM, Sulphur Springs TX, Branson MO, Nashville TN, Macon GA and other locations to be determined.

He has just released it on an album of the same name and will be traveling across America May 11 - June 28 singing his song to honor and raise awareness of his lost shipmates.

CONTACT

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<https://store.cdbaby.com/cd/billthibeault2>

USS KIDD (DDG100) UPDATE

By Rich Alverdes

It was a sunny day and I had a great opportunity to meet with Commander McNealy (Pictured behind me) in early March for a wonderful lunch and productive meeting and meet several of the KIDD's newest officers; ENS Lily Sands - Electronics Warfare Officer (to my immediate right) , ENS Kymber Fogt - Aviation officer (next to ENS Fogt) and ENS Sean-Paul Stickelman - Auxiliaries Officer (to my left). It was a great meeting and nice to meet new people and yes, there are naval personnel shorter me!

A few changes have taken place in their deployment scheduling. The KIDD will be out to sea starting in March as I stated in our last news letter but for only a three (3) month period. Commander McNealy called it a "Special Assignment". During that time frame, Commander Nathan Wemett (Executive Officer) will be off the ship and in Command Officers School (prep school for his upcoming role as Captain of the KIDD). A new Executive Officer will be brought on board during this time at sea. The KIDD will return for more updates and will then deploy for their normal overseas assignment sometime in early 2020 and after the next Change of Command. As we all know, this is the normal "stand in line and wait" Naval process that we have all experienced.



In Memoriam

Copy of Niobrara Tribune provided by Linda Vaa

Niobrara Tribune

...e Lewis and Clark passed, paddlewheel boats crossed, and a town survived two moves by always looking to

...y, March 7, 2019

Niobrara, Nebraska • 1 Section • 8 Pages • 75 Cents

Volume



A full military funeral was held in Sydney, Australia recently for Captain John Stevenson, who was the commanding officer of the HMAS Melbourne air craft carrier, at the time of the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans/Melbourne collision in 1969. He was cleared of any wrongdoing in the incident. His wife, Joanne wrote two books, about how she felt her husband had been unfairly treated following the collision. Copies of the book can be found at the Memories of Old Niobrara Museum. File photo courtesy Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney, Australia.



Captain John Stevenson, left, receiving the Order of Australia medal with New South Wales Governor David Hurley. Photo Courtesy Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney, Australia.

This year will mark the 50th anniversary of the collision of the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans and the Australian aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne of the Royal Australian Navy, in the South China Sea. Seventy-four Evans' crewmen were lost at sea in the collision, including the three Sage brothers of Niobrara, Gary, Greg and Kelly.

Funeral services for the Melbourne's commanding officer at the time of the collision, Captain John Stevenson, were held recently in Sydney, Australia.

On the night of June 3, 1969, the Evans and the Melbourne were participating in the SEATO exercise Sea Spirit off the coast of Vietnam.

During the exercise, the Melbourne was assigned five escorts which included the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans.

Around 3 a.m., when ordered to a new escort station, the Evans sailed under the Melbourne's bow, where the Evans was cut in two.

A joint Royal Australian Navy-United States Navy board of inquiry was held at Subic Bay, in the Philippines, to determine the responsibility of those involved. This inquiry found that both ships were at fault for the collision. Four officers, (the captains of the Melbourne and the Evans, plus the two junior officers in control of the Evans at the time of the collision) were court-martialed; while the three U.S. Navy officers were charged, the Royal Australian Navy officer was cleared of wrongdoing.

Captain Stevenson's article continued

Melbourne crewmen helped to rescue 199 crewmen from the Evans ship that night.

The HMAS crewmen gather every five years on the date of the collision for a memorial and a reunion. The 199 crewmen from the Evans, who survived the collision are now known as the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans Association, and meet every year for a reunion. In the time since the collision, members of both the Evans, and the Melbourne, attend each other's reunions.

Raymond Heath, of Chinchilla, Queensland, Australia, one of the Melbourne crewmen, has visited Niobrara three times, since the collision. He suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome, since the incident.

"Our captain, J.P. Stevenson, was an incredible man," Heath said. "He trained us so well, to the point that we'd do anything for him. We believe we saved a lot of people that night because of his leadership."

Stevenson's naval career ended with the Evans/Melbourne collision at sea.

Heath said, at the time of his 2014 visit to Niobrara, that Stevenson was forced to resign. "It's only been in the last year that they (the

"In the Wake," which are about how she felt her husband was unfairly treated," Heath said.

The Melbourne crew was saddened to hear that their skipper had died, at age 97, Heath expressed, in an e-mail to the Tribune last week. Heath made the trip to Sydney for the funeral. "It was a full military funeral with armed guard, etc.," he said.

He added that about 18 of the original crew attended the funeral and formed an honor guard as the hearse left the church. "It was a fitting farewell for a fine captain who cared for his crew right to the end."

On Tuesday of this week, Heath contacted the Tribune a second time and had this to say: "The Skipper - if ever someone had a reason to be bitter it would have been him. But he decided to stand firm and believed he was right. It took a long time but he was finally vindicated. Through it all he supported and cared for his crew. My favorite memory was in 2014 during a reunion he sat with my wife and I with his arm around us both as he cared for us."

Heath e-mailed the newspaper article about Stevenson's funeral from the Sydney Morning Herald, which

who served Australia for 35 years in war and peace. Noonan stated that Captain Stevenson was accorded a ceremonial funeral of a serving Navy captain to recognize that the circumstances in which he resigned were unique, and to "ensure that there can be no doubt as to the very great esteem in which he is held."

"There can be no doubt that in the past, mistakes were made that impacted both Captain Stevenson and his family," he said. "The Navy of 2019 is a more people-focused organization and strives to ensure that similar mistakes are not repeated."

"We hope this formal farewell in addition to the formal apology Captain Stevenson received from the government in 2012 will help ease the burden which the Stevenson family has had to bear over the past five decades," Noonan said.

The article said that Stevenson was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia medal in Jan. 2018 for his services to the Navy and veterans.

The article also stated that a wreath was propped up near Stevenson's coffin, with a card that said, "To a true gentleman, from the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans Association."

MANY ARE ASKING, WHEN AND WHERE IS THE NEXT REUNION? PLACE IS SAN ANTONIO TEXAS, DATE AND HOTEL HAS YET TO BE DETERMINED.....STAY TUNED

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welcome and warm wishes to all new members. If you know someone who is interested in joining please have them contact Donna Kraus at krausdfm@gmail.com or 760-521-4700, or go to our website @ www.ussfee.org

NAME	RANK / RELATIONSHIP	SERVICE	CITY/STATE
Greg Bouffard	USS Ranger CVA 61	Navy	Redondo Beach CA
David Grandchamp	USS Kearsarge CV 33	Navy	Reserve, NM
Vance Lamee	USS Kearsarge CV 33	Navy	Algonac, WI
Kyra Kraus	Granddaughter of Steve & Donna Kraus		Oceanside, CA
Mallory Kraus	Granddaughter of Steve & Donna Kraus		San Diego, CA
Skyler Kraus	Grandson of Steve & Donna Kraus		Vista, CA
Teresa Reese	Friend of Christine Stone		Fillmore, CA
Christine Stone	Sister of Lost RD2 Ronald Thibeault		Los Lunas, NM
Brad Stone	Brother-in-law of RD2 Ron Thibeault		Los Lunas, NM

IN MEMORIAM

NAME	RANK	SERVICE	CITY/STATE	DECEASED
Bill Swaim	ET3	Navy	Huntsville, AL	21 Mar 2019

IN MEMORIAM RELATIVES

NAME	CITY/STATE	DECEASED	Relationship
Sylvia Campbell	Granbury, TX	7 May 2019	Wife of J C Campbell
George Murphy	W. Springfield, MA	2 Apr 2019	USS Kearsarge
Mike Pierce	Louisville, KY	5 Mar 2019	In-Law Ben Alcoser

WEBSITE

Our website is under construction. It should be finished by the end of July. Our old website was feeling the pain from "Lack of Technology Upgrade." So far the look and feel is much better then our current site. Please send in anything you think should be on the new site and we can add new features

IN REMEMBRANCE — FIRST LADY OF THE USS FRANK E. EVANS

The Association was shocked with the news that our "First Lady" of the Association had passed. Sylvia was the backbone of the Association from its very formation. Sylvia Jeanne Carmichael Campbell passed away on Tuesday 7 May 2019.

Sylvia was born on 6 January 1937 in Dallas, Texas to Joseph & Margaret Suber Carmichael. She was a fourth generation Hood County resident. Sylvia graduated high school in 1955 and was the first female from her family to attend college. Sylvia ultimately received a masters degree from Tarleton State University.

In 19 July 1958 she married J. C. Campbell. They had three sons in their 62 years of marriage.

Sylvia's husband and sons were all volunteer fireman, Sylvia started the Women's Auxiliary for the Granbury Fire Department. She was the USS Frank E. Evans Secretary from the beginning and kept her duties current until 2014. Along with the Secretary duties she was also the Ships Store Keeper. In Her honor The Association dedicated and renamed the Ships Store to the Sylvia Campbell Ships Store in 2017. Rest in Peace and Bravo Zulu for an incredible job!

The plaque below was rededicated to Sylvia shortly after her death. The plaque was refinished by the school board. The plaque originally hung in Sylvia's school office and will now be relocated to the administrative building. Sylvia' legacy lives on.



Ensign John Norton

by Jack Whitehouse



I have been meaning to write this for a long time, almost 50 years, ever since I heard the news about the tragic loss of the USS Frank E. Evans (DD-754) in the waters of the South China Sea in the early morning hours of June 3, 1969. John Norton, an ensign aboard the Evans, and I had become best of friends over the nine months between when he reported for duty and I reported aboard the USS Buck (DD-761). Before I go any further I want to emphasize that the events described below occurred almost fifty years ago and are to the best of my recollection.

I first met John on a Monday morning in late summer 1968 in San Diego, on the flight line at the U.S. Naval Air Station North Island on Coronado. He and I were among about a dozen other officers selected to attend the ten-week long Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter (DASH) School on San Clemente Island. John and I sat next to one another on that first flight out to San Clemente aboard an old DC-3, in Navy parlance a C-47 or "Gooney Bird," dedicated to such miscellaneous and low precedence Navy supply and transport missions.

At the end of our ten weeks of DASH school John placed first in the class and I placed second. Both of us were proud of the little silver helicopter tie clasps the Gyrodyne Company awarded us for placing first and second in the class. The Evans had a schedule very similar to that of the Buck. As I recall both ships had gotten a months-long overhaul at Long Beach Naval Shipyard in the summer and early autumn of 1968 before entering REFTRA (refresher training). With what energy we had left we'd use up complaining about REFTRA; it had to be one of the more grueling programs the Navy ever invented. For six weeks or more life was a never-ending cycle of closely monitored exercises using every ship's system, with days often starting at 0430 and ending after 2200.

The Evans got underway from Pier 17 (mole pier) in Long Beach on Saturday, March 29th, 1969 deploying less than three weeks before the Buck's April 16, 1969 deployment from San Diego's 32nd Street Naval Station. John Norton spent part of his last weekend ashore in San Diego with Elaine and me; it was the last time either of us would see him. I can remember saying good-bye to him on the street in the early morning hours just north and west of the U.S. Grant Hotel.

Even at the time, something about our good-byes made it seem as though it was to be forever; I think sometimes we can see into the future if only so vaguely, not unlike seeing the vague outline of structures through a fog or mist, "through a glass darkly," as it says in the Bible.

On the morning of April 16, 1969 the Buck departed San Diego in the company of the carrier USS Oriskany (CVA-34) and several other destroyers bound for Pearl Harbor. This deployment was to last six and a half months. After a visit to Yokosuka, a week of chasing an "unknown duck" (an unidentified submarine) around the East China Sea and a port call in Kaohsiung, by late May the Buck had begun plane guard duty at Yankee Station. It was there we learned the first shocking news of the Evans.

In the early morning hours of Tuesday, June 3, 1969, John Norton and 73 other American sailors died when the Evans was cut in two by the Australian aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne(R-21.) When the accident happened, John was asleep in his bunk in a small and overcrowded compartment called "forward officers quarters" located on the starboard side in the forward part of the ship. The layout of the Evans was precisely the same as on the Buck. I slept in the same forward officer's quarters.

Immediately outside the single entrance to the forward officers quarters space was a ladder leading to the main deck. When the collision occurred the ladder became jammed against the one and only door to the space, trapping John and three other junior officers inside. Survivors said they knew John and the other trapped men were inside the compartment, but they could not budge the door because of the jammed ladder. We had exactly the same configuration aboard the Buck and could easily see how such a predicament could occur.

Around the time of the incident, the Buck was unexpectedly ordered to leave Yankee Station and escort the USS KING (DDG-10), the victim of an engineering casualty, into Subic Bay Naval Station. The Buck and the King arrived at Subic a little before the surviving aft section of the Evans on June 9th, 1969. While we were in port, the Evans was tied up to a pier some distance from the base's main piers. She was decommissioned on July 1st 1969 and sunk by the USS John R Craig (DD-885) on October 10th, 1969.

As soon as I could, I went aboard, by myself, to see what was left. From the pier it looked exactly as though someone had cut the ship in two with a large knife. In fact the 20,000-ton, 700-foot long "knife" had sliced through the middle of the ship at frame 92. I went aboard and straight up to the DASH hangar. The watertight door providing access to the forward part of the hangar stood open. Entering I could see the hangar door that opened on the flight deck was about a third of the way down allowing in just enough daylight to see everything inside the hangar pretty clearly.

The experience was like walking into a nightmare; in the low light everything looked just like the DASH hangar aboard the Buck, but things were strewn around, wet, broken and trashed, as if a storm had hit the inside of the hangar. In the rubble I spotted a large dark blue garment bag with John Norton's name on it. It was completely empty. John must have been storing it there because there was so little room in forward officers quarters. I thought to take it with me but ultimately decided not to because removing it seemed somehow disrespectful.

It is difficult to explain how I felt in the fetid air of that rotting hangar, totally alone with so many thoughts and memories. My thoughts of John and the tragedy and horror of what happened to him seemed to block out everything else. I'm not a religious person but a prayer for John seemed to take over my brain. The Buck might just as well have been assigned to participate in the SEATO exercise in the South China Sea instead of its support mission on Yankee Station. Such a moment does not turn your mind to hate for war, or the military or any individuals who may have been in part responsible; instead, you are overcome with a personal grief that makes other emotions impossible. Your thoughts are only of what has been lost, what could have been.

My wife and I will always remember John for the wonderful human being he was, and what happened to him and the other brave men lost at sea on that quiet early morning at sea in June 1969.

AGENT ORANGE UPDATE
As of June 25, 2019

The Justice Department has dropped all objections to the Procopio vs. Wilkie Court Decision. The VA will now be granting Agent Orange Benefits for Blue Water Navy Veterans. Additionally the House and Senate have passed the Blue Water Navy Act and it is expected to be signed by the President and take effect in January 2020. This law will make some changes to the distance a ship could be from the coast of Vietnam for Agent Orange Benefits.

The VA Secretary has agreed that all Navy Veterans who served on either a Destroyer or Cruiser, and whose ship provided NGFS had to be within the 12 NM limit.

In order to file or reopen a claim for Agent Orange benefits you need to be able to provide evidence that you were aboard when NGFS was provided to our troops ashore, and that you have one of the 13 presumptive diseases.

Two sources for proof NGFS (Naval Gun Fire Support) are:

Combat Naval Gunfire Support (CONGA)

Deck Logs that anyone has and can share or by requesting a copy of deck logs for a specific dates from the National Archives. If the logs do not exist online there will be a fee for research and providing a paper copy.

We will be posting copies on the website of the deck logs that prove USS Frank E. Evans (DD 754) positions during deployments to Vietnam. These will be important records for you to keep should you find the need to submit a clam to the VA.

Office of the Press Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 25, 2019

On Tuesday, June 25, 2019, the President signed into law:

H.R. 299, the "Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019," which requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to include Blue Water Navy veterans under the presumption of service connection for certain Agent Orange connected medical conditions; and make various changes to VA's home loan programs.



USS FRANK E EVANS ASSOCIATION
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**NEXT
NEWSLETTER
EDITON...
ALL
ABOUT
50TH
GATHERING
IN
LONG BEACH**

