

# USS FRANK E. EVANS DD 754

WWII KOREA VIETNAM



## FOOTLOCKER TALK NEWSLETTER NUMBER 86 — THIRD QUARTER 2022

Shipmates, Family and Friends,

The last three months have been very active, organizing June 3 memorials, site visits for 2023, working out the details for this years reunion and working with our lobbyists . We are happy to report that the June 3<sup>rd</sup> memorial services were held in 6 different locations this year; Long Beach, CA, Gurnee, IL, Fairfax, VA, Niobrara, NE, Independence, MO, and Ulverstone Tasmania, Australia. A special thank you to the master's of ceremony at each location and to those volunteers who helped make each ceremony a memorable event. If anyone has any ideas for future locations for June 3<sup>rd</sup> memorial services please contact Terry Vejra at [trvejra@gmail.com](mailto:trvejra@gmail.com) or 971-645-8655.

The mailing packages for this year's reunion went out in early June. We are looking forward to seeing you at this years reunion in Portland, Maine October 19 -22. If you did not receive a packet, contact Donna Kraus immediately so we can provide one to you. Contact Donna at [krausdfm@gmail.com](mailto:krausdfm@gmail.com) or call 670-521-4700.

Good news, the House passed the NDAA on June 14 with both of our amendments included. The next step is agreement on the language between the House and Senate and then Senate approval. Our stand alone bill is still in the house however we are now confident that since the NDAA amendments were approved it too will soon be passed.

## IN MEMORIAM

When the burden of grief is heavy, lighten our load and lift our spirits. When despair darkens our horizon, shine forth your light and lead the way. When our hearts feel broken, comfort us and hold us in your embrace. When we rage against the injustice of loss, channel this power into all that is good. When sorrow surrounds us, wrap us in hope that we may endure. When we are overwhelmed in the dark of night, may the breaking of dawn bring peace. For we know, O Lord, our God, that you hear our cries for help, and so we ask you to turn our mourning into dancing, to take away our sadness and to clothe us with joy. Amen.

*By Catherine Gorman*

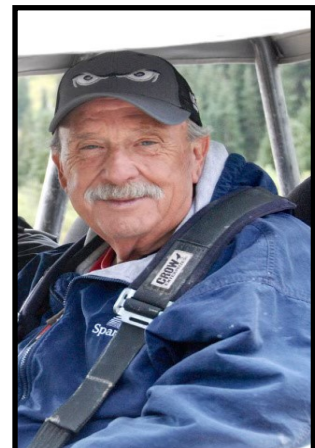
### RELATIVES OF ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

NAME	CITY/STATE	DECEASED
Jane L. Valrance	Huntington Beach, CA	June 3, 2022
William Wendler	Pasadena, CA	May 31, 2022



Jane Lorraine Valrance, age 100, mother of our Ships Storekeeper Mary Gregg, passed away at 11 am on 3 June 2022, in the hospital in Huntington Beach, while our annual memorial ceremony was being conducted just a few miles away in Long Beach, California. Jane lived a full life and experienced many changes during her 100 years on this planet. She leaves behind, Mary her daughter, her three sons Ronnie, Mike and Richard; Three grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

William "Bill" Wendler age 76, father of Tim Wendler, unexpectedly passed away in the hospital on May 31, 2022 from complications after major surgery. Bill was diagnosed with cancer of the kidney last year but surgery was delayed due to a stroke he suffered. The Doctors successfully removed the cancer however during the procedure it is believed they nicked the intestine causing further complications. 10 of his loved ones were with him when he died. A Celebration of Life was held on June 7 at the Murrieta Valley Funeral Home.



## PRANK BETWEEN COMMANDERS

By Ken Bian USS Lynde McCormick

What happened is this, Captain John McCook CO of the USS Lynde McCormick DDG 8 was scheduled to be relieved shortly and heading back to San Diego before the rest of the Destroyer Division 172 skippers. He was asking if there was anything he could do for the wives of the COs once he got back to San Diego. Of course, this was done with a licentious grin and a wink.



Commander Carl Thor Hanson, CO of USS Frank E. Evans and a Rhodes Scholar, came up with a way to get back at Commander McCook. Ensign James Hopson being older than your typical Ensign and having a few gray hairs, was chosen to be the key player in the trick. Captain Hanson briefed Hobson on the activities of the McCor-

mick during the deployment.

Hanson told Hobson about McCormick's boiler problems (Chief Engineer Frank Smith spent Hong Kong on the ship in hack because of them), missile shoot and a few other items. He told Hobson to just ask McCook about each item and then be quiet knowing McCook would talk his leg off about each thing.

Every day McCormick would receive mail from the local aircraft carrier via helo. Each day we would ask the helo if there was a passenger for us, we were waiting for the new CO Bill Rowden to arrive. One day the carrier responded yes there was. Our XO, Lee Beedle, goes to the fantail to greet him, shakes hands and takes him up to the bridge to meet McCook.

The other officers and myself are sitting in the wardroom finishing lunch when our Personnel Office Karl Volegler comes in and asks the XO if he checked the new CO's ID card. The XO says no as the new CO arrived on a Navy helo, from a Navy aircraft carrier; why would he check an ID? Karl stated he didn't think the person acting as Rowden was really Rowden.

## PRANK CONTINUED

The XO immediately called the ship's office and had the Rowden file including his picture sent to him. A few minutes later it was confirmed that our guest was indeed not Rowden. McCook had immediately upon Hobson's arrival sent a message off to COMCRUDESPAC attention Walter Baumberger and reported that William Rowden has reported aboard to assume command of McCormick.

Meanwhile, back in San Diego at COMCRUDESPAC, a briefing officer looks across his desk at Bill Rowden and tells him he is actually in Vietnam, LOL? The Admiral says "what the heck is going on?" and sends a message to COMDESDIV 172 on a different ship "What the heck is going on out there?".

Captain Hanson intercepts the message and tells everyone he has pulled a successful Zulu-5-Oscar on the McCormick. A Zulu-5-Oscar is a security penetration drill. Everyone had a good laugh except McCook. We kept Ensign Hobson as hostage for several days pretending we didn't have him. He did make it back to the Evans via helo. We shared our wardroom with Hobson and he actually enjoyed our hospitality. All this happened while we were doing gunfire support during the battle for the city of Hue during Tet.

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### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welcome and warm wishes to our newest member, Suzie Summers. New members are our life blood, if you know anyone who is interested in joining, please contact Donna Kraus at krausdfm@gmail.com or call 760-421-4700. On the website you may also join [www.ussfee.org](http://www.ussfee.org)

NAME	CITY	STATE
Suzie Summers	Highland, Calif	Friends of Donna & Steve Kraus

CHALLENGE TO EVERYONE...FIND ONE NEW MEMBER,  
JOIN NOW AND GET THE REMAINDER OF THIS YEAR  
AND NEXT YEAR FOR \$30.



## HMAS MELBOURNE/USS FRANK E EVANS MEMORIAL 3<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 2022

By James Lyall

I had the pleasure of attending the Memorial in Ulverstone, Tasmania on 3 June 2022 as the representative of the USS Frank E Evans Association.

Due to the inclement weather the Memorial was moved indoors to the Gawler Room in the Council Chambers. The service was conducted by Rear Admiral Michael van Balen RAN (Ret) and was attended by approx. 50 people. The ceremony was opened by Mr John Hammond, Highland Piper playing traditional Scottish music on his bagpipes.

A representative of the Central Coast Council made us welcome to Ulverstone and thanked Gary Smith for a wonderful memorial and for us attending. We were then welcomed to country by Paul Heaps of the Naval Association of Australia, Devonport/Ulverstone.

The singing of the Naval Hymn was followed by Chaplain Warwick Cuthbertson RFD reciting the Lord's Prayer. See picture right.



Admiral Tony Horton RAN (Ret) a survivor of the collision, gave a personal perspective of the collision, with a speech titled "From the Bridge". Tony was the navigator on the morning of the collision and his words were appreciated by all in attendance, especially those who were there. See picture left

LCDR Mark Burton, OAM, RAN representing CMDR Mark Tandy, CSC, RAN Commanding Officer, Naval Headquarters, Tasmania read written a submission by Commodore Malcolm Baird, AM, RAN (Ret), called Duty. See picture right



### 3 June, Tasmania Continued

Chris Mitchell then piped "The Still." Survivor's of the collision followed by the lowering of the flags by Naval Cadets. Mr Brian Ellis, State President, Naval Association of Australia gave the Recital of the Naval Ode of Remembrance and the ODE. LEST WE FORGET. The bugler played the Last Post and one minute of silence was observed, followed by Reveille, flags raised to full mast.

I then addressed, as the representative of the USS Frank E Evans Association and on behalf of the survivors and thanked all those in attendance who came to pay respects to those who died on that fateful morning 53 years ago. I touch on the continuing fight by the Association to have the names of the "Lost 74" inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Wall in Washington. DC. I expressed the importance of memorials and thanked Gary Smith once again for his dedication in the establishment of the Ulverstone Memorial.

The Honourable Guy Barnett MP, Minister for Veteran's Affairs in the Tasmanian Government gave an address on the continuing support of the Government and congratulated all of those who attended the Memorial.

This was followed by the laying of wreaths and sprigs and a bible reading by Chaplain Warwick Cuthbertson. Chris Mitchell then piped the Carry On. The signing of both the National Anthem of the United States and Australia was preformed, the voice of Wendy Burke-Richardson was very noticeable during the singing.



In closing, a reading was made by Rear Admiral van Balen, AO, RAN, (Ret) of a letter written by Rear Admiral John Davidson, AO, RAN (Ret) Deceased. Rear Admiral Davidson was one of the three Australian Naval Officers sent to form part of the Joint Australian/US Board of Enquiry into the incident.

"The special alliance between the United States of America and The Commonwealth of Australia has existed since 1941 and is especially strong between the two navies of both countries. This alliance needs no special words to define it and I do not need words to define the action which Gary Smith is performing today. On his own initiative, he has put forward the ceremony to commemorate the loss of 74 brave American sailors whose lives were taken on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1969. I can't think of anything more wonderful than this action by a man who claims no personal fame - by his act of commemoration, he puts a seal on the USN - RAN Alliance in the strongest possible way. It has been scoffed at by some, but never by those who are drawn here today in the spirit of Mr Gary Smith. Lest us long remember those brave American men and their magnificent ship."

Final Prayer and Benediction was performed by Chaplain Warwick Cuthbertson, RFD and on conclusion a final playing of the Highland Piper by Mr, John Hammond.



USS FRANK E. EVANS MEMORIAL TREE AND  
PLAQUE ARLINGTON JUNE 2022

Joe Clark took the time to visit our Association Memorial in Arlington Park when he went to the 3 June Memorial ceremony in Virginia. When the tree was originally planted it stood about 6 feet tall. Now it appears to be over 25 feet.

**LEST WE FORGET**

## THREE SAGE BROTHERS

By Linda VAA

Early this year Linda Vaa was approached by Dennis Houska, representative from the Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Reunion Organization. Dennis is a supporter of getting the names of the lost 74 on the wall. On August 11 -14, 2023 the Nebraska Vietnam Veterans Reunion Organization will be having a reunion in Kearney, Nebraska. At that reunion the three sage brothers will be honored. Dennis asked Linda for a write up on Gary, Gregory and Kelly Jo.

The Association found out that the State of Nebraska was going to build a Vietnam Veterans Memorial close to the City of Omaha. At the time the story broke, we also found out that the organizing committee was going to build a panel listing all those who died in the Vietnam, at the time, 396 names. Somehow the Sage Brothers were left off. We were outraged at the thought that the very own State of Nebraska would exclude their very own. Linda Vaa, Doug and Casey Sage soon stepped in. In addition, the Association outreached to the news media and Senate and Congressional Representatives.



Within a week Linda received notice that the organizing committee for the memorial was contacting the contractor to add the three Sage Brothers and RD2 Garry Hodgson. On the following pages are the Sage brothers individual articles' as written by Linda Vaa.

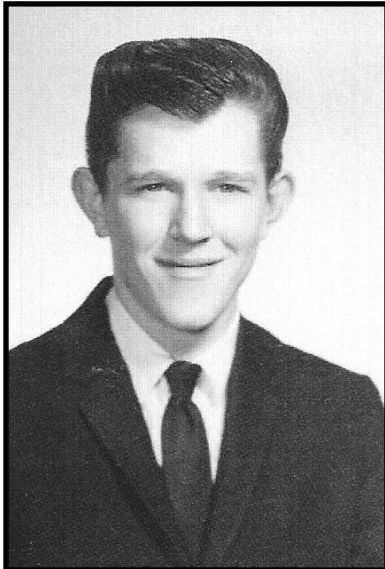
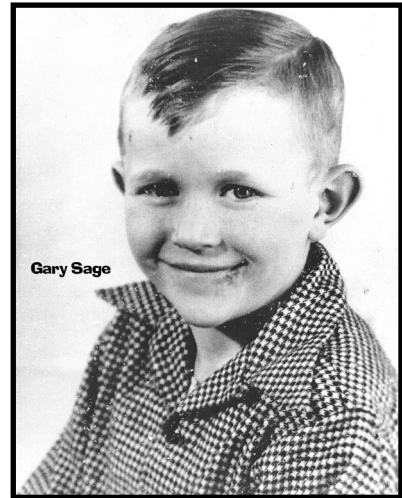


## GARY LOREN SAGE

By Linda Vaa

Gary Loren Sage was born on Friday November 15, 1946 in Bloomfield, Nebraska to Ernest and Eunice [Cornish] Sage.

He was the first-born son to Ernest and Eunice and weighed 8 pounds, nineteen inches long with blue eyes and light brown hair. In Niobrara High School he enjoyed music, class plays, and watching his brother- Greg- play football. He graduated in May of 1965. On the farm he was a very big help to his mother as in helping watch his brothers, cooking, and milking cows. His dream was to go into dairy business after the Navy.

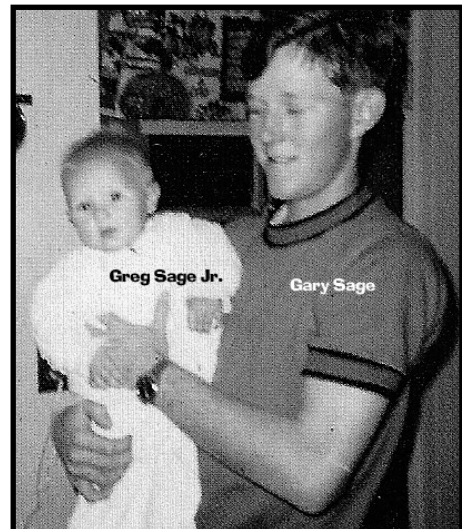


After graduation he moved to Lincoln, Nebraska for several months before enlisting into the Navy on March 8, 1966. His first training was in Great Lakes Naval School and then he was on the USS Merrick AKA. 97 before transferring to the USS Frank E. Evans DD 754. Gary lived with his brother Greg and wife Linda for 6 months before coming home on their last leave to Niobrara, Nebraska.

While living with Greg, Linda, and Allan, Gary was a wonderful babysitter, a good cook, and helper at the house. He also taught Linda a lot about cooking.

Gary was a happy young man and got along with everyone. He loved his family and brothers very much, especially his youngest brother, Doug, who was 6 years old when Gary left for the last time.

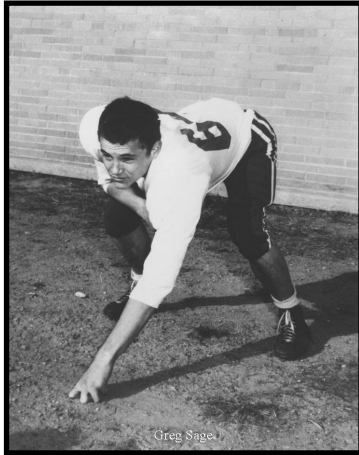
Gary was 22 years and 6 months old when his ship, the USS Frank E Evans was cut in half and 74 young sailors were lost in the South China Sea on June 3, 1969. His death left a big hole in everyone's heart especially his parents.



## GREGORY ALLAN SAGE

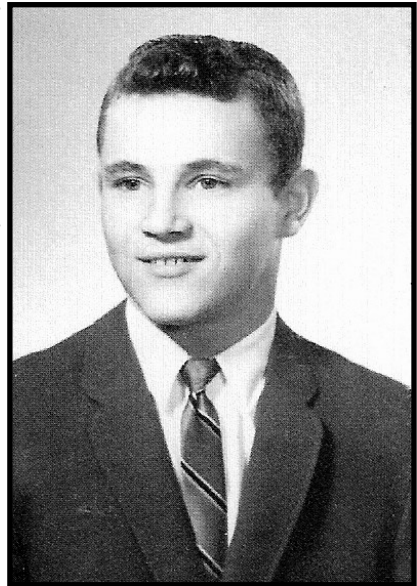
By Linda Vaa

Gregory Allan Sage Sr. was born February 20, 1948 in Bloomfield, Nebraska at Aunt Bess and Swede Johnson's house. He was the second son born to Ernest and Eunice [Cornish] Sage.



He weighed 10 pounds with blue eyes and light brown hair. Greg started school in a country school but attended Niobrara High School for his 4 years of high school, where he played football, lettered all four years, was in class plays, and still helped his family on the farm.

He met Linda Angel the day before his junior year and they dated for 2 years until both graduated in 1966. Greg worked in Omaha for 6 months before his enlistment into the Navy. His training was at Great Lakes Naval School before going aboard the USS Frank E Evans DD 754.



On his second leave he married Linda Angel on July 1, 1967. Ten months



later he returned to Niobrara to meet his new son- Gregory Allan Sage Jr. The three of them moved to Long Beach, California where Greg was stationed for 10 months. Big brother Gary transferred to the USS Frank E Evans and moved in with Greg, Linda and Allan. It was wonderful to watch the 2 brothers talk, watch football, and we were just a big American family.

March 9, 1969 the 4 of us drove our car back to Niobrara for a real family reunion. Kelly had just returned home from boot camp so the house jumped with excitement.

Kelly Jo had to leave earlier so we took him to Omaha to the plane and had their pictures taken for Eunice's Mother's Day gift. June 3 the USS Frank E Evans was cut in half and we all lost our dreams. All 3 were gone.

## KELLY JO SAGE

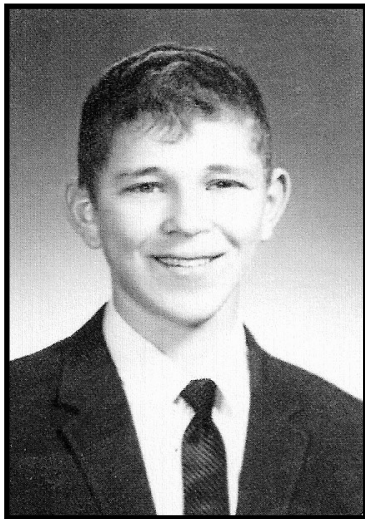
By Linda Vaa

Kelly Jo Sage was born May 29, 1950 in the Bloomfield Hospital in Nebraska. He weighed 7 1/2 pounds with blond curly hair. He was the third son of Ernest and Eunice [Cornish] Sage.

Kelly Jo attended country school until the 5<sup>th</sup> grade then he attended Niobrara Public School where He played football and rode his motorcycle everywhere. Coach Jones told of how Kelly Jo was going to take Greg's place on the team even if Kelly Jo was about 100 pounds soaking wet and Greg was 175 pounds. He loved to compete against brother, Greg. Several months after graduating in 1968 he joined the Navy and attended San Diego Naval School.

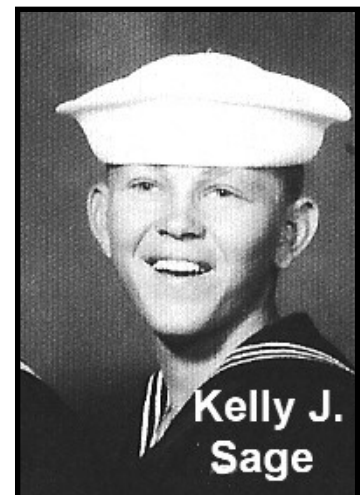


His first leave was March of 1969 when he returned to Niobrara. What a joy it was for him to come home and the whole family was together for the first time in 4 years since big brother Gary had left for the Navy. He enjoyed the time back on the farm for the two weeks especially riding his motorcycle, visiting with his friends, teasing his little brother, Doug, and milking the cows. Grandma and Grandpa Cornish were a favorite so all of the boys spent a lot of time there.



While Kelly was at San Diego Naval School he asked to be onboard Evans as the 3 brothers were very close and Kelly Jo just wanted to be with them. I think he missed being with them after they left home and he wanted to be with them in the Navy. It was a blessing for them to be together but in the end it was the saddest to lose all 3 of the brothers.

Ernest Sage was never the same after June 3. Eunice Sage was stronger with God and knew she would see them again.





**USS FRANK E EVANS ASSOCIATION**  
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**OUR NEXT  
 REUNION  
 IS IN  
 PORTLAND  
 MAINE  
 OCTOBER  
 19 — 22, 2022**

