

USS FRANK E. EVANS DD 754

WWII KOREA VIETNAM



FOOTLOCKER TALK NEWSLETTER NUMBER 96 — FIRST QUARTER 2025

Shipmates, Family and Friends

We welcome 2025 with new opportunities and goals. Our goal has always been and always will be to add the names of the “LOST 74” to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. With the many changes in Washington, DC, we are currently working with Senator Kevin Cramer’s staff on a proposal to address the Department of Defense’s criteria for causality reporting.

Our new strategy is to utilize an administration process rather than a Legislative Bill to gain support to include the names of the “Lost 74” USS Frank E. Evans sailors on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. We believe had all the information been available and clear to the founders and original stakeholders at the time of the development of The Wall; the original criteria would have recognized that a joint military exercise (SEATO) in direct support of the war would have qualified the Evans sailors for their position of honor on the wall.

The good news! The State of California passed legislation to name a bridge and State interchange in honor of the “Lost 74.” The USS Frank E. Evans Lost 74 Memorial Bridge and Interchange dedication will take place at the 3 June Memorial Ceremony this year in Long Beach, California.

Don’t forget to mark your calendar. The next reunion will be in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, September 17-20, 2025. Oklahoma City has lots to see and do! Look for more information and the reunion package by late May. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Steve Kraus
Association President

Terry Vejr
Vice President

Membership Dues Update

We don't think anyone will disagree that inflation has affected everyone in one fashion or another. Like your household, the Association has seen prices increase significantly. We have looked at all aspects of our costs in order to not have to increase dues. The good news! We are not increasing individual memberships in 2025, and are now providing you membership plans that will provide additional overall savings.

Look for your dues notice in the mail. Donna mailed out invoices to everyone the week of Feb 24. Please read the information regarding the new payment plans, we hope you will be pleased with the offerings. You will find the invoice detailing the amount due, different membership plans and the payment options available. (Online payments will be available later this month.)

If you have not joined the association, or know someone who would be interested in joining, please send an email to ussfee.org@gmail.com and we will get the form to you.

Should you have any questions or require any assistance, please reach out to Donna or Steve.

New Membership Payment Plan Offerings

Membership Plan	Price	Applies To
Individual (Identical to previous years)	\$30	Per person per year
Limited Household	\$50	Per household, per year, limited to 2 people in same household
Household	\$60	Per household, unlimited members per physical address over 2
Lifetime Member	\$299	Per person, one-time fee
Shipmate Lifetime Member	\$199 (This is a Limited offer for 2025 only)	Per person, one-time fee Must have served aboard: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• USS Frank E. Evans (any years), or• Desron 23• Operation Sea Spirit Participants



USS KIDD (DDG-100) UPDATES



PEARL HARBOR, HAWAII (Aug 10, 2024). Group photo of those who participated in the RIMPAC 2024 Sporting Events. USS KIDD placed 2nd overall against thirty-two units. RIMPAC is a multi-national Navy event where 30 nations, 40 surface ships, 4 submarines, 14 national land forces, aircraft and approximately 25,000 personnel gather for the largest multi-national maritime exercise.

DUTCH HARBOR, ALASKA (Sep 12, 2024). USS KIDD prepares their Sea & Anchor Evolution in Dutch Harbor. This was the first time the crew experienced a transit through the Aleutian Islands.



EVERETT, WA (Dec 02, 2024) USS KIDD crew taking a photo with “Bill The Goat” in preps for ARMY NAVY 2024 football game. The crew was featured shouting out “Go Navy Beat Army” during the game. #RollGoats

BATON ROUGE, LA (Dec 07, 2024) BMSN Lallis, HM3 Kraft, CS2 Cabalona, and OS1 Arrelano shares their award on top of the original USS KIDD in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. CDR Pilcher and his team were invited to USS KIDD Veterans Museum on 7th December 2024 to honor and remember the events of Pearl Harbor.





Willis D. Zismer

**Dates on the Evans: June 1952 - June 1954
BMSN 1st Class, Deck Hand, Gunnery**



Willis D. Zismer was aboard the USS Frank E. Evans from June of 1952 through June of 1954. Willis was a young lad of 17 when he joined the ship. He remembers the crew on the ship at the time as a very close knitted bunch. He attended boot camp in Norfolk and then came on board Evan’s in Hong Kong. During his time on the ship, they were caught in a typhoon and he spent 12 hours on shift as most of his mates came down sick. He remembers this as a good learning experience. After his time on the ship ended, Willis was transferred to Jacksonville, Florida where he worked security for shipyards with E-3 security clearance.

When his father got sick, he returned to the Kansas City/Liberty, Missouri area. He stocked groceries and worked odd jobs. Eventually, he began hauling automobiles out of Detroit to Cheyenne, St. Louis and other cities. In 1958 Willis settled in Missouri and he married, they went on to have 5 children, 2 daughters and 3 sons.

Willis joined the Association at the Las Vegas Reunion in 1994. He said he recognized most of the men present and it felt like old home week. He married his second wife Joey Boletti (Died in August 2021) and they settled in Yuma, Arizona. Both were huge supporters to the Association through the years. Willis and Joey donated the 2006 GM Danali to the Association and they paid all the costs to have the “Lost 74” plaques and bench installed in the Veterans park in Yuma.



In 2016 Willis received the Golden Anchor Circle award for his continued dedication and his many, many contributions to the Association. We are glad to have Willis be our first member spotlight.

USS FRANK E. EVANS — USS MATACO

We received an email from Ed Pickens with a few photos of the final day USS Frank E. Evans was still afloat. Ed was a crew member onboard USS Mataco ATF 86 the oceangoing tug that towed Evans back to the China Sea to be sunk during a target practice. The photos were taken by Ed on USS Mataco ATF86. The Navy provided a photographer on board to document the target practice. Mataco was also given the opportunity to take a few shots at Evans before she went down.

Ed will be sending us more pictures for our archive.

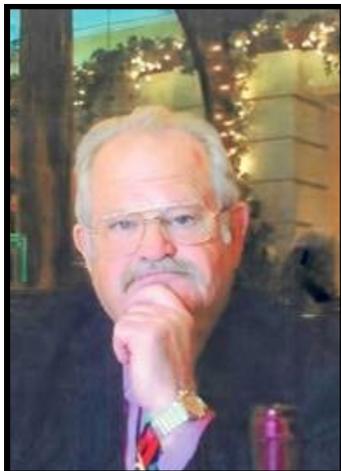


WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welcome aboard to our new members, we are so happy you have joined the USS Frank E. Evans family. Thank you for joining , we are thrilled to have you as members and look forward to meeting you and seeing you at our annual reunion.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CITY/STATE</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Charlie Bauguess	Bluefield, VA	Friend of Judy Cool-Akers
Steven Bethell	Oceanside, CA	Son of Mary Gregg
Brittany Berry	Syracuse, NY	Granddaughter of Chief Reilly
Jason Fox	Crooks, SD	Son of Gerald Fox
Jeffrey Fox	Thief River Falls, MN	Son of Gerald Fox
Keven Freedman	West Hills, CA	Photographer on Kearsarge, 3 June 1969
Sharon Hopfauf	Allen, TX	Friend of Donna & Steve Kraus
Michael Jones	Spokane, WA	Onboard USS Kearsarge 3 June 1969
Terry Nykoluk	Suisun, CA	Shipmate, BT3 1967-69 (Survivor)

IN MEMORIAM



MM2 Timothy (Tim) Patrick Murphy of Canton, Michigan, one of eleven children of the late Leo and Bernice (Larsen) Murphy, passed away on October 6th, 2024 after a long battle with asbestosis.

Tim, a Navy Veteran, proudly served his country in Vietnam reporting for duty on 15 August 1965 as a sailor aboard USS Frank E Evans, he was onboard until 1968 and between 1964 and 1968, luckily surviving Tet in 1968. Before Tim contracted asbestosis, he loved golfing, and he and Audrey traveled the United States and Europe golfing at some of the world's best courses. Tim often said, "I've lived a wonderful life. My three great loves, Audrey, golf and the law, have filled me with joy and anticipation every day".

MM1 Ronald Perkins (Survivor)

We received notice from Sharon Steffy (niece of MM2 Ronald Perkins) that Ron had passed away on 24 July 2024. Ron came aboard USS Frank E Evans on 5 August 1968 and reported to M Division, he was the lead in the after-engine room. Prior to his death he was living in Hooksett, New Hampshire. Ron found the association through the website back in 2010 and joined immediately. Due to health issues, he never was able to attend any reunions.

Phil Ledesma (Loving Father)

Felipe Ramon Ledesma, lovingly known as Phil, passed away peacefully on January 17, 2025, at the age of 97. He is the father of Association member Suzi Summers. Born on March 10, 1927, in Los Angeles, California, Felipe was the eldest of a close-knit family of 10 children born to Felipe and Anita Ledesma.

At his funeral it was disclosed that he had 148 family in his line of succession. In 1948 he married Aurora Mercado, who would be his beloved wife for 76 years. His love for her and his family were an extraordinary example of commitment, and it was clear to all how deeply he cherished her and embraced and loved being a husband and a father. Together, they built a beautiful life filled with family and great love.



Colleen Evelyn Kraus-Nicassio (Loving Wife & Mother)



Colleen Nicassio, cousin of Steve and Donna Kraus, passed away on February 1, 2025. Colleen was from a family of ten. She was the sixth of seven girls and three boys. She grew up in the Los Angeles area where she met her husband Andre, It was love at first sight, they soon married, had 2 children and started their lives together. Colleen was an avid golfer, and fashion enthusiast, She was able to open her own boutique where she designed clothing and jewelry.

3 June 2025 Memorials

Long Beach CA
Shoreline Park
100 Aquarium Way
Donna Kraus
krausdfm@gmail.com
760-521-4700

Fairfax VA
American Legion Post 177
3939 Oak St.
Carol Coulter
crlcoulter@gmail.com
571-317-9951

Independence MO
Mt Washington Cemetery
614 S Brookside Ave.
Ben & Pam Chilcutt
benchilcutt@gmail.com
816-525-7772

Niobrara NB
Sage Brothers Landmark
25410 Park Ave.
Don Hanzlik
donhanz85@gmail.com
712-281-1001

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming Memorial Ceremonies. The Sponsors of these events put a lot of effort and time into planning, scheduling and conducting these ceremonies, please show your support.

LONG BEACH CA 10 AM

This year in Long Beach there will be a Memorial Ceremony and a Highway Dedication followed by a luncheon in Shoreline Park. If you are planning on attending we request you to RSVP to Donna Kraus so we have an adequate count for seating & lunch.

GURNEE , IL 10 AM

INDEPENDENCE , MO 10 AM

FAIRFAX, VA 10 AM

NIOBRARA , NE 10 AM

Niobrara Memorial will be held on Memorial Day 27 May 2025

ASSOCIATION ORGANIZATIONS

The Board of Directors extends its thanks and appreciation to all the members. Abd to all who continue to give The participation by the members and certainly makes our jobs much easier. We are currently searching for someone to take over membership responsibilities. The job requires computer and internet skills. Anyone interested in taking on this very important position please contact Steve Kraus at kraussa754@gmail.com or call 760-458-4595.

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USS FRANK E EVANS DISASTER, 3 JUNE 1969, SOUTH CHINA SEA

BY RICARD COOKE

It happened in the early hours of 3 June 1969. I was an 18 year old Ordinary Seaman serving **aboard** the Australian Aircraft Carrier HMAS Melbourne. We were involved in a major Naval exercise called Operation Sea Spirit which involved about 40 ships from 6 different nations. It was held off the coast of South Vietnam as what I believe to be mainly a 'Show of Strength' (why else would you put your Military Might next to a war zone unless you wanted to be seen by the enemy). The Melbourne was flying aircraft off and as such we required a Destroyer to follow behind us to act as 'Rescue Destroyer'. Their Job was to pick up any pilots who had to eject if their landing went wrong.



It was a hot night and I was off duty so I went to the Focsle which was up front and below the flight deck where a nice breeze could be felt. I stayed there until just before 3 am when I **decided** that I should return to my bunk and try to get some sleep. The exercise was at night and to make it harder for the fleet to be spotted by submarines, all the ships were running 'Darken Ship' which meant no visible lighting, not even Navigation lights. USS Frank E Evans was to our Port side and slightly ahead of us when we asked her to take up the Rescue Destroyer position astern of us. It was a bright moonlit night and the sea was like glass. Instead of turning away from us and coming behind, Evans turned toward us and crossed our bow. Once past us, she turned again and crossed our bow again and the collision occurred.



I was just about to climb up onto my bunk which was 3rd up from the deck, when a call came over the intercom. "Hands to Collision Stations". Melbourne was my first ship out of basic training. I had been serving on her for about 9 months. I didn't know what the call meant as I had never heard it before. Another sailor said that he thought it meant 'Hold on Tight'. Then the call came again "Hands to Collision Stations." We hit the Evans amidship right between her two funnels cutting her in half. Our ship shuddered and rose up and came down again. A bit like going over a humpback bridge in the road. I just had to step out of a doorway and I was outside on the deck.

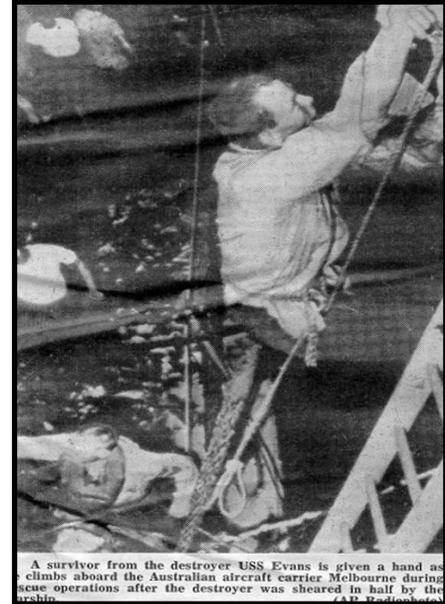
Melbourne had come to a **dead** stop. I looked out and saw half a ship lying on its side on an angle of about 45 degrees or even more. I could see the big white numbers 754 painted on the bow. There was a lot of steam which looked really eerie in the bright moonlight. I could see sailors running down the side of the ship and jumping into the water and people in the water. I could hear them shouting and calling.

I didn't know what to do. Then I saw a long narrow locker which contained Life belts which were kind of like Bumbags which you clipped around your waist and then opened a pouch and pulled a life jacket over your head and inflated it when required by pulling a cord. I grabbed about 4 of them and jumped over the side, a drop of about 30 feet I think (a dumb idea on reflection as it was dark and I didn't know if there was wreckage in the water below). I started swimming toward the front half of Evans. I had to swim sidestroke because of the life belts I was carrying, which made for slow going. I nearly got to the ship but before I could reach her, she rolled completely over, became inverted and then the bow pointed up to the sky and then she went down. I could still hear the sailors shouting over the noise of the air being pushed out of the ship as she sank. The bow went down in just over 3 minutes after being hit by Melbourne, taking 74 sailors with it. Among the 74 were 3 Brothers, Gary, Greg and Kelly-Jo Sage. Also Lawrence Rielly Jr. Lawrence's Father Chief Reilly was also serving aboard Evans with his Son at the time and he survived.



I didn't even get to help anyone by giving them a lifebelt. I think when I saw the ship go down, I dropped them. I had to be rescued by a boat from Melbourne along with a bunch of survivors from the front half of Evans. There wasn't many of them whom managed to escape. We had to climb onto Melbourne by scaling cargo nets which had been slung over the side. It was really hard work especially for those who had fought so hard to escape their sinking ship. Some of them were injured quite badly.

I have nightmares about it all the time. I used to think that maybe if I had been a little quicker in making my decision to jump over the side, I may have been able to save someone. The Americans who I met through the USS Frank E Evans Association soon beat those thoughts out of my head. They helped me to feel a lot differently about what I tried to do. I am close Friends with the survivors and the Families of the lost 74. I think about the collision every night. It is as clear as a bell to me. It seems like it was just yesterday. However, it has been over 55 years now. It has impacted my life in a big way. Mentally it has scarred me.



However, because of the collision, I have made lifelong Friends and unbreakable bonds with people from another Nation. Had it not been for this terrible event, I would never have known those people. I would never have met my Fiancée (now Wife) Karin Pipa-Cooke who graduated High School with the wife of one of the Evans survivors Bill Thibeault.

Well that is about it except for the fact that all of those Sailors who lost their lives that night had been deployed to fight the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War was the only reason USS Frank E Evans was up there. Because the collision occurred just outside of the designated war zone (which we had more than likely been zigging into and zagging out of throughout the exercise), The US Government has refused to include their names on the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington DC. We have been fighting to get their names on the wall ever since, and we will continue to do so. Hopefully, this year, 55 years after the collision, it will happen.

Lest we Forget

Richard Cooke, Ex Royal Australian Navy

Living in the USA

