

February 9, 1999

Mr. Robert J. Bendure

Mr. Donald J. Sibbett

Mr. Jerome M. Fien

Mr. Charles V. Wilhoit

Gentlemen:

I had originally planned to send this letter as a holiday greeting, but you can see what happened. I wanted to bring you up to date on the last F. E. Evans reunion since we didn't see you there. Really thought more would make it since we were on the east coast and centrally located, but no such luck. Jerry Fien, we did hear from J. C. Campbell that he had had a call from you and your plans were changed due to Ruth's illness.

The facilities of the Alexandria Holiday Inn were most comfortable and the reunion schedule was such that we had lots of time to relax with plenty of spare time for the business at hand. Our intimate wardroom group consisted of the Annexstads, Carl and Lois; the Cornwells, Wes and Cynthia; the Schreibers, David and Barbara, and of course, my childbride Corinna and me.

The highlight of the get together was our trip to Arlington National Cemetery where we participated in the dedication of a bronze memorial listing the seventy-four names of the shipmates lost on 3 June 1969 when the USS Frank E. Evans collided with the Australian Carrier HMAS Melbourne (CVS-21) and was cut in half. The forward section of the Evans sank in 5400 feet of water within two minutes. The ceremony was most appropriate and something I will never forget. I have reproduced a copy of the memorial program for each of you. Incidentally, six of the seventy-four lost were Ensigns who were assigned to the forward officers bunk rooms, where Don Sibbett and I lived for a year and a half. I should also mention that the reunion was attended by an officer who had served on the Australian carrier. One Australian officer and his family has attended each year since the reunions have been held. The 1999 reunion is being scheduled for Australia in June.

NEW SUBJECT--The round robin letter is sandbagged again! About two thirds of the way around the circuit for the second time, the letter hasn't been heard from. If either of you four gentlemen have it in your possession, please add your letter and get it on its way, QR if you don't find the time to add a small note, send it on anyway to the next name on the list. YOUR SHIPMATES ARE INTERESTED IN HEARING FROM YOU.

Jack A. Druckemiller