

**Vice Admiral Emmett H. Tidd's  
MESSAGE ON THE SAGE BROTHERS & FAMILY**

Tom, were you aware that three brothers were serving together on the ship, and all three were lost in the collision of the evening of 2 June 1969 with the aircraft carrier, HMAS Melbourne? All from Niobrara, Nebraska, they were:

**Gary L. Sage, BM2;  
Kelly J. Sage, SA; and  
Gregory A. Sage, RD3.**

Messages of condolence from the President, Secretary of the Navy, and the Chief of Naval Operations, were personally delivered to Mr. & Mrs. Sage, Sr., and Linda, wife of Gregory, in their home (Niobrara, Nebraska) on 4 June by Commandant of the Ninth Naval District, Rear Admiral H. A. Renken. He was joined by the ComNine Chaplain, and the CO of the local Naval Reserve Training Unit, Lieutenant Crowder. The Sage family pastor, Reverend C. Lindgren, also accompanied them.

The family expressed appreciation for the personal interest and thoughtfulness of those senior officials and their condolence messages. They said they were grateful to the Navy for allowing their sons to serve in the same ship together and wished to have this known publicly.

One of the very few requests made by the family was for three copies of the Frank E. Evans' 1967-1968 WestPac cruise book. Under the circumstances, this was a challenge. However, these were obtained in time for

presentation to the family at the 11 June Public Memorial Service. This was made possible by the thoughtful donations by Rear Admiral Thor Hanson, USN, then serving on the staff of The Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon. Thor had been CO of the Frank E. Evans during the 1967-68 deployment to WestPac. He promptly donated his one personal copy, and had his father-in-law, Mr. William N. Edens, forward a second copy. Rear Admiral Renken provided the third copy from the Ninth Naval District library of cruise books. The family was very appreciative.

Attending the memorial service, representing the Navy, were Rear Admiral Renken and the visitation party mentioned above, plus personnel from the Naval Training Center at Great Lakes, including a ten man segment of the Bluejacket Choir and director, flag bearers, honor guards, and a bugler.

During the memorial service, Rear Admiral Renken personally presented flags, medals and cruise books to Mr. and Mrs. Sage and Linda Sage. It is reported that the service was covered with dignity by network and local television, radio, wire services and newspapers.

Condolences and sympathy were once again expressed to the family and help and assistance offered. This was appreciated by the family, who again wished to thank the Navy for its concern and assistance.

The family expressed no bitterness toward the Navy and said they were proud of their sons and repeated several times that if their sons wanted to serve together, they are thankful that the Navy was able to comply with their wishes.

If you did not previously have that information, I thought it might be of timely interest to members of our association. At the time of the collision, I was in Vietnam, serving as Chief of Staff to (then) Vice Admiral Zumwalt, who subsequently was to become the next Chief of Naval Operations, at that time the youngest ever to be selected for that top position in the Navy. On receiving information of the loss of the ship we were terribly saddened by the loss of life. Having served in the ship during the early part of the Korean war, having been shot at many times by the enemy, we felt that our Gray Ghost had a charmed life. She defied the enemy, but her luck finally ran out in a dark night on the mid-watch, ever proving that our profession at sea is an inherently dangerous profession.

Thanks again, Tom, for all your assistance. Emmett

*I was especially interested in the fact that the Sage Family was glad the three brothers were able to finish their lives together, while serving their country! It indeed reflected how the USN takes personal care to see that their families of those who died in the service of their country is not forgotten.*

*Thanks Admiral Tidd!*

## QUESTION: ARE USS EVANS' 74 SAILOR'S NAMES ON VIETNAM WALL?

I was asked by a reporter doing a special report on the Memorial Day function in North Salem, New York for the three local servicemen who gave their lives for their country, the above question! **Ens. John Townsend Norton**, who was reared in North Salem, and one of the **74 USS Evans crewmen** who went down in the bow portion of the **Gray Ghost**, which ended the ship's fighting career, when the **Australian Carrier HMAS Melbourne**, took it's bow off in 1969.

The question was if the **74 USS Evans' personnel' names** were listed on the Vietnam Memorial Wall? I really didn't know, but why shouldn't they be included? The Vietnam War was the reason for them being over there in the South China Sea, where the accident happened!

You shipmates who attended the 1998 Association ceremony in Arlington Cemetery can probably come up with the answer. From the program I know the Association placed a granite marker with a bronze plaque in honor of those **74 Sailors!**

Being a "late-bloomer" as for as my Association knowledge is concerned, that Reporter started me thinking, and a few days earlier when **VADM. Tidd** included in a message to me, something about the **Sage Brothers** who were in that group of **74**, and his message containing a lot of interesting factual data from a

U.S.Navy organizational point of view. I realized that since I've been sending out this newsletter, I only reported on what I knew, or was told, and for a fact—I just realized I really didn't know much about that dreadful accident of 1969!

I intend to include that message for the benefit of other "old" shipmates who, like me, just recently learned of this Association, and its activities of the past.

After conversing with **J.C.** and **Ken** I've discovered that **the names are not on the wall because the ship was outside the 12 mile limit from Vietnam** which was Navy policy at that time and it is because of this that we have a Memorial Fund chaired by **Cal Rankin**. We have some indication that that policy has not always been adhered to in all cases therefore we know that our battle lines to get an exception or change to policy will be very political. We have the plaque at Arlington National Cemetery as well as a plaque in **Fredricksburg Texas** at the **Admiral Chester Nimitz Museum**. One of the primary goals of the Association is to design and erect our own Memorial or succeed in changing some minds in **Washington D.C.** to get our mates included on the wall. We urge all our Members to provide funds through **Cal, J.C.** or **Ken** either by separete check or by adding to their dues check with a note indicating the extra should be provided to the Memorial Fund. We would urge

our members to order the book **"In the Wake"** available through **Ken Adams**. This is an account of the Accident and subsequent hearings as seen through the eyes of **Jo Stephenson**, wife and helpmate of **Captain Stevenson** who was the skipper of the **HMAS Melbourne** at the time of the accident. Send **Ken** a check for \$15 and he will.

I have not talked yet, with **Chairman Cal Rankin**, but I already know that a project to have our **74 Shipmates** remembered, is a big job requiring a lot of help from all of **Cal's** fellow Association members, so I urge all of you to contact him and help in every way you can. Maybe we can plan a strategy before the meeting in September, to make a serious effort to get those men the recognition they deserve. You can be sure that they thought they were in the Vietnam War.

I want to take this opportunity to ask some of you **60's** shipmates to send me items which you think will be interesting to your other shipmates! **Pete Peters** has done an outstanding job in keeping in touch. He contributed on the current question, and holds some very definite feelings about the **74** of his shipmates' names getting on that wall!

Please keep me informed of anything you remember of the days when you served on the **USS Frank E. Evans DD-754** I'll be looking for your phone calls, emails, or letters, so let me hear from you! Thanks!