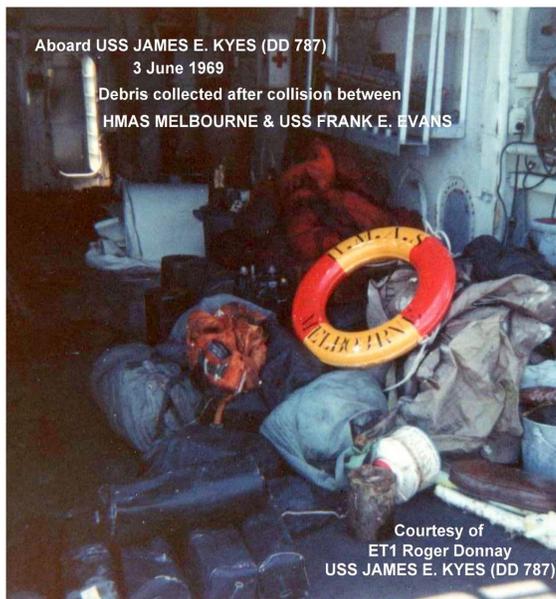


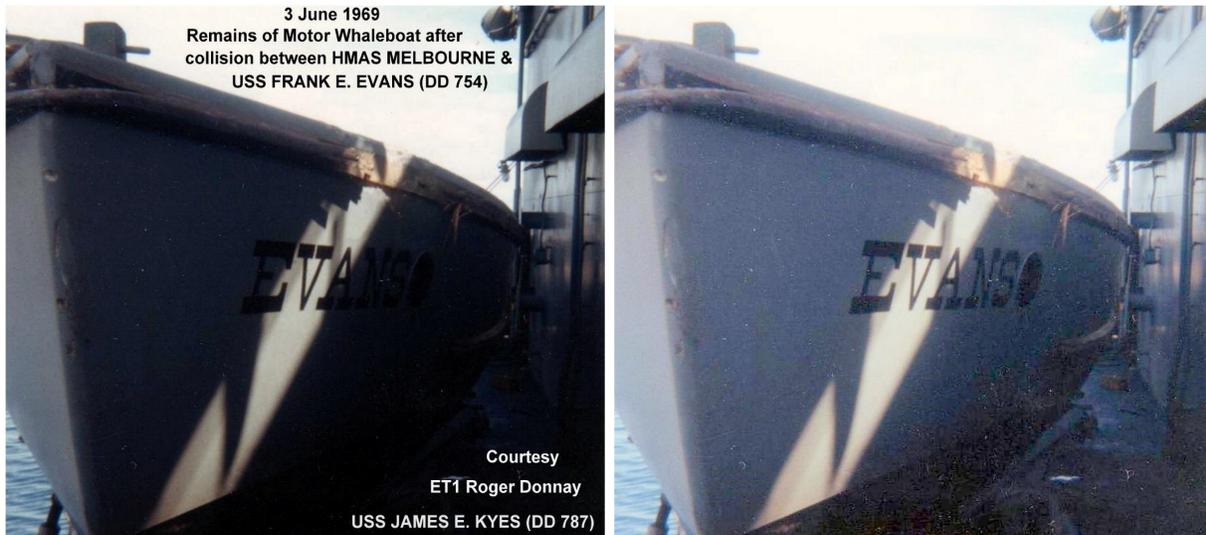
I was aboard USS JAMES E. KYES (DD 787) on the morning of 3 June 1969. KYES and a few destroyers, a submarine and an aircraft carrier, from several nations, were conducting a SEATO exercise as a cold-war show of strength in the South China Sea. Those of us not on watch were asleep in our bunks when the announcement came at 0315 hours that USS FRANK E. EVANS had collided with the carrier. All hands were to immediately go topside to search for survivors.

I will never forget what I saw when arriving on deck: a sea calm as glass, no clouds, and a night filled with stars and a full moon. In the distance, a shadow of the "aft" portion of FRANK E EVANS.

She was only half the length of the ship we had always seen and had accompanied on the last three Westpac cruises. There were no men in the water by the time we reached the deck. The carrier HMAS MELBOURNE had already rescued those who could have been rescued. The remaining 74 had already gone down with the "forward" portion of the ship, which had sunk in less than three minutes. For the next three hours or so, crew members from JAMES E. KYES hauled in floating debris from the collision, including life preservers and the whale boat. We all felt so helpless because we could do nothing at all to save even a single man.



Courtesy of
ET1 Roger Donnay
USS JAMES E. KYES (DD 787)



Within a few hours, USS KEARSARGE arrived to evacuate the survivors. Later in the morning the commander of ASW Group 1 ordered all the ships to form a circle around the location of the collision. The Chaplain from KEARSARGE conducted a memorial service which was transmitted to all ships and played over our loud speakers. We all bowed our heads while a "burial at sea" service was performed exactly over the location where FRANK E. EVANS had sunk more than one mile to the bottom of the South China Sea.

Everyone aboard a U. S. Navy destroyer for three Westpac tours during the Vietnam war was constantly reminded about life being a dangerous game. Occasionally, we felt very vulnerable to the weather, and sometimes to attack by enemy guns and missiles while in the combat zone. What I recall most often from those times at sea was simply going about our routine tasks such as underway replenishment, getting mail from a helicopter, maintaining our equipment, or at-sea exercises and training. There are many stories of injury and death during such routines, some told to me and I told to others from my own experiences. But nothing compares to the loss of a ship and many of her men. I never thought about experiencing such a thing like this in my life-time.

Over the past 42 years I have told the story to many people, but mostly I had put it out of my mind after returning home to the States and going on with my post-Navy life. When I told my friends and business associates about going to Waterloo, Iowa to the Frank E. Evans Association reunion, I also had to tell them why. Many said they didn't even know I was in Vietnam, and none knew about USS FRANK E. EVANS (DD 754) and her story. The average person in America is ignorant of and emotionally far removed from the experiences of men during the Vietnam war, but especially from those of us who spent their time at sea. Stories from Vietnam were always about boots on the ground, rarely about planes in the air or ships at sea.

It is not my intent to diminish the sacrifice of those men whose names are on the Vietnam Wall. We destroyer sailors are bound by a special relationship, by our experiences at sea, and service to our country. The collision on 3 June 1969, tightened those bonds to a point where they can no longer be loosened. On that day, I had many different emotions. I felt a special kinship to the men aboard

FRANK E. EVANS because they were not only Navy men, but because they were Destroyer Navy men, and because they were in my Destroyer Squadron, and because I was an ET and many ETs aboard FRANK E. EVANS were among the lost 74. I was a witness to the events of that day. Even though not aboard FRANK E. EVANS I still felt I was one of the survivors. On that fateful day I became painfully aware of how vulnerable we all were to such a tragedy. Only a few days earlier, USS EVERETT F. LARSON (DD 830) came very close to having a similar collision with the carrier.

Even my wife, back home in Long Beach, was touched by the humanity and the grief. She too had been aboard FRANK E. EVANS several times as she crossed her deck to come aboard JAMES E. KYES. When hearing the news about the collision on television, she screamed in disbelief. She was acquainted with a young wife of one of the lost 74 who lived in our apartment complex. My wife often told the story of how the young, newly married woman would wear her husband's peacoat and never take it off, even in 85 degree weather.

We have all heard stories like this, but what many of you may not know is the story of how FRANK E. EVANS contributed to combat operations in Vietnam even after 3 June 1969. Many FRANK E. EVANS crew may not be aware of how vulnerable our ships were to surface-to-surface missiles when using our guns against coastal targets in North Vietnam.



If you look at a photo of FRANK E. EVANS, you will see the ECM deck, just forward of the Dash Helicopter deck. Above the ECM shack were several domed antennas, one which belonged to a piece of equipment named the ULQ-6. This electronic wonder contained a "travelling wave tube," which was very delicate and very expensive, and seldom survived the rigors of destroyer life. It's purpose was to receive signals from the radar aboard enemy missiles. The ULQ-6 canceled the missile's signal by returning a signal equal in strength but out of phase with the missile's signal which bounced off the ship's hull. Then, ULQ-6 amplified and re-transmitted the signal to the missile with a 12 microsecond delay, thus faking out the missile making it believe we were one mile farther away than our actual position. This caused the missile to fly over the ship and explode in the water a safe distance, one mile away. The ULQ-6 on JAMES E. KYES had been inoperable for weeks because the TWT had failed and we had no replacement part. After FRANK E. EVANS had been towed to Subic Bay, and the survivors had gone aboard to get their gear, the other Desron 23 Destroyers were given an opportunity to salvage anything from FRANK E. EVANS considered valuable to our mission in Vietnam. I heard stories about some of the men who went aboard her could not bring themselves to remove anything because they had a feeling of being in a sacred place. I had those same feelings, but realized how valuable the TWT up in the ECM shack was, and how necessary to our own safety. So I removed it and brought it aboard

JAMES E. KYES. I installed it in our ULQ-6. Imagine my surprise when it came to life! All the ETs on KYES were amazed that such a delicate part could have survived such a chaotic event.

USS JAMES E. KYES (DD 787) was able to participate in a combat operation along the coast of North Vietnam after returning to Yankee Station, only because we were given an extra safety net, contributed by USS FRANK E. EVANS (DD 754).

Contributed by Roger Donnay, ET1, USS JAMES E. KYES (DD 787), Destroyer Squadron 23.

kearsarge pays tribute to evans' missing

In Memorium to those of USS FRANK E. EVANS (DD 754) who died at sea 3 June 1969

When our nation was born on the fourth of July 1776, not all Americans, only a comparative handful, dare proclaim they were its fathers, pledging to one another, their lives and sacred honor, to tell the world here was a land where men would be free.

Destiny is not always fair. Men may starve at a Valley Forge while countrymen profit from their misery; but men have been willing in each generation of our history to pay freedom's price, and have served her at Gettysburg, the Argonne, Iwo Jima, Inchon, and Chu Lai. Still today, some pledge their very lives, and sacred honor. Too often, full payment is asked of that pledge and young lives are offered on freedom's altar, whether it be the inferno of Khe San or the tomb of FRANK E. EVANS.

No one really wants to leave home and loved ones, but to man freedom's distant ramparts, someone has to.

No young man wants to die, but through the 193 years of our country's birth, the list of those who have done so continues to grow.

Now and again the summons sounds.

Someone must serve notice to the world. There is a land where a man, simply because he is a man, can live in liberty and dignity; and assure that they who have died for this cause have not done so in vain, but are in truth, freedom's honored dead.

A Salute, by Chaplain Glynn aboard KEARSARGE

by Vajr