

NAVY, NATION FORGET EVANS

The collision of the Australian aircraft carrier Melbourne and the destroyer Frank E. Evans remains one of the worst disasters in naval history, but there exists even a greater tragedy than the accident ["Ship cut in half like 'a knife through hot butter,'" "Damn the Torpedoes," April 29]. That is the lack of acknowledgment on the part of the Navy and the United States of the sacrifices made by these brave sailors.

How were these 74 heroes acknowledged? They were remembered in a burial-at-sea ceremony aboard the [aircraft carrier] Kearsarge on the way back to Subic Bay by the ship's chaplain. There were no burials provided by the Navy, and the only acknowledgment was limited to family notification. Sadly, the Australian Navy and its government have done more to acknowledge the sacrifice of the Evans sailors than our own Navy or government.

The Vietnam War has been over for 30 years, but, for many, the pain remains. Is there such a thing as healing? Will healing ever ease the memories? Only one body was recovered [from the Evans] after the accident. For the rest, there is no grave or urn of ashes to provide remembrance of these patriots. They will remain nameless and forgotten in death by the country they served faithfully until they join their Vietnam-veteran brothers in arms whose sacrifice is memorialized in stone [on The Wall].

I hope your story will help our quest to make things right.

Thanks for the award-winning stories about my son's ship, the destroyer Cole. Yes, he also is a survivor of a catastrophe at sea.

Mike Smith

survivor, USS Frank E Evans
Camden, S.C.