A Date with Destiny â€“ Part IX

Description

Since 2009, Iâ€™ve had a nagging voice in the back of my head that says â€œYou should try to get recognition for LT Ray Everts. Itâ€™s been very insistent and persistent this past week. This year, Iâ€™m asking for an effort of the greater group of shipmates, who may be able to find some puzzle pieces. Keep reading, Iâ€™ll get to it. First a little background:

I began this story in 2007, 19 years after the fact because I realized it was a story worth telling of the professionalism of my shipmates on USS CARR (FFG-52) and the sailors from USS KENNEDY (CV-67) who saved those men in peril on the sea on April 24th, 1988. I wasnâ€™t there, I reported aboard USS CARR (FFG-52) in late September that year, but in time for the awards to flow in. During that time I heard the first person stories of my crew.

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For many years, it was an integral part of the history of the ship, but that ended as a story among a crew March 13, 2013, when the USS CARR (FFG-52) decommissioned. The story is alive around the web. Part of it here. As I sought out first my shipmates via Navy: Together We Served. I later reached out to those who may have been there, by dates listed aboard the USS BONEFISH (SS-582), USS KENNEDY (CV-67) and USS MCCLOY (FF-1038). While got some dry holes, I found LCDR Pete Wilson, USN who provided a detailed, multi-page input. All those stories, from the several sailors and officers who took the time to provide their view of history, added more context to the day.

Again, I began to tell a story of professionalism, but found a story of heroism, one that had not been reported for the record: It came first from a comment left by Jim Chapman in 2007: He had been the aircrewman in the back of Dusty Dog 613 right on top (they had been practicing dipping on BONEFISH when the fire occurred). Jim lives right near by and we met and he told me what was happening in the helo. They knew sailors were in trouble and needed help, and they did more than the helo was supposed to do, nearly resulting in a crash while trying to hoist more men. That takes guts to keep working a few yards off the water in extreme conditions. Thankfully they and the sailors they pulled aboard all are here to tell the story. In the April 2008 annual post, I recorded Jimâ€™s story to share. He added to my view (and if you read his post, youâ€™ll see he was clear about making sure I had the story right). Jim: BTW, I called CAPT Johnson about 2 years ago and pointed out you and your crew knew exactly what you were doing.

On April 15th, 2008, FT2(SS) Bill Baker left a comment on the 2007 post that told a story of heroism beyond even what the helo crew: LT Everts died in his lap, having safely gotten the boat to the surface, ensuring he didnâ€™t add a collision with a surface ship to the already chaotic, deadly situation. He didnâ€™t put on an EAB, as it would have obstructed his use of the periscope during surfacing. I emailed Pete Wilson, the former XO, and he said that was never related at the debriefings. That began the little voice in the back of my head. The April 2009 anniversary post quoted Bill Bakerâ€™s comments and put what history of Ray Everts I could track down via the internet.

Hereâ€™s my request to my shipmates and family members who may wander by here, itâ€™s also three parts:

- Iâ€™d like to find out how to contact LT Evertâ€™s family. Sounds like he wasnâ€™t married by the many comments, so Iâ€™m assuming his parents would have been the NOKs.
- I want to mount a campaign to complete a virtual 1650 for the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, to acknowledge his selfless sacrifice for his shipmates, the 89 who survived.
- Help to figure out who to submit this to in DoN, or possibly via the serving Congressional senator or representative.

Whoâ€™s in? Spread the word, reach out to commenters on other blogs (thatâ€™s another part of the story), letâ€™s see if we can crowd source the answers and move forward to get this medal in the service record of Ray for the ages.

Leave your comments here, so it can be a group effort. eMail is nice, but this space can be the virtual bulletin board to share anything someone knows.

To those who have, here, and on other blogs, added to this entire story, thank you. The connection of the internet has allowed this moment in time to become a fuller story than any one person has, and also has connected a few sailors from that day.

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And to those, not on the sub, or the helos, or the whale boat, who scrambled to comfort and care for the sailors of the BONEFISH, your efforts were greatly appreciated (go back and skim the comments that have appeared over the years). BZ.

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