

RICHARD J. GLEASON

April 19, 2004

George W. Bush
President of the United States
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed forces
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Re: Request for a new Guided Missile Destroyer (DDG)

Dear President Bush;

In a previous letter to you dated October 29, 2003, I wrote regarding renaming the USS Frank E. Evans (DD-754). I received a letter from Mr. Paul J. Tortora, Director, White House Liaison Office, Office of the Navy regarding my suggestion. Thank you for bringing this matter to the attention of the Navy. I am writing to you again to mention a number of facts that I neglected to include in my first letter, which you may find of further interest.

The original Evans was named in honor of Marine Corps Brigadier General Frank E. Evans (USMC). He was an infantryman in the Spanish-American War and was commissioned in the Marine Corps in 1900. He served in the Philippines with the First Marine Brigade and in the United States before World War I. He sailed for France with the Sixth Regiment of Marines, earning the Navy Cross for heroic service and other awards with the American Expeditionary Force. His post war career included duty in Haiti where he commanded the Constabulary Detachment and was Chief of the Gendarmes d'Haiti. He was also District Marine Officer of several Naval Districts. He retired in 1940 and died in 1941.

The USS Frank E. Evans (DD-754), a Sumner Class Destroyer, was built by Bethlehem Steel Company, Staten Island, New York, and launched in October 1944 under the sponsorship of Mrs. Frank E. Evans, widow of Brigadier General Evans. For the next twenty-five years the ship distinguished itself in service from Okinawa in 1945, through two and a half years in Korea, closure of the Tsushima Straits during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and five years in Vietnam. The Evans was awarded eleven battle stars, one for World War II, five for Korea, and five for Vietnam.

On June 3, 1969, during a training exercise in the South China Seas, an Australian carrier, HMS Melbourne, collided with the Evans in the early morning darkness. The carrier tore the Evans in two and the bow section sank in three minutes, taking seventy-four American crewmen with it. Among the dead were the three Sage brothers from Niobrara, Nebraska; Lawrence Riley of California, whose father, Lawrence Sr. (now of New York), was stationed on the ship with him; and one of two brothers from Michigan, William Brown, was lost while his brother, Melvin, rescued many crewmen and survived. Of the seventy-four men who died, only one body was ever recovered.

Historically, U.S. Navy destroyers are named in honor of Navy and Marine Corps heroes. By renaming the Evans, the nation would be paying tribute again to Marine Corps Brigadier General Evans, as well as the crew who served on board, and those who were lost. There is precedent for renaming ships. The USS Preble (Commodore Preble was a Commander of the USS Constitution, Old Ironsides) has been renamed five times. Also, there presently appears to be an opportunity for renaming a ship. According the Almanac Sea Power for the year 2004, the listing shows hull numbers 100,101 and 102 under construction and apparently unnamed.

For your further information, I am enclosing a videotape of a news report about our effort, which recently aired on Channel 5, the ABC affiliate in Boston. Please take this opportunity to watch it and learn more about the Evans.

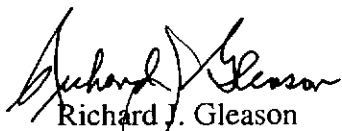
Our Association is committed to its effort to honor the Evans, the crewmembers who served on board over the decades, and the men who sacrificed their lives that day. Each year our association discovers more and more families and loved ones of those who died. We believe these families deserve formal closure on this tragedy, and we believe those who died deserve a fitting memorial.

It is traditional in the Navy that a woman sponsors a new ship. We would be proud if the First Lady, Laura Bush, would have this honor.

In 1969, in a letter of condolences to the family of one sailor President Nixon wrote, "I can assure you that the nation he died to serve shares your grief and will forever honor his memory." We hope that the nation will act now to honor their memory by renaming a new destroyer USS Frank E. Evans (DDG).

Therefore, we respectfully request that you review these additional facts and issue an executive order directing the Department of the Navy to name a new destroyer USS Frank E. Evans (DDG) Thank you for your reconsideration of this request.

Respectfully yours,


Richard J. Gleason
Crewmember 1957-1958

cc: USS Frank E. Evans Association
P.O. Box 164, Granbury, Texas

LEST WE FORGET!