

SHIP'S HISTORY

U. S. S. FRANK E. EVANS (DD-754)

One of many similar hulls laid down during the middle of World War II, the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans is a 2200 ton short hull destroyer, one of the Navy's newest in a long line of vessels stemming from the fast, light, heavily gunned ships conceived in the late 19th Century as "torpedo boat destroyers". Like other modern destroyers, the Evans is equipped to attack and destroy submarines, aircraft, and surface ships with equal ease and deadliness.

The Evans is named for Brigadier General Frank E. Evans (1876-1941) of the U.S. Marine Corps. General Evans served as an enlisted Marine in the Spanish-American War and as an officer in the Philippine Insurrection of 1903 as well as in World War I. General Evans, an often-decorated fighting man, was awarded the Navy Cross for exceptionally meritorious and distinguished service. The General's wife now lives in Lake Charles, Louisiana.

The General's namesake was built by the Bethlehem Steel Company, and was commissioned on 3 February 1945. She took her shakedown cruise and original training in the Cuba and Bermuda area and served briefly in the Atlantic area. In the Pacific she took part in the Okinawa campaign during the final year of World War II and remained overseas to perform post war occupation duty in China and Korea. Then, in company with many other vessels from the powerful Navy that helped to fashion victory in 1945, the Evans was decommissioned on 7 July 1947 and became a member of the "mothball fleet" at San Diego.

At the outbreak of the Korean War, the Evans and her sister ships began to return to the fleet—and to Korea. After more than three years as a number on a plastic-covered hull, the Navy's commission pennant was broken at the Evans' mast on September 15, 1950 in San Diego Harbor as her new officers and crew put the 378 foot ship back into active service.

Like their ship, the crew was mostly reserves—over 95% of them recalled to active duty when war broke out in Asia. Despite her long period of inactivity and that of her crew, she sailed for Japan on 2 January 1951.

During the formative months of our naval blockade the Evans left the comparative safety of the many ships in Task Force 77 and started a cruise along the enemy coast that was to earn her the nickname of "The Grey Ghost" and "The Lucky Evans". She steamed into enemy-held Wonson Harbor on the east coast in company with a cruiser and three other destroyers, to inaugurate a day-and-night siege and bombardment that was lifted only at the time of the Korean Armistice. On the fifth day of the siege, enemy shore batteries took the Evans under fire from three sides for nearly ninety minutes before the destroyer's five inch guns could silence the Communist artillery. This encounter, during which water from the projectile splashes covered the decks, was the first of thirteen running duels with the Communist shore batteries.

With another U. S. destroyer and a Dutch destroyer, the Evans steamed into the enemy port of Songjin to open another continuous naval siege that limited enemy use of an important harbor and supply center.

For a month the Evans ranged the coastline sinking sampans and junks, directing carrier air strikes, hitting Communist supply lines. After a brief stay with TF 77 she was back at the coast line, this time rescuing three downed pilots.

She then returned to TF 77 and led the New Jersey and the Toledo to Wonson. Because of her familiarity with the harbor the Evans was to control the fire of the larger ships on the enemy installations. There was a "well done" from high Navy officials for her part in this action.

Again in Wonson, the Evans learned of heavy damage to a destroyer and to her companion vessel off Songjin. A few days later, a running battle with shore batteries resulted in damage to a patrol vessel close aboard, but the Evans' luck held, only to run out a few days later when shrapnel from air bursts ripped more than forty holes in her thin plating. A quick trip to Japan was made for repairs, and "The Lucky Evans" returned to resume her activities.

On July 4th, the "Grey Ghost" climaxed her first Korean tour with 21 salutes of 21 guns—using selected targets in and near Wonson as aiming points to commemorate American Independence.

A tired but happy crew waved to spectators in San Diego in September after a round trip of 52,000 miles. She had a well earned rest, a fighting nickname, a reputation for luck that was largely hard won excellence, and a new collection of battle ribbons to add to her WWII awards.

In the following months the crew said goodbye to their skipper, Commander G. L. Christie, USN and welcomed Commander N. D. Salmon, USN aboard. Many members of the crew were replaced by new men. There were schools and training and repairs to the ship. In March 1952 the ship left San Diego for Korea via Pearl Harbor. She arrived in TF 77 in mid-April.

(OVER)

In May the Evans was back at her haunts of the previous year, steaming along the east coast of Korea. Then came a period on the Formosa Patrol and a brief respite in Hong Kong. In June she was back on the bomblines re-earning her nicknames of the year before. On 30 August the Evans took the Commander of the United Nations shore bombardment and blockade forces aboard, serving as temporary flagship for Commander TF 95 for two days during a quick trip to Korea and the return to Japan. She then returned to the enemy coastline, and as in the year before, the Evans became an avenging ghost in the eyes of Communist shore observers who sighted her in rapid succession from the front lines to the Manchurian border. During the next twenty-six days, the Evans conducted offshore patrols and continuous shore bombardment of enemy strong points at Hungnam, Tanchon, Songjin, Yongdon, Chongjin, Wonson, Kojo, and the front lines themselves as her guns blistered gray paint until bare metal glinted in the sun.

On October 20th, the Evans left Japan for the second time after a long but successful Korean tour, setting a course for her new home port of Long Beach in company with other ships of Destroyer Division 131. Arriving on 6 November after brief stops in Midway and Pearl Harbor, the ship began a well-earned rest followed by another training period and a short overhaul period.

She returned to Korea in July 1953, but was almost too late for any action. She got to the coast only once, the day before the armistice. The ship continued patrols and training during this cruise and enjoyed a trip to Hong Kong. The in-port periods were longer and the Far East became an enjoyable place during these times. The Evans returned to Long Beach on 20 December and enjoyed Christmas at home. After a 30-day leave period she came in to the Mare Island Naval Shipyard for the latest type of AA guns and firing systems. During early February Commander Salmon was relieved as commanding officer by Commander J. D. Chase, USN. There are now new conveniences for the crew, and habitability items have received high consideration. It is certain that a happier, more comfortable crew and better gunnery systems will be a great asset to our navy and a threat to the enemies of democracy everywhere.

During three tours in Korean waters the Evans: (1) steamed 130,000 miles or more than five times around the world; (2) stayed at sea for 56 consecutive days off Korea, refueling and replenishing at sea; (3) inaugurated the blockade of Wonson and Songjin; (4) fired 20,000 rounds of 5 inch ammunition or about 1,000 tons; (5) won 6 of the 10 combat stars awarded for Korean service to be worn on the Korean Service Medal, and (6) she is now completing a \$1,300,000 overhaul in this yard.
