

March 3, 1997

Rear Admiral G. Dennis Vaughn  
Director of Naval Reserve  
OPNAV NO95  
2000 Navy Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20350

Sir:

The U.S.S. Frank E. Evans DD 754 was initially commissioned at the Brooklyn Naval Yard in the fall of 1944. She served gallantly through World War II. There was a period after the war when she served in the Moth Ball Fleet but in 1949 she was recommissioned. Throughout this correspondence you will note I repeatedly will use the full name "Frank E. Evans". We have been politely reminded and strongly advised to do so by Captain Bill Meyers who was skipper of the Frank E. Evans when she was recommissioned in 1949. He reminds us that there was another "Evans" serving in the Pacific during the same period. Though I'm certain that both ships have gallant records, we must distinguish between the two.

The Frank E. Evans, having gone through numerous retro-fittings and upgrades, was still gallantly sailing the seas until 0415 hrs the morning of 3 June 1969 when she collided with the aircraft carrier HMAS Melbourne while on exercise in the South China Sea. We lost the Frank E. Evans that morning, along with the lives of 74 gallant men. Among the seventy-four were three brothers, Gary, Gregory and Kelly Sage. Their deaths constituted the worst naval family tragedy since the five Sullivan brothers aboard the cruiser USS Juneau in 1942.

In 1992, an old shipmate H.G. Nichols called me one evening and asked, "Were you ever assigned to the USS Frank E. Evans (DD-754)?" Of course, I responded, "absolutely"! Since that fateful evening we have formed the USS Frank E. Evans Association and currently have approximately 300 active members as well as several associate members from the HMAS Melbourne Association.

We have discovered in the process of forming our own association that the Royal Australian Naval Reserve has a very active association for the HMAS Melbourne. One of the most memorable points of history for the HMAS Melbourne is remembering those fateful events on the morning of 3 June 1969 when the Frank E. Evans was lost. Many Australian sailors took action "above and beyond" at a great risk of their own lives to save many lives of American sailors that morning. We have been amazed and extremely gratified to see the length these Australian Naval brothers have gone to, to make certain the events of that fateful morning are not forgotten. We have been somewhat taken aback to note that the people of Australia have not forgotten nor will they ever be allowed to forget because of the actions taken by the HMAS Melbourne Association. In fact they have done so much more to remember ours than we have to remember our own! On 3 June 1969, the 25th anniversary of

when the Frank E. Evans was lost, the HMAS Melbourne Association held a special memorial service and erected a memorial to the USS Frank E. Evans and those lost. Their memorial depicts two clasped hands to indicate that Naval History has forever linked our two ships and our associations, and just as they did from helicopters and life boats that fateful morning, the hands of the HMAS Melbourne continue to reach out to us.

Our own association also held a 25th memorial service, the script of which I've enclosed. This was narrated by a local radio newscaster to the background music of the Naval Hymn "Our Father" sung by the Naval Academy Choir. As the name of each sailor lost was read, a candle was lit in their memory. My purpose in writing is to solicit your membership and support of the association. Additionally, we would respectfully request your attendance at our 6th Annual Reunion on 25-28 September 1997 at the Downtown Marriott Hotel in San Diego, California. We would be especially grateful if you would agree to be our key note speaker at our Saturday evening dinner on the 27th.

Of course Admiral, you know us "ol' shipmates----- nothing comes without a price, but if its worth having it's worth paying for. You see, we would like to put you to work. We will of course be the best yeomen you've ever had. We would like to solicit your support, advise and influence in having one of the 14 new Arleigh Burke-class DDG's currently in production or on the drawing boards named "USS Frank E. Evans" in honor of the 74 men who lost their lives and in memory of all who served.

Our association is reminded each year as we lose members (the numbers of those who served in the 40's is dwindling fast), that in the not too distant future there will be no association nor sailors alive who served aboard the Frank E. Evans. We would like nothing better than knowing that she lives on and will continue to be a contributor to freedom as she sails the seven seas.

We realize this is a lofty goal but one we think will be well worth pursuing. Us ol' sea dogs have taken it a bit further, we would hope to influence the process in such a manner as to have the new "Frank E. Evans" commissioned and have it make port in Sidney, Australia in June 1999 where our Australian Naval brothers are hosting a joint USS Frank E. Evans/ HMAS Melbourne Associations reunion. We see this as a great public relations effort! Lofty Goals? Absolutely! Not unlike the crew of the Frank E Evans or the ship herself, well worth the effort and as noted--an endeavor in which we would welcome your advise, assistance and influence.

Thanking you in advance,

J. C. Campbell, President  
U.S.S. Frank E. Evans Association, Inc.