

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE VIETNAM CONFLICT

Box 4529 / Lubbock, Texas 79409-1013 / (806) 742-3742, 742-3744 / Fax: (806) 742-1060

September 28, 1993

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.
1500 Wilson Blvd., Suite 641
Arlington, Virginia

Dear Admiral Zumwalt:

I enclose herewith a copy of my recent letter to President Lawless requesting permission to go ahead with enlistment of the National Council for the Center.

On an entirely different topic, I take this opportunity to enclose a paper I will be presenting at the Naval Academy's History Symposium in October. It deals with two famous figures from the turn of the century: "Fighting Bob" Evans and William S. Sims. I think the article presents a lot of new information about the relationship that existed between the two during TR's days as president. It also attempts to point out some of the social aspects of officers' life in the Navy at that time.

The paper presents one aspect of the approach I intend to take in my next book on TR's Navy: to make the participants seem more "real" to the reader. I have found this very entertaining comment from Captain Charles D. Sigsbee (the commanding officer of the ill-fated *Maine*) as he waited in 1902 for promotion to rear admiral:

"...it will take great regularity of dying on the part of the fellows above me to give me any great amount of show for my promotion. The list ahead of me may be scanned in vain for any unhealthy or unpatriotic man. Confound them, they won't die, nor will they retire. I would 'bolo' the whole crowd if I were able, and then repent like a gentleman, after promotion."

"...I am simply lashed to my spoke in the wheel of government and revolving with the crowd; just naturally keeping my invariable place, but nothing more."

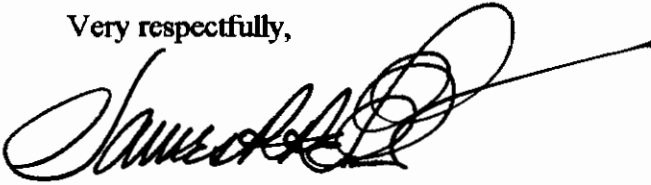
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Such was the state of affairs amongst officers in TR's Navy. A General Board study in 1908 reported that the average promotion age to rear admiral that year was 61 years and two months; mandatory retirement was 62! The frustration senior officers must have felt as the months passed and the chances for a significant sea command dwindled ~~are~~ is easy to appreciate. But all of that will be part of the next book.

Again, Admiral, I offer my heartfelt thanks for your continuing support. I feel certain we will get there...eventually.

Very respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James R. Reckner', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

James R. Reckner

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September 27, 1993

Dr. Robert W. Lawless
President,
Texas Tech University
CAMPUS

Dear President Lawless:

The purpose of this letter is to enlist your assistance in recruiting a National Council for the Vietnam Center Advisory Board. You discussed the idea with Mr. John Lowey and Professor Don Walker during my absence in Washington, and at that time you indicated a desire to be actively involved in any decisions relating to this topic.

At this point we have developed a "job description" for the people we wish to enlist. It is attached. Our idea in so delineating the National Council duties was that we wished to make an absolutely minimal demand for their actual presence here. They are busy men, and at any rate, our budget couldn't support frequent visits. The triennial visit, we anticipated, would occur at the same time as our major Vietnam conferences. This arrangement would make the participating National Council members available to interact with scholars currently working on Vietnam.

The main function of the National Council, as we now envision it, will be for the individual members to lend some of their personal prestige to our endeavor. We believe that such support from nationally recognized individuals will greatly enhance our fund-raising efforts in the years ahead.

Admiral Zumwalt has agreed to actively participate in the recruitment of the National Council, and has agreed, pending your approval, to the "job description" we have devised for these individuals. As to the method of approaching these individuals, should you agree to permit establishment of the National Council, might I suggest a letter from you inviting the individual to take up membership? Such letters of invitation could then be forwarded to Admiral Zumwalt who will, in turn, add a personal message.

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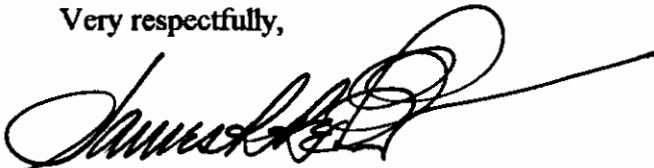
The individuals we have suggested to Admiral Zumwalt (and who Admiral Zumwalt has agreed to approach on our behalf should we choose to do so) include:

Ambassador William Colby	Douglas Pike
General William Westmoreland	William Bundy
James Schlesinger	Melvin Laird
Walt Rostow	General Colin Powell
Ambassador Bui Diem	General P. X. Kelley
Henry Kissinger	General Norman Schwarzkopf
Walter Cronkite	Lt. Gen. P. H. Davidson

I feel reasonably assured that Ambassador Colby and Douglas Pike will accept invitations; probably also Ambassador Diem. The others I have had no direct contact with except William Bundy, who expressed considerable interest in us nearly four years ago when we first started; therefore it is difficult to gauge their probable response.

I received a telephone call from Ambassador William Colby last week to advise that he was shipping his collection of Vietnam-related books (he described the collection as "a room-full" - I have no other indication of the size) to the Vietnam Archive. I am gratified by Ambassador Colby's initiative, not only because of the continued interest he thus displays in our efforts, but also because such a collection doubtless will increase the scope of secondary research materials available here at Texas Tech. Ambassador Colby has also committed to send all of his Vietnam-related research papers to the Vietnam Archive some time in the next few months.

Very respectfully,



James R. Reckner
Director

Teddy's 'Ollie' and the Teflon Admiral: William S. Sims vs. Robley D. Evans in TR's Navy

James R. Reckner¹

More than a quarter century ago Samuel P. Hays examined the municipal reform movement in Pittsburgh during the Progressive Era. Hays concluded that 48% of the reformers were professional men whose interest in reform for the most part "stemmed from the inherent dynamics of their professions." They were men "in the forefront of acquisition and application of knowledge. They were not the older professional men seeking to preserve the past against changes; they were in the vanguard of professional life, actively seeking to apply expertise more widely in public affairs."² How accurately this seems also to describe that small group of officers who sought reform in the United States Navy in the early years of this century! One need only substitute "naval affairs" for "public affairs."

Hays found that 52% of Pittsburgh reformers were businessmen who directed "new" industries, which "had come to dominate the city's economic life";³ Similarly, naval reformers largely were the advocates of the new technologies within the navy.

According to Hays, "the most visible opposition to [municipal] reform and the most readily available target of reform attack was the so called [political] 'machine'."⁴ To line officer reformers the "bureau system," the navy's "machine," was responsible for much of the navy's ills. Power was decentralized; as *The Navy* reported in 1907: "No provision of law exists for any coordination. All [eight] bureaus have equal standing, and each is independent, subject only to the Secretary of the Navy, --free to proceed in its own way, according to the Chief's ideas of the needs and interests of the service....Each element in constructing and equipping a ship is provided for, --except the single, controlling influence necessary...to adapt the vessel most perfectly to her purpose."⁵ Each chief, through long years of service as chief of a specific bureau, in essence was in command of his own

"machine" consisting of officers owing loyalties to the specific bureau which at times overrode the larger loyalty to the navy.

The drama of the municipal reform effort, Hays reported, "lay in the competition for supremacy between two systems of decision-making." One involved "wide latitude for the expression of grass-roots impulses," the other "grew out of the rationalization of life which came with science and technology, in which decisions arose from expert analysis and flowed from fewer and smaller centers..." The same was very much true for the navy. To use labels applied by William S. Sims, the "conservatives" sought to preserve the bureaucratic procedures of the past, while the "insurgents" sought more scientific and systematic arrangements, not just for the improvement of gunnery and the design of battleships, but for management of the navy itself, in the form of a modern naval general staff. To quote Hays one final time, "Those who espoused the former looked with fear upon the loss of influence which the latter involved, and those who espoused the latter looked only with disdain upon the wastefulness and inefficiency of the former."⁶

Commander Albert L Key, one of Sims's close friends and a former aide to President Roosevelt, described this phenomenon much more bluntly:

My cry is to give the "young" officers —the misguided youths under 55, a chance, and down with the senile incompetent old grafters on the retired list, or about to retire, who must devote the whole of their time to a hopeless defense of their errors of administration while on the active list.⁷

The stormy relationship between Rear Admiral Robley D. Evans and Lieutenant Commander (much later Admiral) William S. Sims during the first decade of the twentieth century illuminates well this struggle.

After George Dewey, Rear Admiral Robley D. Evans was the most widely known active duty naval officer of the TR era. A Civil War veteran, one of the few still serving, contemporary journalists compared Evans's "grim, brown, square-jawed countenance" with the battleships he commanded; his "coarse, almost savage mouth" suggested an older age

of "hand-to-hand cutlass fighting and close, fierce ship grapplings."⁸ Evans had acquired considerable institutional strength through marriage to a sister of his Annapolis classmate Henry C. Taylor, and, as a result of early entry into the Naval Academy and advancement related to Spanish War service, he reached the rank of rear admiral at the then remarkably early age of 55. This gave him an unprecedented seven years in flag rank—longer than any other officer of the period—during which he served as commander-in-chief of the Asiatic and later the Atlantic Fleet.⁹

Evans understood well the power of positive publicity. In 1901, he published his autobiography, *A Sailor's Log*,¹⁰ and nine years later, a second autobiographical volume, *An Admiral's Log*.¹¹ He was remarkably popular with the general public. When assigned to escort the German Prince Henry on a tour of the United States in 1902, the "popular enthusiasm" for Evans was "a marked feature of every crowd all along the route."¹² But *A Sailor's Log*, published while Evans was still on active duty, particularly upset former Secretary of the Navy William E. Chandler with its claim that he had bent to political pressure to have Evans removed from a position in the Light House Service while he was Secretary in 1884. On the contrary, Chandler told Secretary of the Navy John D. Long, Evans was one of the few officers he ever encountered who claimed favors of the administration because he was a democrat. He summarized Evans's account of his life in a brief passage heavily laden with cynicism:

"[W]hen I read his frank admissions that he, almost alone, in 1882, changed our naval construction from wooden to steel ships, and thus originated our new Navy; in December 1897, induced Assistant Secretary Roosevelt to provide the fleet in Cuban waters with torpedo boat destroyers and guard boats; and above all, on July 3, 1898, commanding the battle ship *Iowa*, discovered Cervera's fleet coming out of Santiago harbor and destroyed it, I feel that liberal allowances should be made by all true Americans for any mistakes ... which may be made by our greatest self-confessed and self-recorded hero of the War of 1898."¹³

Evans subsequently received a public reprimand for his criticism of Chandler,¹⁴ after which the former Secretary privately dismissed Evans as "a braggart and an ass."¹⁵

A Sailor's Log, published about six months before the Schley court of inquiry, and while Rear Admiral Schley was still on active duty, also fueled the flames of the Sampson-Schley controversy with Evans's negative portrayal of Schley's actions during the *Baltimore* incident of 1891, and his suggestion that Schley might have warranted a "dreadful court-martial sentence" had Cervera escaped from Santiago during the "retrograde movement" in 1898. For the pro-Schley *Baltimore American*, this was proof positive that Evans belonged to "the Sampson-Crowninshield-Long clique." To them, Evans merely endeavored in *A Sailor's Log*, "to boost the fortunes of Admiral Sampson and show his hatred for Admiral Schley."¹⁶

Unfortunately, no significant collection of Evans papers remain; the biographer is compelled to supplement the questionable autobiographies with what few papers may be found in official records and other related collections. The picture that emerges from such sources is one of a man of short temper and long memory, adept at bureaucratic manipulation, and willing to claim full credit for the achievement of others. Charles S. Sperry, a future C-in-C of the Atlantic Fleet, shared many hours with Evans during Evans's tour as C-in-C on Asiatic Station. He found Evans a "pleasant companion";¹⁷ therefore, his private observations are illuminating.

Concerning Evans's flagship, the battleship *Kentucky*, Sperry noted, "Evans has made [Captain Charles H.] Stockton's life a burden....Evans is nervous and meddlesome, and interferes and makes comments all over the ship."¹⁸ "Evans is not the man he is popularly supposed to be....He is rash and intemperate..."¹⁹ Five years later, Rear Admiral Charles M. Thomas also took note of Evans's Atlantic Fleet flagship, the battleship *Connecticut*. After witnessing a heated public argument between the flagship's captain and the admiral's chief of staff, he wrote to his wife Ruth Simpson Thomas [the daughter of yet

another admiral], "The consensus of opinion is that 'things' are rather unharmonious on board the Flagship of the Commander-in-Chief."²⁰

Evidence of Evans's intemperance is not difficult to find. He traveled to Asiatic station on board the steamship *Gaelic* in April, 1902, to take up his assignment there. The *Gaelic* reached Honolulu after midnight on April 16, but, following standard practices, was not boarded by a health officer to grant pratique until 7:40 a.m. According to the captain of the vessel, "the Admiral became incensed over his having been delayed." However, when the health officer did appear, and granted clearance, Evans was in no hurry to leave the ship. But his ill-temper over the perceived delay remained. When *Gaelic* returned to sea, Evans officially reported the medical officer to the Secretary of the Treasury, a measure which generated considerable unpleasantness and correspondence.²¹

A slight to Evans, once noted, was rarely forgotten. When the Paymaster General of the Navy refused to provide Evans with 12,000 pairs of a newly modified uniform trousers for the men of his squadron because 20,000 of the older style were still in stock, Evans placed the Paymaster General on report to the Secretary of the Navy. Paymaster General A. S. Kenny responded by placing Evans on report to the Secretary for failing to observe navy regulations which required Evans to provide him a copy of the original report.²² The issue was seemingly resolved when the Judge Advocate General of the Navy reported that neither officer's reports were sustainable,²³ Clearly, though, the incident was not forgotten.

During the following year, a general court martial on Asiatic Station found an assistant paymaster guilty of drunkenness and "scandalous conduct tending to the destruction of good morale," but assigned a relatively mild sentence. As the convening authority, Evans reviewed the findings, and, dissatisfied, returned them to the court for reconsideration, criticizing the leniency of the sentence. The court stood by its decision, and Evans then approved the findings, but in so doing, he singled out the three junior officers of the court, including two assistant paymasters, saying that "the disgraceful

conduct of Paymaster Nicholson [the subject of the court martial] was less reprehensible than that of those members of the court who succeeded in arriving at the sentence awarded, and thereby bringing the honor of a court martial into disrepute."²⁴ This was a criticism which even the friendly *Army & Navy Journal* found "unbecoming" of the admiral.²⁵

One of the paymasters so criticized, Henry E. Biscoe, appealed to the Secretary of the Navy²⁶ and ultimately to the President, both of whom upheld Evans.²⁷ Hardly had Biscoe's appeals been resolved when Evans went on the attack. When a shortage of supplies was discovered on board Paymaster Biscoe's ship, Evans ordered a court of inquiry. The court recommended nothing more for Biscoe than a reprimand, and that the commissary steward receive a general court martial. Instead, the enlisted man was disgraced by his commanding officer for falsehood, then served as the principal witness against Biscoe at the general court martial ordered by Evans against the recommendation of the court of inquiry!²⁸ The duty of Admiral Evans's new court was clear: Biscoe was found guilty and ordered reduced 50 numbers in seniority.

Biscoe's civilian lawyers filed a formal brief appealing his sentence,²⁹ and Biscoe's father-in-law, Theodore Roosevelt's uncle, Robert B. Roosevelt, approached the President for redress.³⁰ In the end, by direction of the President, Secretary Moody remitted the sentence of the court and issued a letter of reprimand to Biscoe.³¹ As for Evans's role in the affair, President Roosevelt observed that Evans may have "allow[ed] his vindictiveness to cloud his judgement."³² Moody, in response, told the President that he had "always thought that Admiral Evans indulged the sharpness of his pen too much." But, he added, "There should also be taken into account the larger fact, not comforting at all to this accused or his friends, I fear, that Admiral Evans left the Asiatic Fleet in a high degree of efficiency."³³ In essence, Evans's mistreatment of Paymaster Biscoe was excused as the unfortunate, yet necessary, side effect of Evans's demand for efficiency.

Evans's connection with Rear Admiral Henry Clay Taylor provides an interesting insight into how the naval bureaucracy actually worked during the early years of the twentieth century. Widely hailed as the navy's leading strategist and thinker of the period, Taylor served as President of the Naval War College and member of the General Board. On 24 April 1902 he became Chief of the Bureau of Navigation and *de facto* principal advisor to Secretary William H. Moody.

Among the many contentious issues within the Navy Department and Congress during the TR years was the location of coaling stations, those bases vital to extending the operating radius of the growing battlefleet. Similarly, bitter struggles occurred over the evolving designs of battleships, including such issues as the adoption of superposed turrets, and design of the 13,000 ton *Idaho* class (*Idaho* and *Mississippi*). While the official discourse on these topics is well outlined in the appropriate records of the national archives, the personal aspect is equally enlightening.

"Evans and Taylor have been fighting [Rear Admiral Royal B.] Bradford [Chief of the Bureau of Equipment] all along the line and he has been hitting back," Commander Charles S. Sperry confided to his wife. "Bros in law [Evans and Taylor] have been opposing B's coaling stations and he has been opposing their battleship designs." Unable to overcome the honest and outspoken Bradford through frontal assault, Taylor attempted a flanking maneuver: "Taylor has gotten the Secy to accept [Captian William] Swift as the ultimate wisdom and he is solemnly digesting a retinue of coaling stations for the whole world which is evidently not expected to agree with Bradford's vision....[Senator Eugene] Hale has been backing Bradford, and got Frenchman's Bay Coal Depot, and [Secretary of the Navy] Moody intimates that Hale is a jobber, etc., etc." ³⁴

One of the important functions of the Bureau of Navigation was the issuance of orders for all naval officers. Thus, when brother-in-law Evans was sent to the Asiatic Station, Evans's son-in-law, Lieutenant Commander Charles C. Marsh, was ordered to the Orient as naval attache to Peking and Tokyo. And Evans's own son, Ensign Franck Taylor

Evans, a young man with a major drinking problem and a temper possibly even worse than the admiral's,³⁵ was ordered as an additional aide to his father. As Evans was the only flag officer on duty afloat with a third junior officer on his personal staff,³⁶ it seems clear that young Evans was assigned to keep him under his father's protection. Also accompanying the admiral to Asiatic Station was the female branch of the Evans clan, which established residence in Japan: Mrs. R. D. Evans, the Evans's unmarried daughter Virginia, Mrs. Marsh, Ensign Evans's wife Gertrude, and Dora Taylor, Rear Admiral Taylor's unmarried daughter.³⁷ Their presence in Japan, perhaps, sheds some light on Evans's plan, rejected by the Navy Department, to station the Asiatic battleship squadron, including his flagship, in Nagasaki during the Russo-Japanese War. Although Evans later reported to the Secretary of the Navy that his "idea in placing the battleships at Nagasaki was to have a proper force near at hand in case of trouble at Tientsin or Peking which is always threatening."³⁸

It was widely understood that Evans and Taylor conspired to further each other's career. The general outline of the scheme that emerged was that Evans, upon completion of his tour as C-in-C of the Asiatic Fleet, would return home to a temporary position awaiting the end of Taylor's term as Chief of BuNav. When Rear Admiral Albert S. Barker, C-in-C North Atlantic Fleet, retired in March of 1905, Taylor would take that position and Evans would be nominated for the bureau chief slot.³⁹ In the meantime, Taylor enlisted Admiral Dewey to urge passage of the bill creating two vice admirals for the navy: the rank to be held by officers who held the command-in-chief of either the Asiatic or North Atlantic Fleets. "Both Taylor and Evans cultivated Dewey highly. It was evidently Taylor's policy to exalt Dewey in order that Dewey in return might exalt him," a disgruntled Rear Admiral Charles D. Sigsbee later wrote.⁴⁰

In due course, Evans returned to the United States and accepted the presidency of the Lighthouse Board as his "holding" position. Unfortunately for the grand scheme, while on a tour of the Great Lakes, Admiral Taylor died of peritonitis on 26 July 1904.⁴¹ On

the level of strategic thinking, the navy's loss was great; Taylor had been the navy's "mastermind," Reginald R. Belknap wrote.⁴² And Rear Admiral J. B. Coghlan confided to Taylor's widow, "We of the Navy feel that a great light has gone out, and left us to grope in semi-darkness..."⁴³ Taylor's demise could not have been less well timed for Evans, who was then suffering one of many recurring bouts of illness related to his Civil War wounds. He was "not in the best of health and his assignment as chief of the Bureau of Navigation was not contemplated for several months, by which time he hoped to have regained his strength."⁴⁴

Unfitted to take charge of the Navy Department's principal bureau, Evans had to stand aside while Rear Admiral George A. Converse was awarded the prize. Given Evans's vindictive nature, his failure to gain this most influential staff position probably was a stroke of good fortune for the navy. But if the BuNav chiefship was now out of Evans's reach -- the appointments were for four years-- new vistas unfolded in the North Atlantic Fleet.

By September of 1904, Evans had mounted a campaign to gain the command originally slated for his brother-in-law. "Intimate friends" announced that Evans "would not be averse" to return to sea in command of the fleet.⁴⁵ On 8 September Admiral Dewey discussed command of the North Atlantic Fleet with the Secretary of the Navy,⁴⁶ and although there were a number of candidates for the prized position, at least one, Rear Admiral Sigsbee, was convinced that Evans's selection was the fruit of Dewey's support.⁴⁷

Evans assumed command of the North Atlantic Fleet on 31 March 1905. Three months later, Lieutenant Reginald R. Belknap, an officer on the fleet flagship, USS *Maine*, confided to his wife that the fleet still hadn't shaped up.⁴⁸ That little changed in that respect throughout the period of Evans's command is suggested by notes made by Captain Nathan Sargent in the summer of 1907. Sent to the fleet to observe operations for the General Board, Sargent recorded, "Simple evolutions rather raggedly done....Evidence of very little drills." And, illustrative of Evans's abrasive command style, "During exercises C in C's criticisms of commanding officers rather severely made by wireless."⁴⁹

Little noted by historians were a pair of fleet accidents during Evans's tenure as commander-in-chief which reflect upon his leadership. On 7 January 1906, five battleships of the Atlantic Fleet⁵⁰ got underway from New York harbor. Sailing down channel during an unusually low tide at "standard" distance of 400 yards from foremast to foremast, at twelve knots, there was little margin for error. When, negotiating a bend in the channel, the number two ship, *Kentucky*, ran aground; *Kearsarge*, next in line, maneuvered to avoid *Kentucky* and also ran aground. *Alabama*, astern of *Kearsarge*, attempted to swing clear of the two grounded ships, and in so doing, collided with *Kentucky*.⁵¹ Fortunately all three ships avoided major damage. The press was quick to allocate blame: "The responsibility is wholly on Rear Admiral Evans -- unless he can show that the *Kentucky* was, at the time of the grounding, unavoidably out of her proper position. This is not very likely, as he has recently been peremptorily suspending captains by signal from the flagship for deviating from their proper places."⁵² "Admiral Evans should be put on his defense -- and no scapegoat substituted," the *Independent* concluded.⁵³

But Evans escaped censure; Rear Admiral Converse, in his official endorsement of Evans's report of the accident, defended Evans's selection of formation for leaving port, saying it was "the only one in fact which could be used and still retain the semblance of a formation."⁵⁴ Immediately after the grounding and collision, Evans ordered a court of inquiry, which inquired into the actions of the individual ships but did not question the orders issued by the commander-in-chief. In the end, the court concluded that none of the commanding officers were to blame for the accident, responsibility for that having been assigned to an "incompetent helmsman" aboard the *Kentucky*!⁵⁵

When yet another battleship collision occurred, this time while maneuvering in a dense fog off Newport, Rhode Island, in July, 1906, President Roosevelt turned his attention to the problem.⁵⁶ The President correctly attributed the earlier New York accident to "Evans' mistake in taking the ships out in intricate and dangerous navigation in too close order."⁵⁷ Evans, the President asserted, should learn that the idea of training was

"to enable people to take risks, and yet that the risks should not unnecessarily be taken." Yet despite this criticism, Roosevelt added in his own hand at the end of the letter, "But Evans is a first class man."⁵⁸ Even obvious failure did not diminish Evans's aura. Concerning the Newport collision, the President told Secretary Bonaparte that "Evans should explain about sending out those ships in close order in the fog."⁵⁹ Yet the president of the court of inquiry into that collision, Captain Benjamin F. Tilley, did not even interview Evans, limiting his inquiries to the actions of the two battleships involved.⁶⁰

Throughout Evans's years as an admiral, the "astonishingly handsome"⁶¹ William S. Sims was a relatively junior officer.⁶² His accomplishments during the Theodore Roosevelt presidency have been exceptionally well presented by Elting E. Morison,⁶³ however, Morison paid little attention to the Sims-Evans relationship.

There can be little doubt that Sims's efforts to convert the navy to "continuous aim" firing encountered significant resistance, all of which has been documented elsewhere. But Albert Niblack, Sims's predecessor as Inspector of Target Practice, tried to assure Sims that "there was no conspiracy, no ring, no desire to curb you, turn you down, discredit you or anything of the kind."⁶⁴ One of Sims's many faults, however, was that he equated even honest opposition to his reforms with conspiracy, and, increasingly, he labelled those who resisted, "enemies." And, not unlike Evans, Sims had an unfortunate habit of alienating many people with "language and a manner that [were] unnecessarily harsh." As Bradley A. Fiske advised him, "They say you are your own worst enemy."⁶⁵ But Sims saw it differently: "The criticism would be just if it is assumed that the ridicule and sarcasm were not entirely necessary. I am perfectly certain they were, and I used them deliberately..."⁶⁶

Sims had been very fortunate that Rear Admiral Taylor was his superior in Washington when he first became Inspector of Target Practice. Taylor "deplored Sims' virulence," but "never allowed that to stand in the way of using Sims's valuable services and intelligence." But whereas Taylor controlled Sims, Taylor's successor, George A.

Converse, was "intimidated" by Sims's contentiousness; he "hardly endured" Sims and was "all but vigorously opposed to him."⁶⁷

Before Taylor's untimely death, when Evans had been preparing to take over the Bureau of Navigation, he had pressured Taylor to order Sims to sea.⁶⁸ Evans's desire to put Sims to sea related to Sims's gunnery work. The initial reforms, which Sims had begun while on Asiatic Station, had still been in progress when Evans assumed command there. Evans, in his official reports and personal correspondence, had created the impression that he had initiated this work.⁶⁹ To continue Sims as Inspector of Target Practice with Evans as Chief of the Bureau would undermine Evans's claims.

But events, on occasion, follow an unpredictable course. Admiral Taylor died unexpectedly; at the time, Evans was too sick to replace him, and so Sims managed to stay on as Inspector of Target Practice. But when command of the North Atlantic Fleet became available, Evans got it. Thus, Sims, having barely avoided termination of his gunnery duties by Taylor's death, now had to cooperate with Evans as the new commander-in-chief. And he now viewed Evans as one of his principal "enemies" within the service.

By 1906, Sims had convinced himself that Evans's "sinister influence" with the late Admiral Taylor was the reason why no official record of his remarkable gunnery achievements had been included in his record of service.⁷⁰ And in conversations with army Brigadier General Henry G. Sharpe, he learned that Evans had claimed on a number of occasions since 1902 that he had invented the system of "continuous aim" firing which Sims had championed.⁷¹ But within the service the truth was almost universally known. Commander William S. Benson, a future Sims antagonist, in 1906 expressed the hope that Sims's "phenomenal work" would be recognized, and said he would be "delighted to lose a number" in seniority to have Sims advance.⁷²

By March of 1907, Evans was again suffering from complications from his Civil War wounds.⁷³ At this point Sims saw his opportunity to act. In a memorandum to the

President, sent outside the Navy Department chain of command, Lieutenant Commander Sims detailed Rear Admiral Evans's failure to carry out the Navy Department's wishes concerning practice of the General Board's Battle Plan No.1 throughout 1905 and 1906 and his intention not to carry out the practice during the spring maneuvers of 1907.⁷⁴

Evans's normal tour in command of the fleet was scheduled to expire on 1 April 1907. "He is incapacit[ate]d by chronic illness for the arduous duties of the position," Sims told the President. The second in command, Rear Admiral Charles H. Davis (Senator Henry Cabot Lodge's brother-in-law and therefore politically influential in the Roosevelt administration), was nearing retirement.⁷⁵ And the two remaining flag officers with the battleship fleet "have just been ordered as divisional commanders and ... are in no way fitted to take up the work of training our battle fleet...in battle tactics."

Sims suggested that the real problem was that "the most important commands were obtained largely through personal and other influences," with the result "that the administration of the fleet by officers so selected is a personal one, often to the extent of a total disregard of the important tactical studies made by the War College and the General Board," as in the case of Evans.⁷⁶

Immediately after having, in effect, put Evans on report to the President, Sims, as Inspector of Target Practice, headed south to join Evans for the annual target practice. Upon his arrival at Guantanamo, an understandably tense Sims reported to the admiral.⁷⁷ Evans asked whether Sims had seen reports in the *New York American* that the decision had been made to relieve him of command. Sims replied that he had not seen that article, but understood that a similar one had appeared in the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. At the end of this tense discussion, Evans looked directly at Sims and said, "Some 'white mouse' [read Sims] has been talking to the President, and I'd just like to know who it was."⁷⁸ Evans, no stranger to intrigue, eventually concluded that certain members of the General Board had conspired to have Rear Admiral Caspar F. Goodrich replace him, but that by April the intrigue had failed and "only the rotten smell of it" remained. Evans questioned the

General Board's motives, and concluded, with remarkable arrogance, "Of course, the [General] Board must know that they are on trial before the service and not I!"⁷⁹

A few days later, Evans, in the course of an after-dinner discussion, said that Sims had been able to effect his reforms "through the President's friendship -- and added: If any one of us had attempted to do the same thing in the same way we would probably have been court-martialled." Privately Sims noted, "Observe that the last remark assumed that "we" knew how to do it, but were too subordinate to take the unusual (and insubordinate) measures I am supposed to have employed."⁸⁰

By the summer of 1907, President Roosevelt had made the decision to send the Atlantic battleship fleet on its famous cruise around the world. Interestingly, Sims and Evans were in agreement in opposing the cruise. Evans, Sims noted, "is very much opposed to the Pacific cruise, in fact says violent things against it -- that it is political, to catch the Pacific vote, and is also due largely to the influence of Jim Bennett's Russian mistress (though he designated the lady by a less conventional name)."⁸¹

Sims felt that Evans agreed to the cruise because to object would be to risk being relieved of command by the President, who was determined that the cruise would go forward. In fact, Evans's health was a source of growing concern. In May he temporarily relinquished command to Rear Admiral Davis,⁸² and an October series of public denials that Evans was ill again suggest just the opposite.⁸³ Removing Evans from command was discussed in a Cabinet meeting. "The opinion of the President and his Cabinet was that Evans is in no condition for the job, but that it would be the better policy to let him go and make the 'try'," rather than risk a newspaper sensation before the sailing of the fleet.⁸⁴

During his years as Inspector of Target Practice, Sims had continued to examine and criticize the design of America's new battleships. These reports he had sent to the Navy Department through the normal chain of command, where they eventually reached the Board on Construction, only to languish. Sims's increasing frustration with his inability to effect changes in battleship designs led him to further criticism of the

organization of the Navy Department itself, for, in his view, it was the faulty department organization which made possible the perpetuation of design errors in the battleship fleet.

By late 1907, Sims had concluded that he would be unable to effect change within the organization, and therefore when Henry Reuterdaahl, a noted marine artist and American editor of *Jane's Fighting Ships*, approached Sims to clear an article on the battleship design errors and the need for reorganization within the Navy Department, Sims agreed to permit Reuterdaahl to publish information he had earlier provided. The resultant article, "The Needs of Our Navy," appeared in the January, 1908, edition of *McClure's Magazine*,⁸⁵ which went on sale shortly after the Atlantic battleship fleet departed for its highly publicized cruise to the Pacific.⁸⁶

The public outcry raised by Reuterdaahl's criticisms led Senator Eugene Hale, Chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, to hold hearings into the alleged battleship defects. This confrontation pitted Sims and his friends against Sims's own immediate superior in the Navy Department, Rear Admiral George A. Converse. Converse, along with Chief Constructor of the Navy Washington L. Capps, had been tasked with rebutting the Reuterdaahl claims. When Sims and his "insurgent" friends seemed to be proving the validity of the criticisms, a development unanticipated by Senator Hale, the committee went into executive session and then adjourned without issuing any findings.⁸⁷ The reformers, frustrated in their efforts, would seek one more test before the end of the Theodore Roosevelt presidency.

While Sims and his friends fought a bitter bureaucratic battle in Washington, Evans was fighting an equally bitter health battle as the fleet circumnavigated South America. Although the *New York Times*, on the eve of the fleet's departure described Evans as an "efficient survival of the Civil War" who was "looking younger every day,"⁸⁸ nothing could have been further from the truth. At the fleet's first port of call, Trinidad, Rear Admiral Charles M. Thomas recorded that Evans was "Not at all well, worn and tired in appearance and manner."⁸⁹ He was unable to attend the officers' Christmas reception

the next day,⁹⁰ and as the fleet sailed south to Rio de Janeiro, his condition worsened. His chief of staff, Captain Royal R. Ingersoll confided to Rear Admiral Charles S. Sperry that "for the first time the admiral seemed to lose his grip," and one night Ingersoll "was afraid he could not live." Sperry was "alarmed"; he had never seen Evans "look so ill and frail."⁹¹ A plan was hatched to relieve him if his health did not improve while the fleet was in Punta Arenas, Chile, but at the last minute he apparently showed some signs of recovery. Nevertheless, Thomas reported that Evans had "taken so many opiates to relieve pain that it has knocked out completely his stomach, so that he is now unable to eat solids and is living on milk."⁹²

Thomas, who performed all social functions in Evans's place, thought it "criminal" to the navy and the fleet that Evans retained command.⁹³ But it seemed unlikely that Evans would willingly give it up: "he is the greatest Cormorant for Power that I have ever seen," Thomas recorded.⁹⁴ The reason Evans was permitted to stay was obvious to Thomas: "No other man in the Navy but Evans would be kept in command of a fleet a single day, in his condition, but the prestige of his name goes a long way."⁹⁵

By the time the fleet reached Magdalena Bay, Mexico, Evans's condition had further deteriorated. On 30 March he headed north to recuperate at the Paso Robles health resort, while the fleet conducted target practice. But even in this situation he refused to relinquish command, choosing, rather, to take leave.⁹⁶

The American public received daily announcements from Paso Robles indicating a gradual improvement in health,⁹⁷ but when the fleet reached Santa Cruz and Evans rejoined it for his triumphal entry into San Francisco, he clearly had not improved:

"Admiral Evans was met at the wharf by a launch from the flagship. Four picked seamen lifted him from the train, placed him in an invalid's chair, and rolled him to the launch. He walked down the ladder to the launch, leaning on a crutch and aided by two seamen, who assisted him at every step. When the launch was alongside the *Connecticut* ropes were lowered and attached to a chair, and

the Admiral was hoisted to the deck."⁹⁸

"[I]n another minute," *Current Literature* noted, "the Commander of the greatest fleet in American history was again on deck and again in command."⁹⁹ That the "Commander of the greatest fleet in American history" was an aged invalid incapable of exercising effective command elicited no unfavorable public comment; such was Evans's remarkable—and remarkably unwarranted—popularity.

The next day Evans "led" the combined Atlantic and Pacific Fleets to a tumultuous welcome in San Francisco. Evans, who had criticized Rear Admiral Montgomery Sicard for retaining command in 1898 when a younger, more healthy man might have rendered better service in the crisis immediately following the sinking of the *Maine*,¹⁰⁰ had himself retained command of the fleet for four months while totally incapacitated. During that period the fleet had undergone a most important operational test while Evans's chief of staff, Captain Royal R. Ingersoll, ran the affairs of the fleet and Rear Admiral Charles M. Thomas met all of the extensive social requirements during port visits.¹⁰¹

In San Francisco, Evans finally relinquished command. At a farewell dinner at the St. Francis Hotel, he excoriated Sims and the other reformers who had so publicly criticized battleship design faults. "It is not armor belts or waterlines that win battles," he claimed. "It is the men who shoot the straightest and hardest and can stand punishment the longest. If you have such men...it makes no difference whether the armor belts are of leather or wood, or eggshells, or anything else."¹⁰²

The location of armor belts had been one of the substantive issues of the recently aborted Senate hearings into battleship defects. Evans's own view of armor belt location apparently had evolved considerably during the cruise to the Pacific. In August, 1907, commenting on reports that American battleships, when fully laden, often had their armor belts either awash or completely submerged, he expressed the belief that such belts were "a mistake" unless they were so placed "as to give maximum protection possible by waterline

armor when the fleet goes into action. This is not possible when the waterline armor belt is submerged, or nearly so."¹⁰³

In his formal report of the cruise, Evans concluded that even with "smooth seas, and practically no wind, the swell at times caused such rolling and pitching as to expose the lower portion of the armor belt even at heavy load, hence the lower limit of armor should not be raised."¹⁰⁴ In essence, although Evans had publicly conceded that the upper level of the armor belt was too low, he now observed that the lower level of the belt wasn't low enough!

This was Evans's final formal report, and it caused anguish for Sims and friends who were even then preparing for a major struggle over the design of the new dreadnought battleship *North Dakota*, which, Lieutenant Commander Frank K. Hill reported, would also float lower in the water than calculated when she was ready for battle.¹⁰⁵ Evans's report was a valuable tool in limiting change to the *North Dakota* class design: a total of four ships.

But even as Evans underwent surgery and then went on the retired list in August of 1908, Sims and the "insurgents" did battle with their "enemies" at the Newport Conference (July-August 1908). In the end, reaction prevailed in the short-term, with the majority at the conference voting to not significantly alter the *North Dakota* plans. But in the long term, the navy benefitted from the conference decision that future battleship designs would be reviewed by a board of sea-going line officers before their approval.¹⁰⁶

In the final days of the Roosevelt administration, Evans, now retired, embarked on a highly publicized lecture tour, and published a series of critical articles in *Hampton's Magazine*,¹⁰⁷ which attempted to refute the Reuter Dahl criticisms.

Sims, who had fearlessly campaigned for reform of gunnery, improvement of battleship designs, and, perhaps most importantly, for reform of the Navy Department organization, was rewarded during TR's final days as president. When Sims advised Roosevelt that none of the many reports he had made throughout what had been a full

decade of intense effort had been entered into his record,¹⁰⁸ the President ordered the Navy Department to assemble them and attach them to his service record along with a presidential letter of commendation.¹⁰⁹ And in an extraordinary measure, Roosevelt had Navy Regulations, which limited command of battleships to captains, altered to permit the newly promoted Commander William S. Sims to assume command of the battleship *Minnesota*.¹¹⁰

Sims had successfully used his command of the navy's new technology to effect changes on a broader scale. He used the influence he gained through his extraordinary achievements in gunnery to campaign for improvement in battleship design procedures, reorganization of the Navy Department, and improved promotion methods. In the process, Sims also actively promoted himself. He became the most widely known junior officer of the navy, and had a devoted following amongst junior officers. As Commander William S. Benson wrote, "There is a very strong feeling among many officers of the service...that there is but one God and the Inspector of Target Practice is his prophet."¹¹¹ But within the service, his campaign for reform during the TR years had also exposed his personal flaws, which became so critical after World War I, and ensured he would never take the helm as Chief of Naval Operations.

Despite his remarkable energy, and the breadth of his reform endeavors, Sims had been unsuccessful in his efforts to unseat Evans. Within the rigid military structure of TR's navy, success in that endeavor was unlikely in any case. Evans was not one of the ordinary run of flag officers of the period; his largely self-generated popularity further worked against any effort to discredit him.

Shortly after Evans's death in 1912, Navy Chaplain Father Matthew C. Gleeson wrote, "it might be well if some citizen with a passion for accuracy would...write our public librarians, and have both the *Sailor's Log* and the *Admiral's Log* fittingly shelved among prominent works of fiction. As long as they are looked on as volumes plentifully besprinkled with fact, well-meaning men...will be constantly using them as reference

books."¹¹² But no such correction ever occurred, and Evans's reputation survived the many professional criticisms within the service. In the process, he became a hero to a whole generation of young Americans, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, who in 1931 wrote:

His will always be a household name among those of us who love the Navy and its glorious record; his will always be a personality which will live in the traditions of the Service."¹¹³

Notes

- ¹ Research for this paper was made possible by the Navy Historical Center's grant of the Secretary of the Navy's research chair in naval history for 1991-1992. I gratefully acknowledge this invaluable support.
- ² Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 55, no.4 (Oct. 1964): 160.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid., 162
- ⁵ "The Bureau System," *The Navy*, 1, no. 10 (Oct. 1907): 35.
- ⁶ Hays, 168-169.
- ⁷ Albert L. Key to William S. Sims, 3 April 1908. Sims Papers, Navy Historical Foundation collection, Library of Congress (hereafter, Sims Papers).
- ⁸ Richard W. Turk, "Robley D. Evans: Master of Pugnacity," 73-74, quoting "The Adventurous Career of 'Fighting Bob' Evans," *Current Literature* 42 (January 1907): 35.
- ⁹ Promoted to rear admiral 11 Feb. 1901; C-in-C Asiatic Fleet 29 Oct. 1902 - 21 Mar. 1904; C-in-C North Atlantic Fleet 31 Mar. 1905 - 9 May 1908. Dates from Naval Historical Center Operational Archives, "ZB" File, Box 74. For a brief summary of Evans's career, see William B. Cogar, *Dictionary of Admirals of the U.S. Navy*, vol.2 (1901-1918) (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991): 84-85. The most recent biographical treatment of the admiral is Richard W. Turk, "Robley D. Evans: Master of Pugnacity," in James C. Bradford, ed., *Admirals of the New Steel Navy: Makers of the American Naval Tradition, 1880-1930* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990): 73-96.
- ¹⁰ Robley D. Evans, *A Sailor's Log* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1901).
- ¹¹ Robley D. Evans, *An Admiral's Log* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1910).
- ¹² *Army & Navy Journal* 39 (8 March 1902): 668.
- ¹³ William E. Chandler to John D. Long, 15 July 1901. Long Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS). Also published in *Army & Navy Register* 30 (17 Aug. 1901): 128.
- ¹⁴ Assistant Secretary of the Navy Frank H. Hackett to Evans, 9 Aug. 1901. *Army & Navy Register* 30 (17 Aug. 1901): 128.
- ¹⁵ Chandler to Long, 13 Aug. 1901. Long Papers, MHS.
- ¹⁶ "The Conceit of 'Fighting Bob': A Sailor's Log a Record of Self-Glorification." *Baltimore American*, 5 May 1901, p.33.
- ¹⁷ Sperry to Edith M. Sperry, 4 Aug. 1902. Sperry Papers, Navy Historical Foundation collection, Library of Congress (hereafter, Sperry Papers).
- ¹⁸ Sperry to Edith M. Sperry, 6 Nov. 1902. Sperry Papers.
- ¹⁹ Sperry to Edith M. Sperry, 11 Dec. 1902. Sperry Papers.

- ²⁰ Charles M. Thomas to Ruth S. Thomas, 25 Dec. 1907. Thomas Papers, Navy Historical Foundation collection, Library of Congress (hereafter, Thomas Papers).
- ²¹ Evans to Secretary of the Treasury, 17 April 1902. This and related correspondence is contained in National Archives, Record Group 80, entry 19, case 14662. Such documents hereafter cited as: NA, RG 80:19/14662.
- ²² A.S. Kenny to SecNav William H. Moody, 17 Nov. 1902. NA, RG80:19/15136-2.
- ²³ NA, RG 80:19/15136-2. See also, *Army & Navy Register* 33 (10 Jan. 1903): 1.
- ²⁴ Asiatic Fleet General Court Martial Order No. 22, 7 Aug. 1903. Published in *Army & Navy Journal* 41 (26 Sep. 1903): 90.
- ²⁵ "Encroachments of Executive Authority." *Army & Navy Journal* 41 (3 Oct. 1903): 114.
- ²⁶ NA, RG 24:88/4161-1. See also, *Army & Navy Register* 34 (24 Oct. 1903): 3; (14 Nov. 1903): 2; (21 Nov. 1903): 12, 20.
- ²⁷ Captain John E. Pillsbury (Acting ChBuNav) to Biscoe, 12 Jan. 1904. NA, RG 24:88/4161-1.
- ²⁸ Paymaster General of the Navy to SecNav, 23 June 1904. Samuel McGowan Papers, Navy Historical Foundation Collection, Library of Congress. Hereafter, McGowan Papers. By comparison, when Evans was president of the General Court Martial of Commander Benjamin F. Tilley, accused of drunkenness and gross immorality when Governor of American Samoa, he refused to permit enlisted men to testify against the officer, even though they were the principal witnesses still on station.
- ²⁹ A copy of the appeal is contained in the McGowan Papers.
- ³⁰ Robert Barnhart Roosevelt had taken the young TR into his law offices when TR had decided at one point that he wished to study law. William H. Harbaugh, *The Life and Times of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975): 25.
- ³¹ Moody to BuNav, 30 June 1904. NA, RG 24:88/4161-10.
- ³² TR to Moody (Private), 20 Feb. 1904. William H. Moody Papers, Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass.
- ³³ Moody to TR, 25 June 1904. Attached to TR to Bonaparte, 30 Nov. 1906, in Charles J. Bonaparte Papers, Library of Congress. The Biscoe case became a *cause celebre* and was extensively reported in service journals. See, for examples, *Army & Navy Register* 35 (27 Feb. 1904): 2; (19 March 1904): 2; (9 April 1904): 4; (22 April 1904): 3; (14 May 1904): 2; (21 May 1904): 2 (11 June 1904): 2-3. Moody's findings were published in *Army & Navy Register* 36 (2 July 1904): 4, and Biscoe's public reprimand in *Army & Navy Register* 36 (9 July 1904): 5.
- ³⁴ Sperry to Edith M. Sperry, 21 Nov. 1902. Sperry Papers.
- ³⁵ The young Evans had had *eight* reports filed against him in 1901 alone; four for drunkenness, one for disrespect to the executive officer of his ship; three for either leaving the ship without authority, or failing to return to the ship at the time ordered. More spectacular misdeeds followed in 1908 immediately after he lost his father's protection. See SecNav Truman H. Newberry to Attorney General, 2 March 1909. NA, RG80:19/26282-26:2). According to Sims, Franck Evans was "an utter swab and should

have been dismissed long ago – and would have been if he had not been protected by his father." Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 3 Oct. 1908. Sims Papers.

³⁶ See, for example, *List and Station of the Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the Navy of the United States, etc...., July 1, 1902* (Washington:GPO, 1902): 70-76.

³⁷ "Americans in Japan," *Army & Navy Journal* 40 (6 Sep. 1902):16. See also, *Army & Navy Journal* 41 (26 Sep. 1903): 93.

³⁸ Evans to SecNav, 27 Feb. 1904. NA, RG 45:464/"OO", Box 470.

³⁹ *Army & Navy Register* 35 (30 Apr. 1904): 2; (18 June 1904): 3; *Army & Navy Journal* 41 (18 June 1904): 1097; (25 June 1904): 1121. Sims called this "the Taylor-Evans family-combination scheme." Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 30 March 1907. Sims Papers.

⁴⁰ RADM Charles D. Sigsbee to Edward R. Johnstone, 23 Feb. 1905. Johnstone was connected with the *Minneapolis Times*. Sigsbee Papers, SC16148, box 35, New York State Historical Society, Albany, NY (hereafter, Sigsbee Papers, NYSHS).

⁴¹ Asst. SecNav Charles H. Darling to TR, telegram. 27 July 1904. NA, RG 24:88/2780-42.

⁴² Reginald R. Belknap to Julie Belknap, 8 April 1905. Belknap Papers, Naval War College manuscript collection 103, series 1, box 8, folder 7 (hereafter, Belknap Papers).

⁴³ RADM J. B. Coghlan to Mrs. H.C. Taylor, 28 July 1904. Taylor Papers, Navy Historical Foundation collection, Library of Congress.

⁴⁴ *Army & Navy Register* 36 (30 July 1904): 3.

⁴⁵ *Army & Navy Journal* 42 (10 Sep. 1904): 37.

⁴⁶ *Army & Navy Journal* 42 (10 Sep. 1904): 29.

⁴⁷ Sigsbee to Edward R. Johnstone, 23 Feb. 1905. Sigsbee Papers, NYSHS.

⁴⁸ R.R. Belknap to Julie Belknap, 29 June 1905. Belknap Papers, series 1, box 8, folder 8.

⁴⁹ Sargent notebook, entries for 26, 27 Aug. 1907. Sargent Papers, Navy Historical Foundation collection, Library of Congress.

⁵⁰ The North Atlantic Fleet was officially redesignated the United States Atlantic Fleet on 1 Jan. 1906. Charles J. Bonaparte to Evans, 1754/225, 28 Dec. 1905. NA, RG 45:464/"OO", Box 473.

⁵¹ For reports of the individual ships involved, see NA, RG 45:464/"HK", Box 183. For a personal account, see Reginald R. Belknap to Julie Belknap, 8 Jan. 1906. Belknap Papers, series 1, box 8, folder 12.

⁵² "A Damaged Squadron," *Independent* 60 (11 Jan. 1906): 122.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵⁴ 2nd Endorsement to Evans to SecNav, No.56-D, 7 Jan. 1906. NA, RG45:464/"HK", Box 183.

- ⁵⁵ "Naval Collision." *Army & Navy Register* 39 (30 June 1906): 4. The commanding officer's responsibility for employing an "incompetent helmsman" during critical navigation was not addressed.
- ⁵⁶ Official correspondence relating to this collision is contained in NA, RG 45:464/"HK", Box 183.
- ⁵⁷ TR to Charles J. Bonaparte, 6 Aug. 1906. Charles J. Bonaparte Papers, Library of Congress.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ TR to Bonaparte, 16 Aug. 1906. Bonaparte Papers, LC.
- ⁶⁰ For text of the opinion of the court of inquiry, see *Army & Navy Register* 40 (8 Sep. 1906): 18. Tilley, whose career had been saved by Evans's shoddy 1901 general court martial proceedings over charges that Tilley, as governor of American Samoa, had regularly been drunk and had behaved in a scandalous manner in public with Samoan women, would naturally be disinclined to pursue Evans's responsibility. For a detailed description of Tilley's transgressions as governor, see Edward J. Dorn to Secretary of the Navy, 17 May 1901 [letter not sent], and "Memorandum of a conversation with Comdr. B. F. Tilley on May 17th 1901." Both in Edward J. Dorn Papers, Navy Historical Foundation collection, Library of Congress.
- ⁶¹ Elting E. Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1940): 15.
- ⁶² Lieutenant, 1 Jan. 1897; lieutenant commander, 21 Nov. 1902; commander, 1 July 1907. Cogar, *Dictionary of Admirals of the U.S. Navy* 2:255.
- ⁶³ Elting E. Morison, *op. cit.*.
- ⁶⁴ Albert P. Niblack to Sims, 7 Dec. 1902. Sims Papers.
- ⁶⁵ Bradley A. Fiske to Sims, 18 March 1905. Sims Papers.
- ⁶⁶ Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 2 July 1905. Sims Papers.
- ⁶⁷ Reginald R. Belknap to Julie Belknap, 8 April 1905. Belknap Papers, series 1, box 8, folder 7.
- ⁶⁸ For discussions of this, see Sims to Homer C. Poundstone, 23 June 1904, Sims to B. H. McCalla, 23 June 1904, Sims to unidentified captain, 19 August 1904, and Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 30 March 1907. All Sims Papers.
- ⁶⁹ See Sims to unidentified captain, 19 Aug. 1904, and Robley D. Evans to Henry C. Taylor, 11 Sep. 1902. Both Sims Papers.
- ⁷⁰ Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 31 July 1906. Sims Papers.
- ⁷¹ See, for example, Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 14 July 1906, 18 July 1906. Sims Papers. On 12 October 1906 Evans told Navy Chaplain Matthew Gleeson, "I organized [the present system of gunnery training] in China in 1902, and have brought it up to its present state of efficiency." Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 13 Oct. 1906. Similarly, Lt. I. V. Gillis in 1906 formally proposed the engineering competition program adopted by the

Atlantic Fleet in 1908. Yet Evans "allowed the world to believe that he had evolved it in his own brain." I.V. Gillis to Sims, 7 Sep. 1908. Sims Papers.

⁷²Commander William S. Benson to Sims, 12 Nov. 1906. Sims Papers.

⁷³ These wounds were suffered storming Fort Fisher in 1865. The nature of his ailment was variously described as rheumatism and rheumatic gout. For indications of this recurring illness, see Charles S. Sperry to Edith M. Sperry, 28 Nov. 1902, Sperry Papers, *Army & Navy Journal* 41 (31 Oct. 1903):213, and *Army & Navy Register* 38 (7 Oct. 1905):11.

⁷⁴ Sims memo to the President, March, 1907. For a later critical public discussion of the lack of battle practice for the Atlantic Fleet, see, "Have We Any Battle Tactics," *The Navy*, 1, no.6 (June, 1907):12-13. This article claimed that the fleet had had a total of ten hours of battle practice --all prearranged-- since the war with Spain nearly ten years earlier. Writing to his wife, Sims reported that the article reflected what the President had earlier been told. Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 22 June 1907. The President had been briefed by Catholic Navy chaplain Matthew C. Gleeson, both about the state of battle practice, and Evans's attitude toward it, which the President termed "incomprehensible." Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 12 March 1907. Sims Papers.

⁷⁵ Approaching retirement notwithstanding, Senator Lodge had appealed directly to Secretary Charles J. Bonaparte to appoint his brother-in-law to the command-in-chief should Evans step down. H.C. Lodge to Bonaparte, 2 Nov. 1906. Bonaparte Papers, Library of Congress.

⁷⁶ Sims Memorandum for the President, February 1907. Sims Papers.

⁷⁷ Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 9 March 1907. Sims Papers.

⁷⁸ Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 11 March 1907. Sims Papers.

⁷⁹ Evans to Charles S. Sperry, 11 April 1907. Sperry Papers. The General Board-Evans conflict eventually reached the press. See *Army & Navy Register* 42 (28 Sep. 1907): 6 and (5 Oct. 1907): 7.

⁸⁰ Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 14 March 1907. Sims Papers.

⁸¹ Sims to Anne Hitchcock Sims, 13 Sep. 1907. Sims Papers.

⁸² *Army & Navy Register* 41 (11 May 1907): 9.

⁸³ See, for example, *New York Times*, 14 & 16 October 1907, and *Army & Navy Journal* 45 (19 Oct. 1907): 161.

⁸⁴ Charles M. Thomas to Ruth S. Thomas, 20 Dec. 1907, quoting Henry Reuterdaahl. Thomas Papers.

⁸⁵ Henry Reuterdaahl, "The Needs of Our Navy," *McClure's Magazine* 30, no.1 (Jan. 1908): 251-263.

⁸⁶ For a detailed treatment of the world cruise of the Great White Fleet, see James R. Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988).

⁸⁷ The best treatment of these hearings is contained in Morison, *Admiral Sims and the Modern American Navy*, pp. 184-199. But see also, Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great*

White Fleet, 61-75. A transcript of the Hearings was published; see, *U.S. Senate, Hearings Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, on Bill S.335* (Washington: GPO, 1908).

⁸⁸ *New York Times*, 15 Dec. 1907.

⁸⁹ Charles M. Thomas to Ruth S. Thomas, 24 Dec. 1907. Thomas Papers.

⁹⁰ Charles M. Thomas to Ruth S. Thomas, 25 Dec. 1907. Thomas Papers.

⁹¹ Charles S. Sperry to Edith M. Sperry, 14 Jan. 1908. Sperry Papers.

⁹² Charles M. Thomas to Ruth S. Thomas, 2 Feb. 1902. Thomas Papers. Ironically, while Thomas grappled with Evans's illness, in a skit performed by the "Larboard Watch" at the 23rd Gridiron banquet, joking reference was made to Evans's health:

"What were Admiral Evans' orders?"

"Those weren't orders. They were prescriptions."

Army & Navy Register 43 (1 Feb. 1908): 16.

⁹³ Charles M. Thomas to Ruth S. Thomas, 14 Jan. 1908. Thomas Papers.

⁹⁴ Charles M. Thomas to Ruth S. Thomas, 13 Feb. 1908. Thomas Papers.

⁹⁵ Charles M. Thomas to Ruth S. Thomas, 16 Feb. 1908. Thomas Papers.

⁹⁶ Not surprisingly, Evans made no mention of his illness in his account of the cruise, until he actually left the fleet for Paso Robles. For his account, see Robley D. Evans, "Admiral Evans' Own Story of the American Navy." I "The Cruise of the Atlantic Fleet to the Pacific Coast." *Hampton's Magazine* 21, no.4 (Oct. 1908): 403-419; II "Hampton Roads to Trinidad." *Hampton's Magazine* 21, no.5 (Nov. 1908): 577-90; III "Taking the Fleet for a Fight or a Frolic: Trinidad to the Straits of Magellan." *Hampton's Magazine* 21, no.6 (Dec. 1908): 719-729; and IV. "My Last Days with the Atlantic Fleet: Straits of Magellan to California." *Hampton's Magazine* 22, no.1 (Jan. 1909): 33-40. See also, chapters 29 to 32 of Robley D. Evans, *An Admiral's Log: Being Continued Recollections of Naval Life*.

⁹⁷ See, for examples, *New York Times*, 2 April - 3 May 1908.

⁹⁸ *New York Times*, 6 May 1908.

⁹⁹ "The Big Battleships at San Francisco." *Current Literature* 44 (June 1908): 591-2.

¹⁰⁰ Evans, *A Sailor's Log*, 405-406.

¹⁰¹ Captain (later Rear Admiral) Royal R. Ingersoll was the father of Admiral Royal E. Ingersoll of World War II note. The added strain of performing Evans's social duties likely contributed to Rear Admiral Thomas's death by heart attack on 3 July 1908, while dining at the Del Monte Hotel, Monterey, which building is now the Navy Postgraduate School's officers' club. "Rear Admiral Thomas Dead," *New York Times*, 4 July 1908. Thomas's daughter Emily had earlier married a future famous naval officer, Harry E. Yarnell. See *Army & Navy Register* 34 (19 Sep. 1903): 8.

¹⁰² *New York Times*, 10 May 1908.

¹⁰³ "Answers' to *The Navy's Criticisms of Our Fleet*." *The Navy* 1, no.8 (Aug. 1907): 14.

See also, "Admiral Evans on Naval Armor." *Literary Digest* 36 (4 Apr. 1908): 469.