Congressman Don Bacon
Second Congressional District of Nebraska

May 17, 2021

The Honorable Thomas W. Harker
Acting Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Acting Secretary Harker,

I request your review of U.S. Navy Petty Officer First Class Charles Jackson French's service record to ensure proper recognition for acts of valor he performed on September 5, 1942. On this date Petty Officer French went above and beyond the call of duty during an engagement with the Japanese Navy near the Solomon Islands. After nearly 80 years, swift action is now warranted to correct the historical record and properly recognize Petty Officer French for his heroism in combat.

According to numerous reports, Petty Officer French displayed incredible courage during the battle when he encountered a group of wounded shipmates adrift on a raft which was subject to continuous Japanese attack. Disregarding his own safety, Petty Officer French tied a line to himself, and swam for hours without rest through shark-infested waters, thereby keeping his shipmates away from shore, evading capture by the enemy, and ultimately returning them to safety. His conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Naval Service and the U.S. Armed Forces.

Recognition of Petty Officer French is long overdue, and I support ongoing efforts to address this oversight. As the most diverse and integrated part of American society, it is appropriate that the Armed Forces recognize its heroes regardless of the prevailing racial inequities of the time. We owe this to ourselves, our military, our veterans, and every future American who will answer the call.

Thank you for your service to the nation and for your fair consideration of this request to honor the bravery displayed by Petty Officer French.

Sincerely,

Don Bacon
Member of Congress

Attachments:
1. The Story of Charles Jackson French by Bruce Wigo
2. Nights of Hell off Guadalcanal by Capt. R.N. Adrian, USN (Ret.)

cc: Mr. Chester French Jr.
     Mr. Roscoe Harris

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