

= USS Alaska (CB @-@ 1) =

USS Alaska (CB @-@ 1) was the lead ship of the Alaska class of large cruisers which served with the United States Navy during the end of World War II . She was the first of two ships of her class to be completed , followed only by Guam ; four other ships were ordered but were not completed before the end of the war . Alaska was the third vessel of the US Navy to be named after what was then the territory of Alaska . She was laid down on 17 December 1941 , ten days after the outbreak of war , was launched in August 1943 by the New York Shipbuilding Corporation , in Camden , New Jersey , and was commissioned in June 1944 . She was armed with a main battery of nine 12 in (300 mm) guns in three triple turrets and had a top speed of 33 kn (61 km / h ; 38 mph) .

Due to being commissioned late in the war , Alaska saw relatively limited service . She participated in operations off Iwo Jima and Okinawa in February ? July 1945 , including providing anti @-@ aircraft defense for various carrier task forces and conducting limited shore bombardment operations . She shot down several Japanese aircraft off Okinawa , including a possible Ohka piloted missile . In July ? August 1945 she participated in sweeps for Japanese shipping in the East China and Yellow Seas . After the end of the war , she assisted in the occupation of Korea and transported a contingent of US Army troops back to the United States . She was decommissioned in February 1947 and placed in reserve , where she remained until she was stricken in 1960 and sold for scrapping the following year .

= = Construction = =

Alaska was authorized under the Fleet Expansion Act on 19 July 1940 , and ordered on 9 September . On 17 December 1941 she was laid down at New York Shipbuilding in Camden , New Jersey . She was launched on 15 August 1943 , sponsored by the wife of the governor of Alaska , after which fitting @-@ out work was effected . The ship was completed by June 1944 , and was commissioned into the US Navy on 17 June , under the command of Captain Peter K. Fischler .

The ship was 808 feet 6 inches (246 @.@ 43 m) long overall and had a beam of 91 ft 1 in (27 @.@ 76 m) and a draft of 31 ft 10 in (9 @.@ 70 m) . She displaced 29 @,@ 779 long tons (30 @,@ 257 t) as designed and up to 34 @,@ 253 long tons (34 @,@ 803 t) at full combat load . The ship was powered by four @-@ shaft General Electric geared steam turbines and eight oil @-@ fired Babcock & Wilcox boilers rated at 150 @,@ 000 shaft horsepower (110 @,@ 000 kW) , generating a top speed of 33 knots (61 km / h ; 38 mph) . The ship had a cruising range of 12 @,@ 000 nautical miles (22 @,@ 000 km ; 14 @,@ 000 mi) at a speed of 15 kn (28 km / h ; 17 mph) . She carried four OS2U Kingfisher or SC Seahawk seaplanes , with a pair of steam catapults mounted amidships .

The ship was armed with a main battery of nine 12 inch L / 50 Mark 8 guns in three triple gun turrets , two in a superfiring pair forward and one aft of the superstructure . The secondary battery consisted of twelve 5 @-@ inch L / 38 dual @-@ purpose guns in six twin turrets . Two were placed on the centerline superfiring over the main battery turrets , fore and aft , and the remaining four turrets were placed on the corners of the superstructure . The light anti @-@ aircraft battery consisted of 56 quad @-@ mounted 40 mm (1 @.@ 6 in) Bofors guns and 34 single @-@ mounted 20 mm (0 @.@ 79 in) Oerlikon guns . A pair of Mk 34 gun directors aided gun laying for the main battery , while two Mk 37 directors controlled the 5 @-@ inch guns and a Mk 57 director aided the 40 mm guns . The main armored belt was 9 in (229 mm) thick , while the gun turrets had 12 @.@ 8 in (325 mm) thick faces . The main armored deck was 4 in (102 mm) thick .

= = Service history = =

After her commissioning , Alaska steamed down to Hampton Roads , escorted by the destroyers Simpson and Broome . The ship was then deployed for a shakedown cruise , first in the Chesapeake Bay and then into the Caribbean , off Trinidad . On the cruise she was escorted by the destroyers Bainbridge and Decatur . After completing the cruise Alaska returned to the Philadelphia

Navy Yard for some minor alterations , including the installation of four Mk 57 fire control directors for her 5 @-@ inch guns . On 12 November she left Philadelphia in the company of the destroyer @-@ minelayer Thomas E. Fraser , bound for two weeks of sea trials off Guantanamo Bay , Cuba . On 2 December she left Cuba for the Pacific , transiting the Panama Canal two days later , and reaching San Diego on 12 December . There her gun crews trained for shore bombardment and anti @-@ aircraft fire .

= = = Pacific deployment = = =

On 8 January 1945 , Alaska left California for Hawaii , arriving in Pearl Harbor on 13 January . There she participated in further training and was assigned to Task Group 12 @.@ 2 , which departed for Ulithi on 29 January . The Task Group reached Ulithi on 6 February and was merged into Task Group 58 @.@ 5 , part of Task Force 58 , the Fast Carrier Task Force . Task Group 58 @.@ 5 was assigned to provide anti @-@ aircraft defense for the aircraft carriers ; Alaska was assigned to the carriers Enterprise and Saratoga . The fleet sailed for Japan on 10 February to conduct air strikes against Tokyo and the surrounding airfields . The Japanese did not attack the fleet during the operation . Alaska was then transferred to Task Group 58 @.@ 4 and assigned to support the assault on Iwo Jima . She served in the screen for the carriers off Iwo Jima for nineteen days , after which time she had to return to Ulithi to replenish fuel and supplies .

Alaska remained with TG 58 @.@ 4 for the Battle of Okinawa . She was assigned to screen the carriers Yorktown and Intrepid ; the fleet left Ulithi on 14 March and reached its operational area southeast of Kyushu four days later . The first air strikes on Okinawa began that day , and claimed 17 Japanese aircraft destroyed on the ground . Here , Alaska finally saw combat , as the Japanese launched a major air strike on the American fleet . Her anti @-@ aircraft gunners destroyed a Yokosuka P1Y bomber attempting to crash into Intrepid . Shortly thereafter , Alaska was warned that American aircraft were in the vicinity . About ten minutes later , her gunners spotted an unidentified aircraft , approaching in what they thought was a threatening manner ; they shot down what turned out to be an F6F Hellcat fighter , though the pilot was uninjured . Later that afternoon , Alaska shot down a second Japanese bomber , a Yokosuka D4Y .

The following day , the carrier Franklin was badly damaged by several bomb hits and a kamikaze . Alaska and her sister Guam , two other cruisers , and several destroyers were detached to create Task Group 58 @.@ 2 @.@ 9 to escort the crippled Franklin back to Ulithi . On the voyage back to port , another D4Y bomber attacked Franklin , though the ships were unable to shoot it down . Gunfire from one of the 5 @-@ inch guns accidentally caused flash burns on several men standing nearby ; these were the only casualties suffered by her crew during the war . Alaska then took on the role of fighter director ; using her anti @-@ air search radar she vectored fighters to intercept and destroy a Kawasaki Ki @-@ 45 heavy fighter . On 22 March , the ships reached Ulithi and Alaska was detached to rejoin TG 58 @.@ 4 .

After returning to her unit , Alaska continued to screen for the aircraft carriers off Okinawa . On 27 March she was detached to conduct a bombardment of Minamidait? . She was joined by Guam , two light cruisers , and Destroyer Squadron 47 . On the night of 27 ? 28 March , she fired forty @-@ five 12 @-@ inch shells and three hundred and fifty @-@ two 5 @-@ inch rounds at the island . The ships rejoined TG 58 @.@ 4 at a refueling point , after which they returned to Okinawa to support the landings when they began on 1 April . On the evening of 11 April , Alaska shot down one Japanese plane , assisted in the destruction of another , and claimed what might have been an Ohka piloted rocket @-@ bomb . On 16 April , the ship shot down another three aircraft and assisted with three others . Throughout the rest of the month , her heavy anti @-@ aircraft fire succeeded in driving off Japanese bombers .

Alaska then returned to Ulithi to resupply , arriving on 14 May . She was then assigned to TG 38 @.@ 4 , the reorganized carrier task force . The fleet then returned to Okinawa , where Alaska continued in her anti @-@ aircraft defense role . On 9 June , she and Guam bombarded Oki Dait? . TG 38 @.@ 4 then steamed to San Pedro Bay in the Leyte Gulf for rest and maintenance ; the ship remained there from 13 June until 13 July , when she was assigned to Cruiser Task Force 95 along

with her sister Guam , under the command of Rear Admiral Francis S. Low . On 16 July , Alaska and Guam conducted a sweep into the East China and Yellow Seas to sink Japanese shipping vessels . They had only limited success , however , and returned to the fleet on 23 July . They then joined a major raid , which included three battleships and three escort carriers , into the estuary of the Yangtze River off Shanghai . Again , the operation met with limited success .

= = = Post @-@ war operations = = =

In the course of her service during World War II , Alaska was awarded three battle stars . On 30 August Alaska left Okinawa for Japan to participate in the 7th Fleet occupation force . She arrived in Incheon , Korea on 8 September and supported Army operations there until 26 September , when she left for Tsingtao , China , arriving the following day . There , she supported the 6th Marine Division until 13 November , when she returned to Incheon to take on Army soldiers as part of Operation Magic Carpet , the mass repatriation of millions of American servicemen from Asia and Europe . Alaska left Incheon with a contingent of soldiers bound for San Francisco . After reaching San Francisco , she left for the Atlantic , via the Panama Canal , which she transited on 13 December . The ship arrived in the Boston Navy Yard on 18 December , where preparations were made to place the ship in reserve . She left Boston on 1 February 1946 for Bayonne , New Jersey , where she would be berthed in reserve . She arrived there the following day , and on 13 August , she was removed from active service , though she would not be decommissioned until 17 February 1947 .

= = = Conversion proposals = = =

In 1958 , the Bureau of Ships prepared two feasibility studies to see if Alaska and Guam were suitable to be converted to guided missile cruisers . The first study involved removing all of the guns in favor of four different missile systems . At \$ 160 million this was seen as too costly , so a second study was conducted . This study left the forward batteries ? the two 12 ? triple turrets and three of the 5 " dual turrets ? in place and added a reduced version of the first plan for the aft . This would have cost \$ 82 million , and was still seen as too cost @-@ prohibitive . As a result , the conversion proposal was abandoned and the ship was instead stricken from the naval registry on 1 June 1960 . On 30 June she was sold to the Lipsett Division of Luria Brothers to be broken up for scrap .

= = Awards = =