

**THE ALASKA-CLASS: US NAVY'S ONLY LARGE CRUISERS ALL BUILT IN NJ**

~ Lawrence Brennan, (US Navy Ret.)

**THE ALASKA-CLASS: US NAVY'S ONLY LARGE CRUISERS ALL BUILT IN NEW JERSEY<sup>1</sup>**

**By Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, US Navy (Retired)<sup>2</sup>**

The *Alaska*-class cruisers were long, fast, and heavily armed. These essential attributes made them attractive despite being obsolete even before they went to war in the Pacific. Although New York Shipbuilding was scheduled to construct all six ships, and three were launched, only the first two were commissioned, both in 1944 and entered combat in 1945. They each had combat service of about seven months and were decommissioned within 18 months of the end of the war. Some believe that the large cruisers, in fact, were battlecruisers; New York Shipbuilding had begun construction on an earlier class of battlecruisers and converted one, USS *Saratoga* (CV 3) as the first fast carrier in 1927. Built in Camden, New Jersey, USS *Alaska* and *Guam* fought in the Pacific Theatre with the Fast Carrier Task Forces of the Third and Fifth Fleets. Frequently steaming together, they became part of the North Pacific Force which participated in accepting the surrender of Japanese forces in Korea and the landing of US troops south of the “temporary” boundary at the 38th parallel. The two cruisers then carried returning American servicemen to the United States as part of Operation Magic Carpet. Like many ships, they had brief service careers which are documented in their postal history in the covers illustrating this piece.



*Fig. 1: Halftone photo of Guam with her sister Alaska (CB 1) at anchor off the China coast in late August or early September 1945. Copied from the ship's wartime cruise book, U.S.S. Guam: Her Story, 1944-1945.*

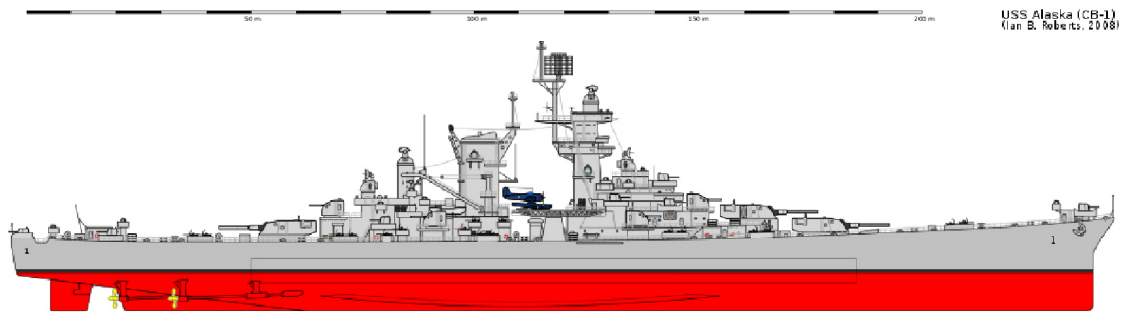
Credit: U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command Photograph.  
Catalog #: NH 90742

“ . . . Naval Might Paraded in Major Ports.”

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The *Alaska*-class ships were designed and authorized in response to reported German and Japanese pocket battleships and battlecruisers. They were authorized in 1940, however, initially only three of the six ship class were funded. Each ship was named for an organized territory belonging to the US, unlike cruisers named for cities and battleships for states, with the exception of USS *Kearsarge*.<sup>3</sup>

The first two ships, USS *Alaska* (CB 1) and USS *Guam* (CB 2), were completed and commissioned; a third, USS *Hawaii* (CB 3) was launched but never commissioned. In June 1943, the construction of the final three ships, *Philippines* (CB 4), *Puerto Rico* (CB5), and *Samoa* (CB 6) was cancelled before it truly began.



**Fig. 2: An outboard profile of USS *Alaska*, the lead ship of the *Alaska* class<sup>4</sup>.**

Between 1938 and the authorization for construction of the lead ships in 1940, there were repeated changes in the design of these vessels driven by the Navy's General Board and the Bureau of Shipbuilding, Construction, and Repair. Limited knowledge of potential enemy warships made ship design and planning far more complicated, particularly when building larger warships.

During December 1941, the Navy responded to President Roosevelt's suggestion that they convert fast ships to aircraft carriers. The *Alaska*-class was considered briefly, primarily because of their speed and length. By early January 1942, the decision was made to convert *Cleveland*-class light cruisers to small aircraft carriers, ultimately CVLs. New York Shipbuilding ultimately built 11 CVLs, including nine which served in combat during World War II. Unlike the earlier post-Washington Naval Treaty conversion of *Saratoga* by New York Shipbuilding from a battlecruiser to a fast carrier, the concept of converting the large cruisers died during the first month of World War II.

**Physical characteristics and armament of *Alaska*-class cruisers**

The final design was a scaled-up *Baltimore*-class heavy cruiser that had the same machinery as *Essex*-class carriers. The ships were 808 feet 6 inches long overall and had a beam of 91 feet 1 inch and a draft of 31 feet 10 inches. They displaced 29,779 long tons as designed and up to 34,253 long tons at full combat load. The ships had four shafts and were powered by four General Electric geared steam turbine sets, each driving one propeller, and eight oil-fired Babcock & Wilcox boilers rated at 150,000 shaft horsepower (110,000 kW) and a top speed of 33 knots. The ships had a cruising range of 12,000 nautical miles at 15 knots. They carried four floatplanes, housed in two hangars, with a pair of aircraft catapults mounted amidships.

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The ships were armed with a main battery of nine 12 inch /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 /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 Bofors guns and 34 single-mounted 20 mm 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 an Mk 57 director aided the 40 mm guns. The main armored belt was 9" thick, while the gun turrets had 12.8" thick faces. The main armored deck was 4" thick.

Weight limitations caused the designs to offer only limited underwater protection. As a result, the *Alaska*-class ships were vulnerable to torpedoes as well as shells that fell short of the ship.

### SERVICE HISTORIES<sup>5</sup>

#### USS ALASKA (CB 1)

*Alaska* was the lead ship of the only class of large cruisers which served in the Pacific Theater during the last year of World War II. She was laid down on 17 December 1941, ten days after the outbreak of war, was launched on 15 August 1943, and was commissioned 17 June 1944 under the command of Captain Peter K. Fischler, US Navy. She was one of the first ships to possibly have shot down an Okha piloted missile off Okinawa.

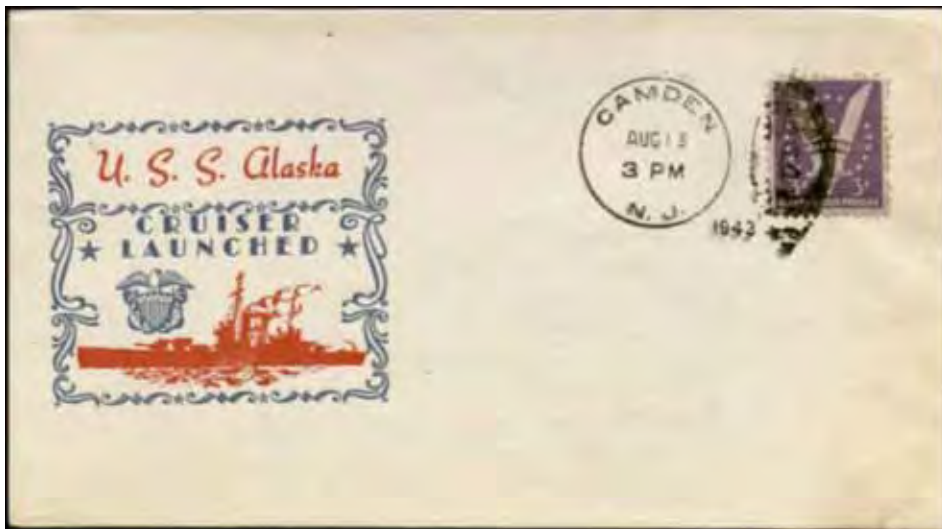


Fig. 3: Launch USS Alaska two color printed cachet postmarked Camden NJ 15 August 1943 with steel hand stamp. The cover is franked with a purple 3¢ Win the War stamp (Scott # 905).

After commissioning, *Alaska* steamed to Hampton Roads, escorted by the pair of ancient four stack destroyers, USS *Simpson* (DD 221) and USS *Broome* (DD 210). The ship was then deployed for a shakedown cruise, first in the Chesapeake Bay and then into the Caribbean, off Trinidad; she was escorted by another pair of superannuated destroyers, USS *Bainbridge* (DD 246) and USS *Decatur* (DD 341).

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**Fig. 4: First Day in Commission USS Alaska two color printed cachet censored and postmarked with ship's Locy Type 3z rubber handstamp postmark dated 18 June 1944 and straight line rubber stamp, "U.S.S. ALASKA (CB-1)" over cachet addressed to long time naval cover collector, Lieutenant R. W. Murch who was a plank owner. The cover is franked with a 3¢ Alaska stamp (Scott # 800). The cancel is rated "R-1" in the USCS Postmark Catalog. On the reverse, Lieutenant Murch wrote, "40 covers cancelled for commissioning. R.W.M."**



**Fig. 5: Official mail #10 penalty envelope postmarked with ship's Locy Type 2z rubber handstamp postmark, killer bars missing, dated 12 August 1944 and rubber stamp return address with, "U.S.S. ALASKA c/o Fleet Post Office, New York, N.Y." addressed to Commanding Officer, The Receiving Station, Navy Yard, Phila., PA." The cancel is rated "C" in the USCS Postmark Catalog.**

After completing the cruise, *Alaska* returned to the Philadelphia Navy Yard for alterations, including the installation of four Mk 57 fire control directors for her 5-inch guns. On 12 November she departed Philadelphia in the company of the destroyer-minelayer USS *Thomas E. Fraser* (DM 24), bound for two weeks of sea trials off Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. On 2 December she left 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.

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On 8 January 1945, *Alaska* sailed west 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 Ulitihi 29 January. The Task Group reached Ulitihi on 6 February and was merged into Task Group 58.5, part of Task Force 58, the Fast Carrier Task Force of Admiral Spruance's Fifth Fleet. Task Group 58.5 was created to provide anti-aircraft defense for the fast carriers; *Alaska* was assigned to defend the two oldest carriers in combat, the New Jersey-built USS *Saratoga* (CV 3) and USS *Enterprise* (CV 6). Fifth Fleet sailed for Japan 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 Ulitihi to replenish fuel and supplies.



**Fig.6: Sailor's mail #6¾ airmail envelope postmarked with ship's Locy Type 2z rubber handstamp postmark dated 23 February 1945 and censored sent by "Cmdr. G. N. Hood, USN, U.S.S. ALASKA (CB-1) % Fleet P.O. San Francisco, Cal." Sent while *Alaska* was providing support for the Fast Carriers off Iwo Jima, the cover was addressed to Miss Sandra S. Hood, Apt 124 Walnut Park Plaza, 63<sup>rd</sup> and Walnut, Philadelphia (39) Penna. The cover is franked with a 6¢ carmine airmail stamp (Scott's # C25). The cancel is rated "B" in the USCS Postmark Catalog.**

*Alaska* remained with TG 58.4 for the Battle of Okinawa. She was assigned to screen USS *Yorktown* (CV 10) and USS *Intrepid* (CV 11); the fleet left Ulitihi 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 US fleet. Her anti-aircraft gunners destroyed a Yokosuka P1Y bomber attempting to crash into *Intrepid*. Shortly thereafter, *Alaska* was warned that US 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 a US Navy F6F Hellcat fighter, though the pilot was uninjured. Later that afternoon, *Alaska* shot down a second Japanese bomber, a Yokosuka D4Y.

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The following day, USS *Franklin* (CV 13) was heavily damaged by several bombs. *Alaska* and *Guam*, two other cruisers, and several destroyers were detached to create Task Group 58.2.9 to escort *Franklin* back to Uliti. During that voyage, another D4Y bomber attacked *Franklin*; the ships were unable to shoot it down. Gunfire from one of the 5-inch guns burned 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 air search radar she vectored fighters to intercept and destroy a Kawasaki Ki-45 heavy fighter. On 22 March, the ships reached Uliti and *Alaska* was detached to rejoin TG 58.4.

*Alaska* continued to screen the fast carriers off Okinawa. On 27 March she was detached to conduct a bombardment of Minamidaitō, 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 begun 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.



**Fig. 7: Sailor's mail postmarked with ship's Locy Type 2z rubber handstamp postmark dated, Sunday, 6 May 1945, days before the German surrender, and censored sent by "John E. McShane, Ph.M. 2/c, U.S.S. ALASKA (CB-1) Div. "H" % Fleet Post Office San Francisco, Calif." addressed to PFC James J. McShane, 161-57736, Separation Center-Mail Section, Fort Dix, New Jersey. The cover is franked with a 6¢ carmine airmail stamp (Scott's # C25). The cancel is rated "B" in the USCS Postmark Catalog.**

On 14 May, *Alaska* returned to Uliti to resupply. She was assigned to TG 38.4, the reorganized carrier task force. Halsey's Third Fleet then returned to Okinawa, where *Alaska* continued in her anti-aircraft defense role. On 9 June, she and *Guam* bombarded Oki Daitō. TG 38.4 then steamed to San Pedro Bay in Leyte Gulf, no longer a combat area, 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, US Navy.

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*Fig. 8: This is a philatelic uncensored “Free Frank” cover with a printed cachet, postmarked on the face with the ship’s Locy Type 2z rubber handstamp postmark and on the rear flap with the ship’s Locy Type 9efu rubber handstamp postmark, both dated 30 July 1945. The Type 2z cancel is rated “B” and the Type 9efu cancel is rated “C” in the USCS Postmark Catalog.*

On 16 July, *Alaska* and *Guam* led a sweep into the East China and Yellow Seas to sink Japanese vessels. They experienced 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 (CVEs), into the estuary of the Yangtze River off Shanghai. Again, the operation was met with limited success, probably in large part due to the paucity of surface targets.

On 30 August, *Alaska* left Okinawa for Japan to participate in the Seventh Fleet occupation force along with *Guam*. She arrived in Jinsen [Inchon], Korea 8 September and supported Army operations there until 26 September, when she left for Tsingtao, China, arriving the following day. There, she supported the 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division until 13 November, when she returned to Inchon 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 Inchon with a contingent of soldiers bound for San Francisco. After reaching California, she left for the Atlantic, via the Panama Canal, which she transited on 13 December.

The ship arrived in Boston 18 December, where preparations were made to place her in reserve. She left Boston on 1 February 1946 for Bayonne, New Jersey, where she was 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.

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*Fig. 9: Sailor's mail #6 ¾ airmail envelope postmarked with ship's Locy Type "P (A-12)" rubber handstamp, the words "U.S.S. ALASKA" inserted in the killer bars, postmark dated 10 January 1946, sent by "William H. Berg-COX, USN, U.S.S. ALASKA C.B. 1. % Fleet Post Office New York, N.Y." addressed to Navy Mail Clerk, Navy-926 [Guam, Marianas Islands]-Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California". The cover is franked with a 6¢ carmine airmail stamp (Scott's # C25). The cancel is rated "B" in the USCS Postmark Catalog.*

*Alaska* was stricken from the naval registry 1 June 1960; on 30 June she was sold to the Lipsett Division of Luria Brothers to be broken up for scrap.

*Alaska* had served only 32 months in commission and fewer than 18 months underway; she received the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with three battle stars, World War II Victory Medal, Navy Occupation Medal with "ASIA" clasp, and the China Service Medal.

**USS GUAM (CB 2)**

*Guam* was authorized under the Fleet Expansion Act on 19 July 1940, and ordered on 9 September. She was laid down 2 February 1942 at the New York Shipbuilding in Camden, New Jersey and launched 12 November 1943. The ship was completed by September 1944, and commissioned 17 September, under the command of Captain Leland Lovette, US Navy. She cost the US Navy \$67,053,828 at completion.

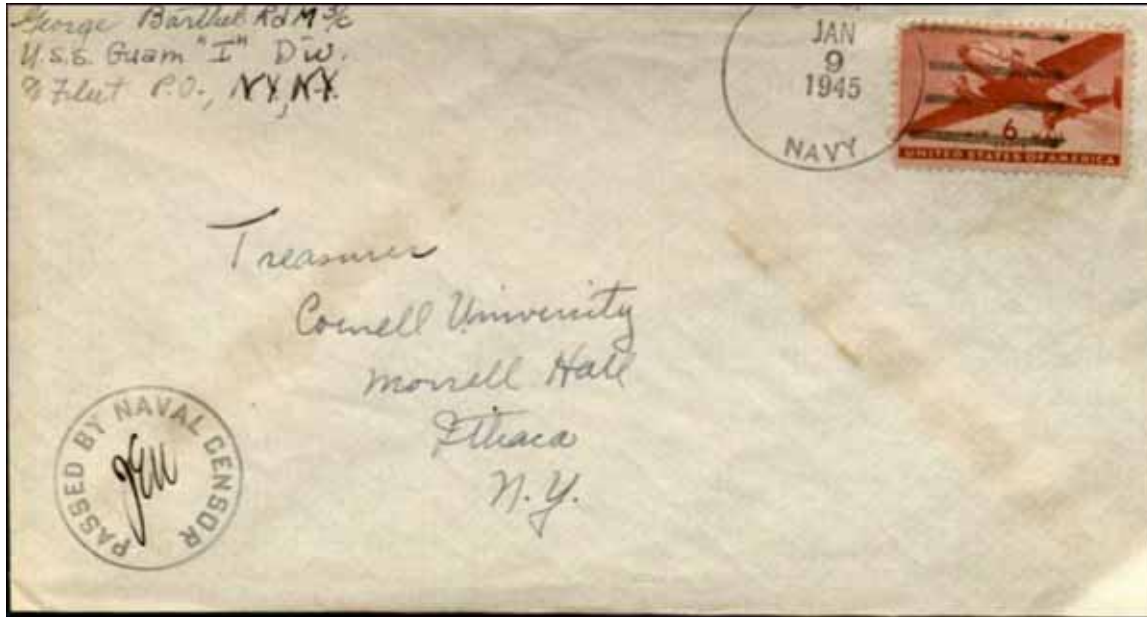
*Fig. 10: Launch USS Guam two color printed cachet sponsored by M. Sanders, ANCS 536, drawn by George V. Sadworth, postmarked Camden NJ on 21 November 1943 with rubber hand stamp having no killer bars. The cover is franked with a rubber stamp free frank.*





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*Fig. 11: Sailor's mail postmarked with ship's Locy Type 2z rubber handstamp postmark dated 9 January 1945, before leaving for Hawaii, and censored sent by "George Bartlett, Rd. M 3/c, U.S.S. GUAM, "I" Div. % Fleet P.O. N.Y., N.Y." Addressed to "Treasurer, Cornell University, Morrell Hall, Ithaca, N.Y.". The cover is franked with a 6¢ carmine airmail stamp (Scott's # C25). The cancel is rated "B" in the USCS Postmark Catalog.*

*Guam* left Philadelphia on 17 January 1945, after completing her shakedown cruise off Trinidad. She proceeded through the Panama Canal, and on 8 February, she arrived at Pearl Harbor to join the US Pacific Fleet. Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal visited the ship at Pearl Harbor. On 3 March, she departed for Ulthi, where she joined her sister *Alaska* on 13 March. Shortly thereafter, Task Force 58, the main strike force of the US Navy, departed for a raid on the mainland Japanese islands of Kyushu and Shikoku. Task Force 58 arrived off Japan on the morning of 18 March and was quickly attacked by Japanese kamikazes and bombers. *Guam*, along with *Alaska*, escorted the damaged carrier *Franklin* to port, which lasted until 22 March.

*Guam* returned to Task Force 58, assigned to Cruiser Division 16, part of Task Group 58.4, and steamed to Okinawa. On the night of 27–28 March, Cruiser Division 16 bombarded the airfield on Minamidaitō. After concluding the bombardment, *Guam* returned to the carrier screen while they conducted operations off Nansei Shoto until 11 May. The cruiser then steamed to Ulthi for periodic maintenance and to replenish ammunition and supplies. She then returned to Okinawa, assigned to Task Group 38.4 of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet. She continued to provide anti-aircraft defense for the fast carriers while they launched fighter sweeps of Kyushu. *Guam* and *Alaska* bombarded Oki Daitō for an hour and a half on 9 June, after which they steamed to San Pedro Bay in the Leyte Gulf, arriving on 13 June.

*Guam* was assigned as flagship for Rear Admiral Francis S. Low, US Navy, Commander, Cruiser Task Force 95, with *Alaska*. On 16 July, *Guam* and *Alaska* conducted a sweep into the East China and Yellow Seas to sink Japanese shipping and returned to the fleet 23 July. Again, the operation was met with limited success, and they returned to Okinawa by 7 August.

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*Fig. 12: Official mail #10 penalty envelope postmarked on reverse with ship's Locy Type 9efu rubber handstamp postmark dated 21 August 1945 and handwritten in pencil return address with, "U.S.S. GUAM San Francisco, Calif" addressed to Postmaster, Room 3122/3112 New York NY. The cover was sent register air mail but no postage was added in addition to the free frank. In addition to GUAM's Type 9efu postmark, the reverse bears a 23 August 1945 Type 9efu from Branch 13871, Okinawa (Buckner Bay), and New York Registry Div. 27 August 1945 postmarks. The Guam cancel is rated "C" in the USCS Postmark Catalog.*

Next, *Guam* became Admiral Low's North China Force flagship. The Task Group showed the flag in the region, including the ports of Tsingtao, Port Arthur, and Dalian. On 8 September, *Guam* entered Jinsen, Korea [now Inchon], to assist in the occupation of the country. As part of Operation Magic Carpet, she left Jinsen on 14 November bound for San Francisco, carrying Army soldiers back to the United States.



*Fig. 13: Sailor's mail postmarked with ship's Locy Type 2z rubber handstamp postmark dated 2 September 1945, the day of Japan's surrender, and censored sent by "Lewis H. Hilt, Jr., MoMM 3/c, U.S.S. GUAM, "A" Div. % Fleet P.O. San Francisco, Calif" addressed to "Mr. & Mrs. Lewis H. Hilt, 4523 Linden Ave., Philadelphia 14, Penna". The cover is franked with a 6¢ carmine airmail stamp (Scott's # C25). The cancel is rated "B" in the USCS Postmark Catalog.*

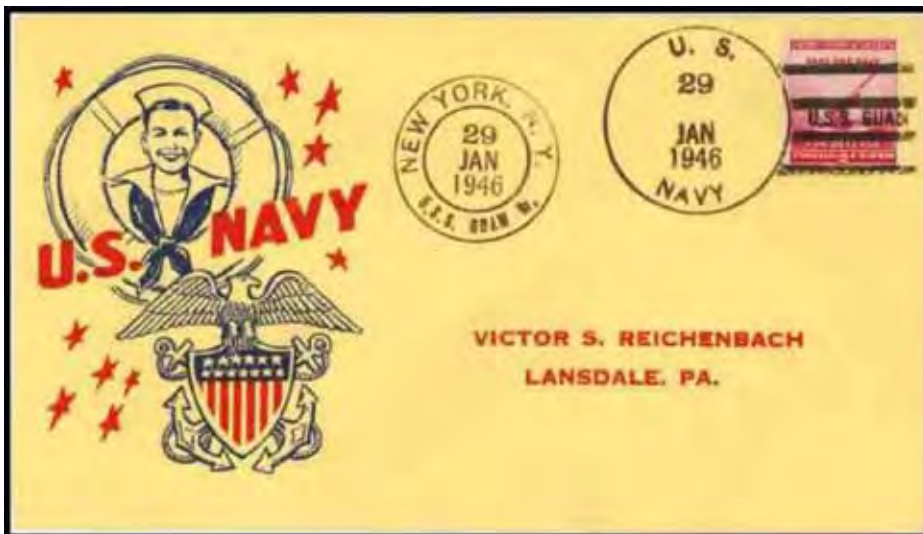
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Cover courtesy Jon Burdette, online Naval Cover Museum<sup>6</sup>

**Fig. 14:** Uncacheted philatelic mail #6 ¾ envelope postmarked on the face with ship's Locy Type 2z and Type 9efu rubber handstamp postmarks both dated 7 December 1945. The Guam cancels are rated "B" and "C" respectively in the USCS Postmark Catalog.



**Fig. 15:** Cacheted philatelic mail #6 ¾ envelope postmarked on the face with ship's Locy Type P(G-35a) and Type 9efu rubber handstamp postmarks both dated 29 January 1946. The Guam cancels are rated "B" and "C" respectively in the USCS Postmark Catalog.

Cover courtesy Greg Ciesielski, online Naval Cover Museum<sup>7</sup>

She arrived in port on 3 December and departed two days later for Bayonne, New Jersey, arriving on the 17th. She remained there until she was decommissioned on 17 February 1947. She was then assigned to the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, where she remained until she was stricken from the Navy List on 1 June 1960. She was sold on 24 May 1961 for \$423,076 to the Boston Metals Company in Baltimore. She was towed to the shipbreakers on 10 July 1961. *Guam* had served only 29 months in commission; she received the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two battle stars, World War II Victory Medal, Navy Occupation Medal with "ASIA" clasp, and the China Service Medal.

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**Fig. 16:** Philatelic mail #6 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> envelope with generic rubber stamp cachet sponsored by Des Jagyi, postmarked with ship's Locy Type P (G-35a) rubber handstamp postmark, the words "U.S.S. GUAM" inserted in the killer bars, dated 13 February 1946 and franked with the 2¢ red FDR Warm Springs commemorative (Scott's # 931) The cancel is rated "B" in the USCS Postmark Catalog.

### **JAPANESE SURRENDER, LIBERATION OF KOREA AND MAGIC CARPET**

These two cruisers were essential to the liberation of Korea. They spearheaded the arrival of US forces which took the surrender of Japanese forces below the 38 parallel while Soviet troops occupied Korea to the north of that temporary line of demarcation.

After the war, both ships served as part of Task Force 71, the North China Naval Force. Its mission was to support the liberation and occupation of Korea. This included executing various show-the-flag operations along the western coast of Korea as well as in the Gulf of Chihli. These naval demonstrations preceded Operation Campus, the amphibious landing of U.S. Army ground forces at Jinsen Korea, on 8 September 1945. Subsequently, both ships returned to the United States in mid-December 1945; they were decommissioned and "mothballed" in 1947 after having spent 32 months (*Alaska*) and 29 months (*Guam*) in service.

### **CONVERSION PLANS AND THE END**

In 1958, the Bureau of Ships prepared two feasibility studies to explore whether *Alaska* and *Guam* could be converted into guided-missile cruisers. The first study involved removing all of their guns in favor of four different missile systems. At \$160 million, the cost of this proposed removal was cost prohibitive, so a second study was initiated. The study, like the conversion of two heavy cruisers [USS *Boston* (CAG 1 ex CA 69) and USS *Canberra* (CAG 2 ex CA 70)] retained the forward batteries (the two 12-inch triple turrets and three of the 5-inch dual turrets) unchanged, and added a reduced version of the first plan on the stern of the ship. Even though the proposals would have cost approximately half as much as the first study's plan (\$82 million), it was still seen as too expensive. As a result, both ships were stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on 1 June 1960. As previously mentioned, *Alaska* was sold for scrap on 30 June 1960, and *Guam* on 24 May 1961.

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### USS *HAWAII* (CB 3)

*Hawaii* was launched in March 1945, but never completed. The still-incomplete *Hawaii* was considered for a conversion to be the Navy's first guided-missile cruiser; this thought lasted until 26 February 1952, when a different conversion to a "large command ship" was contemplated. In anticipation of the conversion, her classification was changed to CBC-1. This would have made her a "larger sister" to *Northampton*, but a year and a half later (9 October 1954), she was re-designated CB-3. *Hawaii* was stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on 9 June 1958 and was sold for scrap in 1959.



Photo #: 80-G-354097<sup>8</sup>

**Fig. 17:** Launch of USS *Hawaii* (CB-3) at the New York Shipbuilding Corp., Camden, N. J. on 3 Nov 1945.



Photo #: NH 89293<sup>9</sup>

**Fig. 18:** USS *Hawaii* (CB-3) being towed away for scrapping on 20 June 1959.

## CONCLUSION

This small class of warships is an example of the importance of New Jersey to the nation's war effort. New Jersey's industrial might contributed greatly to victory during the Two Ocean War. Its shipyards in the north and south of the state built a multitude of complex and highly effective warships including battleships, three types of aircraft carriers, all three types of cruisers, destroyers, destroyer escorts, small craft and landing craft. Thousands of aircraft were built in plants, some of which had manufactured automobiles and would return to car production throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. Army bases defended the coast, and ports and were essential parts of the training and mobilization of massive armies of millions of men and women. Fixed wing and lighter than air craft (blimps) from Naval Air Station Lakehurst were crucial to the defense of merchant ships and convoys bound to or from Northeastern ports, primarily the port of New York which was the major port of embarkation and supply, coastal convoys and individual ships. Citizens of the Garden State served in every branch around the world. Like World War I, New Jersey ports, particularly Hoboken again, played essential roles in the transportation of troops and war materiel especially to the European Theatre of Operation and the return of millions of servicemen during Operation Magic Carpet.<sup>10</sup>

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Photo #: NH 57212<sup>11</sup>  
**Fig. 19: USS Alaska  
photographed on 13  
November 1944**



Photo #: 80-G-K-3725<sup>12</sup>  
**Fig. 20: One of the Alaska's Curtiss SC-1  
floatplanes taxiing up to the landing mat streamed  
alongside, to be picked up by the aircraft crane.  
Photographed on 6 March 1945 during the Iwo  
Jima operation.**



Photo #: NH 92283<sup>13</sup>  
**Fig. 21: USS  
Guam in the  
Delaware River  
circa January 1945.**

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### ENDNOTES:

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- <sup>1</sup> Copyright MMXVIII Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, US Navy (Ret.). All legal and moral rights reserved. May not be copied, republished, or reproduced without the prior express written consent of the author.
- <sup>2</sup> The author is a retired Captain, US Navy and an adjunct professor at Fordham Law School.
- <sup>3</sup> "Of the old wooden vessels of the Navy which were in active service at the date of my last report," Secretary of the Navy Hilary A. Herbert observed in his annual report for the year 1894, "one, the *Kearsarge*, was wrecked in February last, and her name has since been regretfully stricken from the Navy list...There is still a feeling, deep-seated, widespread, and fully shared by the Navy Department, that *Kearsarge* is a name that ought not to be permitted to die out of the Navy list. I respectfully suggest that you recommend Congress to authorize the construction of a battle ship to perpetuate this name. The Department, it is true, approves the policy heretofore adopted of naming our battle ships for States—the pillars of the Union; but the propriety of making an exception to this rule in favor of the *Kearsarge* would, I believe, be universally recognized." <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/k/kearsarge-ii.html>
- <sup>4</sup> Picture from Wikipedia at [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CB-1\\_Alaska\\_Outboard\\_Profile.svg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:CB-1_Alaska_Outboard_Profile.svg).
- <sup>5</sup> As customary, the histories of the ships come in large measure from Navy History and Heritage Command's Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. The series first entered publication in 1959 and continues to be revised in the online edition.
- <sup>6</sup> Naval Cover Museum, Jon Burdett cover, [https://www.navalcovermuseum.org/wiki/index.php?title=GUAM\\_CB\\_2](https://www.navalcovermuseum.org/wiki/index.php?title=GUAM_CB_2).
- <sup>7</sup> Naval Cover Museum, Ciesielski cover, [https://www.navalcovermuseum.org/wiki/index.php?title=GUAM\\_CB\\_2](https://www.navalcovermuseum.org/wiki/index.php?title=GUAM_CB_2).
- <sup>8</sup> Official U.S. Navy Photograph #: 80-G-354097, now in the collections of the National Archives. See <https://web.archive.org/web/20120926005443/http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/images/g350000/g354097.jpg>.
- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Naval Historical Center Photo #: NH 89293 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20121022044358/http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/images/h89000/h89293.jpg>.
- <sup>10</sup> In large part the 1917-1920 experience of the bi-state New York Port of Embarkation led to the unprecedented establishment of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ). The Port of New York and New Jersey comprised the main point of embarkation for U.S. troops and supplies sent to Europe during World War I via the New York Port of Embarkation.. The congestion at the port led experts to realize the need for a port authority to supervise the extremely complex system of bridges, highways, subways, and port facilities in the New York-New Jersey area. The solution was the 1921 creation of the Port Authority under the supervision of the governors of the two states.
- <sup>11</sup> *Alaska* photographed on 13 November 1944 after receiving post-shakedown alterations. U.S. Naval Historical Center Photo #: NH 57212 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20121018005617/http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/images/h57000/h57212.jpg>.
- <sup>12</sup> Official U.S. Navy Photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives, Photo #: 80-G-K-3725 . See <https://web.archive.org/web/20051129111713/http://www.history.navy.mil:80/photos/images/k03000/k03725.jpg>.
- <sup>13</sup> U.S. Naval Historical Center Photo #: NH 92283. See <https://web.archive.org/web/20060915093256/http://history.navy.mil:80/photos/images/h92000/h92283.jpg>.