

Official ship's history 1942 through 1961:

HISTORY
U.S.S. OKLAHOMA CITY (CLG-5)

U.S.S. OKLAHOMA CITY (CLG-5), a guided missile light cruiser, is named for the capital city of Oklahoma. She was originally built as the light cruiser OKLAHOMA CITY (CL-91) by William Cramp and Sons of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her keel was laid 8 December 1942, and she was launched 20 February 1944 under the sponsorship of Mrs. Anton H. Classen, who came to Oklahoma City the year of its founding, arriving the day before Thanksgiving 1899. The wife of one of the city's outstanding builders, her philanthropies in behalf of the cultural, educational, and civic growth of Oklahoma City were many and important.

U.S.S. OKLAHOMA CITY was placed in commission on 22 December 1944 under the command of Captain C.B. Hunt, U.S.N. On 27 January 1945 she departed Philadelphia for training operations in the Chesapeake Bay, thence via Norfolk for shakedown training cruise to the Gulf of Paria, Trinidad, British West Indies. She returned to Philadelphia 11 March for post-shakedown repairs and sailed 9 April 1945 for training exercises while based at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. On 19 April she arrived at Cristobal Harbor, Canal Zone and reported to Commander Cruisers, Pacific for duty. She conducted local operations in the Hawaiian area until 22 May when she sailed for Ulithi, arriving there 1 June 1945.

On 4 June 1945 OKLAHOMA CITY departed Ulithi in company with U.S.S. Bon Homme Richard and two days later made rendezvous with carrier task group 38.1, including flagship U.S.S. Hornet. On 8-9 June, she screened carriers during strikes on Kanoya and Sakishima Gunto in support of the Okinawa campaign, and returned to San Pedro Bay, Leyte, Philippine Islands on 13 June.

Two days later she departed in company with the escort carrier U.S.S. Fanshaw Bay to resume strikes against Sakishima (18-20 June), returning to San Pedro Bay 25 June 1945. She was assigned as a screening unit in the Tokyo, Northern Honshu, and Hokkaido areas 10 through 17 July. On 18 July she formed a bombardment group with the cruisers U.S.S. Atlanta, U.S.S. Topeka, and U.S.S. Dayton, and various destroyer units for a surface sweep to the entrance to Sagami Wan, and took part in the bombardment of Jojima Cape. She rejoined the carrier task group 20 July for continued air operations against the Japanese home islands until the end of hostilities 15 August 1945.

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The OKLAHOMA CITY conducted patrol off Japan until J September 1945 when she entered Tokyo Bay. On 21 September she departed in company with the cruiser U.S.S. Flint and escorting destroyers for Eniwetok Atoll, Marshall Islands, arriving 26 September 1945. She returned to Tokyo Bay 13 October and conducted local operations from that port until 10 November when she sailed for Hiro Wan arriving 12 November 1945. Two days later Captain D.L. Madeira, in command of OKLAHOMA CITY, relieved Rear Admiral Ralph S. Riggs as area commander and assumed command of Task Group 55.3. He relinquished this command to Rear Admiral Emmet P. Forrestal in U.S.S. Baltimore at Kure, Japan 27 November 1945. Three days later OKLAHOMA CITY sailed for Sasebo, arriving 1 December 1945. Commodore G. Van Deurs, U.S.N., Commander Task Group 55.2, hoisted his flag in OKLAHOMA CITY 3 December and remained aboard until 29 January 1946, when he shifted his flag to the U.S.S. Atlanta (CL-104).

On 30 January OKLAHOMA CITY departed Sasebo for the United States. She arrived at San Francisco 14 February and remained until 15 August when she entered the Mare Island Navy Yard for inactivation. She was placed out of commission 30 June 1947 and assigned to the San Francisco Group, U.S. Pacific Reserve Fleet.

On 7 March OKLAHOMA CITY arrived at the Shipyard of the Bethlehem Pacific Coast Steel Company of San Francisco, California. Conversion to a guided missile light cruiser commenced 21 May 1957. Her hull classification and number were changed from CL-91 to CLG-5 effective 23 May 1957.

On 31 August 1960 OKLAHOMA CITY was towed by Navy tugs from Bethlehem Steel to Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco -- her conversion completed

U.S.S. OKLAHOMA CITY (CLG-5) was commissioned at Hunter's Point 7 September 1960, and Captain Ben W. Sarver, U.S.N., assumed command. General Vernon E. Megee, former Commanding General of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, and now retired, was principal speaker at the commissioning ceremonies. Included among the platform guests for the event were Vice Admiral F.N. Kivette, Commander Western Sea Frontier; Rear Admiral George E. Russell, Commandant 12th Naval District; Rear Admiral John E. Kirkpatrick, U.S.N. (ret.), senior representative from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and Captain Charles A. Curtze, Commander San Francisco Naval Shipyard. The ship then commenced a two-month fitting out period at the Naval Shipyard, [San Francisco, California].

Six days after commissioning the ship fired a 19-gun salute to Vice-President Richard M. Nixon, principal speaker at the dedication of the mercy ship S.S. Hope, moored at Berth 4 of the San Francisco Naval Shipyard.

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OKLAHOMA CITY departed San Francisco 21 November to begin her readiness for sea period by loading ammunition at Mare Island and Seal Beach. She began a holiday leave and upkeep period at Long Beach 10 December, and commenced underway training off the coast of southern California on 3 January.

On 8 February the OKLAHOMA CITY became the first combatant unit of the U.S. Pacific Fleet to successfully fire a Talos guided missile. The accomplishment culminated several months of concentrated effort by the ship's crew in readying the weapons system as well as perfecting missile handling and target tracking techniques. Following this, the final acceptance trials were run in early March for the Board of Inspection and Survey, Navy Department.

OKLAHOMA CITY conducted shakedown training from 6 through 24 March, 3 through 14 April, and 1 through 5 May under the operational control of the Commander Fleet Training Group, San Diego.

Proof of the OKLAHOMA CITY's training came during the week 1-5 May when she underwent the final phase of her underway training at the Pacific Missile Range. Adverse weather conditions caused several postponements in Talos firing due to target difficulties, and, as a result, seven missiles had to be launched in two days to complete the exercises. Results were satisfactory to both the ship and the operational commanders.

On 7 May the ship off-loaded ammunition and the remaining missiles at Seal Beach and on 9 May proceeded to the San Francisco Naval Shipyard for a two-month post-shakedown availability.

On 7 July 1961 Captain George R. Muse, U.S.N., relieved Captain Sarver as Commanding Officer of U.S.S. OKLAHOMA CITY. The next day fifty-three NROTC Midshipmen reported aboard for a seven-week training cruise. Much work was accomplished at the shipyard during the ship's two-month stay, and it was a more efficient cruiser that steamed out from San Francisco Bay 11 July 1961. The ship headed South to Seal Beach where she loaded her ammunition, and ultimately she moored at the Long Beach Naval Shipyard 15 July. For the next ten days the OKLAHOMA CITY groomed herself for participation in operation "Tailwind", a major exercise involving twenty-one ships including an attack carrier, four cruisers, and numerous destroyers, auxiliaries, and aircraft. Throughout the exercise, OKLAHOMA CITY distinguished herself as a milestone in modern anti-air warfare.

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The ship turned now from her primary task of anti-air warfare to her related responsibility of training men. Midshipmen, guests of the Secretary of the Navy, visiting Foreign Nationals, service school students, members of the Navy League, Explorer Scouts - all rode the OKLAHOMA CITY and observed her modern equipment and methods. On 19 and 20 August OKLAHOMA CITY was the representative of the Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Forces, Pacific Fleet at the fiftieth anniversary of Naval Aviation. More than 15,000 people visited the ship during the weekend celebration held at North Island Air Station in San Diego.

Rear Admiral Joseph C. Wylie, then Commander Cruiser Division Three, shifted his flag to U.S.S. OKLAHOMA CITY 22 August. He moved aboard with his staff of eight officers and thirty-four enlisted men. On 1 September Rear Admiral Wylie became Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla Nine and continued to ride the ship under his new title.

On 6 September OKLAHOMA CITY fired two more Talos missiles to complete her quarterly requirements. She then continued on to San Francisco where, for the next week, she helped that city commemorate "Fleet Week" by playing host to numerous guests with an "Open House". From San Francisco she returned to Long Beach to commence preparations for operation "Covered Wagon", a major exercise similar to operation "Tailwind".

On 10 October Rear Admiral C.F. Loughlin relieved Rear Admiral Wylie as ComCruDesFlot Nine. Less than a week later the ship put to sea for "Covered Wagon". After an exhausting two weeks, OKLAHOMA CITY returned to Long Beach and commenced the lengthy preparations for deployment to the Western Pacific. On 10 November she took time out from her pre-deployment logistics to take five hundred dependents and friends on a cruise around Santa Catalina Island.

On 11 November Rear Admiral Loughlin and his staff departed. Three more weeks of final preparations, and on 1 December U.S.S. OKLAHOMA CITY departed Long Beach for a scheduled six-month deployment in WestPac.

Arriving in Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1961, the OKLAHOMA CITY anchored near the U.S.S. Arizona and participated in the twentieth anniversary memorial ceremony in honor of those who died in the attack 7 December 1941. The ship hosted some two hundred fifty guests for the ceremony, among them Gold Star mothers and Veterans of the attack. After a two-day stay in Hawaii, OKLAHOMA CITY again pointed her bow westward and arrived in Yokosuka Japan 20 December, having participated while enroute in a fruitless Search and Rescue operation for a distressed Japanese fishing boat, the Choei Maru.

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On 26 December, after six days of transferring personnel and records aboard, interrupted by a Japanese Christmas, U.S.S. OKLAHOMA CITY officially relieved U.S.S. St. Paul (CA-73) as flagship for Commander United States Seventh Fleet, Vice Admiral William A. Schoech, and his staff of 250 officers and men.

OKLAHOMA CITY earned two battle stars and other awards for World War II operations listed below:

1. American Campaign Medal
2. Asiatic-Pacific Medal with two Stars: Okinawa Gunto Operation - Assault and occupation of Okinawa Gunto

Third Fleet Operations against Japan-
10 July to 15 August 1945

3. World War II Victory Medal
4. Navy Occupation Service (Asian) Medal

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