

# MIGHTY NINETY



HOLIDAY 2009

The Quarterly Newsletter of USS ASTORIA CL-90

## Welcome to the latest issue of the Mighty Ninety newsletter!

*This newsletter will be distributed four times a year, containing announcements and content surrounding the light cruiser USS ASTORIA CL-90 and the men who served aboard ship during her career, 1944-1949.*

Some of you may be thinking—"did we miss the Fall newsletter?" The answer is no. This is the first newsletter published since the summer, primarily due to a need over the past few months for me to focus on a couple of overlapping family medical issues. Fortunately we have been very blessed with good, healthy outcomes, and so this newsletter moves forward.

To make up for the long wait, this issue will be more of a "double-issue" with more pages and features. Thanks to everyone who has contributed—individual "thank yous" are listed inside! -Brent

## FEATURE ARTICLE: GEORGE C. DYER, FIRST COMMANDING OFFICER

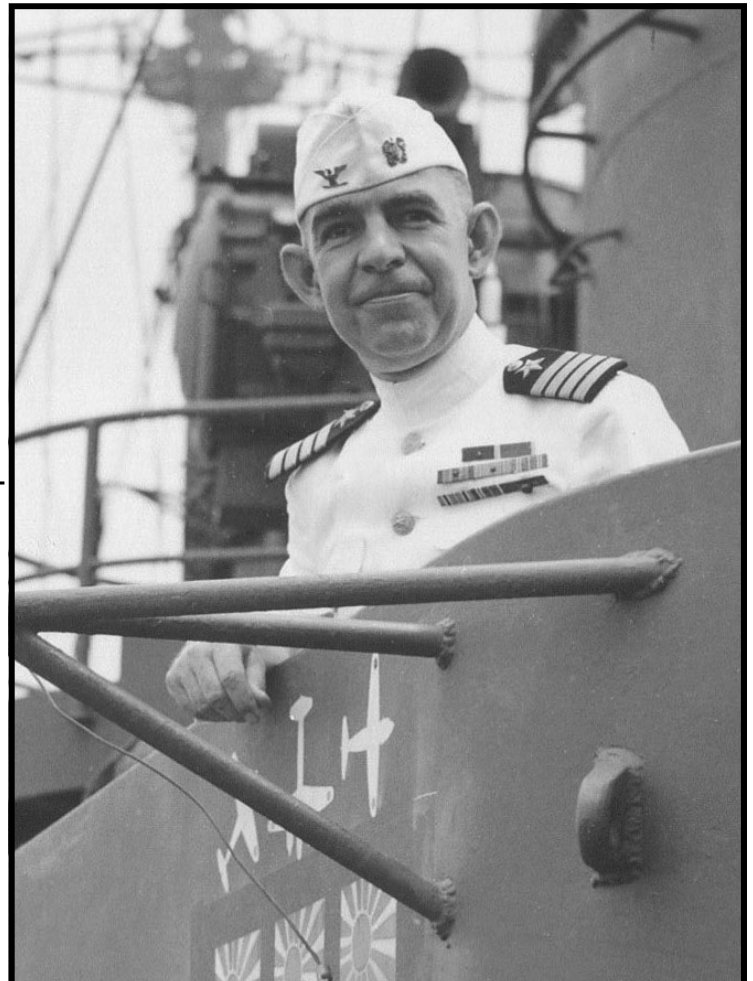
When ship's photographer Herman Schnipper took this photograph of Captain George Carroll Dyer, first skipper of the Mighty Ninety, it was Dyer's final day on the ship.

It was June 1945. The Mighty Ninety had just taken part in the longest continuous period at sea in U.S. Navy history—79 days during Okinawa operations. The ship was freshly painted as Dyer proudly posed for photos over the Mighty Ninety's scoreboard of downed Japanese aircraft.

Dyer turned the ship over to his relief, said his good-byes, and prepared to return stateside for his next assignment. He had tears in his eyes during his final address as he left the crew and ship he loved to finish fighting the Pacific War without him.

By the accounts of the shipmates who served with him, George C. Dyer was a "Sailor's Captain." He is remembered as strict but fair, with the highest of expectations, and determined for his ship to excel in all areas.

But there is much more to know about Dyer, and that will be the focus of this newsletter feature.



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## FEATURE ARTICLE: GEORGE C. DYER, FIRST COMMANDING OFFICER

**Early Navy Career**

George Carroll Dyer, born in Minneapolis in 1898, graduated from the Naval Academy in 1918 just as WWI was drawing to a close. His first decade in the U.S. Navy was devoted to submarine duty. Throughout the 1920s Dyer served aboard nine submarines, commanding three of them.



Above: Two of Dyer's early commands—submarine L-10 and minelayer USS GAMBLE.

In 1931, Dyer transitioned to command of surface ships. First was USS WIDGEON, one of the earliest submarine rescue vessels. Then he took command of the destroyer USS GAMBLE (converted to a minelayer). He also served aboard the battleship ARIZONA and heavy cruiser INDIANAPOLIS during this period, and commanded Submarine Division 8.

**Wartime Service**

In 1939-40, Dyer served as secretary to Admiral James O. Richardson, Commander in Chief U.S. Fleet. It was in this role that he handed Admiral Richardson the orders for his early relief at Pearl Harbor, an event recounted in several books including *At Dawn We Slept*.

His staff position at an end, Dyer did not want to return stateside. He requested a transfer—"any ship, any ocean"—and was detailed again to the INDIANAPOLIS. He reported aboard as Executive Officer.



Dyer as a Commander circa 1940.

Dyer later wrote: *I didn't think we had the ship in a sufficient state of readiness. I wanted to step up our watches while in port so I went in to see my skipper. Much to my pleasure, he said, "I've been hoping that you'd come in and say something like this to me. I think it's most inadequate what we're doing."*

*He backed me all the way as we doubled our readiness condition. Everybody was on duty two days out of four instead of one.*

*This new setup hadn't been going on for forty-eight hours when I got word from Mrs. Dyer, "All the wives have been calling me, asking, 'What's the INDIANAPOLIS trying to do, fight some war all by itself?' Their husbands aren't coming home, and they're upset." I told her I was sorry, but that's the way things had to be.*

*People grew more and more disgruntled. When I handed the captain the dispatch saying, "Air raid, Pearl Harbor. This is no drill," he said to me, "You and I are lucky this dispatch came. In another week, the crew would have thrown us overboard."*

## FEATURE ARTICLE: GEORGE C. DYER, FIRST COMMANDING OFFICER



Left: INDIANAPOLIS as she looked circa 1940.

Right: BISCAYNE at the Sicily Invasion in 1943.

In 1942 Dyer was promoted to Captain and detailed to Admiral Ernest King's U.S. Fleet staff in Washington, where he helped investigate the intelligence breakdowns from the Pearl Harbor attack. Dyer's analysis resulted in significant changes to naval intelligence and planning, an area that soon became his central focus.

In 1943 he was assigned as chief of staff for Admiral Richard Connolly, Commander Amphibious Bases North Africa. On 6 July, Dyer was aboard Connolly's flagship USS BISCAYNE at Bizerte, Tunisia, making final preparations for the amphibious landings at Sicily when a formation of German bombers attacked the ship. Dyer was one of four men aboard BISCAYNE hit by gunfire in the attack. Severely wounded in the leg, he was evacuated stateside where he spent several months undergoing surgeries and convalescing.

### The Mighty Ninety

Dyer was forced to turn down two cruiser commands before he was able to return to sea—AUGUSTA and PASADENA. In early 1944 he accepted command of a new cruiser nearing completion—USS ASTORIA.

The rest, as they say, is history. From her shakedown through her war cruise with the fast carriers, the Mighty Ninety conducted operations with the efficiency and effectiveness that resulted from Dyer's commitment to drill and readiness condition. His earlier experience as Executive Officer aboard INDIANAPOLIS undoubtedly influenced his determination for ASTORIA to be a tight ship from day one.

Dyer commanded the Mighty Ninety during the vast majority of her wartime actions—the Philippines, the infamous Typhoon of 1944, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. For his leadership of CL-90 under combat conditions, Dyer was awarded the Bronze Star with Combat V and Legion of Merit with three gold stars.



USS ASTORIA CL-90 as she appeared under Dyer's command, 1944-45.

## MIGHTY NINETY

### FEATURE ARTICLE: GEORGE C. DYER, FIRST COMMANDING OFFICER



Two close-ups from Herman Schnipper photographs taken shortly before Captain Dyer left the ship in June 1945.

Left: Dyer awards a Purple Heart to Chaplain Lusk. Right: Dyer is relieved by his replacement, Captain William V. Hamilton.

Following the ASTORIA's heaviest action of the war at Okinawa, Dyer received new orders. When the ship returned to anchorage for refit and repair, Dyer turned over command of the ship to its second skipper. He returned stateside for the duration of the war as Chief of Logistic Plans and was promoted to Rear Admiral.

### Post-War Career

Following a stint with the Chief of Naval Operations, Dyer returned to sea in command of Cruiser Division 10, Atlantic Fleet. It was during this period that many CL-90 shipmates recall seeing him in a 1947 issue of Life Magazine.

Dyer taught as Deputy Commander at the National War College from 1949-1951, before returning to sea



Vice Admiral George C. Dyer in 1955.

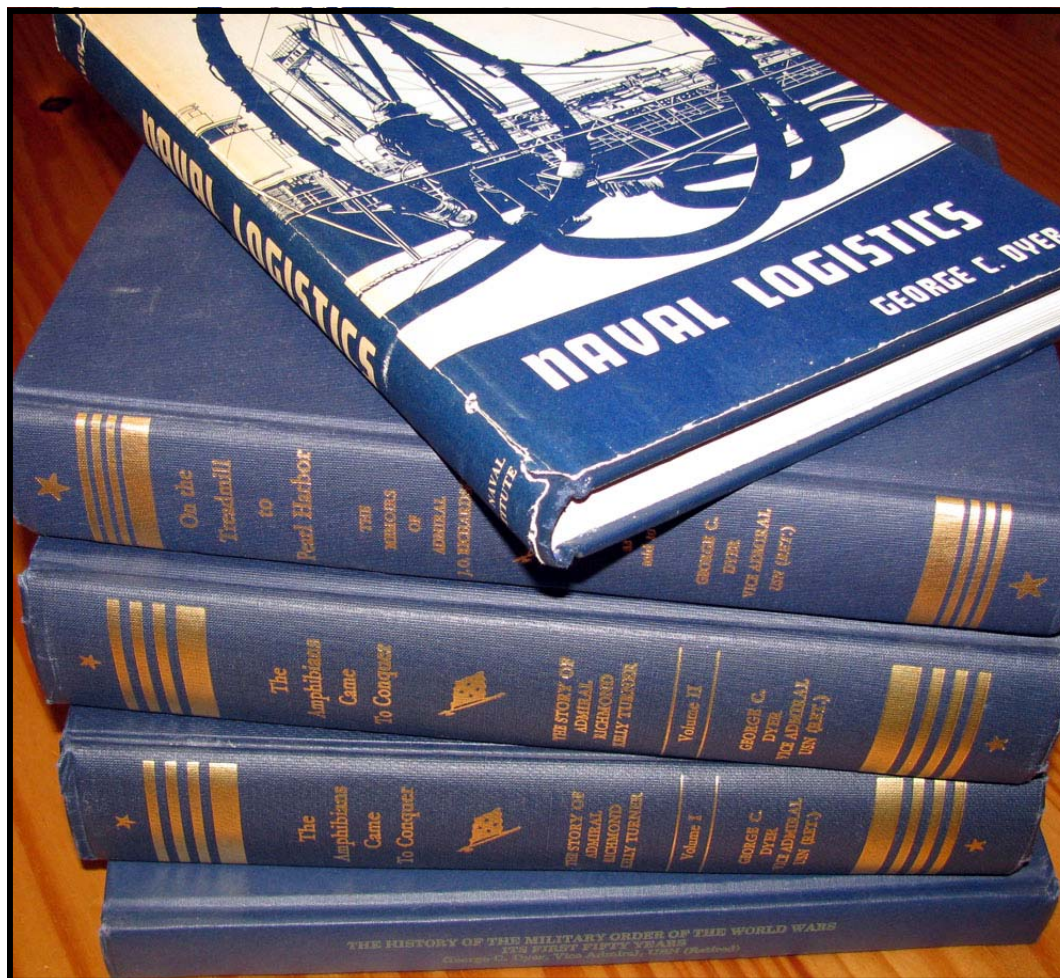
for a final time during the Korean War, where he commanded Task Force 95, the United Nations Blockade and Escort Force. He was promoted to Vice Admiral in 1955 and retired following 37 years of service.

### The CL-90 Legacy

George Dyer always fondly remembered his wartime command, the Mighty Ninety and her crew. In his memoirs recorded in 1970, Dyer said: "They knew they were doing something, accomplishing what the ship was built for, and it made them very proud. I was proud of my crew." He echoed the sentiment when he attended the ship's reunion in 1973.

On Veterans Day 1983, Herman Schnipper received a reply to a letter he had sent to his retired skipper. Dyer wrote: "Dear ASTORIA shipmate, fond memories of that wonderful cruiser—the fighting CL-90 and her outstanding crew—were brought to mind by your most welcome card. They did a super job."

## ARTIFACT SPOTLIGHT: GEORGE C. DYER BIBLIOGRAPHY



Following his U.S. Navy career, George Carroll Dyer took up writing through the Naval Institute. His works included a textbook on Naval Logistics that was used at Annapolis for many years, as well as biographies of Admirals James O. Richardson and Richmond K. Turner. These biographies cover the events leading to the Pearl Harbor attack and the amphibious invasions of Guadalcanal through Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Dyer published his final book at the age of 80. He passed away in 1987 and is buried at the Naval Academy.

## GEORGE C. DYER CL-90 MEMOIRS

As part of his memoirs recorded in 1970, George C. Dyer gave a detailed account of his time as Commanding Officer of ASTORIA CL-90. Earlier this year I obtained a copy of these memoirs from the U.S. Naval Institute and have transcribed and annotated them. I have shared copies with several shipmates and am more than happy to send copies to shipmates and family. The transcribed memoirs are 43 pages in length, and printing plus shipping costs for a bound copy come to about \$10. I can also send via email at no charge.

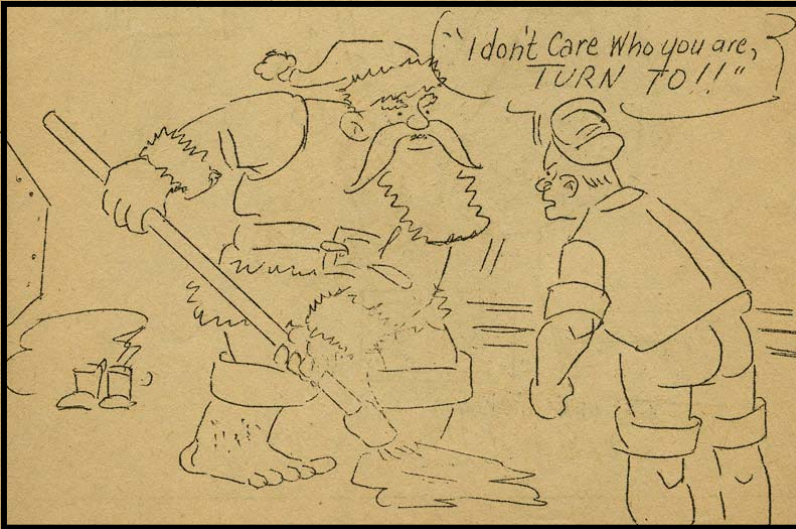
Call or email me (next page) and I will be happy to get a copy out to you.



Memoirs of USS ASTORIA CL-90  
Vice Admiral George Carroll Dyer

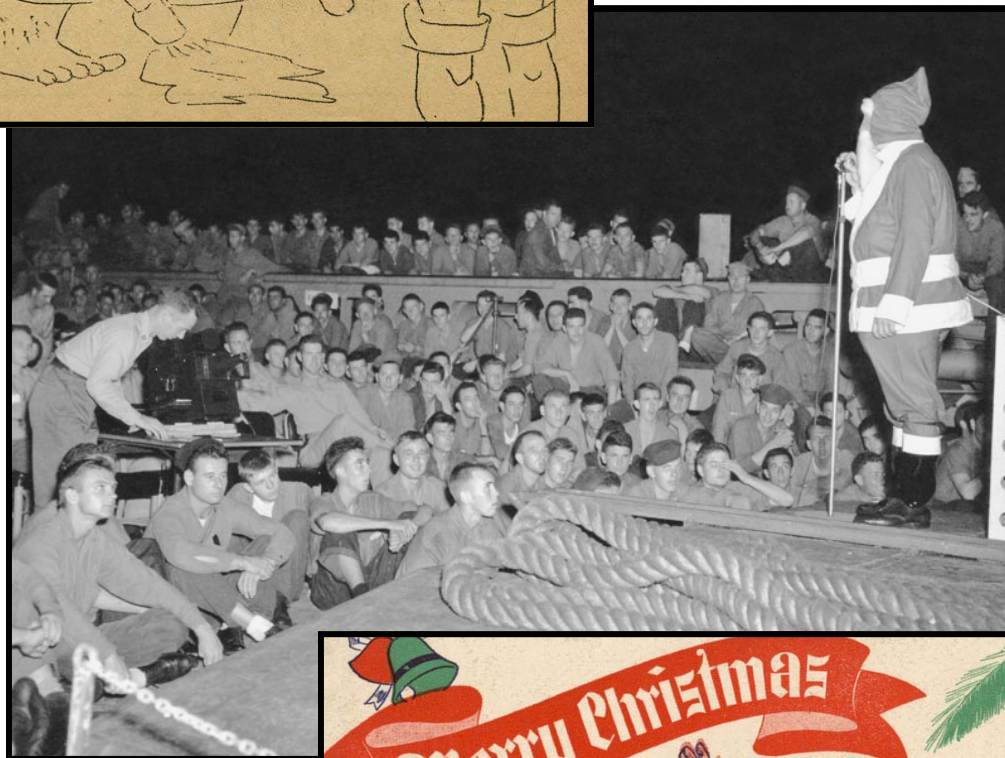
**MIGHTY NINETY**

**HOLIDAY SPOTLIGHT: SANTA CLAUS AND THE MIGHTY NINETY**



A little holiday fun... Kris Kringle made his share of appearances aboard USS ASTORIA, no matter where the ship was when December 25th came around.

Top: A Joe Aman cartoon that appeared in the USS ASTORIA Daily Morning Press in 1944, featuring Santa instead of Joey Fubar.



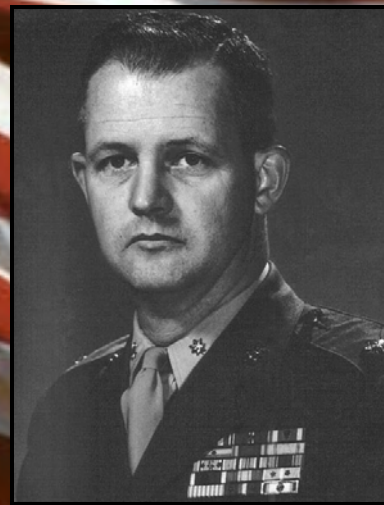
Center: Herman Schnipper captures a photo of jolly old St. Nick entertaining on the fantail at Ulithi Anchorage, December 1944.

Bottom: Santa on a surfboard with Diamond Head in the background makes it clear that USS ASTORIA spent Christmas 1946 in Hawaii. This was the cover for the Mighty Ninety's Christmas dinner menu.



## FIDDLER'S GREEN

## Remembering shipmates who left us in 2009



Left to Right: Chief Herman "Bud" Harms, Ensign John Schmitt USN, and Colonel Gerard T. Armitage USMC (ret.)

## Mighty Ninety Website Updates

## A MESSAGE FROM BRENT

The website has been renewed and paid for through 2011! For those of you who are a bit more computer-savvy, this means that the domain names and site hosting have been guaranteed for another two years. It is the goal of this project to maintain the Mighty Ninety website as an online museum and monument for perpetuity.

New sections of the ship's history were added to the website in the fall. If you haven't checked in recently, take a look at [www.mighty90.com/ship\\_history](http://www.mighty90.com/ship_history) to see the new sections. They cover the Luzon and South China Sea operations in January-February 1945. These sections include fantastic detailed information found in the diaries of J. Fred Lind and Jim Thomson, both from F Division, as well as the photographs taken aboard ship by Herman Schnipper.

I am currently working on the Tokyo Raids of February 1945 and Iwo Jima operations. To contribute stories, suggestions, or anything else please feel free to call me at the number at the bottom of the page.

## Credits and Acknowledgments

Contributions included in this newsletter:

- Herman Schnipper, N Division (photographs on pages 1,4, 6, and 7)
- Tracy White from [www.researcheratlange.com](http://www.researcheratlange.com) for the CL-90 images on pages 3 and 8
- Jim Peddie, E Division (Joey Fubar cartoon)

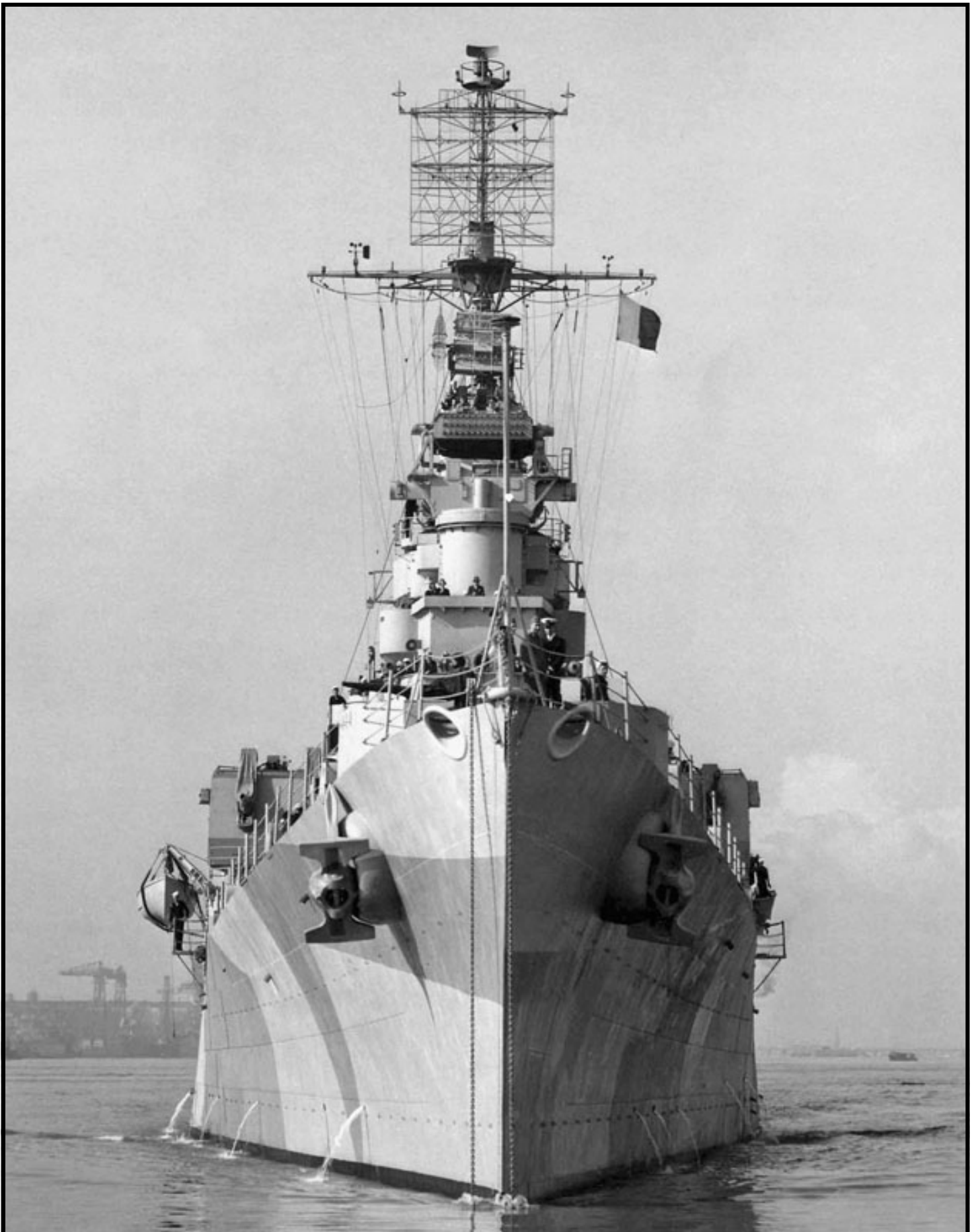
Many thanks to the shipmates who made financial contributions to help offset costs of the Mighty Ninety project and newsletter. Jim Peddie, Fred Lind, and Obie Obuchon—on behalf of the recipients of this newsletter I thank each of you very much.



The Mighty Ninety website and newsletter are primarily written and maintained by Brent Jones, great-nephew of E Division plankowner Lawrence C. Jones.

Brent is looking to contact as many Mighty Ninety shipmates as possible to share the website and newsletter with them. If you can help locate someone new, please share!

Brent can be reached at (214) 995-9224 or via email: [brentj@mighty90.com](mailto:brentj@mighty90.com)



*Bow view of USS ASTORIA CL-90 as she looked when she got underway to join the Fast Carrier Task Force. Photo taken at Mare Island Navy Yard on 21 October 1944. -NARA San Francisco Branch photo courtesy of Tracy White*