

November 2005

U.S.S. San Francisco

*USS San Francisco (Cruiser # 5, C-5, later
CM-2), 1890-1939*

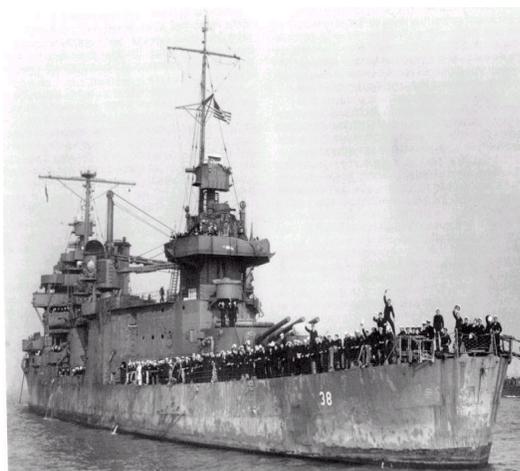
by
Mike Prero

*USS San Francisco (Heavy Cruiser CA-38),
1934-1959*



As with last issue's *USS Sacramento*, three vessels of the United States Navy have been named *USS San Francisco*.

The first *San Francisco* (C-5), was built at San Francisco, California, and commissioned in 1890 as a



4088-ton protected cruiser, a type of naval cruiser of the late 19th century. They were so known because they had only a minimal amount of armor compared to existing "armored" cruisers. She served in the Pacific until 1893, then steamed to the Atlantic. Operations followed in the North and South Atlantic, and in European waters. During the Spanish-American War, in 1898, *San Francisco* was stationed off Cuba. The cruiser had two additional tours of European duty in 1902-04, plus spending some time in the Caribbean area. In 1908-1911, she was converted into a mine planter, one of the Navy's first specialized mine vessels. *San Francisco* assisted in laying the North Sea Mine Barrage designated CM-2 in 1920, and decommissioned in

*USS San Francisco (Nuclear
Submarine, SSN-711), 1981-9*



December 1921. In reserve at Philadelphia Navy Yard for many years thereafter, the ship was renamed *Yosemite* in 1931 and was sold for scrapping in April 1939.

The second *San Francisco* (CA-38), a heavy cruiser, was laid down on 9 September 1931 at the Mare Island Navy Yard, Vallejo, California; launched on 9 March 1933; and commissioned on 10 February 1934, Capt. Royal E. Ingersoll in command. A heavy cruiser is a type of large warship which originated with the British Hawkins class during World War I. On 7 December, *San Francisco* was awaiting docking and the cleaning of her heavily fouled bottom. When the Japanese attacked, the crew had secured the ship for watertightness and had begun looking for opportunities to fight back. Some crossed to *New Orleans* (CA-32) to man antiaircraft batteries. Others began using available rifles and machine guns. On 14 December, the cruiser left the yard; scaling had been postponed in favor of more necessary repairs on other ships.

She was part of the Rabal, Guadalcanal, and Solomon Islands operations. On 12 Nov, a Japanese torpedo plane crashed into *San Francisco*. Fifteen men were killed, 29 wounded, and one missing. Control aft was demolished. The ship's secondary command post, Battle Two, was burned out but was reestablished by dark. The after antiaircraft director and radar were put out of commission. On 13 November, she got into it with a Japanese destroyer, cruiser and two battleships. A direct hit on the navigation bridge killed or badly wounded all officers except the communications officer. Steering and engine control were lost and shifted to Battle Two. Battle Two was out of commission by a direct hit from the port side. Control was again lost. Soon thereafter, the enemy ceased firing. *San Francisco* followed suit and withdrew eastward along the north coast of Guadalcanal. Seventy-seven sailors, including Rear Admiral Callaghan and Capt. Young, had been killed. One Hundred and five had been wounded. Of seven missing, three were subsequently rescued. The ship had taken 45 hits. Structural damage was extensive, but not serious. No hits had been received below the waterline. Twenty two fires had been started and extinguished. She received the Presidential Unit Citation. On 18 November, the cruiser sailed for Noumea, and, on the 23d, she got underway toward the United States. She reached San Francisco on 11 December. Three days later, repairs were begun at Mare Island. By February 1943, she was back prowling the seas.

San Francisco saw further action at the Marshall Islands, Kwajalein, Saipan, Guam, Tinian, the Ryukyus, Formosa, Iwo Jima, Okinawa. On 27 November, 1945, the embattled ship headed home. Arriving at San Francisco in mid-December, she continued on to Philadelphia for inactivation. Decommissioned on 10 February, she was berthed with the Philadelphia Group of the Atlantic Reserve Fleet until 1 March 1959 when her name was struck from the Navy list. On 9 September, she was sold for scrapping. *San Francisco* (CA-38) earned 17 battle stars during World War II.

The third *San Francisco* (SSN-711), a *Los Angeles*-class submarine, was launched on 27 October, 1979, and commissioned on 24 April 1981, with Commander J. Allen Marshall in command. In its life, *USS San Francisco* has carried the pride and charm of its namesake city to the far reaches of the Pacific including: Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, Okinawa; Subic Bay, Singapore, Guam, Korea, Australia, Canada; as well as Bremerton, San Diego, San Francisco, and Hawaii.

On January 8, 2005, the *USS San Francisco* hit an uncharted undersea mountain of Guam while travelling at high speed about 500 ft below surface. The submarine was able to surface and head back to Guam. One critically injured sailor died and 23 other crewmen were injured. The Captain was later removed from his command. As of May 8th, the boat was still undergoing repairs.

[<http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/USS+San+Francisco>; <http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/cruisers/ca38.txt>; <http://navysite.de/ssn/ssn711.htm>