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# THE BEGINNING

**T**HIS, then, is a battle record and a history of the light cruiser USS COLUMBIA from her inception to her last Pacific Fleet assignment in WORLD WAR II. This is the story of YOUR ship—a valiant ship manned by valiant men.

The USS COLUMBIA was named for the city of Columbia, S. C., and she was the second cruiser of her class to be built. She was authorized on May 17, 1938, and her building contract was placed with the New York Shipbuilding Corporation in Camden, N. J. Her keel was laid on August 19, 1940, and on the 17th day of December, 1941, she was launched.

Miss Jean Adams Paschal, daughter of the acting mayor, in 1941, of Columbia, S. C., was

*Facts of Interest*

<b>Beam</b> .....	<b>65' 7½"</b>
<b>Length</b> .....	<b>610' 0"</b>
<b>Displacement</b> .....	<b>10,000</b>
<b>Draft</b> .....	<b>24' 5"</b>
<b>Rated Speed</b> .....	<b>33 Knots</b>
<b>Horse Power</b> .....	<b>100,000</b>
<b>Main Battery</b> .....	<b>12 6"/47</b>
<b>Secondary Battery</b> ..	<b>12 5"/38</b>
<b>40MM Anti Aircraft Batteries</b>	
<b>20MM Anti Aircraft Batteries</b>	
<b>Steamed mileage</b> .....	<b>178,023</b>



Miss Jean Adams Paschal, daughter of acting mayor of Columbia, S. C., christens the USS Columbia—Dec. 17, 1941.

accorded the honor of smashing the traditional bottle of champagne against the COLUMBIA's bow. With the blowing of yard whistles and the cheers of workmen, the youthful ship slipped quickly down the ways into the waters of the Delaware River unaware of the essential role she was to play in victory over Japan.

Due to the exigencies of war, a pre-commissioning detail was immediately assigned to the new ship by the Navy Department. This first nucleus gathered for duty in the Welsback Building in Gloucester, N. J.—duty which accounted for the COLUMBIA's "plank-owners" being dubbed "Welsbackers."

Early on the morning of July 29, 1942, the order to "board ship" was given to the "Welsbackers," and to many of that first crew, the order marked the beginning of a trip that would see them half-around the world, and for some others, half-around again to return after three years of fighting in the Pacific.

The crew stepped up the gangway of the "Gem of the Ocean," or "Gem" for short—a nickname the COLUMBIA had already acquired—at the New York Shipbuilding Corporation, having previously been assigned bunks and lockers. It was the first assigned billet aboard a naval vessel for some of the men and