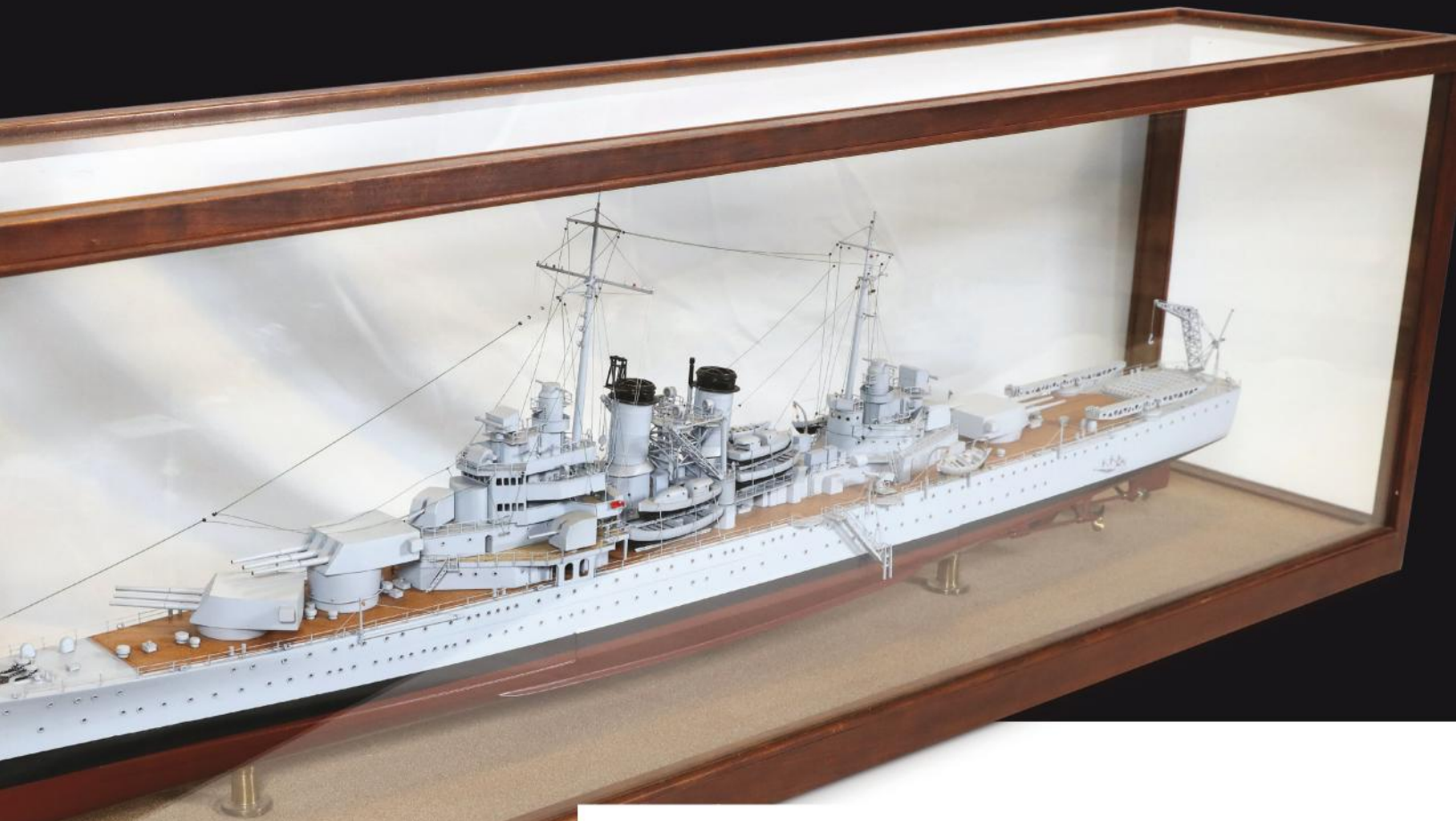


SHIPSHAPE

FDR's enormous model ship collection arose out of two deeply held passions



PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT had a fathomless reverence for the navy, the sea, and sailing—one long preceding his 1913-1920 term as Assistant Secretary of the Navy and continuing throughout his life. His mother's family, the Delanos, were ship owners and merchants; Franklin, always comfortable in water, learned to sail at a young age. He loved traveling by ship (he is aboard the USS *Houston*, above, in 1938), strongly preferring that to air travel. An inveterate collector, he combined his passions in a vast maritime and naval collection that includes more than 400 model ships. As president, he filled White House rooms with the models; many others were on display in the Naval Exhibition Room at the presidential library he created on the grounds of his home at Hyde Park, New York. Visitors to the FDR Presidential Library and Museum may see them there today, behind glass in a collections storage room evoking his Naval Room. —Karen Jensen

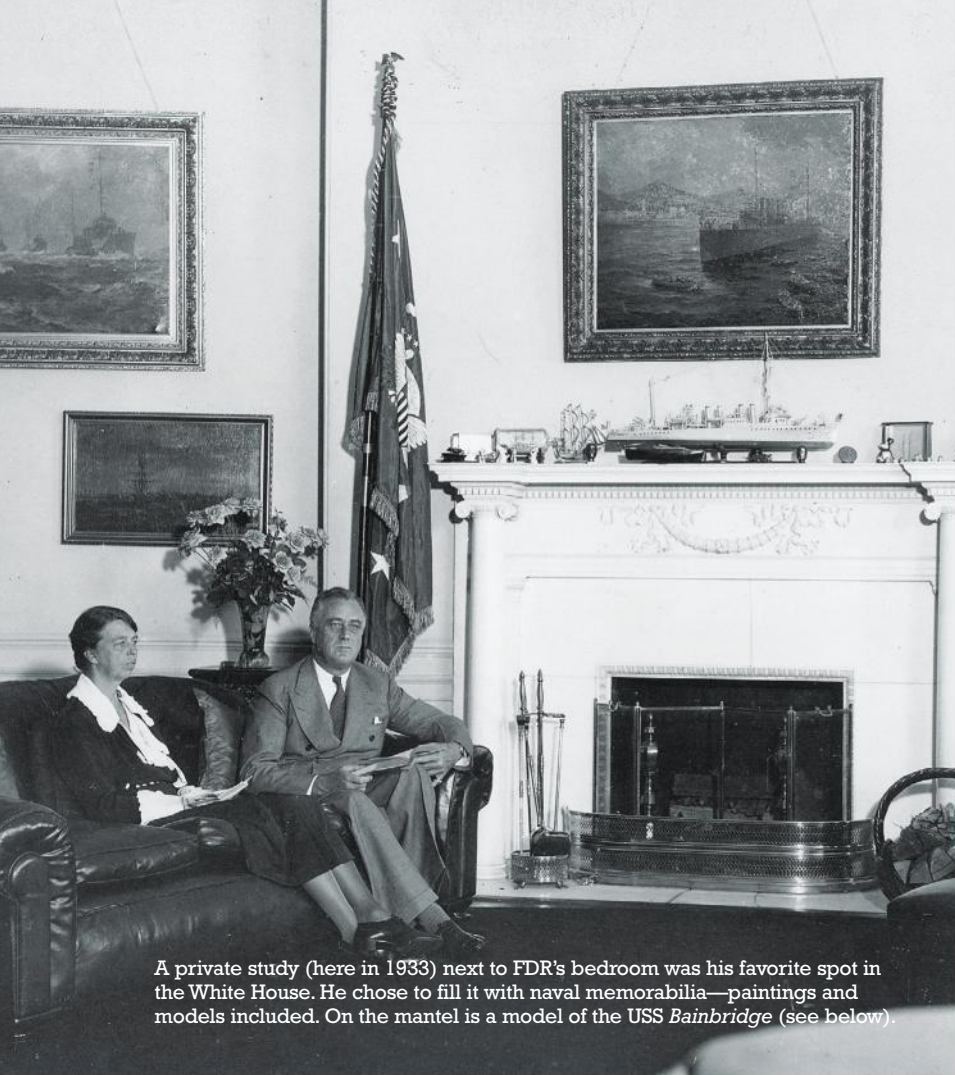


MOSQUITO FLEET

In 1941, the Milton Bradley Company manufactured this diminutive wooden PT boat (top) as a toy; the company's vice president, Roy Davy, presented it to President Roosevelt. The original PT-9 was the U.S. Navy's first PT boat: a British vessel American manufacturer Elco imported that became the prototype for the 80-foot craft Elco subsequently built. While a dozen manufacturers ultimately supplied the U.S. Navy with the small, fast vessels, the majority of them, 399, came from Elco.

CLASS OF ITS OWN

In January 1941, when model maker Frederic A. Craven gave this 1/16" scale replica of the USS *Wichita* to FDR, the heavy cruiser had just begun its long wartime service. After convoy escort duty in the North Atlantic, the single member of the *Wichita*-class served in North Africa, Europe, and the Pacific, ending up in Nagasaki Harbor shortly after Japan's surrender. The *Wichita* was sold for scrap in August 1959.



A private study (here in 1933) next to FDR's bedroom was his favorite spot in the White House. He chose to fill it with naval memorabilia—paintings and models included. On the mantel is a model of the USS *Bainbridge* (see below).

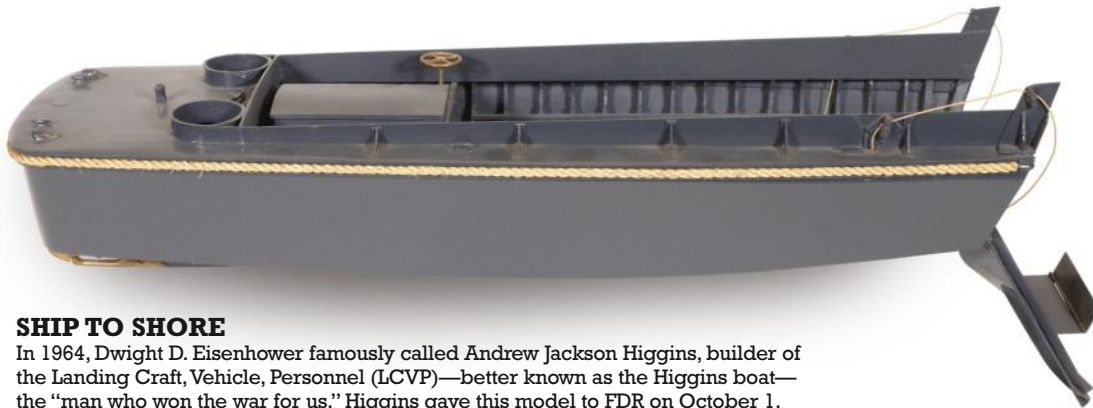
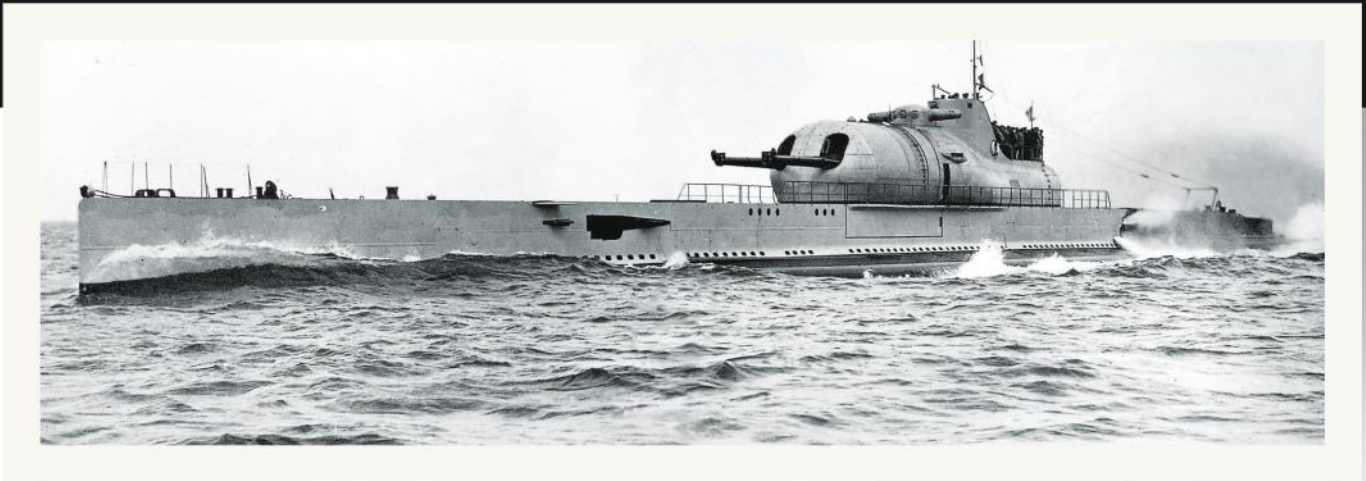


MODEL PRISONER

An inmate at New York's Sing Sing Correctional Facility crafted this 40-inch-long wooden model of the destroyer USS *Bainbridge* and sent it by express mail to the White House in November 1933. "I made each and every part of this model by hand during recreation periods at the prison," he wrote. "I know you are keenly interested in ship models and I hope you will accept my humble gift which I am most happy to present to you for your collection."

DIVE, DIVE, DIVE

The Free French submarine *Surcouf* (photo, below) loosely inspired this working aluminum model—able to dive, fire guns, and launch torpedoes—made by a French petty officer in occupied Tunisia. On July 9, 1944, General Charles de Gaulle presented the 42.5-inch vessel to Roosevelt; he and his grandson, Curtis, promptly took it for a successful swim at a Maryland shipbuilding test facility, the David Taylor Model Basin.

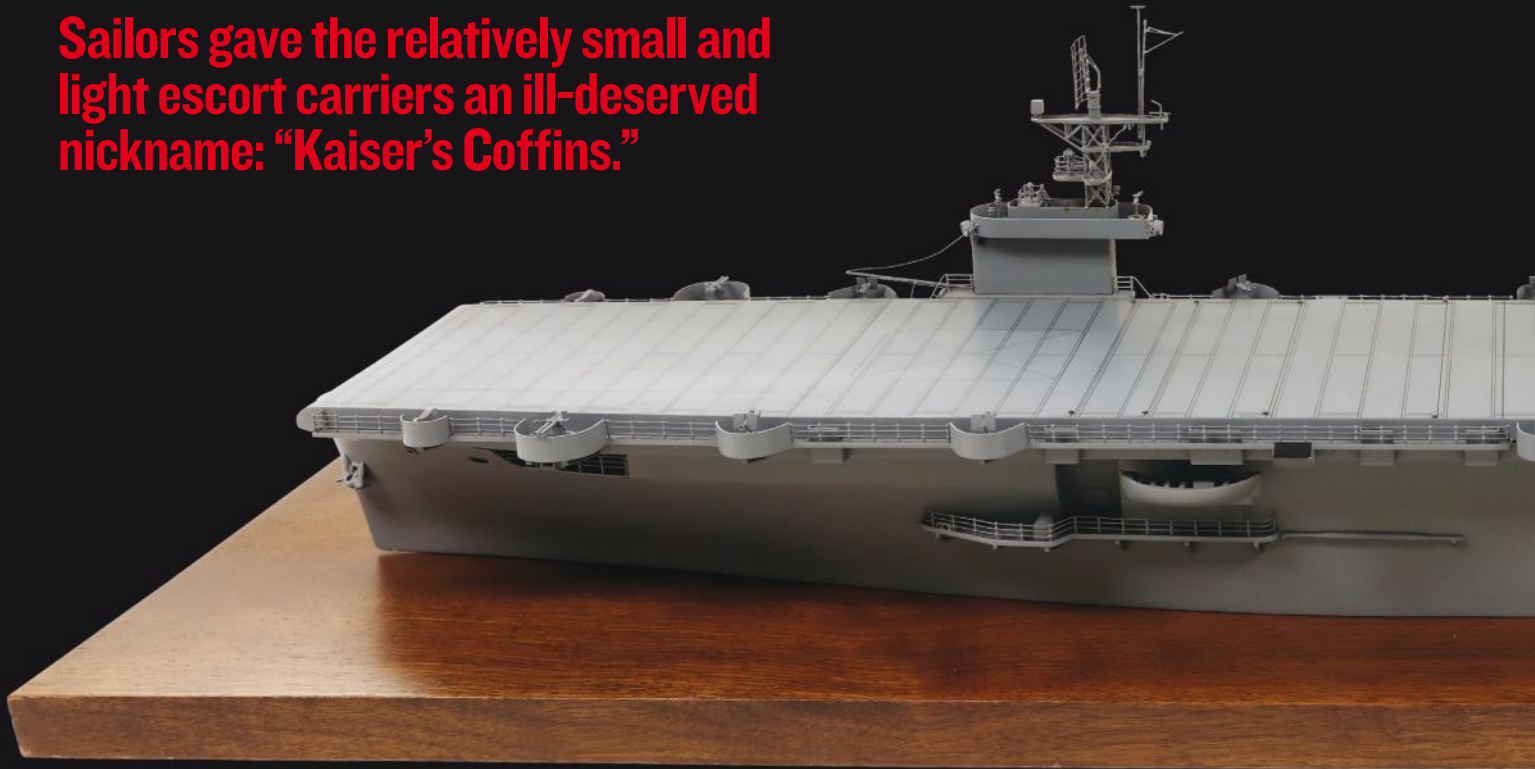


SHIP TO SHORE

In 1964, Dwight D. Eisenhower famously called Andrew Jackson Higgins, builder of the Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel (LCPV)—better known as the Higgins boat—the “man who won the war for us.” Higgins gave this model to FDR on October 1, 1943; the LCPV went on to prove crucial to all major American amphibious landings.

SHIPSHAPE

Sailors gave the relatively small and light escort carriers an ill-deserved nickname: “Kaiser’s Coffins.”



GONE SOUTH

Eugene M. Wheeler, president of Wheeler Shipyard Inc. in Brooklyn, New York, presented this 41.5-inch model of an 83-foot U.S. Coast Guard patrol boat to the president in June 1943. The vessel depicted, CGC-83385, had been transferred to Cuba three months earlier, along with nine other Coast Guard patrol boats under the Lend-Lease program, to aid Cuba’s anti-U-boat operations.

BABY FLATTOP

Henry J. Kaiser, namesake of the Kaiser Shipbuilding Company (at center, inset), presented a model of the escort carrier USS *Casablanca* to the president on March 18, 1943. The next month, Eleanor Roosevelt traveled to Vancouver, Washington, to christen the vessel, the first of 80 *Casablanca*-class carriers built during the war. "The ship went safely down the ways at the appointed time and was duly christened," the First Lady wrote in the April 7, 1943, entry of her "My Day" newspaper column. "It was interesting and impressive to see all the workers and their families gathered together for the occasion and I felt there was a spirit of good workmanship in this yard."



DOUBLE TROUBLE

George H. Maynor, 17, of Tampa, Florida, built this 49.5-inch model of the destroyer USS *Benham*, mounted in front of a mirror. His grandfather sent it to FDR in March 1941. But when the president invited George to the opening of the presidential library at Hyde Park that June, George had to decline; he had joined the navy the previous month. Aviation Mechanist First Class Maynor was on the flight deck of the USS *Hornet* on April 18, 1942, when the Doolittle Raiders departed for their legendary attack on Tokyo, and survived the sinking of the *Hornet* that October.