



# General R. L. Howze

AP-134

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Robert Lee Howze, born in Rusk County, Tex., 22 August 1864, graduated from the Military Academy in 1888. As a young officer he fought in the Indian Wars and earned the Medal of Honor fighting off a Sioux attack 1 January 1891. In the Spanish-American War Howze served in Cuba and later the Philippines. Following a tour of duty in Puerto Rico, he was Commandant on Cadets at the Military Academy 1905 to 1909. This brought him staff posts in several major commands, and command of a cavalry unit with Pershing on the Mexican border. At the outbreak of World War I, Howze was appointed Major General and commanded the 38th Division. He took part in the Meuse-Argonne fighting and marched to the Rhine as Commander, 3d Division. He received the Distinguish Service Medal from World War I service. Returning from France, Howze was appointed Major General in the regular Army in 1922. He died at Columbus, Ohio 19 September 1926.

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Builder: Kaiser Shipbuilding Inc., Richmond, California

Class: *General G. O. Squier*

Type: C4-S-A1

Commissioned: 7 February 1944

Decommissioned: Her Coast Guard crew was removed on 1 April 1946

Length: 522' 10"

Beam: 71' 6"

Draft: 26' 6"

Displacement: 17,250 tons (fl)

Propulsion: Geared turbine; single shaft; 8,500 HP

Top speed: 18 knots

Complement: 356 officers & crew

Troop capacity: 3,530

Armament: 4 x 5"/38 dual purpose; 4 x 1.1" twin gun mounts; (later replaced by 4 x 40mm twin gun mounts); 16 x 20 mm (single).

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*General R. L. Howze* (AP-134) was laid down under Maritime Commission contract 22 July 1942 by Kaiser Co., Inc., Yard 3, Richmond, Calif.; launched 23 May 1943; sponsored by Mrs. W. C. Gardenshire; acquired by the Navy 31 December 1943; converted to a transport by Matson Navigation Co., San Francisco; and commissioned at San Francisco 7 February 1944, Captain L. H. Baker, USCG, in command.

After shakedown off San Diego, the transport loaded supplies, embarked troops at San Francisco, and sailed 20 March 1944 for New Guinea. *General R. L. Howze* carried troops to Milne Bay and Lae to support the American buildup of pressure in the southwest Pacific returning to San Francisco 2 May 1944. Subsequently, the ship steamed to Guadalcanal, Manus, Eniwetok, and many other islands as the rising tide of the Navy's amphibious offensive swept toward Japan. She carried troops, supplies, and even Japanese prisoners of war on a total of 11 voyages to the combat areas of the Pacific, before returning to San Francisco 15 October 1945, after the Japanese surrender.

In November, *General R. L. Howze* steamed to the Philippines to bring home veterans, and sailed 10 January 1946 for England with 3,400 German prisoners. After touching at Liverpool 31 January, she brought American troops from Le Harve [sic; Le Havre] to New York 16 February, and made a final voyage to France for more returning veterans. *General R. L. Howze* decommissioned at New York 1 April 1946 and was returned to WSA for transfer to the War Department. She was placed in reserve in the James River 6 August 1947, and returned to the War Department as an Army Transport in 1948. The veteran transport was reacquired by the Navy 1 March 1950 and joined MSTs with a civilian crew. For the next year *General R. L. Howze* sailed to and from Europe for the International Refugee

Organization, bringing displaced persons from Eastern Europe to the United States. In mid-1951, she was transferred to the Pacific, and steamed between San Francisco and the Far East with troop replacements for U.N. fighting in Korea. She continued this vital role helping to defend freedom in Korea, both during the active fighting and after the armistice.

However, in September 1954, *General R. L. Howze* was diverted from her normal pattern of sailings to take part in Operation "Passage to Freedom." For 5 months she and other Navy ships brought tens of thousands of refugees from North to South Vietnam as that unfortunate country was partitioned.

*General R. L. Howze* made two more voyages to the Far East supporting America's important readiness forces before returning to Seattle 31 December 1955. She remained inactive until entering the reserve fleet at Astoria, Oreg., 15 July 1957. The ship was finally returned to the Maritime Administration 17 July 1958 and placed in the Maritime Defense Reserve Fleet at Astoria, where she remains.

*General R. L. Howze* received six battle stars for Korean War service.

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**Sources:**

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.

*Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships.* Washington, DC: USGPO.

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II.* Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

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