



## Juniper, 1940

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An evergreen tree or shrub of the genus *Juniperus*, having scale-like, often prickly foliage, fragrant wood, and bluish-gray berry-like fruit.

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Builder: John H. Mathis Company, Camden, New Jersey

Length: 177'

Beam: 32'

Draft: 8' 7"

Displacement: 790 tons

Cost: \$396,464 (contract)

Commissioned: 1 October 1940

Decommissioned: 15 July 1975

Disposition: Sold

Machinery: 2 electric motors connected to 2 Budda generators driven by 2 550-horsepower Cooper-Bessemer diesel engines; twin propellers; 900 SHP (total).

Performance & Endurance:

Max: 12.5 knots

Cruising: 11.0 knots; 7,000 mile range

Deck Gear: 20-ton capacity steel boom; electrically-powered winch

Complement: 38 (1945)

Armament: None (as launched); 1 x 3"/50 single-mount; 2 x 20mm/80 (single); 2 depth charge tracks (1945); none -- small arms only (1964)

Electronics:

Radar: SO-8 (1945); SPN-11 (1964)

Sonar: WEA-2 sonar (1945); none (1964)

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### Class History:

*Juniper* was planned as the lead tender of a three-ship class of tenders. She was the only one built, however, due to the transfer of the Lighthouse Service to the Coast Guard and the coming of World War II. The *Juniper* was the first all-welded steel and diesel-electric-propelled coastwise tender. Prior to her construction, all tenders had been designed to service and/or supply aids to navigation in a specific region, and this accounts for the large number of small classes and single examples of tenders that made up the vessel inventory of the Lighthouse Service prior to this time. Partly in the interests of economy, the *Juniper* was the first attempt by the Lighthouse Service to design an all-purpose, ocean-going tender capable of servicing aids to navigation along any of the nation's coasts.

Her design was used as a base model for the new 180-foot classes of buoy tenders that did enter service during the war, although that design was modified considerably to accommodate the Coast Guard's roles of light icebreaking and search and rescue, in addition to tending aids to navigation. There were other differences with *Juniper*, including the fact that she had twin propellers versus the 180s' single screw design. *Juniper* also had a much shallower draft. Her most distinguishing characteristic was her turtle-back forecastle, so designed as to prevent buoys and their mooring lines from snagging on the tender's hull. The October, 1940 issue of the *Coast Guard Bulletin* (Volume I, Number 16, page 129) gave a detailed description of the new tender:

The *Juniper*, a steel, twin-screw, Diesel electric propeller vessel, had been built for the Coast Guard by the John H. Mathis Co., of Camden, N. J., and was launched on May 18 [1940].

The vessel is 177 feet in length, with a beam of 32 feet, and with a draft of 8 feet 7 inches with normal load. Propulsion is by means of two 55-horsepower Diesel engines direct connected to 385-kilowatt generators and 20-kilowatt exciters. Power from the electric generators is led to two

450-shaft horsepower electric motors mounted directly on the propeller shafts, which are turned at 195 revolutions per minute.

A heavy derrick is rigged on the foremast, and the ship is specially designed with a large buoy deck forward, to facilitate the servicing of buoys, the construction and repair of minor lights and other similar work upon the navigational aids, for which this class of vessel is designed.

The new vessel is constructed of steel, the hull having been assembled by means of electric welding. It has a raked stem, an overhanging stern, a continuous main deck, a main deck house, and an upper deck house. The forecastle deck has a turtle-back shape at the sides.

Peterson notes that: "Many allege that *Juniper* was the last tender begun for the LHS before its merger into the United States Coast Guard on 01 Jul 1939. It was designed by the LHS, as were at least half a dozen others commissioned in the early 1940s. However, since the contract bid for construction was not opened until 21 July 1939 (three weeks after the LHS merged into the Coast Guard on 01 Jul 1939), this actually makes *USCGC Juniper* the first tender built by the Coast Guard! The 'title' of the Last Tender of the LHS belongs to *Fir* (third and final of the Hollyhock class)." (*United States Lighthouse Service Tenders, 1840-1939*, p. 146).

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### **Tender History:**

*Juniper* was built by the John H. Mathis Company of Camden, New Jersey. She was launched on 18 May 1940 and underwent trials on the Delaware River in September of that same year. The trials were supervised by an official trial board made up of CDR N. C. Manyon of the Norfolk District; LCDR C. W. Lawson of the New York District; and LT W. G. Wallace of the Jacksonville District. The trials proved to be successful and *Juniper* was commissioned on 1 October 1940. She was first assigned to the Coast Guard's Jacksonville District, which became part of the 7th Naval District when the Coast Guard was transferred to the Navy Department on 1 November 1941 and the Coast Guard's older district system merged with the Navy's, the latter of which had been originally based on the Lighthouse Service's numbered districts. *Juniper* soon after received the designation and hull number WAGL-224. She was based out of Key West, Florida and tended aids to navigation in the 7th District during the war.

After the war she was transferred to St. Petersburg, Florida, which remained her homeport for the rest of her Coast Guard career. There she tended aids to navigation and conducted search and rescue and law enforcement duties when required. On 3 October 1951 she rescued survivors from a small boat near St. Petersburg. On 3 May 1952 she assisted in the recovery of bodies from an Air Force B-29 crash near Cedar Keys. From 16 to 19 May of that same year she rescued three survivors from the fishing vessel *Parnell*. From 22 to 24 November 1952 she helped free the tender *Birch* and a barge that had gone aground on Gasparilla Pass.

From 5 to 6 January 1953 she assisted a PBM flying boat and the next month, on 15 February, she searched for survivors from National Flight 470. On 18 July 1954 she salvaged a Navy SNB aircraft off Tampa Bay. On 4 October 1954 she searched for an overdue Navy Hellcat aircraft near Tampa. From 5 to 6 February 1955 she assisted the fishing vessel *Southsea* of St. Petersburg. Two days later, on 8 February, she towed the disabled trawler *Bluebonnet* to St. Petersburg. On 29 March 1955 she assisted the USS *LST-287* off Florida. On 17 July 1955 she searched for the overdue motor vessel *Fay* off Florida. On 12 December 1955 she towed the disabled fishing vessel *Edward T* to St. Petersburg. On 4 May 1956 she towed the disabled tug *Do All 3* to St. Petersburg. On 17 October 1956 she assisted the disabled fishing vessel *Eleanor Singleton* and on 23 January 1957 she towed the disabled fishing vessels *Cola II* and *Spray* to Crystal River. From 5 to 6 February 1957 she assisted the disabled fishing vessels *Gulf Defender* and *Gulf Trader*. On 3 January 1958 she assisted the disabled fishing vessels *Noahs Ark* and *Miss Jan* off Key West. On 31 January 1958 she assisted the fishing vessel *Miss Mary* near Tampa Bay. On 22 September 1959 she assisted the fishing vessel *Echo* near St. Petersburg. On 27 September 1959 she assisted the PC *Capadoo*. From 9 to 12 November 1959 she assisted the fishing vessel *Bonita*. From 7 to 8 March 1962 she towed the disabled fishing vessel *Amber Jack* to Tampa Bay. From 29 November to 6 December 1962 she salvaged a Coast Guard HUS-1G

helicopter that had crashed into the Gulf of Mexico. On 28 January 1963 she escorted the NASA missile barge *Promise* to Fort Pierce, Florida. From 11 to 20 April she again escorted the *Promise*. From 2 to 3 November 1964 she towed disabled the fishing vessel *Mystery* from 90 miles west of Fort Myers, Florida to Charlotte Harbor. On 27 November 1969 she salvaged the remains of a Coast Guard HH-52A helicopter that had crashed near Tarpon Springs, Florida. In the early 1970s she salvaged a Navy A-5 Vigilante jet aircraft. She was decommissioned on 15 July 1975 and was sold in December of that same year.

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**Sources:**

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