

Gentian, 1942



WLB / WAGL / WIX-290
180-A Class

Any of numerous plants of the genus *Gentiana*, characteristically having showy, variously colored flowers; The dried rhizome and roots of a yellow-flowered European gentian, *G. lutea*, sometimes used as a tonic

Builder: Zenith Dredge Company, Duluth, Minnesota

Builder's Number: (CG-90)

Cost: \$911,968

Length: 180' oa; 170' bp

Beam: 37' 1" mb

Draft: 12' max (1945); 14' 7" max (1966)

Displacement: 935 fl (1945); 1,026 fl (1966), 700 light (1966)

Keel Laid: 3 October 1941

Launched: 23 May 1942

Commissioned: 3 November 1942;
September 1999 (Caribbean Support Tender)

Decommissioned: 23 June 2006

Status: Transferred to the Columbian Navy on 15 October 2007

Propulsion: 1 electric motor connected to 2 Westinghouse generators driven by 2 Cooper-Bessemer-type GND-8, 4-cycle diesels; single screw; 1,000 SHP

Top speed: 13.0 kts sustained; 11.0 kts economic

Economic speed: 8.3 kts (1945); 8.5 kts (1966)

Complement: 6 officers, 74 enlisted (1945); 3 officers, 2 warrants, 42 enlisted (1962)

Deck Gear:

Boom Capacity: 20 tons
Hoist Power: Electric

Electronics:

Radar: BK (1943) SL (1945); SPS-23 (1966)
Sonar: WEA-2 (1945); UNQ-1 (1966)

Armament: 1-3"/50 (single), 2-20mm/80 (single), 2 depth charge tracks, 2 Mousetraps, 4 x Y-guns (1945); None (1966)

Small Boats: 1 x RHI with twin 70 HP Evinrude engines; 1 x 25' motor cargo boat with a two-cycle 60 HP diesel engine.

Class History:

When the US Coast Guard absorbed the Bureau of Lighthouses on 1 July 1939, *Juniper*, a 177-foot all welded steel buoy tender, was under construction and plans for a successor were on the drawing board. Plans initiated by the Bureau of Lighthouses called for the construction of several identical buoy tenders to replace existing coastal buoy tenders. The preliminary designs generated by the Bureau were for a vessel similar to *Juniper*. When the Aids to Navigation (ATON) system transferred to Coast Guard control, USCG planners reviewed the preliminary plans for the new class of buoy tenders and modified them to meet the service's multi-mission role. To be an effective part of the Coast Guard, the new buoy tenders needed to be multi-purpose platforms. They had to be capable of conducting Search and Rescue (SAR) and Law Enforcement (LE) missions, as well as their primary mission tending ATON. On 20 January 1941 the US Coast Guard contracted Marine Iron and Shipbuilding Company of Duluth, Minnesota to build the design based on *Juniper* and modified to meet the service's requirements. On 31 March 1941 Marine Iron and Shipbuilding laid the keel for the first vessel of the new buoy tender class. The new vessel measured 180 feet overall and had a beam of 37 feet at the extreme. She had a displacement of 935 tons and drew 12 feet. The new design was similar to *Juniper* in

appearance but did exhibit some important differences. Gone was the turtle back forecastle. A notched forefoot, ice-belt at the waterline, and reinforced bow gave the vessel icebreaking capabilities. Extending the superstructure to the ship's sides increased interior volume above the main deck. A single propeller, turned by an electric motor powered by twin diesel generators, replaced the twin-screw arrangement. The 30,000-gallon fuel capacity gave the new design a range of 12,000 miles at a 12-knot cruising speed; at 8.3 knots the cruising range increased to 17,000 miles. Finer lines at the bow and stern increased the new tender's sea keeping ability in rough weather; an increase in draft also promoted seaworthiness. Numerous minor alterations increased the vessel's utility as a SAR platform while deck-mounted guns and depth charge racks supported military duties. Marine Iron and Shipbuilding launched the prototype vessel on 25 November 1941, even as three more took shape. Preparations also went forward to begin a fifth vessel. By the time they commissioned the first 180, *Cactus*, on 1 September 1942 twelve vessels were under construction at the Marine Iron shipyard and at the Zenith Dredge Company shipyard, also in Duluth. The initial designation for the new buoy tenders was WAGL, which was a US Navy designation denoting an auxiliary vessel, lighthouse tender. The designation changed from WAGL to WLB in 1965. A few of the 180s have been designated as other types of vessels over the years; three became WMECs (medium endurance cutters), one of those, *Evergreen*, was a WAGO (oceanographic research vessel) before it became a WMEC. *Gentian* was a WMEC for a time and was then designated a WIX (Training Cutter) in 1999. Though designations have changed over time, each vessel's hull number has remained the same since commissioning.

DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE 180' CLASS

Six "B" or *Mesquite* class tenders followed the initial production run of thirteen vessels in the "A" or *Cactus*-class. The first *Mesquite*-class tender hit the water on 14 November 1942. Marine Iron and Shipbuilding built all except one of the *Mesquite*-class. The USCG built the lone exception, *Ironwood*, at the service's shipyard in Curtis Bay, Maryland. Twenty *Iris* or "C" class vessels followed the *Mesquite*-class tenders. The first launch of an *Iris* class vessel took place on 18 June 1943, and the final addition to the class slipped off the ways on 18 May 1944. Differences among the three classes were minimal. Their basic dimensions, length and beam were the same and draft varied based on loading. All were built of welded steel along the same framing pattern and with very similar internal and external layouts. All three classes could steam 8,000 miles at 13 knots, 12,000 miles at 12 knots, and 17,000 miles at 8.3 knots; though the "B" and "C" class vessels had engines with 20 percent more power than the "A" class. The "A" class vessels could carry the most fuel with a tank capacity of 30,000 gallons. The "C" class carried 29,335 gallons and the "B" class about 700 gallons less. The layout of the Commanding Officer's cabin and the radio room was slightly different in the "A" class vessels. The bridge wing door on the "B" and "C" vessels opened to the side while the doors on the "A" vessels opened forward. The cargo holds as originally laid out in the "C" were larger, by a nominal amount, than those in the other vessels. To hoist buoys and cargo, the "A" vessels carried an A-frame structure that straddled the superstructure and supported the cargo boom. The other two classes were fitted with power vangs that attached to the bridge wings and manipulated the cargo boom. The "A" vessels were originally fitted with manila line as part of the cargo handling system while the second and third generation vessels used wire rope. From the outside, other than the A-frame used in the first production run, the three classes were almost indistinguishable. Over the years their internal differences and variation in equipment were minimized by successive overhauls and improvements. Moreover, it does not appear that any one of the

three classes was superior to the other two in the eyes of the US Coast Guard administration or the men who manned the buoy tender fleet. Tenders from each of the three classes remained in use past the turn of the 21st century. It usually took from two to four months between the time shipyard workers laid a keel and the day the vessel slipped off the ways. Once launched, however, the tenders were far from ready for service. The practice was to build the superstructure, finish the interior, and complete the machinery installation while the vessel was floating. Hence, on launch day the tenders were little more than finished hulls. As the shipyard workers neared the end of the building process, the Coast Guard would begin assigning officers and men to the vessels. Once each vessel was complete and ready to enter active service, the US Coast Guard commissioned her as part of the fleet. Often the commissioning ceremonies took place after the tender had departed from Duluth and arrived at an initial duty station. For the 180s as a whole, it took an average period of 308 days to go from the beginning of construction to commissioning. Divided according to sub-class, the elapsed time from keel laying to commissioning averaged 360 days for the *Cactus*-class; 323 days for the *Mesquite*-class; and 269 days for the *Iris*-class. The building process averaged 192,018 man-hours of labor per vessel. In keeping with the Lighthouse Service practice of naming tenders after foliage, all of the 180s were named after trees, shrubs, or flowers.

Cutter History:

Gentian, built by the Zenith Dredge Company in Duluth, Minnesota, was launched on 23 May 1942. She was commissioned on 3 November 1942. She was assigned to the 3rd Naval District and was stationed at New York, New York until late-1943 when she transferred to the 4th Naval District and was stationed at Cape May, New Jersey. During May 1944 she surveyed wrecks in coastal waters of the 4th and 5th Naval Districts.

While based out of Cape May, the tender assisted 72 vessels in distress, broke ice on the Hudson River during the winter months, and towed 12 Coast Guard cutters to Curtis Bay, Maryland. One of her more notable rescues occurred on 3 July 1948 when *Gentian* safely evacuated 42 persons from the disabled Swedish M/V *Dagmar Salen* and then brought the Swedish vessel's engine room fire under control some 20 miles from the Overfalls Lightship outside of the Delaware Bay.

On 1 October 1956 *Gentian* transferred to Miami, Florida where she continued to service aids to navigation and also conducted search and rescue and law enforcement duties when required. From 29 to 30 September 1959 she assisted in the evacuation of persons from Charleston and Savannah areas due to Hurricane Gracie. She transferred yet again on 15 July 1960, this time to Galveston, Texas. She was rammed the following year by the F/V *Islander*, the fishing vessel then sank.

Gentian was decommissioned on 2 September 1976 and was placed in storage at the Coast Guard Yard. She was recommissioned on 27 July 1983 after undergoing a complete renovation under the Service Life Extension Program (SLEP), one of the first tenders to undergo the SLEP refit. The upgrades cost approximately \$8.3 million. She received new main diesel engines, a propulsion control computer, a central fluid power system, electronics and navigation equipment, and upgraded marine sanitation systems. Generators, berthing spaces, and sanitary facilities were overhauled.. She was stationed at Atlantic Beach, North

Carolina and was assigned her traditional duties of servicing aids to navigation, conducting search and rescue and law enforcement duties when needed. In December 1983, after the U.S. invasion of Grenada, she was ordered to serve as a tender to the 95-foot cutters assigned to patrol Grenadian waters. She was also directed to patrol Grenadian waters as a "surveillance force unit." She served in Grenada through May, 1984. Later that year, on 27 November 1984 *Gentian* seized the M/V *Princess* which was smuggling 17.5 tons of marijuana.

Gentian participated in rescue and relief operations after Hurricane Hugo came ashore in September, 1989 and then restored aids to navigation along the coast of South Carolina that were destroyed or displaced by the hurricane. She was awarded the Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation for her work after Hugo. In October 1991 she rescued the S/V *Jubilee* in 20-foot seas. On 18 January 1994 she was ordered to the Washington, D.C. area to break ice on the Potomac River after severe winter weather to clear the path for 2 oil barges waiting to resupply the area's power plants. Eventually she cleared the way for 2.5 million gallons of fuel oil for the nation's capital. Later that year she enforced the United Nation's embargo of Haiti and was the last U.S. vessel in Port au Prince before hostilities broke out. She was awarded the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for her service there. She also rescued Cuban migrants fleeing Cuba.

Then in May of 1998, history repeated itself and the *Gentian* was decommissioned for a second time until Congress authorized funding for an international maritime training platform and once again *Gentian* fulfilled the needs of the U.S.

Re-commissioned on 27 September 1999, and home-ported in Miami, *Gentian* became the first -- and only -- Caribbean Support Tender. With a multi-national crew representing Panama, Bahama, Jamaica, Belize, Honduras, Suriname, Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago and the U.S., the *Gentian* and its crew began training personnel from Caribbean, Central American and South American countries, in seamanship, search and rescue and law enforcement operations, strengthening ties between the U.S. and those countries. Her official website noted that:

The Caribbean Support Tender is a new multi[-]national venture that seeks to foster cooperation and improve the operational capability of the maritime services of the Caribbean. It was reactivated in 1999 and commissioned as a U.S. Coast Guard Cutter with a new mission of international engagement, training, logistics and maintenance assistance.

The ship's ability to carry 100,000 pounds of cargo, with a ten ton lift capacity, allows her to deliver cargo and equipment across the region. The ship also supports multinational exercises and assist in disaster relief operations.

The Support Tender's unprecedented international crew consists of U.S. Coast Guard Members and representatives from maritime services of countries throughout the Caribbean region. The multi[-]national crew fosters improved regional cooperation teamwork and provides an opportunity for the exchange of professional information and practices. The international crew now includes members of the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard, Royal Bahamas Defense Force, Dominican Republic Navy, Panama Maritime Service, Suriname Navy, and the Guyana Defense Force Coast Guard.

The Caribbean Support Tender set sail on its inaugural deployment on October 6th 1999 and has since visited the Dominican Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua, St. Lucia, Jamaica, the Bahamas, St. Kitts, Dominica, Barbados, Guyana, Suriname, Grenada, St. Vincent, Curacao and Haiti. The August deployment of 2001 saw the development of the CST to include Central America in its list of partner countries including Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Belize. The Caribbean

Support Tender now boasts of providing support to more than 20 countries since its commissioning in 1999.

During *Gentian's* service as the Caribbean Support Tender, she made a total of 155 visits to 23 countries, bringing donated supplies and parts totaling \$3.9 million. The *Gentian* also trained more than 5,500 people and refurbished and donated to U.S. allies 26 confiscated go-fast boats.

She was formally decommissioned on 23 June 2006 at Causeway Island, Miami Beach and was mothballed at the Coast Guard Yard. *Gentian* was transferred to the Colombian Navy on 15 October 2007 at a ceremony held at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. The Commandant, ADM Thad Allen, stated:

Colombia is one of the most important countries in the Coast Guard's counter-drug program, and shares our goal of improving maritime counter-narcotics cooperation. With the decommissioning of the *Gentian* and its discontinuation as a Caribbean support tender, a key policy objective has been to ensure the vessel is allocated to one of the countries she once served. Allocation of the *Gentian* to Colombia will facilitate combined counter-drug and security operations in the region, and will serve as a force multiplier for the Coast Guard.

VADM Vivian Crea, Coast Guard Vice-Commandant, presided over the ceremony and transferred title of the 180-foot vessel to Colombia. ADM Guillermo Barrera, commander of the Colombian Navy (which is called the Armada República de Colombia or ARC), represented the Colombian government at the ceremony. The following day, in a commissioning ceremony in Baltimore held aboard the ARC *Valle Del Cauca* (the former CGC *Durable*), Colombian Navy CDR Luis Jose Soler took command of the tender. The Colombian Navy renamed her ARC *San Andres*. She was scheduled for a limited refit in Baltimore before making the voyage to Colombia.

During the cutter's 64 years of service to the U.S. and the Coast Guard she received four National Defense Medals, the World War II Campaign Ribbon, the World War II Victory Ribbon, three Coast Guard Unit Commendations, a Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation, the Coast Guard Bicentennial Commendation and the Coast Guard Humanitarian Service Medal.

Commanding Officers:

LT O. DOYLE: NOVEMBER 1942-JULY 1943
LT S. KRAUSS: JULY 1943-NOVEMBER 1943
LT D. HERR: NOVEMBER 1943-FEBRUARY 1945
LT G.I. EHLERS: FEBRUARY 1945-OCTOBER 1945
LT P.F. DEAKYNE: OCTOBER 1945-NOVEMBER 1945
LT J.J. CONWAY: NOVEMBER 1945-MAY 1947
LT A.M. HAYES: MAY 1947-AUGUST 1947
LT B.R. HENERY: AUGUST 1947-NOVEMBER 1947
CDR R.S. LECKY: NOVEMBER 1947-FEBRUARY 1948
CDR H.E. DAVIS: FEBRUARY 1948-AUGUST 1948
LT G.A. PHILBRICK: AUGUST 1948-SEPTEMBER 1948

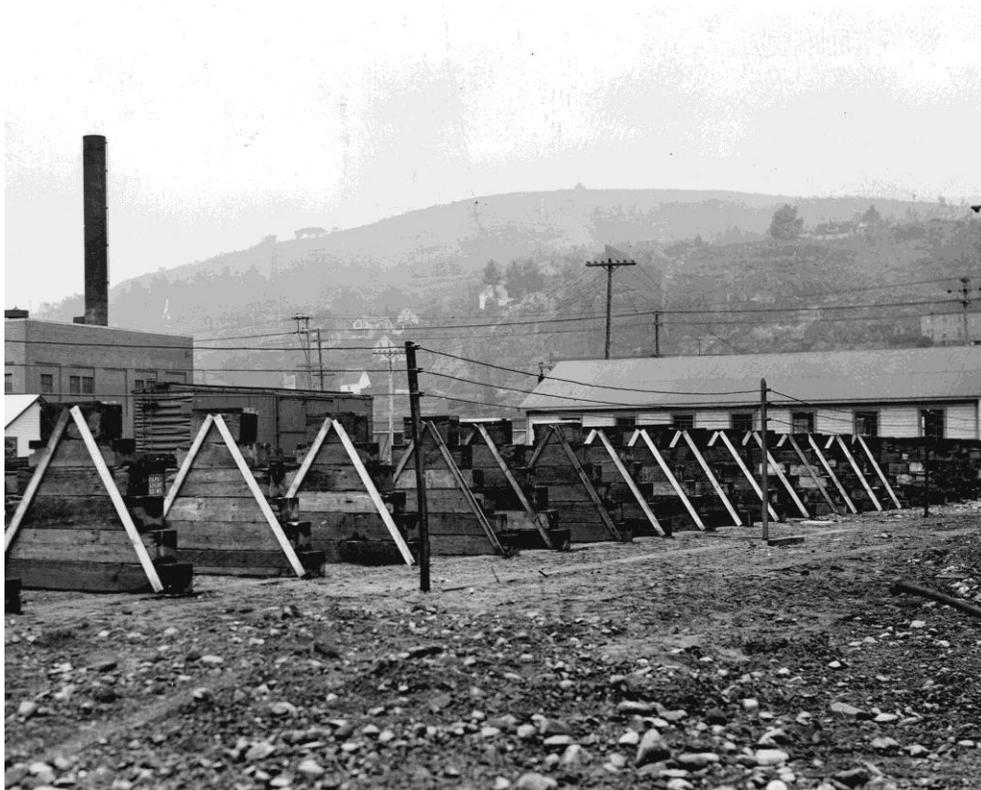
LT J.B. SPEAKER: SEPTEMBER 1948-JUNE 1950
LCDR J.A. HEIKEL: JUNE 1950-DECEMBER 1951
LCDR F.A. BOOLE: DECEMBER 1951-JULY 1952
LCDR H.F. STEEL: JULY 1952-MAY 1954
LT R.C. TAYLOR: MAY 1954-FEBRUARY 1955
LCDR C.W. BAILEY: FEBRUARY 1955-JUNE 1958
LCDR E.P. SAWYER: JUNE 1958-JULY 1962
LCDR J.G. MILOSIC: JULY 1962-JUNE 1965
LCDR G.D. MILLER, JR.: JUNE 1965-JUNE 1968
LCDR R.M. TERKELSEN: JUNE 1968-NOVEMBER 1968
LCDR J.H. HOLMEAD, III: NOVEMBER 1968-JULY 1979
LCDR J.R. DAZEY: JULY 1970-APRIL 1972
LCDR G.J. SANOK: APRIL 1972-JULY 1973
LCDR S.E. WOOD, JR.: JULY 1973-AUGUST 1976
LCDR E.F. LABUDA: AUGUST 1983-JULY 1984
LCDR R.W. BATSON: JULY 1984-JULY 1987
CDR G.R. MCNIFF, JR.: JULY 1987-AUGUST 1990
LCDR J.H. OLTHUIS: AUGUST 1990-AUGUST 1993
LCDR E.H. DANIELS: AUGUST 1993-AUGUST 1996
LCDR T.W. FLYNN: AUGUST 1996-MAY 1998

DECOMMISSIONED: 26 MAY 1998

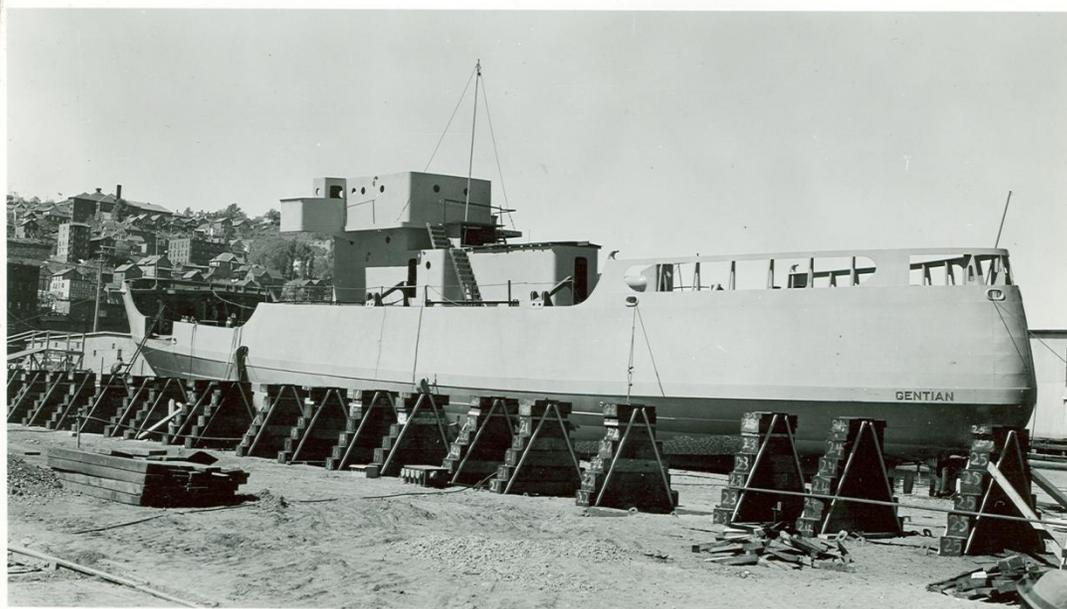
COMMISSIONED USCGC GENTIAN (WIX 290) “THE CARIBBEAN SUPPORT TENDER”: 27 SEPTEMBER 1999

CDR D.M. HOLLAND: APRIL 1999-JULY 2001
CDR T.S. MORRISON: JULY 2001-AUGUST 2002
CDR J.M. VOJVODICH: AUGUST 2002-JULY 2004
CDR E. PINO: JULY 2004-JUNE 2006

Images:



No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.
Gentian's keel laying.



Z-81

MAY 23 1942

No official caption; 23 May 1942; Photo No. Z-81 (3); photographer unknown.



No official caption; 3 November 1942; Photo No. Z-166; photographer unknown.
Gentian's commissioning.



"*Gentian* breaking ice along Delaware River";
2 February 1945; Photo No. 19-34A; Photographer "Sanicola".



'2/48 Hull damage on GENTIAN

A

"Hull damage on GENTIAN"; December [?] 1948;
Photo No. CG12348; photographer unknown.



No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



"USCGC Gentian (WLB-290) [;] Miami, Fla."; 10 March 1959;
Photo No. CPI 031059-05; photographer unknown.



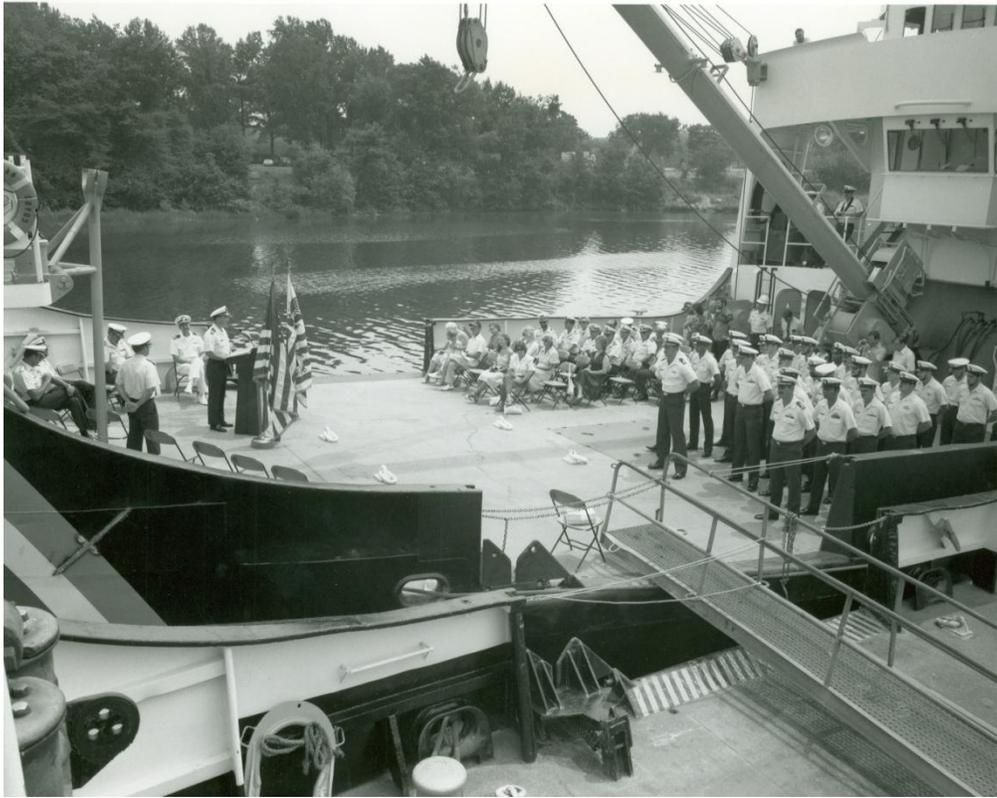
"A damage control party from the Coast Guard cutter Gentian departs to inspect the condition of two Venezuelan ships which collided 88 miles south east of Galveston Monday afternoon. One man was killed and another injured as a result of the collision. The vessels remained firmly locked together and were being assisted by the salvage tugs Sturgeon and Marlin."; Press Release dated 26 January 1971; Contact: JO2 Peter T. Murnane."



No caption; 10 August 1983; no photo number; photographer unknown.
Gentian at Curtis Bay.



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.
Gentian, circa 1983.



No caption; 4 August 1983; Photo No. CGYard-080483-24B; photographer unknown.



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.
Gentian breaking ice on the Potomac River, 24 January 1994.



“Washington, DC (Jan. 24 [1994])--The Coast Guard Cutter *Gentian* breaks ice on the Potomac river as it leaves Washington, D.C. The *Gentian* escorted fuel barges into the city during a January cold snap. USCG photo by PA1 Ron Mench.”



“Washington, DC (Jan. 24 [1994])--The Coast Guard Cutter Gentian (WLB-290) breaks ice on the Potomac River as it leaves Washington, DC. The Gentian escorted fuel barges into the city during a January cold snap. USCG photo by PA1 Ron Mench.”



No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



“PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (March 7, 2004)--Coast Guard Cutter Gention anchors in the Port-au-Prince harbor. USCG photo by PA3 Cindy Marshall.”



“Port Royal, Jamaica (Jun. 4, 2006)-- An aerial photo of the Jamaican Defense Force (JDF) Base in Port Royal, Jamaica, shows vessels from the Dominican Republic and the United States moored. The Coast Guard vessel present is the CGC Gentian.”



“MIAMI BEACH, Fla. -- The Coast Guard Cutter Gentian is moored at Coast Guard Base Miami Beach during its decommissioning ceremony June 23, 2006. Coast Guard photo illustration by PA3 James Judge.”

Sources:

Cutter History File, U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Robert Scheina. *Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1981.

Scheina, Robert. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990.

