



## *U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

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### *Klamath, 1946*



WPG / WHEC-66

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*Klamath* was named for Klamath Lake, Oregon.

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Call sign: NRUO

Builder: Western Pipe & Steel Co., San Pedro, CA

Commissioned: 19 June 1946

Decommissioned: 1 May 1973

Disposition: Sold 18 November 1974

Length: 254'oa; 245'bp

Navigation Draft: 17'3" max (1966)

Beam: 43'1" max

Displacement: 1,978 fl (1966); 1,342 light (1966)

Main Engines: 1 Westinghouse electric motor driven by a turbine.

SHP: 4,000 total (1945)

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.0 kts, 6,157-mi radius (1966)

Performance, Economic: 10.0 kts., 10,376-mi radius (1966)

Fuel Capacity: 141,755 gal (Oil, 95%)

Complement: 10 officers, 3 warrants, 130 men (1966)

Electronics:

Detection Radar: SPS-23, SPS-29, Mk 26, Mk 27 (1966)

Sonar: SQS-1 (1966)

Armament: 1 5"/38; Hedgehog; 2 Mk 32 ASW TT (*Winnebago*, 1966 – most units without TTs)

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**Class History:** "The bow and the stern for each other yearn, and the lack of interval shows..."

Myths have long shadowed the design history of the 255-foot class. These cutters were to have been much larger ships, and two theories persist as to why they were shortened. The first is that these cutters were built to replace the ships given to Great Britain under lend lease, and Congress stipulated that the Coast Guard had to build these replacement cutters to the same size and character as those provided to the British. The second is that their length was determined by the maximum length that could pass through the locks of the Welland Canal from the Great Lakes to the St. Lawrence River. The Great Lakes shipbuilding industry brought pressure on Congress to ensure that it had the potential to bid on the contract. The first theory seems to be correct, but the second cannot be ruled out.

The Coast Guard had prepared a design for a 316-foot cutter that was to have been an austere 327. This design was cut down into the 255-foot ship. To accomplish this, everything was squeezed down and automated to a degree not before achieved in a turbo-electric-driven ship.

The machinery design of the 255s was compact and innovative, but overly complex. It had pilothouse control, variable-rate (10 to 1) burners, and automatic synchronizing between the turbo-generator and the motor. Westinghouse engineers developed a system of synchronization and a variable-frequency drive for main-propulsion auxiliary equipment, which kept the pumps and other items at about two-thirds the power required for constant-frequency operation. The combined boiler room/engine room was a break with tradition.

The turbo-alternators for ship-service power exhausted at 20 psi gauge pressure instead of into a condenser. This steam was used all over the ship before finally going to a condenser. Space, heating, galley, cooking, laundry, freshwater evaporation, fuel, and feed-water heating were all taken from the 20 psi backpressure line.

The 255-foot class was an ice-going design. Ice operations had been assigned to the Coast Guard early in the war, and almost all new construction was either ice-going or ice-breaking.

The hull was designed with constant flare at the waterline for ice-going. The structure was longitudinally framed with heavy web frames and an ice belt of heavy plating, and it had extra transverse framing above and below the design waterline. Enormous amounts of weight were removed through the use of electric welding. The 250-foot cutters' weights were used for estimating purposes. Tapered bulkhead stiffeners cut from 12" I-beams went from the main deck (4' depth of web) to the bottom (8" depth of web). As weight was cut out of the hull structure, electronics and ordnance were increased, but at much greater heights. This top weight required ballasting the fuel tanks with seawater to maintain stability both for wind and damaged conditions.

The superstructure of the 255s was originally divided into two islands in order to accommodate an aircraft amidships, but this requirement was dropped before any of the units became operational. Construction of this class received a low priority, and none of the cutters served in the war. Following completion of the preliminary design by the Coast Guard, the work was assigned to George G. Sharp of New York to prepare the contract design.

The number of units – 13 of them – had an interesting origin. Three were to have been replacements for over-aged cutters, the *Ossipee*, *Tallapoosa*, and *Unalga*; ten units were to be replacements for the 250-foot class transferred to Great Britain under lend-lease. For economy, all 13 units were built to the same design.

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### **Ship's History:**

*Klamath* was homeported at Seattle, Washington, from 19 June 1946 to 1 May 1973. She was used for law enforcement, ocean station, and search and rescue operations in the Pacific. Additionally, she also conducted Bering Sea Patrol annually.

From 20 to 24 March 1966, she inspected the Soviet M/V *Olyturka*, which had sought haven in U.S. waters following a casualty. On 25 March 1966, the Japanese F/Vs *Bansho Maru No. 38* and *Tenyo Maru No. 3* were discovered in U.S. waters and escorted out.

*Klamath* was assigned to Coast Guard Squadron Three, Vietnam, from 14 May 1969 to 31 January 1970. After a 10-1/2 month tour, she returned home, arriving in Seattle on 24 April 1970.

In February 1972, a boarding party from *Klamath* helped save the badly damaged M/V *Tenzan Maru* and she was subsequently escorted to safety.

*Klamath* was decommissioned on 1 May 1973 and was sold for scrap on 18 November 1974.

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**Photographs:**



*Klamath, 28 February 1966. No official caption.*



*Klamath, with stripe. No official caption/date.*



"Naval Gunfire Support."; *USCGC Klamath: Market Time Patrol* [Cruise Book], page 62.



"USCGC KLAMATH (WHEC 66), Seattle, Washington [circa 1969]."  
*USCGC Klamath: Market Time Patrol* [Vietnam Cruise Book], p. 2.



CLARK'S COMMANDOES

"NOW, SET THE BOARDING DETAIL: CLARK'S COMMANDOES." *USCGC Klamath: Market Time Patrol* [Vietnam Cruise Book], p. 60.



"NOW, SET THE BOARDING DETAIL: SWING INTO ACTION." *USCGC Klamath: Market Time Patrol* [Vietnam Cruise Book], p. 60.



"NOW, SET THE BOARDING DETAIL: UNDER EXCELLENT COVER."  
*USCGC Klamath: Market Time Patrol* [Vietnam Cruise Book], p. 60.



"NOW, SET THE BOARDING DETAIL: [TO BOARD]. . .AND SEARCH." *USCGC Klamath: Market Time Patrol* [Vietnam Cruise Book], p. 60.

**Sources:**

Robert L. Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1981), pp. 1-3.

Robert L. Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), pp. 18-26.

255' Cutter Sailors' Page, hosted by 255' cutter historian Doak Walker, RMC, USCG (Ret.):  
**[255wpg.11.net.com/](http://255wpg.11.net.com/)**

Cutter File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

Ship's Characteristics Card.

