



Matagorda, 1949

WAVP / WHEC-373

The Matagorda was named after a bay along the southeastern coast of Texas, separated from the Gulf of Mexico by the Matagorda peninsula.

Radio call sign: NIFV

Builder: Boston Naval Shipyard, Boston, MA

Commissioned: 16 Dec 1941 (USN); loaned to USCG 7 March 1949
8 Jun 1949 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 15 Oct 1967; transferred to USN 30 Oct 1968; expended as a target

PARTICULARS, AS OF 1967:

Length: 311' 7" oa; 300' 0" bp

Navigation Draft: 12' 5" max

Beam: 41' max

Displacement: 2,496 fl

Main Engines: Fairbanks-Morse, direct reversing diesels

BHP: 6,000

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.1 kts, 9,725 nautical mile range

Performance, Economic: 13.0 kts, 16,600 nautical mile range

Fuel Capacity: 166,430

Complement: 10 officers, 3 warrants, 136 men

Electronics: Radar: SPS-23, SPS-29A

Sonar: SQS-1

Armament: 1 x 5"/38 Mk 30-75; 1 x Mk 52 Mod 3 director; 1 x Mk 26 fire control radar; 4 x Mk 6 Mod 2 DC projectors; 1 x Mk 10 Mod 1 A/S projector;

Class history—The *Casco* class ships were built as small seaplane tenders by the US Navy. They were designed to operate out of small harbors and atolls and had a shallow draft. The fact that the class was very seaworthy, had good habitability, and long range made them well suited to ocean-station duty. In fact, an assessment made by the Coast Guard on the suitability of these vessels for Coast Guard service noted:

"The workmanship on the vessel is generally quite superior to that observed on other vessels constructed during the war. The vessel has ample space for stores, living accommodations, ships, offices and recreational facilities. The main engine system is excellent. . . .The performance of the vessel in moderate to heavy seas is definitely superior to that of any other cutter. This vessel can be operated at higher speed without storm damage than other Coast Guard vessels."

[\[Click here to view a complete copy of the memo\].](#)

Once they were accepted into Coast Guard service, a number of changes were made in these ships to prepare them for ocean-station duty. A balloon shelter was added aft; there were spaces devoted to oceanographic equipment and a hydrographic winch as well as an oceanographic winch were added.

See *DANFS* for naval service.

Ship's history:

The *Matagorda* was stationed at Boston, MA, from 8 June 1949 to 1054. She was used for law enforcement, ocean station, and search and rescue operations in the Atlantic.

From 1954 to 15 October 1967, she was stationed at Honolulu, HI, and used for similar duties, in the Pacific, as during her years at Boston. On 26 January 1956, the *Matagorda* delivered clothing to an orphanage in Japan from Washington Intermediate School in Honolulu. In August 1960, she towed the disabled F/V *Wild Goose II*. On 12 and 13 January 1965, she stood by the disabled Liberian tanker *Saint Helena* 1,000 miles northwest of Midway Island. The tanker had sustained hull damage due to heavy seas and was in danger of breaking in two. The *Matagorda* was relieved by CGC *Bering Strait* and proceeded to Hawaii, via

Midway, in heavy seas. In mid-September of 1965, she escorted the disabled Liberian M/V *Londias* to Honolulu. On 27 February 1966, she transferred 12,000 gallons of water to the disabled M/V *Union Success* and towed her until relieved.

The Navy considered taking the *Matagorda* for target practice upon her decommissioning in 1967. The ship was eventually transferred to the Navy and expended as target 72 miles off Hawaii at 20°08'N, 158°30'W.

Photographs [click on description/caption to view image]:

[Matagorda, 21 November 1966, no caption. Photo number 14CGD-112166-04.](#)

Sources:

Matagorda, Cutter Subject File, USCG Historian's Office

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. IV (1969), pp. 268-269.

"Listings: AVP's"; compiled and written by LCDR J. P. Smith, USCGR

Robert Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), pp. 10-16.

Ship's Characteristics Card: USCGC Matagorda, 17 April 1967.

