



## *Narcissus*, 1939

WAGL / WLI-238

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Any of several widely cultivated bulbous plants of the genus *Narcissus*, having long narrow leaves and usually white or yellow flowers characterized by a cup-shaped or trumpet-shaped central crown.

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

Length: 122' 2"

Beam: 27'

Draft: 7'

Displacement: 355 tons

Cost: \$220,023.00

Commissioned: 1939

Decommissioned: 1 January 1971

Disposition: Sold to Guyana

Machinery: 2 Superior diesel engines; 430 BHP; twin propellers

Performance & Endurance:

Max: 9.0 knots; 1,350 mile range

Cruising: 6.0 knots; 3,500 mile range

Deck Gear: 10 ton boom capacity; electrically-powered hoist

Complement: 43

Armament: None

Electronics: SO-8 radar

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## **Class History:**

The *Narcissus* was one of three 122-foot bay and sound tenders built just prior to the transfer of the Lighthouse Service to the Coast Guard, the others being *Zinnia* and *Maple*. They were the first tenders to be constructed primarily by welding. Although Peterson disagrees that *Maple* was one of this class (*United States Lighthouse Service Tenders, 1840-1939*, p. 143) the official Lighthouse Service publication, the *Lighthouse Service Bulletin*, noted in its June 1939 issue (Vol. V, No. 42, pp. 186-187), that these tenders were in fact considered to be all of the same class:

### **NEW TENDERS FOR THE LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE**

. . .The *Zinnia* class of tenders, which include the tenders *Zinnia*, *Narcissus*, and *Maple*, are the most recent tenders added to the Service. These tenders are for work in the harbors and bays of the fourth, seventh, and tenth districts, and all have been launched this year.

The principal improvements of this design of tenders over the preceding design are in seaworthiness, derrick capacity, stability, sized of buoy deck, power for propulsion, and maneuverability. Factors in bringing about these improvements included a moderate increase of the principal dimensions and the use of greater power with twin screws in lieu of a single screw, the substitution of pipe struts for the derrick mast in place of wire-rope rigging.

The dimensions of the *Zinnia* class of tenders are length over all 122 feet 3 inches, beam molded 27 feet, minimum depth at side 9 feet 6 inches, draft loaded 6 feet 6 inches. The total shaft horsepower is 400 and is obtained from two four-cycle Diesel engines with reduction gears. The speed is 10 knots in loaded condition.

Although there are differences in physical appearance of *Maple* from her sisters, included *Maple's* rounded forecastle and enclosed main deck abaft the boom, the Lighthouse Service considered these three tenders to be of the same class.

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## **Tender History:**

She was originally stationed at Washington, North Carolina and assigned to service aids to navigation but was also called upon to perform search and rescue, law enforcement duties, and light icebreaking when needed. During the winter of 1930-1940, she conducted icebreaking operations on the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River.

As of 28 February 1941 she transferred to Portsmouth, Virginia, where she remained homeported for the rest of her Coast Guard career. During World War II the *Narcissus* was used for tending aids to navigation on the Delaware Bay and

Delaware River. She also repaired and extended anti-submarine nets at Cape Lookout, North Carolina.

After the war she continued servicing aids to navigation and also conducted search and rescue and law enforcement duties as required. On 16 October 1954 she searched for survivors from the tug *Indian* in the James River. From 12 to 18 September 1955 she patrolled the President's Cup Regatta. On 24 January 1956 she medevaced a crew member from the CG-23067 off Smith Point. On 1 July 1961 she collided with the Liberian motor vessel *World Challenger* while moored at Portsmouth and sustained damage topside.

She was decommissioned on 11 March 1971 after being sold to Guyana for \$83,000 through the auspices of the U.S. Agency for International Development. She remained "In Commission, Special" status while a Coast Guard crew under the command of LCDR Neal Mahan put aboard at Portsmouth and then, beginning on 9 April 1971, sailed her on a risky voyage over 3,000 miles to Georgetown, Guyana. LCDR Mahan noted in his report: "The ship's stability as well as its ability to take a sea in excess of four feet were of major concern." Fortunately they made it to Georgetown unscathed and even participated in two SAR cases enroute. Then they formally turned the tender over to Guyanese authorities on 5 May 1971. The wife of the Guyanese president, Mr. Arthur Chung, rechristened the *Narcissus* as the *SS Maripa*, the name of a waterfall on the Mazaruni River. The crew also delivered over 4,000 pounds of books that had been donated by the Navy's "Project Handclasp" and carried aboard *Narcissus* on the voyage.



**"Narcissus (WAGL-238)."; no date/photo number; photographer unknown.**

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**Sources:**

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

Douglas Peterson. *United States Lighthouse Service Tenders, 1840-1939*. Annapolis: Eastwind Publishing, 2000.

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

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

