



Papaw, 1943

WAGL / WLB-308



Overall Length.....180 ft
Max Range.....7,980
N M Loaded Displacement.....1025 tons
Propulsion.....Diesel Electric
Mean Draft.....12'8"
Boom Capacity.....20 Tons
Max Speed.....13.5 kts
Personnel.....7 Officers; 42 Enlisted
Fuel Capacity.....28,607 gals
Water Capacity.....29,220 gals

History:

USCGC *Papaw* (WLB-308) was an oceangoing buoy tender whose design is based on the pre-World War II Lighthouse Service Tenders. The original design was modified to provide an armored cutter capable of wartime missions in addition to her primary mission of Aids to Navigation. *Papaw* was built in 1943 by the Marine Iron and Shipbuilding Company of Duluth, Minnesota. Commissioned October 12, 1943, she was assigned the home port of San Francisco, California. *Papaw* saw extensive duty during WW II establishing aids to navigation systems for the newly captured islands in the Pacific. After the war *Papaw's* home port was moved to Astoria, Oregon. In June of 1949, *Papaw* was shifted to the warm waters of Miami, Florida where she assumed responsibility for the aids to navigation in the Florida Keys and the Caribbean. In 1954, *Papaw* moved once again, this time to Charleston, South Carolina. There she maintained buoys, shore stations, and towers. In October of 1989 *Papaw* entered the Service Life Extension Program (SLEP) at the Coast Guard Yard in Curtis Bay, Maryland. She arrived at her new home port of Galveston, Texas on June 18, 1991.

Papaw services approximately 150 aids to navigation from Brownsville, Texas to Calcasieu, Louisiana. The ship carried out many missions throughout the Gulf of Mexico including: Search and Rescue, Drug and Contraband Interdiction, Environmental Protection, Military Readiness Exercises, and Buoy Deployment Operations with the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration.

Papaw's main propulsion system was diesel electric. Two 700 hp General Motors E.M.D. diesel engines each drove a DC generator which provided electricity to the 550 volt Westinghouse main motor. At 1200 hp the main motor turned a single shaft to a maximum speed of 13.5 knots. Electric power was supplied by two 200 KW generators each driven by a Detroit Diesel engine. A bow thruster was fitted during the 1989 Service Life Extension Program giving the *Papaw* greater maneuverability. The *Papaw's* main boom was hydraulically operated and had a maximum working load of 20 tons.

Buoys serviced by the *Papaw* ranged from tiny 6 foot nun buoys to the 35 foot tall 18,000 lb Galveston Entrance Channel Buoy. Most buoys are equipped with electrical lights powered by batteries and solar cells. Some have sound signals, radar beacons, and elaborate power systems. All buoys are pulled from the water at least once a year for painting, maintenance, and position checks.

The *Papaw* has received many awards during its proud history. Her wartime honors include: the World War II Victory Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and two National Defense Service Medals. *Papaw* has also received many peace time commendations, these include: two

Coast guard Meritorious Unit Commendations, a Humanitarian Service Medal, and a Coast Guard Special Operations Ribbon.

Papaw was decommissioned on 23 July 1999 at Group Galveston, Texas. She was donated to Canvasback Missions of Benicia, CA, a nonprofit organization.

Photographs:



USCGC *Papaw* [WAGL-308; WLB-308];
no caption/photo number; 13 March 1959; photographer unknown.



USCGC *Papaw*, no date/photo number; photographer unknown.
Courtesy of Don Skokan.

Sources:

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

Obert, Tanney Edward. *Lucky Sweetbrier: Coast Guard Cutter Survives WWII Okinawa Kamikazes, Typhoons and More*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2005.

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.

U. S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. *U.S. Coast Guard 180-Foot Buoy Tenders*. HAER booklet. Washington, DC: National Park Service, September, 2003. [HAER nos. DC-56, LA-14, LA-15, RI-56, and AL-187; Todd Croteau, HAER Industrial Archeologist (project leader); Jet Low, HAER

Photographer; Dana Lockett (architect); Pete Brooks (architect); Candace Clifford (historian); and Kevin Foster (historian).]

