



## ***POINT ARENA, 1966***

### **WPB-82346**

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A point along the Northern California coast.

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Builder: J.M. Martinac Shipbuilding Corp., Tacoma, WA

Commissioned: 26 August 1966

Decommissioned: 30 March 1995

Disposition: Stored at Curtis Bay, MD (as of 28 June 1997)

Length: 82'10" oa, 78' bp

Navigation Draft: 5'11" max (1960)

Beam: 17'7" max

Displacement: 69 ft; 60 light (1960)

Main Engines: 2 Cummins diesel (see class history)

BHP: 1,600

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 18.0 kts, 542-mi radius (1,600 hp, 1963)

Performance, Economic: 9.4 kts, 1,500-mi radius (1,600 hp, 1963)

Maximum Speed: 22.9 kts (1963)

Fuel Capacity: 1,840 gal

Complement: 8 men (1960); 2 officers, 8 men (1965); 1 officer, 9 enlisted (1986)

Electronics:

Radar: SPN-11, CR-103 (1960), or SPS-64

Armament: 1 x 20mm (1960), 2 x .50 caliber MGs (1986)

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**Class history**—The 82-foot patrol boats have mild steel hulls and aluminum superstructures. Longitudinally framed construction was used to save weight.

These boats were completed with a variety of power plants. 82301 through 82313, 82315 through 82317, and 82319 through 82331 were powered by two Cummins 600-hp diesels. Boats 82318 and 82332 through 82379 received two Cummins 800-hp diesels. The 82314 was fitted with two 1,000-hp gas turbines and controllable-pitch propellers. The purpose of this installation was to permit the service to evaluate the propulsion equipment. All units were eventually fitted with the 800-hp diesels. Units remaining in 1990 were re-equipped with Caterpillar diesels.

WPB 82301 through 82344 were commissioned without names; at that time the Coast Guard did not name patrol craft shorter than 100 feet. In January 1964 they were assigned names.

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### **Ship's history:**

The *Point Arena* was home-ported at the U.S. Naval Amphibious Base in Little Creek, Virginia. Here she patrolled the waters of the Fifth Coast Guard District where she was used for law enforcement and search and rescue operations. On 18 July 1968, she helped extract a bomb found in *Sea Rover's* nets 42 miles southeast of Chesapeake Bay. On 26 June 1969, she medevaced a crewman from the tug *Lead Horse* 243 miles southeast of Cape Hatteras. On 20 September 1969, she dewatered and escorted F/V *Anthony Anne* out of the Chesapeake to Norfolk. On 8 April 1970, she medevaced a crewman from M/V *Irish Cedar* off the Chesapeake. One day later, she medevaced a crew member from M/V *Frubel Oceania* off the Chesapeake. On 25 June 1970, she towed a disabled 18-foot pleasure craft to Lynnhaven Inlet.

She was awarded a Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation in March, 1986. The citation read:

“For meritorious service from 4—7 November 1985 for the heroic rescue of the sailing vessels AFFAIR and PRELUDE. During this period, the Middle—Atlantic coast was lashed by a sudden severe southwest storm system generating hurricane force winds. The S/V AFFAIR, while seeking refuge, collided with the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and was dismasted. Within seven minutes of receipt of the MAYDAY, POINT ARENA was underway with 70% crew and battling 65 knot winds and 8' seas proceeding to assist. POINT ARENA in a

prompt and skillful fashion rigged a tow and proceeded to extricate AFFAIR from her perilous situation. Although the tow rig failed at one point due to deteriorating weather, POINT ARENA exhibited superb seamanship and quickly maneuvered alongside and successfully brought AFFAIR and her two man crew to a sheltered mooring. A mere three hours later found POINT ARENA responding to a second MAYDAY. The S/V PRELUDE was being battered by the same storm more than 180 NM off the Virginia Capes. While being pounded by 20' seas and storm force winds, POINT ARENA fought her way for fourteen hours to PRELUDE's new position 240 NM east of Cape Henry. In spite of severe seasickness, three engineering casualties and profound crew fatigue, POINT ARENA successfully took PRELUDE in tow and eventually brought her to a safe mooring in Ocean City, Maryland. The professional skill, courage and untiring efforts of POINT ARENA's personnel prevented the possible loss of seven lives. Their devotion to duty and excellent performance are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard. The Operational Distinguishing Device is authorized."

She was then awarded a Coast Guard Unit Commendation later in 1986. The citation read:

"For exceptionally meritorious service from 2 July to 6 July 1986 engaged in the safety and security patrols of all waterborne events surrounding the Statue of Liberty Centennial Celebration in New York Harbor. These events included the relighting ceremonies on Governors Island, the largest parade of Tall ships ever gathered for Operation Sail 1986, the Fifth International Naval Review, and the nation's largest display of fireworks. Working exceptionally long hours, CCC POINT ARENA served as a command and control platform as well as providing search and rescue, law enforcement, and port security functions day and night for the various marine events during the period. Despite the complexity of the regatta regulations and the incredibly large throng of spectator craft clogging the harbor, CGC POINT ARENA met the challenge with a high degree of professional skill and calm demeanor. As a result, all marine events were conducted safely and successfully. With an estimated total of 150 MEDIVAC cases and 1,500 assistance cases for Liberty Weekend, there was not one marine casualty that resulted in loss of life or serious injury. The expert seamanship, professional skill, and devotion to duty displayed by CGC POINT ARENA personnel reflect great credit upon themselves, their unit and the United States Coast Guard. The Operational Distinguishing Device is authorized."

In February and March of 1987 she was assigned to a law enforcement patrol in Seventh District waters along with D7 cutter CGC *Dauntless*. According to a report in the May 1987 issue of the Fifth District publication *News Bits* (Volume 3, Issue 5):

"Breaking some new ground recently, POINT ARENA spent parts of February and March on patrol with CGC DAUNTLESS, and in so doing, helped the veteran

210 seize a fishing boat carrying a cache of cocaine. On 2 March, while the two cutters were patrolling the Exuma Chain, *Dauntless* received a tip that an aircraft had dropped 14 or 15 duffel bags of coke to a fishing boat some seven hours from the cutters' position. When the POINT ARENA arrived at the suspected drop zone, her crew, then under the command of LTJG Vann Young, set up a blockade and began a systematic boarding of 10 outbound vessels that were in the area. Later that morning, DAUNTLESS received further intelligence about the drop; this time a report that a plane had crashed during the night and that two people were hiding near the crash. The report also indicated that a 40-45 foot fishing boat had piecked up small packages and was steaming the shallows on the south side of the Exuma Chain. A helicopter from the DEA was now on-scene and reported that they had the suspect boat, the fishing vessel PUMPKIN, in sight, which was fortunate since DAUNTLESS and POINT ARENA were on the north side of the Chain. The helicopter also reported that PUMPKIN'S crew was throwing packages over the side. Speeding between the tiny islands, DAUNTLESS eventually caught up with the fishing boat. A boarding party then seized the remaining evidence, the boat, and arrested two Cuban-Americans who were aboard. The whole scenario from boarding to arrest took about 30 minutes. At that time, POINT ARENA'S RHI, coxswain'd by BM1 Scott Pickering, began picking up the small cookie box sized packages of coke. All told, they collected 130 kilos (250 pounds) of the white powder. Finally, the morning of March 4, POINT ARENA, with PUMPKIN in tow, arrived in Nassau, where the contraband, arrestees and boat were turned over to Bahamian authorities."

She was decommissioned on 30 March 1995 and was stored at Curtis Bay, Maryland.

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### Sources:

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

"The 82-Foot Class Patrol Boat." *U.S. Coast Guard Engineer's Digest* No. 133 (Mar-Apr 1962), pp. 2-5.

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

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