

General William Mitchell

AP-114



William Lendrum Mitchell, born in 1879 in Nice, France, enlisted in the Army as a private in 1898 and served in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War. After return to the United States, he led in the precarious construction of a telegraph network in Alaska, and then pioneered in U.S. Army aviation. He rapidly rose in rank, and, when he commanded the U.S. air forces in France in World War I, he was promoted Brigadier General. After the war, General "Billy" Mitchell was made Director of Military Aviation in the U.S. Army and argued violently for a large, independent air force. His caustic-public criticism of military and naval leaders led to his court-martial in 1926. After resignation, General Mitchell remained a bitter critic of Army and government policy. He died in 1936.

Builder: Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, Kearny, New Jersey

Class: *General John Pope*

Type: P2-S2-R2

Commissioned: 19 January 1944

Decommissioned: Her Coast Guard crew was removed on 22 April 1946

Length: 622'

Beam: 76'

Draft: 25' 6"

Displacement: 11,450 (lt); 20,175 (fl)

Propulsion: Steam turbines; twin shafts; 17,000 HP

Top speed: 20.6 knots

Complement: 465

Troop capacity: 5,142

Armament: 4 x 5"/38 dual purpose; 4 x 1.1" twin gun mounts; (later replaced by 4 x 40mm twin gun mounts); 20 x 20 mm (single).

History:

The Coast Guard-manned *General William Mitchell* (AP-114) was laid down as a Maritime Commission type P2-S2-R2 hull under Maritime Commission contract MC-672 at the Federal Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company of Kearny, New Jersey. She was launched on 31 October 1943. She was sponsored by Mrs. William Mitchell, the namesake's widow. The Navy acquired her on 15 January 1944 and commissioned her four days later under the command of CAPT Henry Coyle, USCG.

From 3 March-20 August 1944 *General William Mitchell* made five round trip transport voyages out of Norfolk and New York to Casablanca and Liverpool, carrying fighting men to the North African theater and participating in the buildup prior to the Allied invasion of Northern France. On the return leg of these frequent voyages, she carried casualties and rotation troops home to the United States,

insuring a steady flow of men and equipment between America and war-torn Europe.

During the autumn of 1944 and through the spring of 1945, *General William Mitchell* called twice at Bombay, India, as she redeployed and rotated troops in the China-Burma-India theater. On the first of these voyages she sailed from New York via Panama and Australia, putting in at Bombay 7 October and embarking veterans for passage to Australia and America, and finally mooring at San Diego 17 November 1944. Her second passage to India took her from San Pedro via Tasmania to embark Allied troops and Italian prisoners of war at Bombay; she subsequently off-loaded the POW's at Melbourne and returned to San Pedro 3 March 1945.

The ship then brought troops from San Francisco to Espiritu Santo, Guadalcanal, Manus, and Leyte as the European war neared conclusion and the Pacific theater gained priority, *General William Mitchell* sailed to Leghorn and Naples, Italy, to transport seasoned fighting men and redeploy them for the anticipated assault on Japan's homeland. These troops debarked at Ulithi and the Philippines in the summer of 1945, and the ship returned to San Francisco 6 December 1945 at war's end filled with homeward-bound warriors.

As part of the "Magic-Carpet" fleet, this busy transport carried bluejackets from San Francisco to the Philippines, returning servicemen from Hollandia to Seattle, and troops from the Philippines and Guam to San Francisco, through the spring of 1946. Her Coast Guard crew was removed on 22 April 1946.

Thereafter, from late-April 1946 until 1949 *General [William] Mitchell* sailed from West Coast ports and shuttled troops and supplies to and from Japan, China, Guam, and Hawaii. She underwent alterations for peacetime service at the Philadelphia Navy Yard in March 1947 and then returned to San Francisco and her transpacific schedule.

In October 1949 she was transferred to MSTTS and in 1950 continued her West Coast-Orient travels. In that year, too, two round trip voyages from New Orleans and New York were made to Bremerhaven to rotate and supply troops in Europe. She made an around-the-world cruise out of New York in the summer of 1951, visiting Germany, North Africa, Ceylon, Indochina, Korea, and Japan before mooring at San Francisco 26 September 1951.

General William Mitchell continued to transport men and material from West Coast ports to Japan and Korea, supporting the United Nations forces in the latter country. Her frequent shuttle runs followed this pattern with the addition of numerous calls at Formosa and Pacific Islands until returned to the Maritime Administration 1 December 1966. *General William Mitchell* entered the National Defense Reserve Fleet and was berthed in Suisun Bay, California.



Privately taken photo provided courtesy of Mr. Charles P. Rogers, the son of the Coast Guardsman in the photo, Carpenter's Mate Leonard B. Rogers, USCG. The woman in the photo is none other than Betty Grable. The USO had a show aboard Leonard Rogers' ship, the *Mitchell*, and he had the honor of ferrying Ms. Grable to and from her show on the *Mitchell*.



Sources:

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

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Washington, DC: USGPO.

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

