



Hermes, 1932

WPC-109

The cutter *Hermes* was named for Hermes, "herald of the immortals" in Greek mythology, the wing-shod messenger of the gods. Hermes was the son of Zeus and Maia (Maia was the daughter of Atlas). As friend to the mortals, he introduced weights and measures (as well as dice). He also escorted the dead to Hades.

Builder: Bath Iron Works, Bath Maine

Launched: 23 February 1932

Commissioned: 7 March 1932

Decommissioned: 2 November 1948

Disposition: Sold, 16 May 1958

Displacement: 1933: 337 tons full load
1945: 350 tons full load

Dimensions:

Length: 165' oa

Beam: 25' 3"

Draft: 7' 8" (1933); 10' (1945)

Machinery: 2 x Winton Model 158 6-cylinder diesels; 1,340 bhp

Propellers: twin, 3-bladed

Performance: Maximum speed: 16.0 knots

Maximum sustained: 14.0 knots for 1,750 statute miles

Cruising: 11.0 knots for 3,000 statute miles

Economic: 6.0 knots for 6,417 statute miles

Complement: 1933: 5 officers, 39 men

1945: 7 officers, 68 men

Armament: 1933: 1 x 3"/23; 1 x 1-pounders;

1941: 1 x 3"/23; 1 x Y-gun; 2 x depth charge tracks;

1945: 2 x 3"/50 (single-mounts); 2 x 20mm/80 (single mounts); 2 x depth charge tracks;
2 x Y-guns; 2 x Mousetraps.

Electronics: 1933: none

1945: Radar: SF-1; Sonar: QCO

Cost: \$258,000

Class History:

The 165-foot "B" Class cutters, sometimes referred to as the *Thetis*-Class, were a follow on to the 125-foot cutters. Both types of cutters were designed for the enforcement of Prohibition, but the 165-footers primary mission was to trail the mother ships that dispensed alcohol to smaller, faster vessels well beyond the territorial waters of the U.S. Hence these cutters had to have excellent sea-keeping qualities, good accommodations for the crew, and long range. Although Prohibition ended soon after most entered service, their design nevertheless proved to be adaptable to the many other missions of the Coast Guard.

An article written soon after they entered service noted that: "the new cutters are low and rakish, without excessive superstructure or freeboard. A raking stem, well flared bow and cruiser stern give the appearance of speed as well as contribute to the seaworthiness of the vessels, a quality which has been demonstrated in actual service. . . The new ships are twin-screw driven by two 670 horse power Diesel engines, furnished by the Winton Engine Co. of Cleveland, Ohio. The shafting and propellers are arranged and supported in a novel manner. The ship is equipped with two

overhanging rudders on a line with and just aft of the propellers. The rudders are supported by a streamline rudder post at the forward end which is bossed out for a bearing to take a stub shaft which extends through the propeller. This method of arranging the rudders has proved remarkably successful. At full speed, the ships turn a complete circle in two minutes and eighteen seconds, and can be docked with ease under the most difficult conditions. On trial runs, the *Atalanta* averaged 16.48 knots at 468 RPM with practically no vibration and the engine under no evident strain. Due to the arduous service for which these vessels were built, only the finest materials available were used. It is interesting to note that genuine wrought iron pipe was used for practically all the services where resistance to corrosion, vibration, and strain was required. The fuel oil, lubricating oil, and water service to the main engines and auxiliaries; the fire and bilge system; and the steam heating system were all installed with genuine wrought iron pipe. At the Lake Union plant this pipe was furnished by the Reading Iron Company through the Crane Company's Seattle office and Bowles Company of Seattle. The new ships are a distinct contribution to modern shipbuilding and should be of great value to the Coast Guard."*

They certainly did prove to be of great value to the Coast Guard. Most saw service as coastal convoy escorts during World War II and two, the *Icarus* and the *Thetis*, each sank a U-boat. Many saw service well into the 1960s and some still service as tour boats in New York City with the Circle Tour Line, testament to their sturdy and well-thought out design.

Cutter History:

CGC *Hermes* was built by Bath Iron Works of Bath, ME and was commissioned on 7 March 1932. After a 10-day shakedown cruise she arrived at Pier 18 in Stapleton, New York, her assigned home port. Here she joined the New York Division's Special Patrol Force, conducting law enforcement patrols in support of the Coast Guard's war against rum-runners. After the passage of the 23rd Amendment, she continued sailing out of Stapleton on law enforcement and search and rescue patrols. On 17 February 1934 she was transferred to San Pedro, California, arriving there on 23 March 1934. She was assigned to the Bering Sea Patrol in 1939. During the spring of 1941 she was rearmed at the Puget Sound Navy Yard and was then assigned temporarily at Cordova, Alaska, during the months of September and October of 1941. During the war she was assigned to duty with the WESTSEAFRON and was based out of San Pedro, California, for the duration of the war. She conducted anti-submarine and search and rescue patrols as well as escorting convoys along the west coast. She made a depth charge attack on a sound contact on 31 December 1941, an attack that the Navy noted that it was a "Class E" assessment, meaning that if there was an enemy submarine present it was "probably slightly damaged." On 26 January 1943 she rescued 11 survivors from SS *Lewis Cass*. On 12 September 1945 she seized eight fishing vessels who were fishing in a restricted zone around San Clemente Island. On 11 September 1945 she reported for duty with the 11th Naval District (later Coast Guard District) out of Long Beach, California, and underwent repairs and modernization in late 1946. She was later transferred to the 14th Coast Guard District on 11 July 1947 and arrived at Honolulu on 30 July 1947. She was placed "In Commission, In Reserve" status on 26 December 1947 and was stored at Sand Island. Due to a lack of personnel and the need to reactivate a buoy tender, it was decided to keep *Hermes* in storage indefinitely. She was placed in a "decommissioned, in reserve" status on 2 November 1948. She was towed to San Francisco, arriving there on 6 October 1950, and was again placed in storage at the Alameda Coast Guard Base. Here she was used as a training aid for Coast Guard recruits. *Hermes* was sold to The Learner Company of Oakland, California on 16 May 1958 for \$8,168.68.

Sources:

Cutter files, USCG Historian's Office.

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