

ADDITIONAL READING

- *The Coast Guard at War, Transports and Escorts V*, Vols. 1 and 2.
- *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 8 vols. Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1959-1981.
- Johnson, Robert Erwin. *Guardians of the Sea: History of the United States Coast Guard, 1915 to the Present*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987.
- Morison, Samuel-Eliot. *History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II*, 15 vols. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947-1962.
- Willoughby, Malcolm F. *The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II*. Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1957.
- Scheina, Robert L. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1982, Appendix A.

— G-CP/H

depth charges in Lunga Roads off Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

There were only two survivors from the 198 men of the crew who were aboard at the time, and 57 members of an Army stevedore unit died in the explosion; the commanding officer and seven others were ashore when their ship sank.

The *Serpens* disaster, which was not attributed to enemy action, resulted in the Coast Guard's greatest loss of life in World War II.

The *USS Ponthus*, a converted LST serving as a motor torpedo-boat tender, and 18 small gasoline tankers, most of which were commissioned in 1944, completed the roster of Coast Guard-manned naval auxiliaries. The latter — 10-knot, 220-foot ships — supplied gasoline and lube oil to combat vessels operating in the Pacific and to advanced bases.

Occasionally, they became combatants themselves, as when the *USS Calamus* shot a Japanese aircraft down at Okinawa. Its sister, the *USS Sheepscot*, was the only loss,

capsizing on June 6, 1945, after running aground in heavy weather off Iwo Jima.

The Coast Guard also provided crews for many smaller naval vessels, among them the converted yacht *USS Anethyst* and numerous district craft, including a number of the patrol boats better known as *yippies* from their YP designation. Most had been fishing boats originally; a few were 110-foot wooden submarine chasers built during World War I.

In all, the Coast Guard manned 351 naval vessels in the course of World War II, those so employed numbering 48,622 at the war's end. ADM Russell R. Waesche, the Coast Guard commandant, hoped that naval crews might replace his service's personnel aboard these ships when the Coast Guard was returned to Treasury Department control on Jan. 1, 1946.

The Navy, however, was facing its own demobilization problems, so the Coast Guardsmen ultimately decommissioned most of the vessels in which they were serving.

The last may have been the frigate *USS El Paso*, which had been a weather ship off Leyte. According to the Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, its ensign and commission pennant were hauled down on July 18, 1946. Nineteen other frigates, also fitted as weather ships, were decommissioned several weeks later, but had been lent to the Coast Guard in 1946 and so were no longer naval vessels.

During the period between Japan's surrender and their pre-inactivation overhauls, most of these ships performed a variety of duties. Transports and cargo ships took part in Operation Magic Carpet, returning military personnel to the United States, while frigates continued to patrol weather stations in the Atlantic and the Pacific.

Some LSTs and DEs were assigned duties associated with the occupation of Japan, as were several of the LCIs — sisters of the last shuttled personnel and cargoes among Pacific atolls.

DEs also searched Pacific islands for isolated Japanese garrisons or survivors of wartime airplane crashes, and a few had to make a weather patrol before returning