A large white rescue ship with a blue stripe and red accents is docked at a pier. The ship has multiple masts and antennas. In the background, a city skyline with various buildings is visible across a body of water. The sky is clear and blue.

*“When Others
Were Coming In,
They Were
Going Out...”*

**A Rescue Ship's
Odyssey**

There were storms when the ship was leaning so far over that the crew walked on the bulkheads instead of the decks, and looking down into a porthole, a sailor could see *the foam of the ocean.*

Jack Watson remembers going out to *rescue a ship* that had *broken loose from a tug* that was unable to reconnect.

“We spent two or three hours trying to get a line across, *with the wind blowing* like hell. Finally, the commanding officer just decided to *lay the Tamaroa across* from it and hand over the line. I was in the engine room, and when we *slammed up against the ship*, it knocked me down. We got her into Gravesend Bay in lower New York harbor, and *the tug towed her* the rest of the way. Later, the captain pointed to the half-round pipes that ran alongside of the ship. “You see those? Those are *fenders to prevent* the hull from *getting pierced.*”



The USS Zuni assisting LST-944 at the beach on Iwo Jima.

She started as a 205-foot salvage tugboat that was one of 70 Navy ATF's, which stood for auxiliary tug fleet. Built at Commercial Iron Works in Portland, Oregon, she was christened the USS Zuni and launched on October 9, 1943. She was ATF-95. Hundreds of men—and one woman—would serve on her. In the Second World War, the Zuni saw the invasion of Tinian on June 24, 1944 and the occupation of Saipan. Following these missions, the Zuni rescued the cruiser USS Houston near Formosa (now Taiwan) after she was torpedoed. Shortly afterward, the Zuni towed the torpedoed cruiser USS Reno for eight days and 490 miles through waters laden with Japanese submarines after the Reno was hit off the San Bernardino Strait in the Philippines. During this rescue the Reno had to be lashed to the Zuni to keep the cruiser from capsizing.

On February 22, 1945, the Zuni began supporting the invasion of Iwo Jima for 31 days. At this time the Zuni was intentionally run aground next to LST-944 (a landing ship tank built to carry troops and supplies). The Zuni held the LST in place so that badly needed munitions and supplies could be offloaded from it and later assisted in laying submerged fuel pipelines to Iwo Jima. On March 23, 1945, while assisting LST-27 in Iwo Jima, the Zuni's wire towline snapped and struck James M. Byres, USNR of New York,

NY and Frederick F. Pavlovics of Elizabeth, NJ who were both killed. In its long career, they were the ship's only casualties. The Zuni, because of the snapped towline, suffered a damaged propeller and a disabled anchor line that caused her to broach the shore on Iwo Jima, leaving her keel broken and her hull pierced. She was later towed to Pearl Harbor for a complete overhaul. During her two years of Navy service the Zuni participated in four invasions, earned four battle stars, saved numerous ships, and was underway 80 percent of the time. Zuni skipper Lt. Ray E. Chance was awarded the Legion of Merit by Admiral "Bull" Halsey. In 1946 she began a new life in the Coast Guard as a medium endurance cutter. She was renamed the USCGC Tamaroa, following the tradition of naming cutters after Native American tribes and given the number WMEC-166.



Peter Daniel Davis

Not long ago, GSA auctioned the Tamaroa on behalf of the Coast Guard. The ship is now under the stewardship of Harry Jaeger, Director of Operations of the non-profit Tamaroa Maritime Foundation of Richmond, Virginia. Its mission is to educate the public on the importance of Virginia in maritime history, the role of cutters and tugs, and to restore the ship to operating order. The ship will be available to the Sea Cadets and Sea Scouts, the NROTC and Junior NROTC, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and the general public. It will have displays and live demonstrations as well as ship tours, allowing those calling on the ship to share their experiences. Along with his wife, Shirley Jaeger, and an assortment of vets and other volunteers, Jaeger has devoted himself to the ship's restoration. The Coast Guard is working with the Foundation to help ensure the ship's seaworthiness.

The sailors who served on the Tamaroa and the ships like her were the "sea dogs" who went out into storms when other ships were coming in for safe harbor. They were young, often still in their teens. Searches did not always have happy endings—sometimes all that could be found after responding to a distress call was a sneaker or a lifejacket. Recently, former crewmembers recounted their experiences on board the Tamaroa and her sister ships. Paul Fritz, who served on the Tamaroa said, "If you're seventeen, a guy who is twenty-one is an old man. You're relying on his experience." He remembers once preparing to lower a lifeboat and taking two turns with the rope around the bollard instead of the required three. He soon found out the reason. Without the additional friction, the boat started slipping, and had

someone not helped him hold the rope, he would have dumped the lifeboat into the sea. "It was a self-contained community where people's lives were in my hands. I was part of a team. And I found out that I was capable of more than I had thought possible."

Kevin Frost recalled how a surfboat they were lowering started falling, and someone went into the water. They fished him out, and following tradition, he was given a shot of medicinal brandy. Had it happened at night, they might not have found him. He also remembers searching for one of the Coast Guard's Zodiacs, a small inflatable boat that had been conducting fishing inspections, when a fog rolled in. They started doing

an expanding square search, and finally it turned up.

Though he worked on deck, Frost respected the crew who worked in the engine room. "We'd be at liberty, and they'd be wrenching the final turns on the engine," he said. Jim O'Brien, who served on the destroyer USS Basilone, said that in the engine room, it could reach temperatures of 130 to 140 degrees, Fahrenheit. Crewmembers who worked in the engine room were called "snipes," while those on deck who stood watch, cleaned, and did general duties were called "deck apes." The lowest ranking crewman in the engine room would also clean the pots and pans. In addition to the cook, the ship also had a "jack of the dust," who brought food up to the galley. The person in charge of buying food was the



Larry Eckert



Paul Fritz, who served on the Tamaroa said, "If you're seventeen, a guy who is twenty-one is an old man. You're relying on his experience."



Peter Daniel Davis

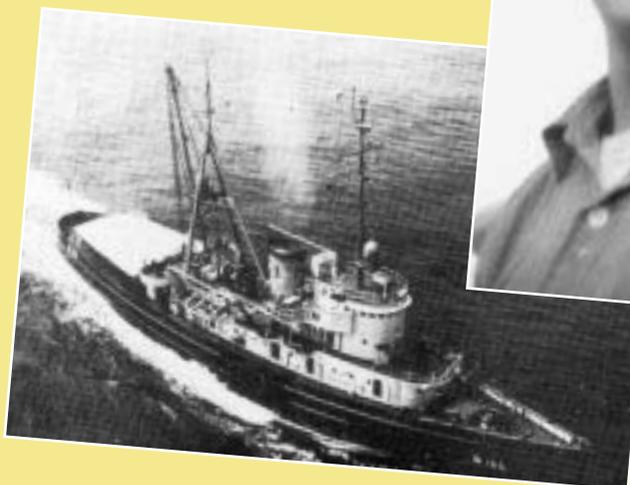
A Glimpse of the Past

ship's chandler. The crew ate well—if the chandler was a good one. There was always coffee—but anyone on watch from four until eight in the morning got the last pot that had been made at dinner. It would be like syrup, and they would resort to lots of cream and sugar or just make tea.

From 1946 to 1985, the homeport of the Tamaroa was New York. While in New York the Tamaroa was based first on Staten Island and then Governors Island where she conducted various search and rescue missions, monitored iceberg movement, and carried out law enforcement patrols and fisheries enforcement. Doug Garbini remembers boarding a Spanish fishing boat, and in the best high school Spanish he could muster said, “Captain, we would like to see your box of ice.” He was delighted when, understanding what he meant, the captain obliged.

On July 25, 1956, the Tamaroa was the first on the scene after the Andrea Doria and the Stockholm collided on a foggy evening in the Atlantic. In the 1960s the Tamaroa rescued the fishing boats Deepwater and Foam, and the yacht Petrel. While in New York in March 1984, the Tamaroa rescued two crewmembers of the Soviet freighter SS Konsomolets Kirgizil and on December 28, 1988, she rescued the container ship SS Lloyd Bermuda's crew. On December 23, 1988, the Tamaroa rescued the two-man crew of the fishing boat Jimmy Squarefoot only 55 minutes after the initial mayday.

When they were towing, someone in the stern always had a fire ax. That way, if the line ever snarled, he could cut it immediately. But that precaution was of no help when in the early 1950's, an anchor chain from another ship they were attempting to rescue tangled in the screw. Stanley Kerbel recounted that the





Eddie Cass reminisces with Joe Treen about salt pills and ringing bell buoys.

on any ship, they were constantly painting. There was a saying, said O'Brien, "If it moves, salute it, if it doesn't move, paint it."

Joe Treen recounts, "I was too big for my breeches in school. My father told me I wasn't gonna sit around. So I enlisted. My dad told me not to go in the Army, so I went into the Coast Guard. They had fresh food all the time there. The first time I was in a hurricane, the smell of diesel went through the ship. There were a bunch of tablets that I thought were seasick pills, so I took some. They were salt tablets. Capt. Raphael T.A. McKenzie, USCG was commanding

Tamaroa drifted in the North Atlantic for five days until it could be towed to dry dock in Virginia.

In the 1970's, law enforcement duties were added to the Tamaroa's rescue duties. These included fisheries violations. On July 22, 1976, 80 miles off Tom's River, New Jersey, the Italian boat Amoruso Quarto and then on July 28, 1976, 77 miles off Cape May, New Jersey, the Japanese Ookumi Maru were found fishing illegally. On February 26, 1984, just 45 miles east of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the Tamaroa was involved in the seizure of 16.5 tons of marijuana aboard the Apollo III. Also in the 1970's, during a long strike of the New York Sanitation Department, the Tamaroa even assisted in towing garbage barges and became known as "You call, we haul" by its crew.

The Watch, Quarter And Station Bill showed each crew member's name, rank, rating (qualifications), and station for each status of the ship. That could mean being in battle, simply being under way, abandoning ship, or towing a disabled vessel. Duties might include working in the galley, handling signal flags, or carrying blankets into a lifeboat. And as



Crewman with Capt. Raphael T.A. McKenzie, USCG Commanding Officer of the Tamaroa from 1960-1962.



The Tamaroa battles hurricane force wind and waves.

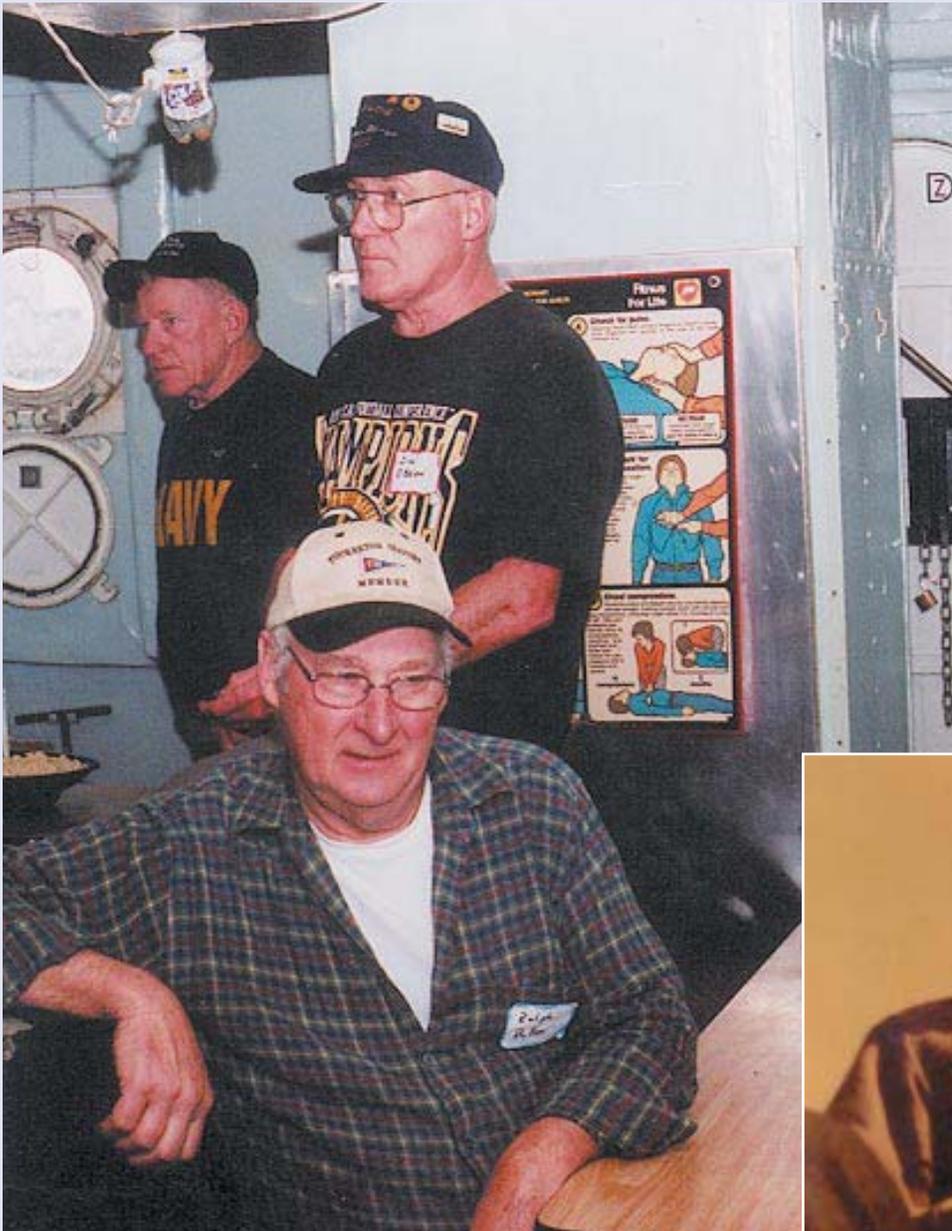
officer at the time. We had a quartermaster (who piloted the ship) who was as old as dust when I came on board and never listened to the captain when he was at the helm and he was bringing the ship in, but he knew the tides and he was a good pilot.”

Eddie Cass tells of returning to the barracks after visiting a local tavern frequented by coasties while being stationed at Base St. George, Staten Island. On the way back, he and a

buddy noticed bell buoys alongside the road and decided to try ringing one. Within moments, personnel were running helter skelter in their skivvies. The two hadn’t known that the bell buoys had been converted into fire alarms. Returning to the barracks, they found the coastal police already waiting for them.

From July 1985 until her decommissioning on February 1, 1994, the Tamaroa was based in New Castle, New

Hampshire. At this time, the Tamaroa was involved in her most well-known rescue. On October 30, 1991, the “No Name” or “Halloween Storm,” documented in Sebastian Junger’s best-selling book *The Perfect Storm*, struck New England. The Tamaroa assisted in rescuing three crewmembers of the sailboat Satori in spite of huge waves and 80 mph winds, 75 miles south of Nantucket Island. Shortly after a long night of assisting the crew of the Satori, taps was played. Ten minutes later,



Left to right: Harry Jaeger and Jim O'Brien with Ralph Pullen (foreground and inset).



reveille sounded. Next, the Tamaroa was called to rescue the crew of an Air National Guard H-60 helicopter that ran out of fuel south of Long Island. The Tamaroa rescued four of five helicopter crewmembers and the cutter earned the Coast Guard Foundation Award for its effort.

Theirs was a world always punctuated by danger. Ralph Pullen said, "Many times I thought we weren't coming back." And yet, it was a part of the job they understood and accepted, and though they would not call themselves heroes, that is what they were. Perhaps Ray Pushie put it best when he said, "It was the worst pay and living conditions I ever had, and I wouldn't trade it for the world."

Tamaroa-Zuni Links and Sources

http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-cp/history/Chronology_Oct.html. See entries on the Tamaroa for Oct. 30 and Oct. 31.

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g%2Dcp/history/cutternicknames.html>. Coast Guard cutter nicknames, including ones for the Tamaroa.

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-cp/history/WEB CUTTERS/Tamaroa1943.html>. Brief Tamaroa history including photographs.

<http://www.tamaroa.org/Tamaroa> Maritime Foundation. The site includes news, history, and photographs.

(The USS Reno rescue occurred around November 3, 1944 when she was torpedoed according to the site http://www.nafts.com/sOURCE_page.htm under the section *Rescue of The Reno*. The site <http://www.tamaroa.org/zuni.htm> has the Reno rescue occurring around January 1945.)