

**reporter-news.com**

An E.W. Scripps Company

news
opinionfeatures
entertainmentweather
classifieds

sports

Abilene Reporter-News

scripps-howard news service

national news

news

International
National
Washington
Politics
Education
Business/Economy
Science/Technology
Religion
Other News / Stories

lifestyle

Food/Nutrition
Health / Fitness
Family/Relationships
Home / Gardening
Minorities
Consumer Issues
Personal Finance
Other Lifestyle

weather

sports

Pro Football
College Football / SEC
Pro Basketball
College Basketball
(Men) / (Women)
Pro Baseball
(NL) / (AL) / (O)
Tennis / Golf / Soccer
Hockey / Olympics
Other
Hunting/Fishing
Auto Racing

opinion

entertainment

People/Celebrities
Television
Film/Movies / Music
Books
Travel
Fashion
Schedules
Other Entertainment

classifieds

top news

Hero ship of WWII and 'Perfect Storm' on the auction block

By LISA HOFFMAN
Scripps Howard News Service
March 16, 2001

- She helped win the battle for Iwo Jima, saved countless sailors, snared ships smuggling tons of marijuana and played a heroic starring role in what has come to be called "The Perfect Storm."

Now, the rusty former Navy tug and Coast Guard cutter Tamaroa sits silent at a New York City pier, waiting for her fate to be decided by a public auction of surplus government property.

The U.S. General Services Administration has put the Tamaroa on its auction Web site (<http://www.gsaauctions.gov>), where bidders can contend for the 205-foot ship until March 29. At last check, bidding stood at \$15,888. Whoever wins must move the 1,700-ton ship within a week, unless other arrangements can be made.

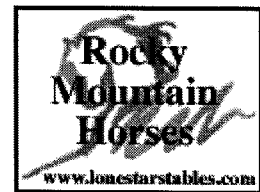
This is the latest, and likely last, attempt to find the aged vessel a permanent home. Odds are high, however, that the mighty Tamaroa will be turned by whoever buys her into a pile of metal scrap. The GSA lists her current condition as "rough" and in need of major work.

Bill Doherty, a Coast Guard veteran who served on the ship from 1967 to 1968 and now is fighting to save her, gives a ballpark estimate of \$170,000 as the cost of basic repairs. He and other former Tamaroa crewmen have volunteered to help scrape, paint and otherwise rehabilitate her.

The ship's current sorry state belies an extraordinary history in which she saved hundred of lives.

She began life in October 1943 as the USS Zuni, a Navy salvage tug dispatched soon after commissioning to the Pacific combat theater. There, she took part in four key

HOME DELIVERY



invasions, and saved two torpedoed U.S. cruisers, two transports and many small craft and other vessels.

During the protracted battle for Iwo Jima, the Zuni crew beached the tug alongside an out-of-commission landing craft, and under fire unloaded munitions and cargo desperately needed by beleaguered U.S. Marines. For her wartime efforts, the Zuni won four battle stars.

In 1946, she began a new career for the Coast Guard as the USCGC Tamaroa. For the next 38 years, she racked up a remarkable record on search-and-rescue and law-enforcement missions, including finding violators of fishing laws. She conducted 12 drug busts, seizing one vessel carrying more than 16 tons of marijuana.

It was in search-and-rescue that she really made her mark. When the Andrea Doria sank in 1956 off Nantucket Island, Mass., the Tamaroa was the first on the scene. Over the years, she rescued the crew of a Soviet freighter as well as those of dozens of yachts and fishing vessels.

Her most famous moment came on Halloween 1991, during the fierce storm off America's East Coast immortalized by the recent book and movie "The Perfect Storm." As depicted, the Tamaroa braved 80 mph winds and 40-foot swells to save three people from the sinking sailboat Satori, then turned around and saved four Air National Guardsmen after their own rescue helicopter ran out of fuel and crashed into the churning Atlantic.

In light of that history, Doherty and others of the vessel's former Coast Guard crewmen who have been waging a low-profile battle to save the ship say that scrapping it would be a tragedy..

Doherty, 53, now works a few blocks from the "Tam's" berth. He passes her every morning as he drives to work as a property manager in Manhattan. Another former crewman, Serge Obolensky, an online services manager in the Washington, D.C., area, has lovingly created an extensive Web site devoted to his old ship's history and, he hopes, its future. (<http://www.tamaroa.org>)

Doherty first spied the Tamaroa at the pier in 1994, and harangued her caretakers ever since about the vessel's poor shape and dubious fate. Doherty has lobbied state and local officials on the Tamaroa's behalf. But the cost of renovating or maintaining such a ship keeps scaring suitors away.

Their Web site describes three failed efforts to give her a new life. The Hudson River Park Trust in New York had wanted to use her as a floating headquarters, but that came to naught. Then, the Palm Beach (Fla.) Maritime Museum expressed interest, but nothing came of that

either. The city of Portchester, N.Y., also briefly flirted with taking her.

Now, the Tamaroa has fallen to the sad status of "surplus property," a designation that means the federal government has no more use for her. That pains Doherty and the 100 or so other Tamaroa vets and boosters pulling for the ship to stay afloat.

"This ship was built to live," Doherty said, quoting a ship's engineer who has joined the fight to save the Tamaroa.

(Contact Lisa Hoffman at [HoffmanL\(at\)shns.com](mailto:HoffmanL@shns.com) or <http://www.shns.com>.)

Copyright © 1995- 2001, E.W. Scripps Publications,
All Rights Reserved.
Site users are subject to our User Agreement.
We also have a Privacy Policy.