

NEW YORK WATERFRONT

Sale Threatens a 'Perfect Storm' Savior

The Coast Guard cutter Tamaroa's crew first last week for a last effort to rescue that rescue boat.

Chronicled as a naval salvage tug during World War II, the Tamaroa has been a Coast Guard ship for more than 50 years. For most of that time, it was in New York Harbor, but in 1984 it went to New Haven, where it helped rescue survivors of the big storm of 1991, which inspired the novel and film "The Perfect Storm."

In 1994, the boat was decommissioned and sent back to the city, where it has languished at the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum and, since 1999, at Pier 40 in Lower Manhattan.

Efforts by nonprofit groups to adapt the Tamaroa for civic uses had faltered through, so last month the United States General Services Administration, which owns the boat, placed the 205-foot vessel in its new auction site. The first bid came in at \$100.

Word of the auction put former crew members on high alert.

"After an experience like that, you see the Tamaroa as an extension of your family," said William Moselle, a Connecticut resident who served alongside 45 crew members during the 1991 storm. "It's hard to put a price tag on that."

William O. Doherty Jr., who served on the boat in the 1960's and works in Manhattan, feared that bidders would junk the boat for scrap metal and sought donations from the old crew. By last Thursday, hours before the auction was set to end, he said he had collected \$30,000. But bids exceeded \$60,000.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, an advocacy group, is challenging the auction, invoking, among other things, a federal law that protects historic ships. The group wants the sale rescinded. As of late Friday, its efforts were unsuccessful.

At 10:29 p.m. Thursday, the auction ended with a bid of \$60,075 from GoForIt. Auction officials said they would release the bidder's identity after receiving payment.

DENNY LEE

HISTORY

Life Cycle of a Ship

1943 Commissioned as the naval salvage tug Zumr. During World War II participated in four Allied invasions, including the assault on Iwo Jima.

1946 Sent to New York Harbor as the recommissioned Coast Guard cutter Tamaroa.

1956 Was among the first to arrive at the stranding of the ocean liner Andrea Doria.

1985 Transferred to New Hampshire.

1991 Helped avert survivors off the Perfect Storm.

1994 Decommissioned and sent to the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum.

1999 Transported to Pier 40 at the foot of West Houston Street.

Illustration: Robert D. Hart



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The Tamaroa has inspired loyalty among its former crew members, but they could not raise enough money to buy it at auction.

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