U.S.S. Coos Bay (AVP-25) / U.S.C.G.C. Coos Bay (WHEC-376)

The U.S.S. *Coos Bay* served with both the U.S. Navy (1942-1946) and the U.S. Coast Guard (1949-1966). The ship's navy crew earned two battle stars during World War II, and the ship's Coast Guard crew saved at least thirty-eight lives.

The Lake Washington Shipyards in Houghton, Washington, launched the U.S.S. *Coos Bay* on May 15, 1942. It was built to serve as a "small seaplane tender" (U.S. Navy designation AVP) and received the hull number AVP-25. *Barnegat*-class vessels were named for bays, inlets, and straits in the United States, and the *Coos Bay* was named for Coos Bay, Oregon. This lightly armed ship displaced 1,650 tons, was 319'9" in length, drafted 13'6", and had a top speed of 18 knots. It carried a crew of 215 and entered service with the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet in mid 1943.

Throughout 1943, the *Coos Bay* served in support roles in the Pacific. After overhaul in San Pedro, California, in late 1943, the ship was sailing west in March 1944 when it collided with a merchant vessel and was forced to return to San Pedro for extensive repairs. From September 13 to December 2, 1945, the *Coos Bay* was based out of Ominato Ko, Honshu, Japan. After that duty, the ship sailed to Orange, Texas, where the navy placed it in reserve on April 30, 1946. On January 5, 1949, the navy loaned the ship to the U.S. Coast Guard.

The *Coos Bay*'s nomenclature changed with its uses by different branches of the U.S. Armed Services. From 1949 to 1965, the Coast Guard designated it WAVP-376, that is, as a Coast Guard seaplane tender; in 1966, the Coast Guard identified it as a high-endurance cutter with the hull number WHEC-376. From 1949 through 1966, the ship was assigned to the 1st Coast Guard District and based in Portland, Maine. It served in the North Atlantic in the roles of law enforcement, search-and-rescue, open-ocean navigation aid, and communications relay station.

The *Coos Bay* was involved in three notable rescue operations. On February 27, 1953, the crew rescued ten men from a downed U.S. Navy patrol aircraft; on January 26, 1955, they retrieved six men from a downed U.S. Air Force transport; and on February 19, 1964, they saved twenty-two men from the stalled and sunken British cargo ship MV *Ambassador*.

The Coast Guard decommissioned the *Coos Bay* on September 1, 1966, in Boston, and the ship returned to the U.S. Naval Register in December 1967. On January 9, 1968, the navy struck the *Coos Bay* from its register when it sunk the ship during target practice off the coast of Maryland.

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Further Reading:

Scheina, Robert L. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters and Craft, 1946-1990*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1990.

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