

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to CRASH BOATS Part 2 – covering the post-war built boats, and the diverse military and civilian roles that they fulfilled. Keeping track of surviving craft is very difficult at the best of times, but with U.S. registered craft it can be a nightmare, as vessels can be registered either with the State Motor Licensing Dept or with the U.S. Coast Guard Register. Usually, but not always, State Registration numbers change when a vessel is sold, those on the USCG Register retain the same number and just the name details change. However, to make things more confusing a vessel may move from one register to the other register several times in its lifetime, and sometimes seem to have disappeared – usually when on State Registry. Creating a list of craft built and survivors has taken some time – adding sightings, registrations, those from the Internet, my own list and in 2003, that of Captain George Schneider’s (who provided me with a copy of his list) which were all cross-referenced together. Every few months it was necessary to check the registry for any changes etc then trying to contact owners willing to divulge information about their craft.

Again, Terry Holtham has proved a great help with this project. His excellent drawings (some which proved a real challenge) of both military and civilian craft and conversions nicely illustrate the diversity of designs based on one hull type. His own input from his collection and research information have brought some really rare pictures to light (like the SEPTAR target AVR), and filled gaps in my own. Without his guidance I would have been totally lost where to start with this publication. We’ve had responses to Part 1 giving new information on some craft and correcting mistakes on others – for this we are grateful and encourage such input.

We have plans to take this one step further and follow up this book with one including the larger 85ft Design-379 WW2 Patrol Rescue Boat and the two 94ft Experimental AVRs built post-war – the last of their kind. Anyone with information or photographs to add to this project please feel free to contact us – as we said, this is a base point from which we can work from.

DAVID LINLEY

CRASH BOATS Part 1 covered essentially the origin, development and operation of the vast number of 63ft Aircraft Rescue Boats built during the WWII period and concluded with the US Army TC-Design 416 version. CRASH BOATS Part 2 is the continuation of the development of the highly successful 63ft ARB hull, and commences with a full section on the construction and layout of the “Standard” version – namely the Model 314 which was the most common of all the types built. The construction/layout section, along with the sections on Armaments, Engines and Radar at the end of Part 2, is intended to compliment the sections in Part 1 where reference is made to the more technical aspects of the craft.

The remainder of Part 2 covers, in approximately equal depth, the craft that were built post-WW2 and the many craft that were converted for other roles, both during WW2 and after hostilities ended, as well as the survivors. Thus nearly half of Part 2 is devoted to the various “types” of survivors i.e. those that did survive the scrap to be used for a number of different uses. The hard work of Dave Linley in tracking down nearly 190 surviving craft, some of which survive to this day, is exemplary. It is very interesting, but also frustrating, to note that whereas the service details, numbers and other information on craft serving in WWII is relatively easy to track down, the records of more recent buildings in the post-war period are somewhat more difficult to come by. Perhaps it is the effect of the post-war military secret society brought about by the cold war! Thus the details of Mk3 and especially the Mk4 versions are like gold dust.

Part 2 has been very interesting to compile as there are a vast number of different boats described amongst the conversions and survivors. Details of some are probably “published” herein for the first time, and thanks to a short list of individuals (see acknowledgements) the details of a few “bizarre” looking versions have come to light. Thus in the various chapters the compilers have “featured” a few craft that adequately portray the overall array of craft that were still operating or surviving through the 1950s – 1970s. These include the craft used in the movie McHales Navy, EMPTY VESSEL - a ferry now used for art students in the Bronx, ASR-313 a Mk3 version that was restored by Sea Scouts, ALLEN GARDINER which is one of the oldest craft built - now in South Africa as a restaurant, the AIR FAITH in Australia used for charter cruises including Hen Nights, the P-619 which is a fully restored almost as original US Army version, and of course FILIA – the only privately owned craft that served in the US Navy known to survive outside of USA, and which started the whole CRASH BOATS project off.

The coverage would not be complete without a feature on the only craft that is STILL in service with the US Navy to this day (see front cover photograph) – although of the post-war version, she is rather unique as the CINCPACFLT Barge at Hawaii – some 40 plus years after entering service.

As in Part 1, the profiles in Part 2 are all to the same scale and approximately 1:132.

TERRY HOLTHAM