

*Submerged
Cultural Resources
Exploration
Team*



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Exploration Updates

2004

Issue 1

Welcome to the first issue of *SCRET's* newsletter for 2004. Our goal is to publish the newsletter twice each year. Each issue will focus on *SCRET's* efforts to explore and document significant submerged cultural resources in the Pacific Northwest.

YMS -- Auxiliary Motor Minesweepers

The focus of this newsletter is USS YMS-359, a WWII era motor minesweeper, whose remains lie 200 feet deep in Lake Washington.

History. The wooden-hulled YMS auxiliary motor minesweeper was one of the more durable and versatile ships built for the U.S. Navy during World War II. The first YMS was completed in March 1942. A total of 481 ships of this type were built at various shipyards on the East and West Coasts of the United States. The only significant variation within the type was one of appearance; YMS-1 through 134 had two stacks, YMS-135 through

445, 480, and 481 had one, while YMS-446 through 479 had none. Originally rated as service craft, the YMS were used during World War II for inshore mine sweeping to prepare the way for amphibious assaults. The YMS were also used by the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. *Ruff* (MSCO-54), originally YMS-327, the last of its kind in U.S. service, was struck from the Navy List in November 1969.

The general features of the YMS auxiliary motor minesweeper included:

Displacement: 270 tons

Length: 136 feet

Beam: 24 feet, 6 inches

Draft: 6 feet, 1 inch

Speed: 13 knots

Armament: 1 3"/50mm gun & 2 20mm guns, 2 depth charge tracks plus 2 extensions, and 2 depth charge projectors

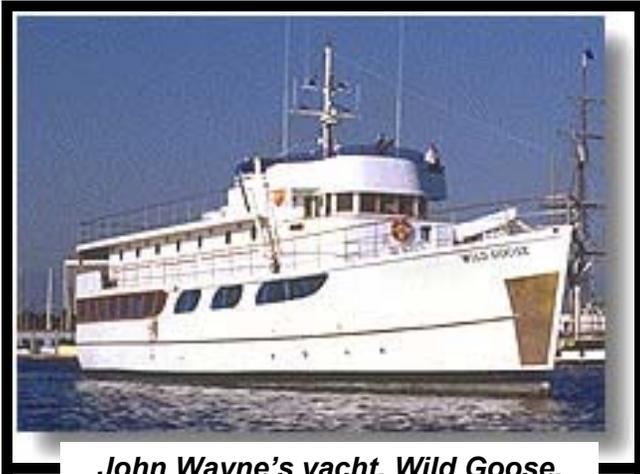
Complement: 4 officers, 29 crew

Diesel engines, twin screws, 500 horse power each



**YMS-324 in
San Francisco
Bay in 1944**

After service with the U.S. Navy, many YMS minesweepers were sold to the navies of other countries. Other YMS minesweepers were stripped of military hardware and sold to private parties who modified the hulls for civilian use. Some YMS hulls were converted into yachts for the rich and famous. Perhaps the best known example is John Wayne's yacht, Wild Goose, which was built on a YMS hull.



**John Wayne's yacht, Wild Goose,
a former YMS minesweeper**

USS YMS-359's History

According to U.S. Navy records obtained from the National Archives, YMS-359 was in active service from August 1943 through May 1946. In September 1944, YMS-359 participated in the allied invasion of France. YMS-359 was part of Mine Squadron 11, Task Group 80-10, engaged in sweeping the channel to Mentone, France during the follow-up phase of the invasion of Southern France. As an example, the Commanding Officer of YMS-359, Lt. Murphy, filed this report of action on September 18, 1944:

"On the port beam of YMS-250, this vessel with M/A gear streamed was proceeding in the first section of a sweeping task force. The mission underway was to sweep a fire-support channel from position (a) to position (b). The shore along the channel was fortified by the enemy."

"This vessel swept the channel from point (a) to point (b) without difficulty. Just beyond point (b) enemy batteries commenced firing at the ship. The commander of the operation ordered a change of course and this vessel proceeded out of range of the enemy, returning fire as it went. Enemy shells landed within 50 yards of the ship"

What happened to YMS-359 after 1946 is less clear. When SCRET divers first visited YMS-359, an individual in Seattle named Clif Gazaway, had the following on his website:

"Clif Gazaway was, perhaps, the only man in the Navy that owned his own Navy ship. The ship was a Navy surplus mine sweeper, YMS 359."

"Gazaway bought it while the Navy was sending him to the University of Washington. He used it for a house boat, but it was at least 5 times as big as an ordinary houseboat. Gazaway lived in a small part of the bow. Gazaway was a dreamer, or perhaps, insane. He had hoped to recruit a crew of sailors to finance refurbishing of the mine sweeper. Then when they all retired from the Navy they would sail the mine sweeper around the world and live on their Navy retirement checks. Clif was going to recruit sailors that would all retire in the same year and go cruising at retirement time. Meanwhile, each sailor, while on active duty, would contribute financially to the restoration effort. Unfortunately YMS 359 sank."

SCRET has not been successful in its attempts to contact Mr. Gazaway for further information.

USS YMS-359 Today

Today the hull of YMS-359 sits upright on the bottom of Lake Washington in 200 feet of water.



**Side scan image of YMS-359 provided by
Innerspace Exploration Team**

YMS-359 is located in the middle of the lake straight out from Houghton (present day Carillon Point). The wooden hull is completely intact. It is still Navy gray and has the numbers "359" on either side of the bow, similar to YMS 324 in the picture on the first page of this newsletter. There are bow thrusters on either side of the bow near the bottom of the hull.

C



Numbers on side of hull near bow

The wheelhouse and cabins above the main hull are missing. Sections of the decking on the top of the forward section of the hull are also missing, offering views of the cabins inside the hull. All of the portholes and other brass fittings have been removed. The forward cabins contain bunk beds and bathroom fixtures, but are otherwise empty.

Aft of the cabins, the hull contains three large open holds that are, for the most part, empty. There is some machinery in one of the holds. However, the engines, shafts and propellers are missing. There are holes in the bottom of the hull where the propeller shafts should be.



SECRET diver Walter Jaccard inspects inside cabin window with missing porthole



Bow thruster on starboard hull



Machinery in hold



Bathroom sink inside cabin

Cleats on top side of hull



I
N
F
O

I would like to contact *SCRET* for information on a wreck – write to info@scret.org

I would like to become a member of *SCRET* – join on-line at www.scret.org

I would like to make a financial contribution to *SCRET* – mail to *SCRET*'s address shown below.

I would like to contribute an article to *SCRET*'s next newsletter – e-mail to wjaccard@mindspring.com or mail to *SCRET*'s address shown below.

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