

## YMS-359

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The YMS-359 minesweeper is located in the middle of the lake straight out from Carillon Point. The wooden hull is completely intact. It is still Navy gray and has the numbers "359" on either side of the bow. The hinge plates for the acoustic "hammer box" are on either side of the bow near the bottom of the hull. The "hammer box" devices were used to detonate some types of mines.

YMS-359 Specifications 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 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. We have not been able to locate a photograph of YMS-359. However, its appearance would have been similar to the photographs of other sisterships in this article. Background Information

YMS-359 was built by Robert Jacob Inc. at a shipyard in City Island, NY. The hull was laid down on September 12, 1942; the ship was launched on April 9, 1943; and completed on August 20, 1943.

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"

YMS 359 was struck from the Naval Register on April 17, 1946 and sold by the Navy on January 6, 1948. What happened to YMS-359 after the sale 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."

Perry Lind, who was working for Marine Parts Co. at the time and operating and at times living onboard another YMS moored at the South end of Lake Union, remembers this about YMS-359:

"I vaguely remember YMS-359. The ship was tied up on the ship canal, near the Seattle Yacht Club, at a site owned by the University of Washington. There was a lot of speculation about YMS-359. We knew that it was privately owned by a student. At that time the ship was in good shape and had all its equipment aboard; this was obvious by the way it sat in the water.

If my memory serves me correctly, there was a fire somewhere about the 01 deck and burned the ship down to about what you see today. The cause of the fire was not determined or at least not talked about. There was a rumor that it started from some device the student was using to try and keep the area he lived in warm.

The ship simply disappeared one night. The University wanted it gone after the fire. But nobody ever knew for sure where

it went. We knew, or at least thought we did, that it did not go west toward the locks. Our boat was moored at the south end of Lake Union and we would have seen it leave if it went west. There was, however, a small yard at the south end of Lake Washington at Rainier Beach that had a crane large enough to pull the 14+ ton engines and gear boxes, and a dock large enough to use a truck to remove them. The yard was a co-op yard and would do anything for anyone. Finding YMS-359 on the bottom of the lake is not really a surprise.&rdquo;

Today the hull of YMS-359 sits upright on the bottom of Lake Washington in 200 feet of water. 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 and 313 in the pictures above. The hinge plates for the acoustic "hammer box" are on either side of the bow near the bottom of the hull. The "hammer box" devices were used to detonate some types of mines. The wheelhouse and cabins above the main hull are missing, probably as a result of the fire. 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.