

# USCGC MORRIS: ALIVE AND WELL!

This last operational “buck and a quarter” just sailed through the Panama Canal on its way to a new home and many more years of sailing life - **BY ROGER CAIN**



Under the command of Capt. Andrew Evanow, *Morris* crosses San Francisco Bay at a leisurely seven knots at 800/950-rpm.

The *Active*-class of Patrol Boats was one of the most useful and long-lasting in US Coast Guard service. Designed to trail “mother ships” along the outer line of patrol during the Prohibition Era, the vessels were built at a cost of \$63,173 each. They gained a great reputation for durability and picked up the nickname “buck and a quarters” because of their 125-foot length. During the late 1930s, their original six-cylinder diesel powerplants were replaced by significantly more powerful eight-cylinder units that utilized the original engine beds — giving the vessels an extra three knots and enhancing their durability.

All of the *Active*-class served during World War Two, but two — *Jackson* and *Bedloe* — were lost in a 14 September 1944 storm known as

the Great Hurricane of 1944. With waves of 100 to 125 feet, it was a terrible day for the USCG with 20 aboard *Jackson* being killed while 26 crewmen from *Bedloe* died. During the war, ten *Actives* were refitted

as buoy tenders but reverted back to patrol work after the conflict. Originally designated WPC, for Patrol Craft, they were re-designated WSC, for Sub Chaser, during the war. The “W” appended to the

SC designation identified vessels belonging to the USCG.

When built, the *Active*-class was armed with one three-inch gun. In 1941, this was upgraded with two depth charge tracks and in 1945 two single mount 20mm caliber weapons were added along with two Mousetrap anti-submarine rocket launchers fitted with 7.2-inch rockets. In 1960, one 40mm anti-aircraft gun was fitted.

*Morris* was built during 1927



Post-war photo of *Morris* — note the 40mm gun installation.



This is what *Morris* looked like when operated by the Sea Scouts.