

INTRODUCTION

A HOBBY TURNED OBSESSION

In this book we hope to give a general coverage of these wonderful small craft from their conception to retirement from service. The information has been gathered from books, internet, builders, designers, historians, copies of surviving files, museums, armed forces of many nations, ex-boat crews and owners. What started as a general interest in the 63ft Aircraft Rescue Boat, gradually grew until we realised that you couldn't cover the subject without also referring to their larger sister the 85ft Patrol Rescue Boat – also designed by Dair Long, and what could have been the future – the private design by Huron-Eddy 95ft Experimental Rescue Boat of which only two prototypes were built, but shows surprising resemblance to its predecessors.

It is by no way a complete guide to these vessels, but we have gathered as much information together as possible over the last few years – much has either been destroyed (individual boat records, Army and USAF records, also some company records) or lost over the years. There are many dead ends to the trail – I'm sure the information is out there in the Museums and Archives, but there seems to be a lack of knowledge as to what collections are held, and an automated reply to what-ever the question may be that sends you round and round in circles.

Thank goodness we found many good sources of first hand knowledge, Jean E. Buhler of the original design team at Miami Shipbuilding Corp who has advised me on many areas, and demands that if I write anything it be accurate, and not here-say. Other surviving builders, crews, and several museums who went out of their way to find some excellent pieces of information, records and photographs contributed. Plus of course many hours on the internet proved very useful with some of the surviving craft. Where possible I've contacted the owners of the surviving vessels to gather any information that they can supply regarding their vessel and it's past.

I was once told by "some-one in-the-know" that I was wasting my time, and that it had all been done before – well my answer to this person now is this – some areas of it have been covered, but the fact that much of the information I have gathered, although not complete – shows that only the surface has been skimmed. I have now been doing this project for six years, a lot of ink and paper has flown out from here, with about 50% dead-ends, however the many good replies from the rest show me that there's still a fair bit of "meat" still to be gathered before we can claim to have covered the subject thoroughly.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any relevant information to add, and photographs of these wonderful craft – as this is an on-going project. Special thanks must go to a whole host of people and organisations, all listed in the Acknowledgments Page, as they have been patient and extremely helpful. Special thanks must go to Phil Simons firstly for getting me interested in small craft, & for his help with survivor information – without his help this project would never have been started. Also of course Terry, who has helped put together this from our joint notes, and who's guidance and drawing skills have made this book possible.

DAVID LINLEY

Having caught the "bug" from David and the desire to include the "Miamis" as one of the monograph appendices to the RAF Marine Craft Directory, I set about helping with the research and covering areas that David had not covered in detail. We swapped notes and to a certain degree some photos, and from them I soon realised that a few profile drawings would be required to cover the different "types". My knowledge of the craft expanded exponentially and with guidance from David the few drawings soon reached the sixty or so in number and make up my real contribution to the project. All the profiles are drawn to the same scale of approx 1:132

In compiling the notes and references, I soon realised that the original intention to cover the 63ft, 85ft and 95ft all in ONE volume was not achievable and thus this is only the first part of two on the 63ft type alone. Some of the photographs are not necessarily of the best quality for reproduction, but the sources are many, and some important "finds" were from veterans who did not have the benefit of digital cameras whilst in the South Pacific during WWII.

The order of the chapters does follow the building of the various types and purely by coincidence and the fact that the printer limits us to around 200 pages for the binding and reasonable cost of the finished product, the Part One covers the WWII built boats. Thus Part Two will cover the post-war developments and the details of the numerous craft that did survive after the war to be used in various roles, and thus in the text there are several notes like "*see future chapter*". A loose sheet with proposed contents for Part Two is included with this book to allow the reader advance notification of our intentions.

TERRY HOLTHAM