

NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT VESSEL: USNS *Shoshone* (T-AO-151)



USNS *Maumee*, the first ship of the class and a sistership of the USNS *Shoshone*. Maritime Administration photograph.

Vessel History

The product tanker USNS *Shoshone* (AOT-151) was built by Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company of Chester, Pennsylvania, and was the third of four *Maumee*-class tankers. The *Maumee* class was the first of the Navy's new "super tankers," which were significantly larger than previous classes.¹ Sun Shipbuilding produced the plans and specifications for the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Ships. The ships were also built in accordance with commercial practice under the supervision of the Maritime Administration, which gave it the designation T5-S-12a.² In keeping with the Navy's naming system, the vessels were named for American rivers: USNS *Maumee* (T-AO-149); USNS *Potomac* (T-AO-150); USNS *Shoshone* (T-AO-151); and USNS *Yukon* (T-AO-152).

The ships were designed and built to operate in a non-commissioned status by the Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS),³ later the Military Sealift Command (MSC), with civilian crews

¹The era of "super-size" *commercial* tankers began in 1947 with the *Ulysses*, a 27,928 dwt (dead weight tonnage) tanker built by Welding Shipyards of Norfolk, Virginia. The *Ulysses* was the largest tanker in the world, approaching twice the size of its predecessors. In comparison, the *Shoshone* had a dwt of 26,940.

²This is the Maritime Administration's design classification. "T" signifies ship type, in this case a tanker, the "5" signifies the vessel's length, the "S" signifies machinery type, number of propellers, and under 12 passengers, and "12a" signifies the chronological design number and alteration, in other words version "a" of design 12.

³MSTS was a post-World War II combination of four predecessor government agencies that handled similar sealift functions. These included the Navy's Naval Transportation Service and Fleet Support Service, the Army Transport Service, and the War Shipping Administration of the United States Maritime Commission. In 1970, MSTS was renamed the Military Sealift Command (MSC).

working under contract. The ships were not designed for underway replenishment (refueling ships at sea). Rather, they were built to transport fuel oil, gasoline, and aviation fuel to American military forces overseas. *Maumee* was the first ship completed and was delivered to the Navy on December 1, 1956. *Shoshone* was launched on January 17, 1957 and placed in service in April 1957. The ship was designated AO-151 and assigned to the MSTS where it served from 1957-1984.

During its early years, MSTS contracted with private operators to fill its tanker tonnage requirements. However, by the mid-1950s, increased world demand for oil drove costs up and reduced the number of commercial ships available for charter. In response, a series of large modern tankers were built specifically for MSTS operation. *Shoshone* was one of those tankers and the ship supplied fuel to American military bases at home and abroad.

Shoshone operated out of fuel terminals in the Gulf of Mexico and supplied fuel to American bases in the Atlantic and Pacific. During its first year of operation the ship steamed 97,990 miles and transported 2,846,411 barrels of petroleum products. *Shoshone* transited both the Suez and Panama Canals and visited 54 ports in the Atlantic, Pacific, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, China Sea, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico.

In the summer of 1961, *Shoshone* and its sistership *Potomac*, supplied U.S. bases on Greenland's west coast. It was involved in similar operations in the Arctic in 1965 and 1969. *Shoshone* provided logistical support for operations in Vietnam by delivering fuel to locations in Asia; however, the ship apparently never visited the actual war zone.

During an active career of 27 years the *Shoshone* was involved in several mishaps. On April 27, 1961, a broken hose caused a spill of jet fuel in Tampa Bay, Florida that led to a temporary ban on oystering. On February 22, 1968, while docking at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the *Shoshone* collided with the destroyer USS *Newman Perry* (DD-883) causing substantial damage to that vessel, which was forced to suspend its training program. On October 10, 1980, another broken hose during routine transfer operations at Stockton, California spilled over 300,000 gallons of cargo causing a temporary shutdown of the port.

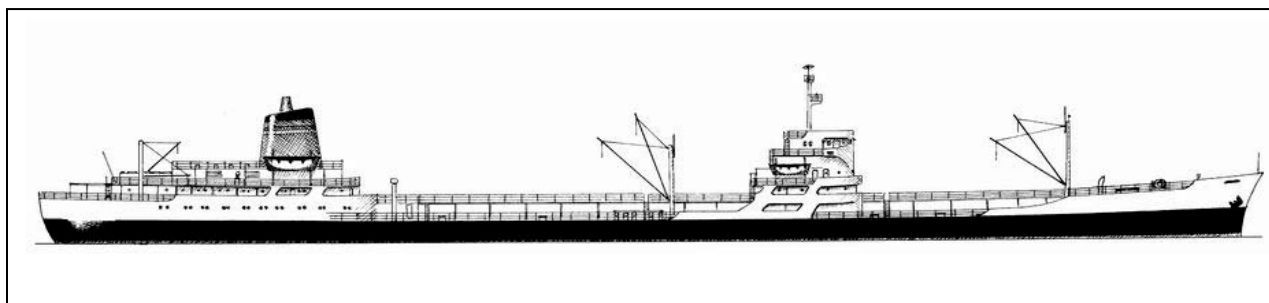
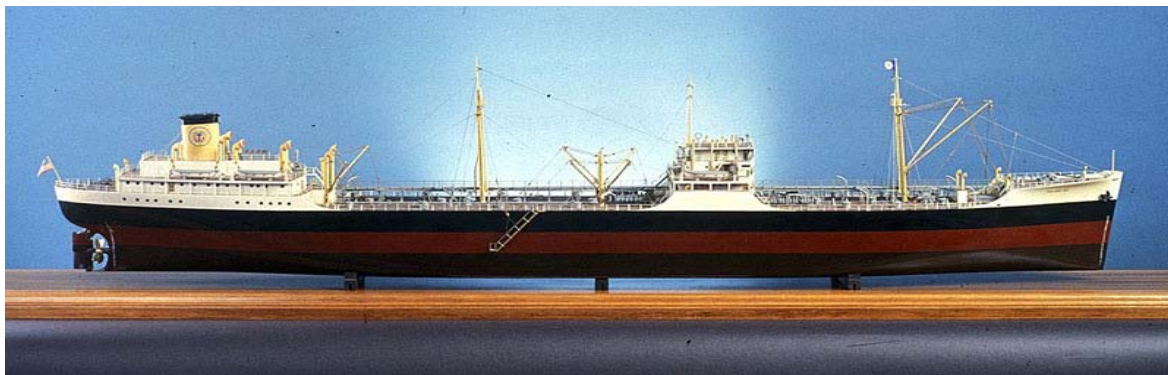
Shoshone's service with the MSTS and later the MSC, spanned nearly three decades. When larger capacity tankers became available the vessel was removed from MSC service and transferred to the Maritime Administration's National Defense Reserve Fleet (NDRF).

Maritime Administration

The NDRF was established under Section XI of the Merchant Ship Sales Act of 1946 to serve as a reserve of ships for national defense and national emergencies. A Ready Reserve Fleet (RRF) component was established in 1976. RRF vessels can be activated on short notice to provide rapid deployment of military equipment during an emergency. When activated, operational control of the ships is transferred from the Maritime Administration to the Navy's MSC. The RRF later became known as the Ready Reserve Force.

The *Shoshone* was placed at the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet in Benicia, California on February 10, 1984. In November 1990, the ship was moved to the Mare Island Naval Shipyard and upgraded to Ready Reserve status. In February 1991, MSC activated *Shoshone* for Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, but the activation was cancelled less than one month later. *Shoshone* was downgraded from the Ready Reserve on October 7, 1994. In 2001, *Shoshone* was towed from Suisun Bay to the Bay Ship & Yacht Shipyard in Richmond, California where the Office of Naval Research used the ship to test oil spill avoidance systems for single hull tankers. On October 1, 2004, the vessel was downgraded from retention status to non-retention status.

Prior to RRF operations, NDRF vessels supported emergency shipping requirements in seven wars and crises. During the Korean War, 540 vessels were activated to support military forces. A worldwide tonnage shortfall from 1951 to 1953 required over 600 ship activations to lift coal to Northern Europe and grain to India. Another tonnage shortfall following the Suez Canal closing in 1956 activated 223 cargo ships and 29 tankers from the NDRF. From 1955 through 1964, another 698 ships stored grain for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. During the Berlin crisis of 1961, 18 vessels were activated and remained in service until 1970. During the Vietnam War 172 vessels were activated. In August 1990, the RRF consisted of 96 ships, 78 of which were activated to support Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM. This was the first large-scale activation and employment of the RRF since it was separated from the NDRF. The vessels involved were roll-on/roll-off (Ro-Ro) vessels (which describe how cargo is handled), break-bulk cargo ships, tankers, and barge carriers.



Top: A model of a T2-SE-A1 tanker, the most common tanker design. Nearly 500 were built between 1940 and 1946. http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/collection/TR_313036.html.

Bottom: A drawing of a T5-S-12a tanker. The two designs share many similarities, such as the divided superstructure and multi-level deckhouse forward of amidships. However, the T5 design was nearly 100 feet longer, with a beam of 83.5 feet versus 68 feet, and was able to travel 18 knots versus 15 knots. http://drawings.usmaritimecommission.de/drawings_t5_s_12a_types.htm. Drawing by Karsten-Kunibert Krueger-Kopischke

Description/Principal Characteristics of Vessel

Type: T5-S-12a

Official Number: 986562

Builder: Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company of Chester, Pennsylvania

Year: 1957

Sister Ships: *Maumee, Potomac, Yukon*

Location: Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet, Benicia, California

Length (overall): 614.50'

Length (between perpendiculars): 590'

Beam: 83.5'

Draft (design): 32'

Depth at side: 42'

Depth at centerline: 43.75'

Deadweight: 26,940

Speed: 18 knots

Shoshone had the divided superstructure then standard for large tankers, with a multi-level deckhouse forward of amidships containing crew quarters and surmounted by the wheelhouse, and an aft deckhouse containing the upper machinery spaces and additional crew quarters. Accommodations were provided for a crew of 52. It was a single screw vessel powered by steam turbines manufactured by the Westinghouse Electric Corporation. The engines were

designed to produce 18,600 shaft horsepower for an operating speed of 18 knots.

For much of the 20th century the standard profile for oceangoing tankers was a divided superstructure with the navigating bridge and some living quarters nearly amidships with the upper machinery spaces and remaining living quarters at the stern. The *Shoshone* and its three sisterships were built with this configuration. Soon after the construction of this class in the late 1950s, tankers were completed with a new profile that included a tall unified superstructure at the stern. This design became standard and has remained so to the present day.

Statement of Significance

The *Maumee* class was the first of the Navy's new "super tankers," significantly larger than previous classes. It was also the first class of ships built specifically for MSTC service. However, these tankers were similar to the many commercial tankers being constructed domestically during the same era. From a naval architectural standpoint, they were not significant.

Integrity of Characteristics/Features

The vessel was originally constructed in 1957 and did not undergo any substantial modifications during its service life. The vessel retains its historical integrity, being substantially unchanged from original construction. All (or most) salient design features of structure, machinery, and equipment are substantially intact. The vessel's physical integrity is slightly degraded, and the vessel's overall condition is fair. *Shoshone* currently holds a large amount of oil.

National Register Eligibility Statement

The *Shoshone* is an example of a standard design tanker built to provide transportation and storage of bulk petroleum products for the U.S. military. The class does not represent a revolutionary design, other than the fact that it was considerably larger than its predecessors and therefore able to transport greater quantities of fuel. It did not influence the design of future tanker classes. In fact, by the mid-to-late 1960s, most new tankers featured all-aft superstructures and machinery, replacing the traditional divided superstructure profile that had been popular since the early twentieth century. Therefore, *Shoshone* does not possess the significant historical or technological characteristics necessary for listing. In regard to Criteria A and B, it did support military operations during the Vietnam War; however nothing extraordinary was uncovered that would support eligibility based on Criteria A for this service. Moreover, *Shoshone* is not associated with significant persons in our past history.

Date: March 11, 2010

Determination: NOT ELIGIBLE

Sources

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Internet Sites

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<https://pmars.marad.dot.gov/detail.asp?Ship=4557>