

Bedloe, 1927



WSC-128, ex-*ANTIETAM*
Call sign: NRLC

Builder: American Brown Boveri Electric Corp., Camden, New Jersey
Commissioned: 25 July 1927
Decommissioned: N/A
Disposition: Lost at sea
Length: 125-feet
Beam: 23' 6"
Draft: 7' 6"
Displacement: 232 tons
Propulsion: 2 x 6-cylinder 300-HP diesel engines
Performance:
 Max: 13 knots, 2,500 mile range
 Economic: 8.0 knots, 3,500 mile range
Complement: 22 (1938); 38 (1944)
Armament:
 1927: 1 x 3"/27
 1941: 1 x 3"/23; 2 x depth charge tracks and 10 depth charges

Class History:

The *Active*-class of vessels was one of the most useful and long- lasting in Coast Guard service with 16 cutters still in use in the 1960's. The last to be decommissioned from active service was the *Morris* in 1970; the last in actual service was the *Cuyahoga*, which sank after an accidental

collision in 1978. They were designed for trailing the "mother ships" along the outer line of patrol during Prohibition. They were constructed at a cost of \$63,173 each. They gained a reputation for durability that was only enhanced by their re-engining in the late 1930's; their original 6-cylinder diesels were replaced by significantly more powerful 8-cylinder units that used the original engine beds and gave the vessels 3 additional knots. All served in World War II, but two, the *Jackson* and *Bedloe*, were lost in a storm in 1944. Ten were refitted as buoy tenders during the war and reverted to patrol work afterward.

Cutter History

Launched and commissioned as *Antietam*, she was first stationed in Boston, where she served out of until 1935. She was assigned to law enforcement and search and rescue duties and also broke ice when needed. She then transferred to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and saw service on the Great Lakes. She was sent to Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1940 where her armament was upgraded at the plant of Tietjen & Lang. She was assigned to the EASTSEAFRON (Eastern Sea Frontier) and was stationed out of Stapleton, Staten Island, where she saw service as a convoy escort vessel along the eastern seaboard.

On 9 March 1942 she rescued 16 survivors of the torpedoed tanker *Gulftrade*. She was renamed the *Bedloe* on 1 June 1943 and was lost, along with her sister cutter *Jackson*, while going to the assistance of a merchant vessel in the powerful hurricane off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, on 14 September 1944. Twenty-six of her crew perished while 12 survivors were rescued.

CGC's BEDLOE AND JACKSON

TWO CUTTERS FOUNDER OFF CAPE HATTERAS

Two Coast Guard cutters the CGS's BEDLOE (ex-ANTIETAM) and JACKSON, foundered in heavy weather off Cape Hatteras on 14 September, 1944. The cutters had gone to the assistance of a Liberty Ship which had been torpedoed off the North Carolina coast and almost driven ashore in a later hurricane but she had weathered both blows and was towed to Norfolk with no casualties among her 40 man crew and only slight damage to her cargo. The two cutters were each 125 feet in length and of 220 tons each. The commanding officer of the BEDLOE was Lt. A. S. Hess, and of the JACKSON, Lt. (jg) N. D. Call. The BEDLOE had 5 officers and 33 men on board when sunk, of whom 2 officers and 24 men were lost. The JACKSON had 5 officers and 36 men on board and 2 officers and 19 men were lost.

LIFE RAFTS SPOTTED BY PLANES

Twelve survivors from the BEDLOE and nineteen from the JACKSON were spotted on life rafts, those from the BEDLOE being spotted by a patrol plane and picked up an hour later by a Navy minesweeper. Those from the JACKSON were spotted by a Coast Guard plane from Elizabeth City, N. C., and picked up by a 36 foot cutter from the Oregon Inlet Lifeboat Station, 15 miles away. The former had been in the water 51 hours and the latter 58 hours. The Coast Guard planes landed in the swells, a plane next to each liferaft, and crew members dived into the sea and hauled semi-conscious men onto the wings of the tossing planes, where first aid was administered. A Navy blimp dropped emergency rations. Guided by PBM's and another Navy blimp, the Coast Guard cutter made directly for the JACKSON's survivors and quickly hauled them aboard. Near the shore the men were transferred aboard a Navy vessel, where they were treated by a physician until Coast Guard PBM's landed and flew them to Norfolk for more hospitalization. An intensive search was instituted for the 48 officers and men reported missing in the twin disaster, including the 23 year old skipper of the JACKSON, Lt. (jg) N. O. Call.

CREWS OF EACH CUTTER LOOKED TO OTHER FOR RESCUE

Survivors said 37 officers and men originally clung to the three *Jackson* rafts, but 17 died during the second night from exposure and exhaustion. Added to the torment of parched throats, crowded rafts and heavy seas during their 58 hour vigil were sharks and "Portuguese men-of-war," multi-tailed marine pests whose stingers continually lashed the bodies of the storm-tossed men. Ironically enough, crew members of each vessel pinned their hopes on rescue by the other, unaware of the like doom of each ship. Lt. Hess of the *Bedloe* explained: "Skippers often think alike. I was trying to work our way out to sea a bit to avoid the heavy swell hitting near the shore and I figured the *Jackson* was doing likewise and would be somewhere in the vicinity."

BEDLOE GOES UNDER

Struck four times by the towering waves, the *Bedloe* tossed like a matchstick in the ocean before going down. All 38 officers and crew men safely abandoned ship and at least 30 were able to obtain a hold on the liferafts. However, the strain of fighting the hurricane aboard, plus the ordeal of hanging to liferafts for 51 hours, proved too much for most of the men and only 12 were able to hang on until rescued. One man slid under the water only minutes before the rescue craft came into sight.

END OF THE JACKSON

Borne to the top of a huge swell, the *Jackson* was struck by two swells and rolled over until the mast dipped water. As the swells subsided, the ship righted and was hit by another high sea and turned on her side a second time. Struggling out of that, the vessel was carried high by a third sea. It seemed then, survivors said, that she hung in mid-air for seconds; then the wind seized her, turned her on her side and completely over. She disappeared under a huge wave. Next day, two of the survivors had tried to swim ashore which they thought was 10 miles away. After swimming about 3 hours they realized they were making little headway and decided to return. Turning back, one of them saw a shark about 30 feet away headed for the other. The shark was more than six feet long but passed him without harm.

"WE MADE IT"

William W. McCreedy, boatswain's mate 1/c from the Oregon inlet Lifeboat Station, who assisted in the rescue of the survivors from the *Jackson* said the first thing he saw was a man doubled up in a small raft, his eyes resembling "a couple of blue dots in a beefsteak." "He flashed a beautiful smile that couldn't be missed," McCreedy continued, "I felt I had looked at something a man sees once in a lifetime -- sort of thought I had come to the edge of heaven. Then, as though his last will to fight had been lost when he saw us, slumped into the water. The radioman grabbed him and held him in the raft. I went overboard to help and the three of us dragged the r aft down. The unconscious man's foot was twisted in the lines, but I cut him free and we put him in the boat." Just before reaching shore, the man reached, stroked McCreedy's face and mumbled "We made it." Then he died.

***Bedloe* casualties:**

MISSING

NESENGER, William T. Jr., ENS
BAUER, Roderick John, CBM
CLEMENTS, Robert Wheeler, MoMM3c

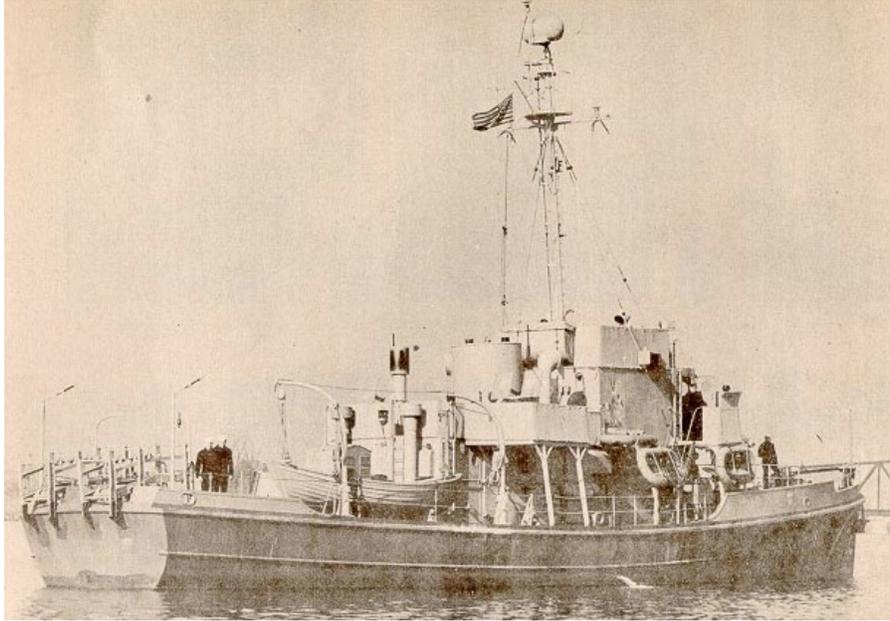
CUNTAN, George, Sea1c
ENOCH, Paul Clark, MoMM2c
GILL, David Ernest, Sea1c
GRIMES, Mavis E., Sea2c
HERBST, George Edward, SoMM2c
JOHNSON, David, SC2c
LEAR, Jack, SoM2c
LINEK, Thomas Joseph, Jr., MoMM2c
LOFTON, James Henderson, Sea1c
MANTANI, Rudolph, RM2c
McCusker, Leo Joseph, Jr., Sea1c
MULHERN, Ray Joseph, Jr., Sea1c
MYLES, Hugh L., Sr., Sea1c
POGORZELSKI, Charles Julius, RM3c
RILEY, Daniel Webster, St1c
TILL, Donald, MoMM2c
VISSMAN, Paul Louis, Sp3c
WEBER, Thomas Jay, Cox
WILDUNG, Lea William RT3c

BODIES RECOVERED

PETERS, Maurice, ENS
BERGREN, Ernest, GM3c
FRANZINA, Robert Carl, Sea1c
VERNIER, Norman Robert, Sea2c



USCGC *Bedloe*, circa 1930.
Photographer unknown.



USCGC *Bedloe*, circa 1944.

Image is a print photo that was in the Lost Cutters section of the Coast Guard at War series (Volume 8), p. 14.

Sources:

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Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

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