

U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Absecon, 1949



WHEC-374 **Radio call sign: NBNP**

Absecon was named for an inlet north of Atlantic City, NJ.

Builder: Lake Washington Shipyards, Houghton, WA

Commissioned: 28 Jan 1943 (USN)
May 1949 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 15 Jul 1972

Disposition: Transferred to South Vietnam

Length: 311'7" overall; 299'11" between perpendiculars

Navigation Draft: 13'1" max (1964)

Beam: 41' 3/4" max

Displacement: 2,610 tons full load (1970)

Main Engines: Fairbanks-Morse geared diesels

SHP: 6,080

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.3 kts, 10,138-mi radius (1966)

Performance, Economic: 10.0 kts, 20,000-mi radius (1966)

Complement: 10 officers, 3 warrants, 138 men (1964)

Electronics: Radar: SPS-23, SPS-29A (1964)

Sonar: SQS-1

Armament: 1 x 5"/38; 6 x .50 caliber machine guns; 2 x 81 mm mortars; Mark 52.3 director; Mark 26-4 fire control radar; all ASW equipment removed as per SHIPALT 311-A-258 (1970).

Class History:

The *Casco* class ships were built as small seaplane tenders by the US Navy. They were designed to operate out of small harbors and atolls and had a shallow draft. The fact that the class was very seaworthy, had good habitability, and long range made them well suited to ocean-station duty. In fact, an assessment made by the Coast Guard on the suitability of these vessels for Coast Guard service noted:

"The workmanship on the vessel is generally quite superior to that observed on other vessels constructed during the war. The vessel has ample space for stores, living accommodations, ships, offices and recreational facilities. The main engine system is excellent. . . . The performance of the vessel in moderate to heavy seas is definitely superior to that of any other cutter. This vessel can be operated at higher speed without storm damage than other Coast Guard vessels." [Memo, CDR W. C. Hogan, Commanding Officer, CGC MC CULLOCH to Commandant "SUBJ; CGC MC CULLOCH, Suitability [sic] for use as CG Cutter.", 12 February 1947; copy in 311-Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.]

Once they were accepted into Coast Guard service, a number of changes were made in these ships to prepare them for ocean-station duty. A balloon shelter was added aft; there were spaces devoted to oceanographic equipment and a hydrographic winch as well as an oceanographic winch were added.

See *DANFS* for naval service.

Cutter History:

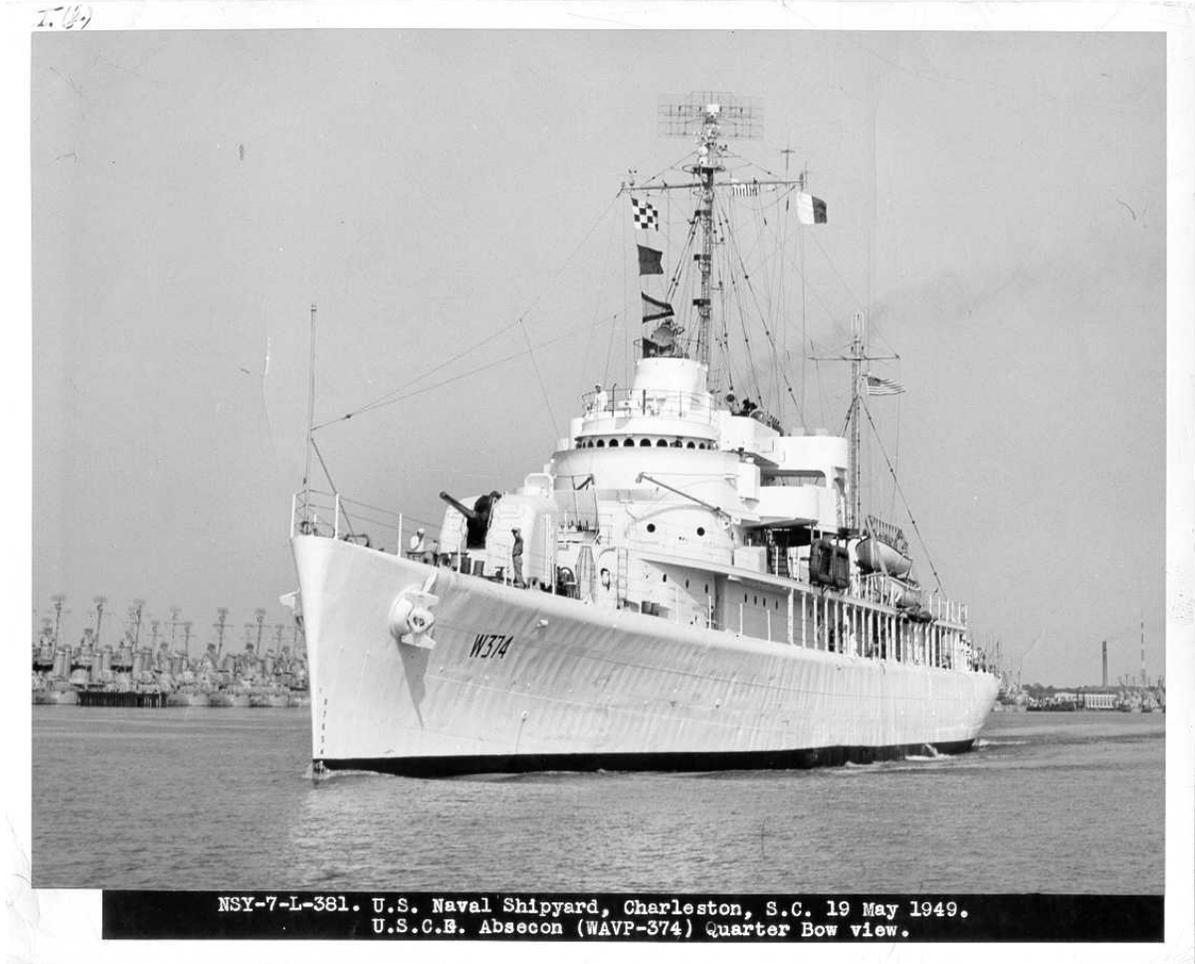
Absecon was stationed in Norfolk, VA from 1949 to 1972. On 5 March 1955, medical assistance was rendered to a cadet on the Swedish training ship *Falken* en route to Bermuda. In late September 1957, the *Absecon* coordinated a nine-day search in which 60 M/Vs of 13 nations participated seeking the 87-man crew of the German sail-training barque *Pamir* east-northeast of Bermuda. 6 survivors were recovered, one by the *Absecon* and five by the U.S. M/V *Saxon*.

In 1960 and 1962, the *Absecon* participated in a cadet practice cruises to Canada, Europe, and Bermuda. The ship was damaged by heavy seas on 7 March 1962 while proceeding to sea from Norfolk, VA to assist M/Vs during a storm. On 13 September 1963, the *Absecon* rescued the Third Engineer of the German M/V *Freiberg* midway between Bermuda and the Azores after he had fallen overboard and remained in the water for 17 hours.

From 20 Jul 1963 through 23 July, the cutter stood by the disabled M/V *Seven Seas* in the mid-Atlantic and escorted the ship to St. John's, Newfoundland. In February 1966, the *Absecon* stood by the disabled British M/V *Parthia* while waiting for a commercial tug. On 13 November 1969, a crewman of M/V *Morgenstern* was medevaced in the mid-Atlantic.

The Coast Guard decommissioned the *Absecon* on 9 May 1972 and returned her to the Navy. She was struck from the Naval Register and transferred to South Vietnam where she was commissioned as the *Tham Ngu Lao* (HQ-15) on 15 July 1972. She was seized by the North Vietnamese when the South fell in 1975. The North Vietnamese gave her the hull number HQ-1 but did not apparently name her. She was refitted with 2 or possibly four SS-N-2 launchers. As of 1991, the ship was still thought to be in service of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Photographs:

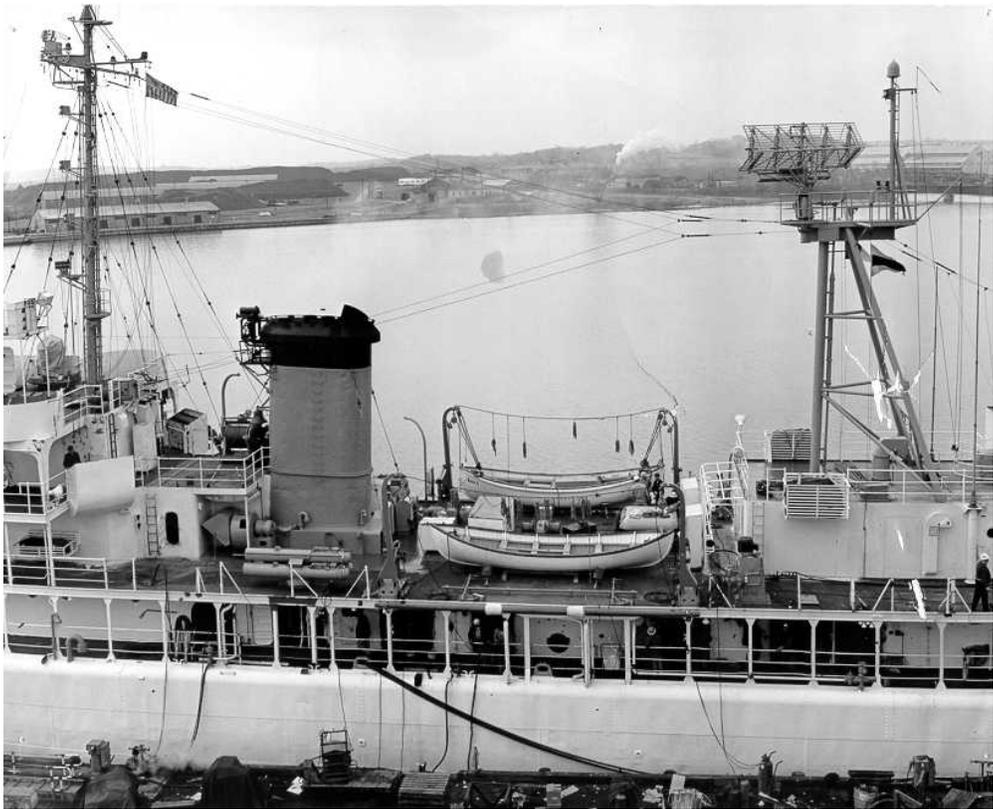




January, 1967 relieving CGC *Spencer* on Ocean Station *Echo*.



27 December 1969





Sources:

Abescon, Cutter History File, USCG Historian's Office

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. I (1959), p. 6.

"Listings: AVP's"; compiled and written by LCDR J. P. Smith, USCGR, copy in 311' Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.

Memo, CDR W. C. Hogan, Commanding Officer, CGC MC CULLOCH to Commandant "SUBJ; CGC MC CULLOCH, Sutiability [sic] for use as CG Cutter.", 12 February 1947; copy in 311-Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.

Robert Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), pp. 10-16.

Ship's Characteristics Card: USCGC Absecon, 22 November 1966.

