

Acushnet, 1946

WMEC -167/ WAGO-167/ WAT-167/ ARS-9
ex-*Shackle*



Motto: *Juvate, Servate, Confirmate*- "Help, Save, Strengthen"

Call Sign: NNHA

Nicknames: "A" Team of Alaskan Fisheries; "Mighty Acu"; "Squishnut"; "Crush-nuts"; "NOAAs ARK" (due to the support for NOAA's weather ops); "Mighty A"; "Never Never Home Again" (a take-off on its call sign)

USCG Historian's Office acknowledges the contributions of LT Kirk Fistick, USCG, in the construction of this ship's history website

Acushnet: a river in Massachusetts

Builder: Basalt Rock Company, Napa, California

Keel Laid: 26 October 1942

Launched: 1 April 1943

Sponsor: Mrs. Walker Cochran

Commissioned: 5 February 1944 (USN); 23 August 1946 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 29 June 1946 (USN); 11 March 2011

Length: 213' 6"

Beam: 40' 8"

Draft: 13' 11"

Displacement: 1,756 tons

Propulsion: 4 diesels; 3,030 BHP; twin propellers

Performance: Max: 14.6 knots Economic: 10.3 knots; 13,700 mile range

Complement: 120 (1944); 76 (1964); 80 (1986)

Armament: 4 x 40mm (1944)

Electronics: Radar: OS-8E (1964) Sonar: none (1964)

Design:

The *Diver*-class ships were designed as rescue and salvage ships for the US Navy.

Cutter History:

USS *Shackle* was laid down on 26 October 1942 by the Basalt Rock Co., Napa, California; launched on 1 April 1943; sponsored by Mrs. Walker Cochran; and commissioned on 5 February 1944, Lieutenant Charles G. Jenkins, Jr., in command. At the time of its building, the country was at war and in need of more naval vessels. As a result of this necessity, three ships, identified only as "naval auxiliaries" were constructed. The project took less than a year to complete and would become fleet rescue and salvage vessels serving in the Pacific Theater. These vessels would all later become Coast Guard cutters.

Shackle's first station was at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, where she served as a salvage ship in the West Pacific throughout the remainder of WWII. *Shackle's* first year was spent completing extensive salvage assignments clearing wreckage in the channels at Midway Island and Pearl Harbor. The vessel spent the rest of the year in Guam, Eniwetok, Tinian and Saipan.

On 15 February 1945, *Shackle* sailed for the invasion of Iwo Jima where it successfully completed over 44 diving and salvage assignments. One of these was the battle repair of the USS *Terry* which was hit by a Japanese shore battery. During March 1945, *Shackle* served as a supporting unit for the Okinawa invasion. Between D-Day (1 April 1945) and 20 September 1945, the ship completed 55 salvage and rescue operations on larger naval craft damaged by kamikaze attacks. There were 108 general alarms during the period.

Shackle was also assigned to mine sweeping operations in the East China Sea where over 200 enemy mines of all types were sunk or destroyed. *Shackle* also cleared the vital docking area of the wreckage of sunken Japanese cable laying ship at Yokosuka Naval Base, Tokyo Bay, Japan. During all of these operations the *Shackle* suffered no damage or casualties. As part of her service in the Pacific Theater, *Shackle* received three WWII battle stars, the WWII Victory Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, the American Campaign Medal, and the Navy Occupation Service Medal.

Decommissioned by the United States Navy at the end of World War II, along with her sister ships USS *Seize* and USS *Escape*, she was quickly transferred to the United States Coast Guard. She remained at San Diego, California, until ordered to San Francisco, California, where, on 29 June, she was decommissioned and transferred to the Coast Guard. First homeported at Portland, Maine as a Coast Guard tug, and renamed USCGC *Acushnet* (WAT-167), she earned a sound reputation as a dependable friend to fishermen and boaters in distress.

While in Portland, Maine *Acushnet* became a friend to the maritime community with her search-and-rescue endeavors. While in Maine, *Acushnet* not only served as a vessel for SAR, but also as part of the International Ice Patrol. *Acushnet* and her role in the International Ice patrol was featured in the 22 April 1957 edition of Life Magazine. Between 1946 and 1959, *Acushnet* responded to a major fire in Bar Harbor, Maine salvaged a vessel that ran aground in the Kennebec River and assisted two tankers that broke in half during a violent storm.

On 18 February 1952, *Acushnet* participated in what is listed as the ten most significant Coast Guard rescues. Two tankers, SS *Pendleton* and SS *Fort Mercer*, split in two in a fierce storm off Cape Cod, and *Acushnet* took 18 men off the stern of the *Fort Mercer* in heavy seas. The ships collided twice and the merchant seamen jumped to the safety of the *Acushnet's* fantail.

In 1950 *Acushnet* became active in the International Ice Patrol and spent a total of seven patrol months sharing that responsibility with the cutters *Androscoggin* and *Evergreen*. *Acushnet's* salvage gear was removed in late 1959 and replaced with search-and-rescue gear. From 1960 to 1968 *Acushnet* completed four towing missions for over 950 miles, assisted a vessel that broke in two, escorted four disabled vessels and assisted in two medevacs. A few of *Acushnet's* more noteworthy cases during that time frame include the following: in 1960, it salvaged the 300-ton USCGC *General Greene* which had been driven one hundred yards ashore in high winds. One of her more dramatic cases in Portland included the rescue of the entire crew of ten people from a disabled seagoing dredge, the *Cartagena*, which was adrift in 30-foot seas and 75-knot winds 200 nm off of Cape Cod on Christmas Day, 1961. In May 1963 *Acushnet* salvaged a crashed Coast Guard helicopter 600 yards off Duxbury Beach, Massachusetts.

The fall of 1967 took *Acushnet* south, where the cutter rescued a Cuban refugee from a distressed 17 foot pleasure craft 50 nm south of Key West, Florida. Re-designated an oceanographic ship, WAGO-167, on 8 July 1968 and assigned to oceanographic, meteorological, and polar operations, she commenced duties as a research support ship. During fiscal year 1970, she underwent conversion during which alterations were made to her hull and scientific equipment, and research and storage spaces were added at a shipyard in San Diego, California. As part of the National Data Buoy Project of NOAA *Acushnet* spent three years attached to the Office of Naval Research and the Scripps Oceanographic Institute in San Diego, California. Her primary mission on eleven extended deployments through June 1971, the cutter aided in positioning buoys. While serving as a WAGO, *Acushnet* assisted in only one rescue case a medevac in 1970.

In July 1971 *Acushnet* transferred to the Gulf Coast; and, based at Gulfport, Mississippi, she continued her oceanographic work with the National Data Buoy Center, this time aiding the Mississippi Test Facility. On 24 August 1971 *Acushnet*, affectionately known to the crew a "NOAA's Ark", arrived in Gulfport with 64 crew and a 100-ton buoy that was towed from San Diego as its first new support assignment.

Once established in Gulfport, *Acushnet* continued to play a diverse and important role in the search-and-rescue mission. In the fall of 1973 the cutter played a major role in the *Key Largo* fire south of New Orleans opposite the town of Phoenix. *Acushnet* was again called to respond after a collision on the Mississippi river. *Acushnet* and the cutter *Dependable* were presented the Coast Guard Unit Commendation for extinguishing a fire on the tanker *Key Trader* after it collided with another vessel, the Norwegian ore ship *Baune*, and burst into flames in the river.

Between the years 1975 and 1978, *Acushnet* conducted search-and-rescue research of the Gulf of Mexico shelf area, conducted the first marriage on-board a Coast Guard vessel since the mid-19th century, and made her first drug seizure of 18 tons of marijuana and 21 smugglers.

In late 1978 the cutter embarked on a patrol to participate in the Global Weather Experiment, 140-nation effort to gather worldwide weather information. In 82 days *Acushnet* covered over 18,000 miles from Peru to New Zealand. For this operation *Acushnet* received the Meritorious Unit Commendation. Additionally in 1978, *Acushnet* was designated a Medium Endurance Cutter (WMEC 167) and was formally assigned law enforcement and search-and-rescue missions.

In August–September 1979, Mobile, Alabama was hit by Hurricane Frederick while *Acushnet* was in drydock there. The cutter, however, sustained no damage. Her first patrol out of drydock was immediately canceled and *Acushnet* was sent to pick up survivors of a collision between an oil tanker and a merchant vessel.

From 17 May to 6 June 1980, *Acushnet* participated in the largest immigration crisis in the history of the Coast Guard, the Mariel Boat Lift from Cuba. The cutter escorted the vessel *Red Diamond* with 800 refugees into Key West. In addition, she assisted 35 boats, aided 120 refugees directly, and fueled two 41-foot Coast Guard boats. For her efforts, the cutter received the Humanitarian Service Award. During its time in Gulfport, *Acushnet* interdicted nearly 200 Cuban and Haitian refugees, retrieving some of them from shark-infested waters.

Drug interdiction during the rest of the 80s proved to be successful. In 1980, *Acushnet* seized 52 tons of marijuana. Between September and November of the same year, *Acushnet* confiscated marijuana on 7 vessels totaling a seizure of over 76 tons. Between 1987 and 1989 *Acushnet* had yet two more seizures of marijuana and hashish oil valued at over 1.5 million.

Acushnet moved to Eureka, California in July 1990. During a September patrol, a lookout spotted floating objects in the water. These "objects" were the three crew members of the fishing boat *Miss Patty*, which had capsized before it could radio for help. During Operation Sandtrap in July 1991, *Acushnet* intercepted the sailing vessel *Malekula* carrying twelve tons of hashish from Indochina. The cutter pulled 32 bales from the burning and sinking *Malekula*, despite efforts by smugglers to scuttle the sailboat.

In October 1991, *Acushnet* made her first trip to the waters of Alaska. The cutter was diverted for two weeks to coordinate anti-pollution efforts when the 518-foot *Hyundai No. 12* ran hard aground near the Shumagin Islands. She also responded to a mayday call made by the fishing vessel *Tonquin* in the Gulf of Alaska, rescuing one man out of a five man crew from stormy and frigid waters during a five-day search. The cutter coordinated a search involving several fishing boats and a tanker in the area. As a result, three additional crew members were rescued.

As the majority of *Acushnet's* patrols were Alaska Patrols, she was moved to Ketchikan, Alaska in 1998. This considerably shortened her transit time to the Bering Sea. There she was employed in law enforcement, fisheries, and search and rescue missions.

On 23 February 2007 *Acushnet* was designated as the "oldest commissioned cutter" in the fleet following the decommissioning of USCGC *Storis*. As such, she was designated "Queen of the Fleet" and authorized to display gold hull numerals to demonstrate this distinction. She was scheduled for decommissioning in late 2008. The 2008 decommissioning was canceled and *Acushnet* continued to conduct patrols in Alaska until March 2011.

On 11 March 2011 *Acushnet* was decommissioned and retired from active duty after more than 67 years of service. USCGC *Smilax* succeeded *Acushnet* as the Coast Guard's oldest commissioned cutter. She was subsequently auctioned as surplus property by the General Services Administration. The cutter was purchased for \$600,825 by Mr. Vernon Officer of Eules VA on 16 March 2011.

Decorations:

Presidential Unit Citation
Secretary of Transportation Outstanding Unit Award
2 Coast Guard Unit Commendations
6 Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendations
Coast Guard E Ribbon
Coast Guard Bicentennial Unit Commendation
American Campaign Medal
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal
World War II Victory Medal
Navy Occupation Service Medal
4 National Defense Service Medals
Global War on Terrorism Service Medal
2 Humanitarian Service Medals
Transportation 9-11 Ribbon
2 Special Operations Service Ribbons
27 Marijuana Seizures

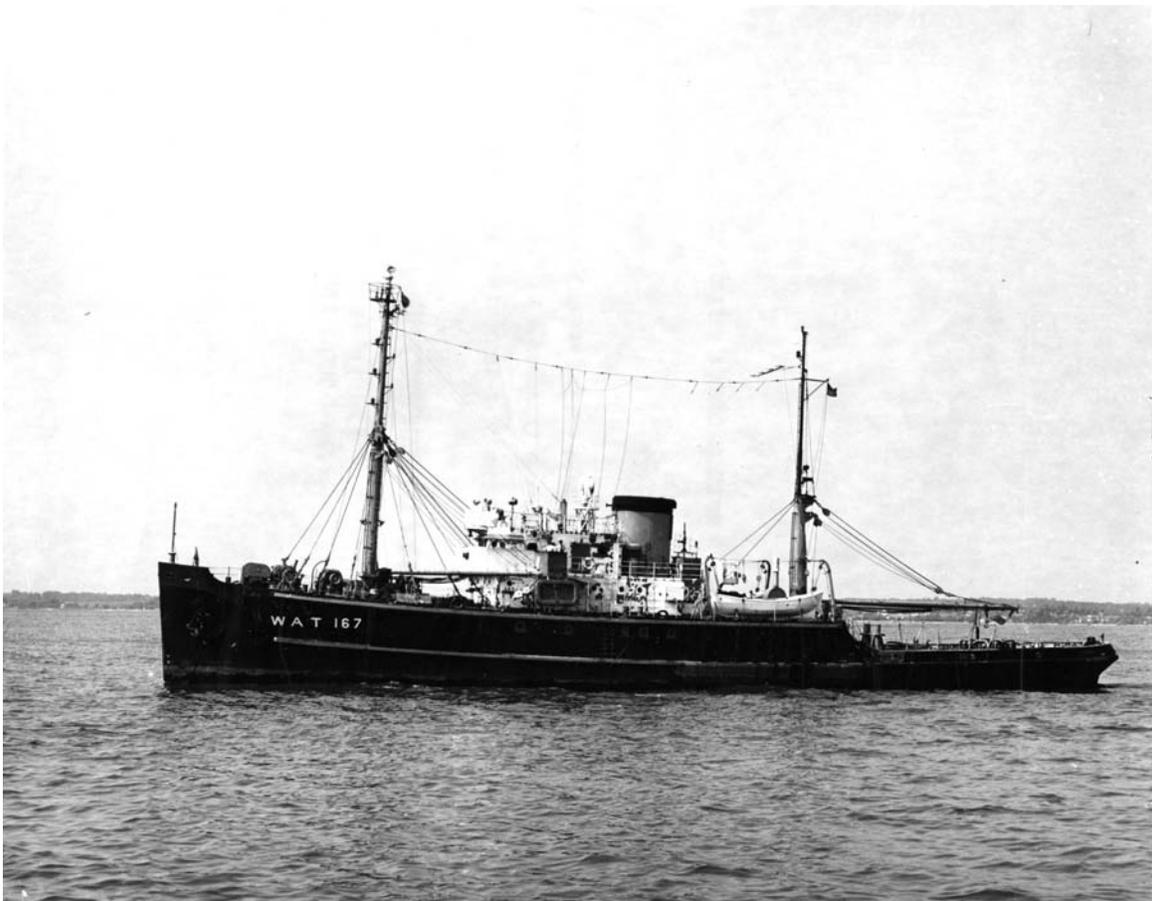
**USCGC *Acushnet* (WMEC-167)
COMMANDING OFFICERS**

1946-1949	CDR F.K. Johnson
1950-1952	CDR John M. Joseph
1952-1955	CDR N.D. Maclellan
1955-1957	LCDR Paul A. Lutz
1957-1959	LCDR Harold F. Lynch
1959-1961	CDR Albert A. Heckman
1961-1963	CDR Neal O. Westfall
1963-1965	CDR B.E. Kolkhorst
1965-1966	Norman P. Ensrud
1966-1969	CDR Robert J. Knapp
1969-1971	CDR Arthur G. Morrison
1971-1973	Donald D. Garnett
1973-1975	CDR William M. Flaners
1975-1977	CDR Charles W. Busby
1977-1979	CDR Alan C. Peck
1979-1981	CDR Gary C. Nelson
1981-1983	CDR Anthony R. Carbone
1983-1985	CDR Charles S. Park
1985-1987	CDR Douglas D. Lundberg
1997-1999	CDR Lawrence C. Vose
1999-2001	CAPT Richard J. Preston
2001-2003	CAPT Michael D. Inman
2003-2005	CAPT Paul Wiedenhoeft
2005-2007	CDR Marc D. Stegman
2007-2009	CDR Andrew M. Sugimoto
2009-2011	CAPT Mark Frankford

Images:



Ship's Crest



USCGC *Acushnet* in 1947



USCGC *Acushnet* in 1947



USCGC *Acushnet* on International Ice Patrol



USCGC Acushnet in 1957



USCGC Acushnet in 1961



USCGC *Acushnet* in 1971



USCGC *Acushnet*, date and location not identified.



USCGC *Acushnet* in 2005



USCGC *Acushnet* approaching Juneau in 2005



USCGC *Storis* (left) and USCG *Acushnet*



USCGC *Acushnet* Decommissioning- 11 March 2011

Sources:

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Washington, DC: USGPO.

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990.

