



United States Coast Guard
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Coast Guard History Program
Northwind, 1945

WAG / WAGB-282 Call Sign: NRFJ



Builder: Western Pipe & Steel Co., Los Angeles, CA

Builder's Number: CG-184

Cost: \$9,880,037

Length: 269' oa

Beam: 63' 10" mb

Draft: 29' 1" max

Displacement: 6,515 tons (1945)

Keel Laid: 10 July 1944

Launched: 25 February 1945

Commissioned: 28 July 1945

Decommissioned: 20 January 1989

Status: Eventually sold for scrap to International Shipbreakers, Brownsville, Texas after first being assigned to the James River Reserve Fleet for a number of years.

Propulsion: 6 Fairbanks Morse 10-cylinder diesels driving 6 Westinghouse DC generators which in turn drove 3 electric motors; 12,000 SHP; two propellers aft; one propeller forward.

Re-engined with Enterprise diesels in 1974-1975

Performance: Top speed: 13.4 knots (1967) Economic speed: 11.6 knots; 32,485 mile range.

Complement: 12 officers, 2 warrants, 205 men (1967)

Electronics: Radar: SA-2; SL-1 (1945) Fire Control Radar: MK-26 (1945) Sonar: QCJ-8 (1945)

Armament: 4 x 5"/38 (twin mounts); 12 x 40mm/60 (quad mounts); 6 x 20mm/80 (single mounts); 2 x depth charge tracks; 6 x "K" guns; 1 Hedgehog

Class History:

The "Wind" Class final design--modeled after the Swedish icebreaker *Ymer*--was prepared by Gibbs & Cox of New York after initial design work by LCDR Edward Thiele, USCG (later the Coast Guard's Engineer-in-Chief) who had obtained details of foreign icebreakers while vacationing in Europe before the war. The *Wind*-class of icebreakers measured 269 feet in length, 63'6" in beam and displaced 6,500 tons. The Coast Guard contracted for five vessels of the class in November 1941 to fulfill the need to access military bases in Greenland that would be inaccessible during most of the year without the use of heavy icebreakers. Eventually, the Coast Guard operated seven *Wind*-class icebreakers.

The design of the vessels included a bow propeller used to clear the hull from ice and dredge broken ice forward. The bow propeller was not typically used as a means for propulsion unless the vessel needed to back out of surrounding ice. The vessels also had a diesel electric power-plant, the most compact, economical, and powerful propulsion system available at the time. Additionally, while the diesels provide the power supply, there was a division between these diesels and the motors, which supplied power to the shafts. The rotating electric motors could handle the shocks and extreme power-to-speed ratios necessary for ice operations.

The close spaced frames and careful design of the trusses and planting, along with the thick, welded hull plating made the hulls of the *Wind*-class unprecedented in strength and structural integrity. The hull also had compressed cork insulation, strengthened steering apparatus, and a padded notch at the stern to nestle the bow of any vessel being towed through ice. Also the design included fore, aft,

and side heeling tanks with pumps to aid in water movement within the vessel to rock the ship free from ice buildup. The specifications for construction were so extensive that the Western Pipe and Steel Company of Los Angeles was the only builder to submit a bid. They were originally designed to be equipped with a fixed wing amphibious aircraft.

Cutter History:

USCGC *Northwind* was launched on 25 February 1945 and commissioned 28 July 1945. As such, the cutter did not see any real service before the end of World War II. From 1945 to 1973 *Northwind* was stationed at Seattle, WA and used for polar ice operations and Bering Sea Patrol. During 1945 and 1946 *Northwind* was temporarily stationed at Boston, MA to participate in special US Navy operations. During 1946 and 1947 *Northwind* participated in Antarctic Operation High Jump. During May to August 1948 *Northwind* conducted Bering Sea Patrol. This was the first patrol in eight years. During 1953 *Northwind* conducted a Bering Sea Patrol. From 12 July-29 September 1954 *Northwind* participated in the U.S.-Canadian Beaufort Sea Exploration. From February to April 1955 *Northwind* conducted a Bering Sea scientific expedition. During July-September 1955 *Northwind* supported Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line operations. From November 1956 through April 1957 *Northwind* participated in Operation Deep Freeze to the Antarctic. During 5-25 July 1962 *Northwind* conducted oceanographic experiments in the Chukchi Sea in cooperation with universities in the Pacific Northwest. The cutter did likewise in the Bering Sea from 6-19 September 1962.

From 2-26 October 1962 *Northwind* conducted more oceanographic experiments in East Siberian Sea and Arctic Ocean in cooperation. From 7 August to 18 September 1963. *Northwind* conducted oceanographic experiments in the Chukchi, East Siberian, and Laptev seas in cooperation with the University of Southern California. From July to October 1964 conducted Bering Sea Patrol and carried out oceanographic experiments in Bering Strait and Chukchi Sea. The cutter's crew also installed an unmanned oceanographic station in Fairway Rock, and escorted ships re-supplying the DEW Line. In July 1965 *Northwind* conducted an oceanographic survey between Greenland, Iceland, and Scotland and was the first Western vessel to operate in the Kara Sea off the Soviet Union. In mid-October 1965 *Northwind* escorted the disabled Swedish MV *Orion* in the North Atlantic to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. During July and August 1967 *Northwind* conducted a current and hydrographic survey in the Bering Strait. From September to November 1967 *Northwind* was beset by ice 450 mi north, northwest of Point Barrow, AK. The cutter was freed by USCGC *Staten Island*, and the Canadian icebreaker *John A. MacDonald*.

From 9 June to 15 July 1969 *Northwind* conducted an oceanographic survey in the Chukchi and Bering seas. From 8 to 22 September 1969, along with Canadian icebreaker *MacDonald*, *Northwind* escorted the tanker *Manhattan* from Resolute, AK to Prudhoe Bay where it was relieved by *Staten Island* on transit of Northwest Passage. *Northwind* tested ice and returned to Seattle, WA having transited 14,000 miles and become the first vessel to conduct both a West to East and East to West transit of the Northwest Passage in a single season. From 20 January through 9 April 1970 *Northwind* conducted a western Arctic patrol and oceanographic cruise. The cutter's northernmost penetration was to 66° 35' N, 167° 29' W on 13 March. From 23 June through 28 September 1970 *Northwind* served on Arctic Operations. The duties included laying cables, oceanographic studies, and re-supplying the DEW Line. On 13 July 1970 *Northwind* rescued two from a ditched helicopter near the Yukon Delta in Norton Sound. During June and July 1973 *Northwind* conducted oceanographic research in Alaskan waters. From 1973 to 1975 *Northwind* underwent extensive machinery modernization and electronic modification at the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, MD and was stationed in Baltimore, MD. During the Summer of 1975, *Northwind* conducted an Arctic cruise.

From 6 October 1976 to 13 April 1977 *Northwind* participated in Operation Deep Freeze to the Antarctic. From 10 July-10 December 1978 *Northwind* undertook a cruise to the Arctic. From 3 November 1979-24 March 1980 *Northwind* participated in Operation Deep Freeze to the Antarctic. From June to September 1980 *Northwind* operated in Greenland's waters as part of Arctic East. The cutter conducted glacier surveys and escorted a US Navy vessel into Thule harbor. From 26 September to 13 December 1981 *Northwind* undertook a cruise to the Arctic. From 1978 to 1989 *Northwind* was stationed at Wilmington, NC and used for icebreaking, including the Great Lakes. On 16 February 1984 *Northwind* medevaced a woman from a 33-ft sailboat 200 miles west of Bermuda. On 28 April 1984 *Northwind* assisted a US Navy LCM extinguish a fire in the Caribbean. On 5 August 1984 *Northwind* assisted a personal craft off Kulusuk, Greenland. On 4 November 1984 *Northwind* seized *Alexi I*, 240 miles southwest of Jamaica carrying 20 tons of marijuana. From 2 July to 21 July 1986 *Northwind* assisted the Danish and Greenland governments in reestablishing a musk-ox herd in northwest Greenland.

During the summer of 1988 she participated in Arctic East Summer 1988, steaming over 25,000 miles. She was decommissioned on 20 January 1989 and turned over to the Maritime Administration and was laid up in the James River Reserve Fleet. She was eventually sold for scrap to International Shipbreakers of Brownsville, Texas.

Commanding Officers:

CAPT R. M. Hoyle	1945-1946
CAPT C. W. Thomas	1946-1948
CDR P. J. Smenton	1948-1948
CAPT E. K. Rhodes	1949-1950
CAPT J. A. Dirks	1950-1952
CDR W. C. Foster	1952
CAPT R. E. Morell	1952-1954
CAPT W. L. Maloney	1954-1956
CAPT J. A. Bresnan	1956-1958
CAPT T. R. Midtlyng	1958-1960
CAPT R. R. Waesche, Jr.	1960-1962
CAPT J. P. Martin	1962-1964
CDR L. A. Pharris	1964-1965
CAPT K. N. Ayers	1965-1966
CAPT A. J. Bush	1966-1967
CAPT J. F. Phair	1967-1968
CAPT D. J. McCann	1968-1971
CAPT S. G. Putzke	1971
CAPT N. C. Venzke	1971-1973
CAPT R. J. Hanson	1973
LT J. H. Fishburn	1973-1975
CAPT V. W. Driggers	1975-1976
CAPT J. H. Wubbold	1976-1978
CAPT R. R. Garrett	1978-1980
CAPT W. P. Hewel	1980-1982
CAPT W. A. Anderson	1982-1984
CAPT W. A. Caster	1984-1986
CAPT K. J. Morris	1986-1989

Images:



USCGC *Northwind*'s sponsor, Mrs. Mabelle C. Dempwolf



USCGC *Northwind*'s christening- 25 February 1945



USCGC *Northwind*'s launching- 25 February 1945



USCGC *Northwind* in New York Harbor- 26 June 1946.
Note the Sikorsky HNS on *Northwind*'s new helicopter landing pad.



USCGC *Northwind* breaking ice in Antarctic- 1947



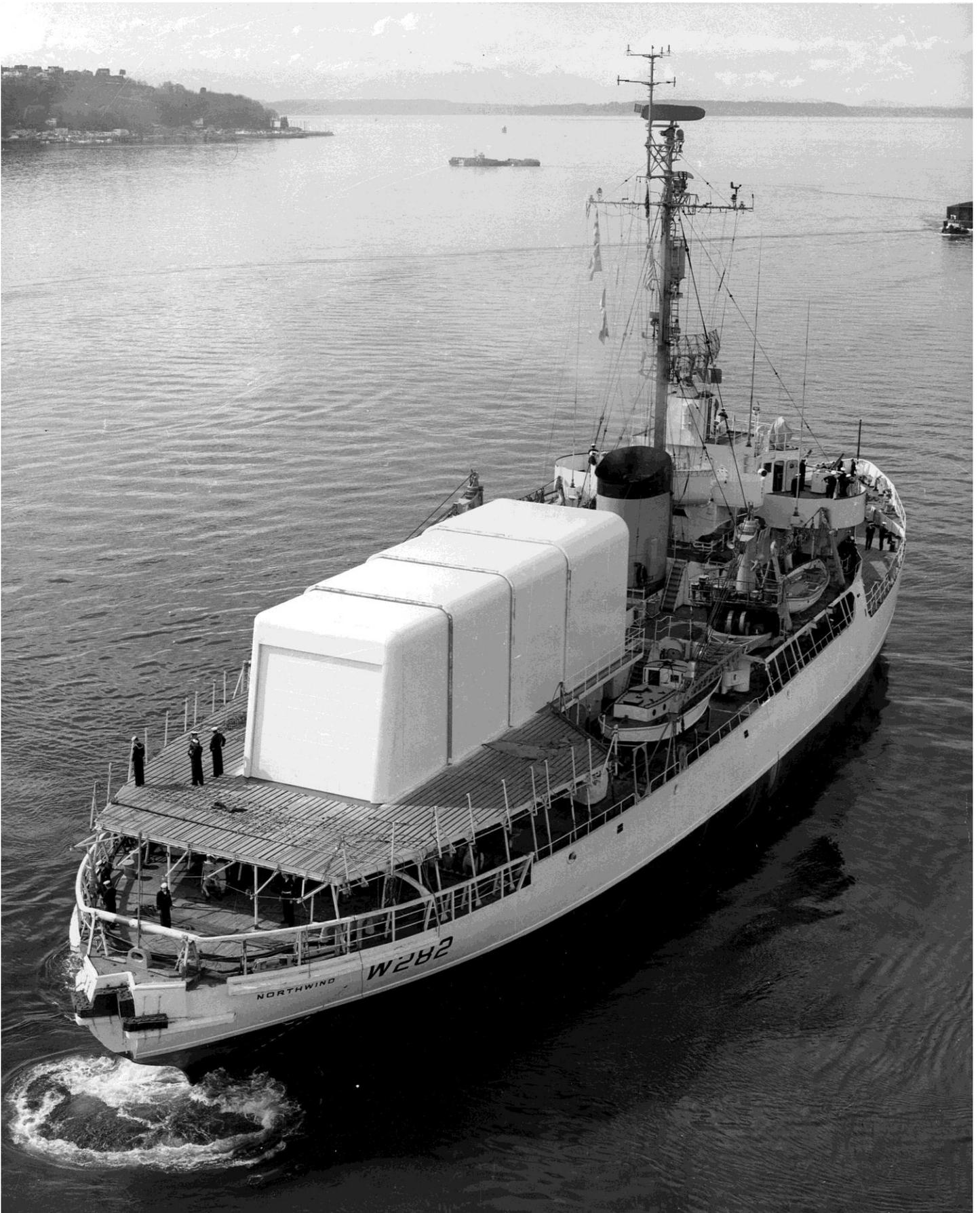
USCGC *Northwind* in the Bay of Whales, Antarctica, 1947



USCGC *Northwind* in ice- no date



USCGC *Northwind* during Operation Deep Freeze- 14 December 1956



USCGC *Northwind* with a retractable helicopter hangar, 1963.



USCGC *Northwind* off Cape Parry, Northwest Territories, Canada- 1 September 1964



USCGC *Northwind* in ice, no date.



USCGC Northwind in ice- no date



USCGC Northwind in ice- no date



USCGC *Northwind* in drydock in 1980 (note the distinct shape of the hull and ice-breaking bow)



USCGC *Northwind* tied up at her homeport of Wilmington, NC- 4 February 1985



USCGC *Northwind*, 1986

Sources:

Cutter History File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

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

Robert Scheina. *Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1981.

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