



Westwind, 1944

WAG/ WAGB-281
ex-Severni Pulius; ex-Westwind

Callsign: NLKL



Nicknames: "Big Red of the Gulf Coast"; "Big Red Pig", "Floating Football"; "Wandering Arctic Garbage Barge" (a takeoff on the hull designation WAGB)

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

Builder's Number: CG-96

Cost: \$9,880,037

Length: 269' oa

Beam: 63' 6" mb

Draft: 25' 9" max

Displacement: 6,515 tons (1945)

Keel Laid: 24 August 1942

Launched: 31 March 1943

Commissioned: 18 September 1944 (USCG); 22 September 1952 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 21 February 1945 & transferred to USSR; returned 19 December 1951; 29 February 1988 (USCG)

Status: Initially mothballed to the James River Reserve Fleet

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.

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: SPS-10B; SPS-53A; SPS-6C (1967)

Sonar: QCJ-8 (1944)

Armament: None

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 build up. 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:

After commissioning *Westwind* was to have been assigned to the Northwest Sea Frontier (NOWESTSEAFRON) and stationed at Port Angeles, WA. The cutter, however, was transferred to the USSR on 21 February 1945 instead. The ship was subsequently returned by the Soviet Union on 19 December 1951 and re-commissioned on 22 September 1952. From 22 September 1952-May 1966 *Westwind* was stationed at Brooklyn, NY and used for icebreaking. From June-September 1953 the cutter re-supplied Arctic bases. During December 1953 and January 1954 *Westwind* broke ice on the Hudson River. From June to September 1954 *Westwind* re-supplied Arctic base. During that time the ship became trapped in ice about 450 mi from North Pole, which threatened the possibility of wintering over. During the summers of 1955 and 1956 *Westwind* participated in DEW Line construction. From December 1957 through March 1958 *Westwind* participated in Operation Deep Freeze to the Antarctic. During June-July 1959 the ship re-supplied Arctic bases.

During July 1960 *Westwind* escorted thr Danish MV *Julius Thomsen* through ice-clogged water to Thule, Greenland. From 1962 through 1965 *Westwind* spent the summers re-supplying bases throughout the Arctic. In November 1965 *Westwind* assisted cable ship *John Cabot* with the repair of the break in the Thule-Deer Lake ocean cable. From May 1966 to 1972 *Westwind* was stationed at Baltimore, MD and used for icebreaking. During July 66 the icebreaker conducted an oceanographic cruise to the Arctic and from December 1967 through March 1968 participated in Operation Deep Freeze to the Antarctic. On 21 January 1968 *Westwind* freed the grounded Danish MV *Magga* in Winter Quarters Bay. During March and April 1969 *Westwind* broke ice on the Great Lakes as part of project to extend the navigational season on the lakes. From July to November 1969 *Westwind* participated in MSTS re-supply cruise to the Arctic. On 26 August 1969 the cutter's helicopter rescued an expedition of 7 from University of London near

Sermilgaq, Greenland. During March and April 1970 *Westwind* broke ice on the Great Lakes.

During 1972 and 1973 *Westwind* underwent extensive renovation at the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, MD. From 1974 through 1981 *Westwind* was stationed at Milwaukee, WI, and used for icebreaking. From May to October 1979 *Westwind* conducted an Arctic cruise. On 7 August 1979 *Westwind* rescued three from a private aircraft near Kulusuk, Greenland. On 29 August 1979 *Westwind* penetrated to 83 45 N about 375 mi from the North Pole, a record at the time. From 1981 to 29 February 1988 *Westwind* was stationed at Mobile, AL and used for LE and icebreaking. From 4 October 1983 to 25 February 1984 *Westwind* participated in Operation Deep Freeze to the Antarctic. On 5 October 1983 *Westwind* repaired engines on FV *Ocean Hope II* 300 mi S of Mobile, AL. On 1 January 1984 *Westwind* sustained major hull damage while operating in the Weddel Sea, the cutter subsequently returned to the US.



USCGC *Westwind* in New York harbor- 29 September 1954



USCGC *Westwind* in Gravesend Bay, NY- 6 March 1964 (Note the Verrazano Narrows Bridge under construction in the background)



USCGC *Westwind*, 18 August 1964; Cape Atholl.



USCGC *Westwind*, 26 September 1964, Greenland.



USCGC *Westwind* in Kane Basin- 10 September 1966 (Note the crewmen on the pack ice).



USCGC *Westwind* in the Arctic, 1965.



USCGC *Westwind* escorting a vessel through the ice- no date



USCGC *Westwind*- no date.

The following photographs were scanned and provided courtesy of Bruce Rogerson and USCG Auxiliary Flotilla 11 NR 8-7, Mendocino County, California.









Sources:

Westwind Cutter File, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

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.

