

## *Human Stories of the U.S. Coast Guard*

### **HOLLY R. HARRISON**



As with any meaningful career, that of LCDR Holly R. Harrison reflects her hard work and devotion to duty. This native of Arizona comes from a military family tracing its connection to the nation's armed services back several generations.

LCDR Harrison continued her family's tradition of service to country early in life, gaining hands-on experience with Coast Guard units while still in high school. She worked hard to fulfill her dream of entrance into and graduation from the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut.

From the Academy, Harrison received a variety of shipboard assignments, including ones on Storis

(WMEC-38), Kiska (WPB-1336) and command of the 110-foot Aquidneck (WPB-1309). By the end of 2002, after well over a year in command of Aquidneck, she received orders to the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG) to take part in Operation Iraqi Freedom. By the spring of 2003, as CO of Aquidneck in the NAG, Harrison had become the first woman to command a Coast Guard vessel in a combat zone. While serving as Aquidneck's captain, the cutter and its dedicated crew conducted innumerable search and rescue, maritime interdiction, convoy and combat-related operations between Bahrain in the south and the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr in the north.

In July 2003, Harrison received the Bronze Star medal in recognition of Aquidneck's achievements under her command. She is the first female member of the United States Coast Guard to receive this distinguished award.

**WILLIAM H. THIESEN**  
ATLANTIC AREA HISTORIAN  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD