

DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to the people of South Viet Nam, that a just and lasting peace may come to their land.



The USCGC SPENCER (WHEC-361) was built in 1936 and commissioned in March 1937 in New York. The SPENCER is a Secretary Class Cutter, named for the Honorable John C. SPENCER, Secretary of the Treasury in 1844 under President John TYLER. Following her commissioning, the SPENCER was employed primarily in the International Ice Patrol. This service originated after the sinking of the SS TITANIC in 1912 after her collision with an iceberg. The Ice Patrol locates all icebergs that would drift into the Atlantic shipping lanes and provides their position to vessels.

When United States participation in World War II commenced, the SPENCER donned gray paint and went to war. During 1942, 1943, and the first half of 1944, the SPENCER served as a convoy escort in the North Atlantic. During this period she was credited with two known submarine sinkings and one possible—an exemplary record.

In the latter part of 1944, the SPENCER'S mission changed, and she was fitted out as command and communications ship for use in amphibious operations.

In October 1944, the SPENCER reported to the Commander, Seventh (Pacific) Fleet, where she took part in many landings including Luzon and Palawan in the Philippines.

When the War ended, the SPENCER, along with the Coast Guard, returned to its peacetime operations but with a new duty. The improvement in aviation capabilities during the war had made over-ocean flight commonplace, developing a need for rescue facilities along the way. Ocean Stations were set up in the Atlantic and Pacific and the Coast Guard was selected to carry out this commitment. The SPENCER, along with twenty-one other Coast Guard vessels on the East Coast takes her turn patrolling Ocean Station BRAVO, in the Labrador Sea; Charlie, 520 miles southeast of Greenland; Delta, in the Newfoundland Basin; and Echo, 1500 miles east of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The purposes of the Ocean Stations are to provide weather observations, navigation assistance to aircraft, and be available for Search and Rescue capabilities in mid-ocean.

Even though the SPENCER is primarily oriented to the Coast Guard's peacetime mission of "safety of life and property at sea," she still has warship potential. The SPENCER has a fire-power capability of one 5"/38 caliber dual purpose gun on the forecastle, and six .50 caliber machine gun mounts from bow to stern. Anti-submarine weapons consists of a "hedge hog" mount which launches projectiles ahead of the ship and one triple mount torpedo tube on each side.

In January, 1969, the USCGC SPENCER departed New York on a new mission . . . to take up Market Time Patrol off the coast of South Viet Nam. This is the story of her deployment.