

HISTORY

The United States Coast Guard Cutter **Westwind** was originally commissioned on September 18, 1944, after construction for over two years at a cost of twelve million dollars. On Thanksgiving Day, 1945, **Westwind** was loaned to Russia under the Lend-Lease Program. She was renamed the USSR **Severni Polius**, and deployed for general purpose work in the ice-ridden seas north of Russia.

On December 19, 1951, she was returned to United States control at Bremerhaven, Germany. Recommissioned by the Navy on February 1, 1952, she returned to the United States for renovation and reconditioning. On September 22, 1952, she officially joined the Coast Guard fleet. The name "**Westwind**" was restored, and she took on board her first Coast Guard crew.

From 1952 to 1966, **Westwind** was deployed annually in Arctic waters in conjunction with Military Sea Transportation Service resupply of isolated northern bases. To these stations, many of them vital to national defense, **Westwind**, leading supply ships through the ice, was a welcome sight and heralded the coming of Arctic summer.

Westwind's duties encompass many assignments in addition to logistics support. They include rescue and assistance, support of scientific research, oceanography, law enforcement, native health care, marine safety and other state and federal co-operative missions. In 1960, for assistance rendered in freeing the ice-jammed Danish Freighter **Ruth Basse** off Kape York, Greenland, and ferrying scientists to the Devon Islands to measure the Brae Glacier, **Westwind** received congratulatory messages for jobs "WELL DONE."

Westwind is by no means confined to Arctic operations. She performed double duty in the 1957-58 season by taking part in both Arctic and Antarctic resupply. In the 1966-67 season she participated in Operation DEEP FREEZE '67 and played an important role in the construction of the new

scientific research station on Anvers Island, Antarctic Peninsula, Antarctica. Under her supervision and through her support, elements of Construction Battalion 201, U.S. Navy, laid the groundwork for the new Palmer Station.

Perhaps **Westwind's** proudest year was 1964. For her work of that year, **Westwind** was honored with the United States Coast Guard Unit Commendation. The 1964 season was the toughest Arctic ice year that could be remembered. During that season it took 10 days for the sister ships **Westwind** and **Atka** (then a naval vessel) to escort the **USNS Greenville Victory** 250 miles through ice upwards of 4 feet thick.

That same year **Westwind** participated in the resupply of the small Eskimo village at Savigasivik on the west coast of Greenland. Until the **Westwind** and **Atka** (now the Coast Guard Cutter **Southwind**) led a small Danish cargo ship in with supplies to last the winter, it was thought the village must be evacuated or face starvation. Coincidentally, this tiny village was the same one that had fed and sheltered the crews of ten New Bedford (Massachusetts) whalers after their ships were crushed by the ice in the early 19th century.

Westwind has seen service in many oceans and during several conflicts. In addition to the Coast Guard Unit Commendation, she has been awarded the World War II Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, National Defense Service Medal and Antarctica Service Medal. The foregoing awards would instill pride in any unit, however, **Westwind** will not rest on her laurels, and personnel serving aboard can look forward to continued exemplary service from the "Wind of the West."

When not actually engaged in polar operations, **Westwind** returns to her home port of Baltimore, Maryland. There she is reconditioned, resupplied and made ready for the never-ending struggle and treacherous assignments in the ice.