



The Retiree Newsletter

(USCG—NOAA—PHS)

“Semper Paratus”

April—June 2017

Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty

Issue 2/2017

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Arctic Cutter Bear	1
Shopping at the CGX	2
Coast Guard Mutual Assistance	7
Admiral Zukunft	8
Coast Guard Combat Related Special Compensation	9
Annual Meeting of the CGNRC	10
Coast Guard Self Service	12
TRICARE Dental	15
Book Review: The Lost Eleven	16
Tax Changes	17
The Shield	23
DCMS	23



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

CO's Corner	2
Reunions and Notices	3
Retiree Pay Days	9
Retirements	11
TAPS	18
Dependent TAPS	23
Directory Assistance	25

Arctic Cutter *Bear*—“A symbol for all the Service represents”

William H. Thiesen, Ph.D.
Atlantic Area Historian, United States Coast Guard

The Bear is more than just a famous ship; she is a symbol for all the service represents—for steadfastness, for courage and for constant readiness to help men and vessels in distress.

--Captain Stephen Evans, *The United States Coast Guard, 1790-1915*

As the quote above indicates, the *Bear's* story reflects the Service's core values. This extraordinary ship, on which legends were made, remains the most famous cutter in Coast Guard history.

Built in 1874, *Bear* was designed specifically to work in ice-bound conditions before the use of icebreakers. She was a 198-foot, 700-ton barkentine rigged steamer constructed in Scotland for sealing in northern waters. In 1874, iron proved too brittle for use in the cold Arctic, so *Bear's* hull was built of wood, reinforced with six-inch thick oak planks and sheathed with Australian “ironwood” for a total hull thickness of ten inches. *Bear* also boasted a steel-plated bow, retractable screw and, in case of long periods underway, she had extra space for fuel, supplies or added passengers.

In 1881, LT Adolphus Greely, a member of the U.S. Army's Signal Corps, led an expedition to study the weather and winter conditions on Ellesmere Island northwest of Greenland. Attempts to relieve Greely's expedition in 1882 and 1883 proved unsuccessful and members of the expedition began to die of disease and starvation. In 1884, the U.S. Navy purchased *Bear* and, in June 1884, she helped rescue Greely and the five surviving members of his expedition.

In the spring of 1885, the Navy transferred *Bear* to the Revenue Cutter Service and, in early November, she began a voyage to California around Cape Horn. Captain Michael Healy took command of *Bear* in April 1886 after she arrived at her homeport of San Francisco. A veteran of Alaskan waters and skilled ice pilot, Healy was the first African American to receive a commission from the U.S. Government and the first to command a Federal ship. Under Healy, *Bear* served on the Bering Sea Patrol, which comprised between 15,000 and 20,000 miles of cruising. Conditions on the Bering Sea were harsh, dangerous, stressful and, at times, deadly. Healy described the pressures of serving on the Bering Sea assignment: “to stand for forty hours on the bridge of the *Bear*, wet, cold and hungry, hemmed in by impenetrable masses of fog, tortured by uncertainty, and the good ship plunging and contending with ice seas in an unknown ocean.”

As an Alaskan cutter, *Bear* saved lives at sea and preserved the lives of those struggling to survive in Alaska's frozen frontier. The native people of Alaska had

(Continued on page 13)