



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Glacier, 1966

AGB-4 / WAGB-4

Motto: "Follow Me"



Navy name retained (named for Glacier Bay, Alaska).

Builder: Ingalls Shipbuilding Corp., Pascagoula, MA

Cost:

Length: 309' 8" oa

Beam: 74' 4"

Draft: 28' 3"

Displacement: 8,650 tons (when commissioned)

Launched: 27 August 1954

Commissioned: 27 May 1955 (USN); 30 June 1966 (USCG)

Decommissioned: 7 July 1987

Status: Property of the USS Glacier Society

Propulsion: 6 electric motors driven by 10 Westinghouse generators driven by 10 Fairbanks-Morse diesels; 21,000 HP; twin propellers

Top speed: 17 knots (1966); 16,000 mile range

Economic speed: 10 knots (1966), 29,280 mile range

Complement: 199 (1985)

Small Boats: 1 x 39-foot Arctic Survey Boat; 1 x 36-foot landing craft; 1 x motor-surfboat; 1 x Zodiac outboard

Electronics:

Radar: SPS-6C; SPS-10; SPS-46 (1966)

Sonar: UQN (1966)

Armament: 5"/38 (twin mount)

Other: Equipped with a flight pad, hangar and maintenance spaces for two helicopters. *Glacier* was also equipped with aerological, hydrographic and photographic laboratories. She also had an aloft conning station 74 feet above the waterline that was used as a high bridge control station for icebreaking operations.

Class History:

The Navy designed the revolutionary USS *Glacier* to traverse through polar regions not then accessible to Navy vessels. As with the *Wind*-class icebreakers, she was equipped with a built-in heeling system whereby an artificial 10-degree roll was initiated by the rapid shifting of 140,000 gallons of fuel side-to-side through tanks inside the hull, thereby permitting the ship to break free from binding ice. Although somewhat similar to the *Wind*-class icebreakers *Glacier* was considerably larger and was the only one of her class built.

At the time of her launching she carried the largest diesel-electric plant "afloat in the free world." That power-plant produced 21,000 horsepower and turned two 17-foot wide propellers with each mounted on two-foot diameter shafts. It was claimed at the time that she was then the largest and "most powerful" icebreaker ever built in the U.S." With her thick armored hull, 74-foot wide beam, large screws, powerful propulsion and heeling systems along with great displacement she was "the most effective icebreaking vessel in United States history" to that time, according to her National Park Service *Statement of Significance*.

Official publications noted that she was "designed and constructed for sustained polar operations," including ice-breaking services, support to polar scientific research programs, escorting ships through the ice, logistics support of polar stations, oceanographic and survey work, and weather and ice observations in polar regions.

Cutter History:

The fourth Navy vessel named *Glacier* (AGB-4) was launched 27 August 1954 by the Ingalls Shipbuilding Corporation in Pascagoula, Mississippi. She was sponsored by Mrs. Roscoe F. Good and commissioned 27 May 1955, CDR E .H. Mater, USN in command. She then began a career of serving as a major component of the Navy's participation in each annual "Operation Deep Freeze" to Antarctica from 1966 until 1966.

In the late spring of 1966, after participating in her 11th Operation Deep Freeze, *Glacier* returned to her home port of Boston, Massachusetts. On 30 June 1966 while under the command of CDR Franklin P. Faughman, USN, *Glacier* was decommissioned and turned over to the U.S. Coast Guard and on 1 July 1966 *Glacier* was struck from the Navy List

Glacier was transferred to the Coast Guard as per an agreement between the two sea services whereby the Coast Guard took over responsibility for all icebreaking efforts for the United States. After a brief ceremony Captain C. G. Houtsma, USCG, accepted the icebreaker from the Navy. At that point she was commissioned as the cutter *Glacier* under the command of CAPT Opie L. Dawson, USCG. While still in Boston she underwent a major overhaul and had her hull painted Coast Guard white before she transferred to her new home port of Long Beach, California. She arrived at the west coast port on 24 August 1966.

As a Coast Guard cutter *Glacier* participated in the following annual Operation Deep Freeze resupply missions to Antarctica: November 1966-April 1967; December 1967-March 1968; November 1968-April 1969; November 1969-April 1970; October 1972-March 1973; October 1973-March 1974; November 1974-March 1975; November 1975-March 1976; November 1977-April 1978; November 1978-April 1979; November 1979-March 1980; November 1980-February 1981; October 1981-April 1982; November 1982-April 1983; October 1983-March 1984; November 1985-May 1986; and November 1986-April 1987.

While in availability status on 25 September 1967 she was ordered to put to sea to assist her disabled sister cutter *Northwind* which was beset in ice 450 miles NNW off Point Barrow and "in imminent danger of being icebound for the long arctic winter at Latitude 79° 02'N Longitude 168° 06'W." *Glacier* arrived at the edge of the arctic pack on 8 October 1967 and by that time *Northwind* had been freed by other icebreakers but *Glacier* was nevertheless awarded a Letter of Commendation for "outstanding performance of duty."

Glacier also participated in annual "Arctic West" operations, which consisted in part with oceanographic exercises, beginning in the summer of 1970. Additional deployments included: March-May 1971; June-September 1972 when she undertook oceanographic research in Alaskan waters and again the following year in Alaskan waters from June-July 1973. She deployed to the Arctic from July-October 1976, from June-September 1977 and July-August 1978.

In July, 1971, two of her crew were charged with throwing an incendiary device at the cutter's hangar *Glacier* prior to a 1971 Arctic West deployment while the cutter prepared for the mission in Long Beach and both were court-martialed. Also that year *Glacier*, under the command of Captain William E. West, made a goodwill visit to the port of Nakhodka, USSR, on the Sea of Japan, becoming the first Coast Guard vessel since World War II to visit a far eastern Soviet port.

In March, 1975, now under the command of Captain Clarence Gillett, *Glacier* lost two propeller blades while going to the assistance (along with CGC *Burton Island*) of the trapped Argentine icebreaker *General San Martin* beset in the ice seventeen miles north of Palmer Island. Disabled, preparations were made to winter-over in Antarctica after first evacuating all non-essential personnel. She was able to extricate herself from the ice though after nine days and

returned safely to Long Beach. In 1976 Captain John J. Dirschel, Jr., relieved Captain Gillett as commanding officer.

Glacier's main 5-inch armament was removed in 1969. On 3 January 1972 she broke with tradition when her hull was painted fire red as an experiment "to increase flight safety through improved visibility of the ship from the air" as pilots had noted that locating *Glacier's* white hull while in the ice was difficult. Even with a red hull she kept making history during her continued voyages to the world's ice-bound regions, exploring, discovering, and preparing for any possible military requirements. During operations in Deep Freeze '73 "*Glacier* successfully completed the deepest penetration of the Weddell Sea possible. In January, 1974, scientists onboard conducted seal studies along the Wilkes Land Coast. In 1975 *Glacier*. . .scientists continued oceanographic studies in the Bering and Chukchi Seas and completed a MIZAPAC Operation (Marginal Ice Zone Pacific). . .In the summer of 1976 she participated in polar military exercises including the Submarine Arctic Warfare Project."

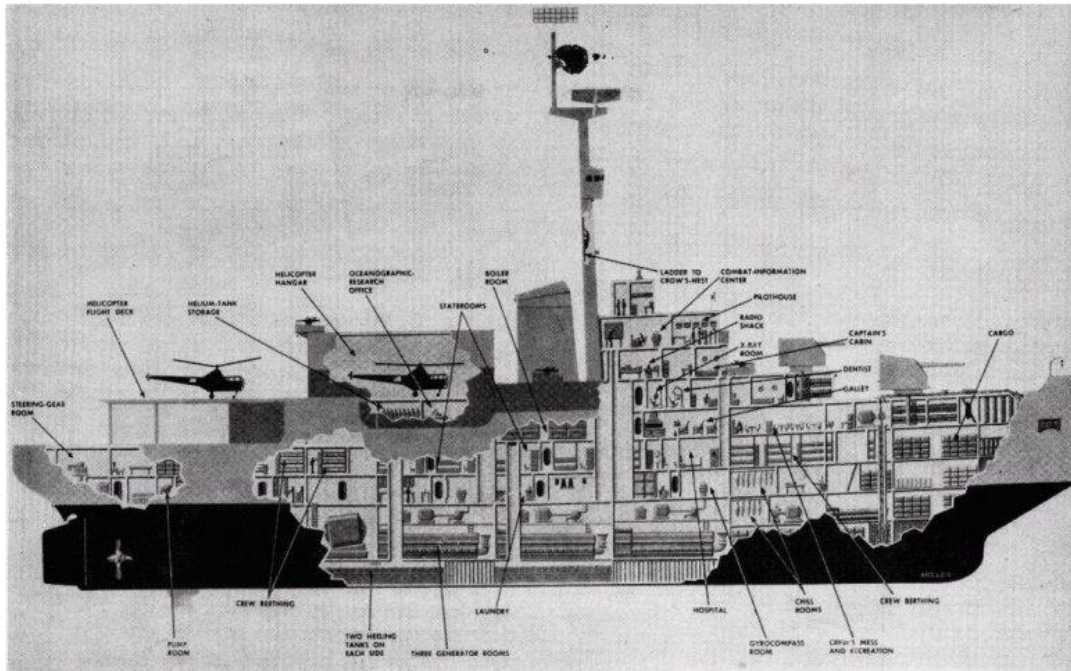
In 1980 she received a \$3 million refit in 1980 whereby her mess deck, galley and berthing areas received upgrades and a new marine sanitary system was installed. In May of 1983 Commander George F. Martin relieved Captain P. Richard Taylor as Commanding Officer. The next year *Glacier* underwent a \$12 million refit in Long Beach before participating in Operation Deep Freeze '85. For that mission she departed San Diego on 31 October 1984 on what became a 27,000 mile voyage where she circumnavigated South America and participated on a law enforcement patrol before returning home and transferring to her new homeport of Portland, Oregon, arriving there on 24 May 1985, under the command of Captain William P. Hewel. In June, 1986, Captain Robert E. Hammond, II assumed command. After she was drydocked in 1986 hull weakness was detected and her icebreaking missions were restricted. She was decommissioned 7 July 1987 after she completed a scientific expedition in the Elephant and Seymour Islands area of the Antarctic Peninsula during that spring.

During her career with both the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard *Glacier* completed 29 missions to the Antarctic and 10 missions to the Arctic. Her decorations included the Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation awarded in 1961, 1969, 1971, 1975 and 1980. She was awarded the Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation in 1983 and 1985. She also received a Coast Guard Letter of Commendation, Arctic and Antarctic Service medals. While serving with the Coast Guard *Glacier* had the distinction of having "the largest crew of any Coast Guard unit afloat", averaging around 199 (15 officers, 184 enlisted).

Coast Guard Commanding Officers:

CAPT Opie Dawson 1966-1968	CAPT Bruce Little 1978-1980
CAPT Eugene McCrory 1968-1970	CAPT James Coste Jr. 1980-1982
CAPT Theodore Roberge 1970-1972	CAPT Paul Taylor 1982-1983
CAPT William West Jr. 1972-1974	CAPT George Martin 1983-1984
CAPT Clarence Gillett 1974-1976	CAPT William Hewel 1984-1986
CAPT John Dirschel 1976-1978	CAPT Robert Hammond 1986-1987

Historic Photographs:



USS *Glacier* (AGB-4) schematic drawing. US Navy photo from "All Hands" magazine, December 1956; Source: NAVSOURCE.ORG.

Photo # NH 67733 USS *Glacier* underway, 8 November 1955



USS *Glacier* (AGB-4) Underway, 8 November 1955. Naval Historical Center Photo No. NH-67733; Source: NAVSOURCE.ORG.



USCGC *Glacier* underway, probably August or September, 1966.
No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



USCGC *Glacier*, 30 August, 1966.
No official caption; Photo No. 083066-2; 11th District Photo; photographer unknown.



USCGC *Glacier* flight deck, hangar, and port-side twin-5" battery, 14 July 1966. No official caption/photo number; photographer unknown.



USCGC *Glacier* underway, 23 August 1970.
No official caption/photo number; photo by James F. Doster.



USCGC *Glacier*, 25 February 1970.
No official caption; Photo No. W4-02-25-70-1-B; photographer unknown.



Official caption: "USCG Icebreaker Glacier (WAGB-4) moored on Filchner's Shelf. Scientists hunting seals to take blood samples. Location: Weddell Sea"; no date/photo number; photo by "Clayton".



USCGC *Glacier*.
No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



USCGC *Glacier*, 1972
No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



USCGC *Glacier*.
No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



USCGC *Glacier*.
No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



USCGC *Glacier*.

No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



USCGC *Glacier*, 1973.

No official caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.

Sources:

Dictionary of American Navy Fighting Ships, Volume III. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968.

Dolan Research, Inc. "Draft Statement of Significance for the Nomination of the Glacier." 18 February 1992.

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Robert Scheina. *Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990.

