

Message from the Captain

This past year we have all played an active role in determining the Coast Guard future. The 270 WMEC is indeed a quantum jump from traditional to State-of-the-Art technology. Like the many lead vessels of each class, BEAR blazed the trail for others to follow. Our motto "Summa Potentia Per Facilitatem" translates "Greater Strength Through Versatility," and the strength and "Can Do" spirit mustered from the very depths of each plankowner's heart vaulted BEAR into the annals of Coast Guard history. A ship is nothing more than structured steel until the commissioning pennant is broken and the initial crew breathes life giving air into the hollow voids. The crew is the heart and soul of any vessel, and the reputation of each vessel is shaped by the attitudes and examples of its crew. I am indeed fortunate to have had the pleasure of serving as the first commanding officer of BEAR, not because of any personal recognition which may come from such a position, but solely because it presented me with the opportunity to serve with a magnificently dedicated crew. We worked hard, played hard and overcame all obstacles, delays and disappointments, and when the time came, we introduced BEAR into the fleet by establishing standards for which others must surely strive. Not even nature itself with the "Monstrous Wave" could deter us from our path. The bonds of dedication, friendship and family are strong within BEAR. The spirit of the old BEAR lives on in the modern version, and those who follow us will accomplish even greater goals built upon the foundation you have established. Let us never forget the BEAR has returned.

A sincere "well done" and a most appreciative thank you for your tireless efforts, total dedication, gallant performance and friendship.

Respectfully,



Foreword by the Committee

Finally, BEAR has arrived.

We all know about BEAR. We've heard of her and dreamed of her for years. From the early stages of a penciled drawing on the designers' table, to her birth at Pier 36 in Seattle, Washington on February 1, 1983, BEAR is a reality now. She also holds within her framework the most sophisticated array of electronics, engineering, and weaponry of any cutter in the history of the Coast Guard.

But the lifeblood of BEAR lies in her people - her crew. The men and women who serve on BEAR form a strongly bonded team, and that team is the one, absolutely essential ingredient that makes BEAR come alive.

It is for our BEAR shipmates, the life of the BEAR, that many of us have joined together to create this book.

The many months which this book represents has been a portion of time most of us will never forget. These months have marked us with anticipation, delays, hard work, enjoyment, good fellowship, trial and error, and triumph.

For many of us, we marked the beginning of BEAR at SIU Norfolk. Here, we met new shipmates and began the tedious assignment of putting together the "paper empire" that would soon serve as the "backbone" for an entire new class of cutters. We schooled, trained and organized ourselves into a team, and before we knew it, we were Seattle-bound for the USCGC BEAR (WMEC-901).

We cleaned her, we polished her, we outfitted her, we commissioned her, and then it was time to take BEAR home, so we headed to the south and east for Portsmouth, Virginia.

Along the way, we grew with BEAR. From "the wave" of San Francisco, helicopter operations in Long Beach, shakedown and towing operations in San Diego, to the thrill of bringing the very first of the 270's to the Atlantic Ocean through the Panama Canal, BEAR proved she was seaworthy, and we were proving that we could handle her.

April marked the coming home of BEAR. And she did it in a grand fashion. With a flotilla of Coast Guard small boats and tugs leading the way and spraying multi-colored water through fire monitors and sounding horns, bells and sirens, there was no doubt in the minds of those at Support Center Portsmouth that the BEAR was coming. And what a wonderful sight as we rounded Craney Island to see all of our loved ones waiting for us on the pier.

In early May, we sailed north to Baltimore, Maryland where an extensive availability took place. After more than eight months of trying times, the BEAR left the Coast Guard Yards and headed home once again.

Which brings us to the present. We are now an operational Coast Guard cutter, and as the first of our class we must still undergo much testing and evaluation in addition to our regular Coast Guard duties. But the adventures that we have experienced over these past months will always be remembered by us, just as the crew of the original BEAR did when she was new. The moments of boredom, the times of excitement and the absolute thrill and sense of accomplishment that has surrounded us all - it is with this book that we hope to relive those memories.