

# OPERATION DEEPFREEZE 1974

GLACIER departed Long Beach on the 27th of October enroute Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for two weeks of helicopter training. It was an excellent first taste as this was the first time GLACIER had undergone such training since joining the Coast Guard in 1956. However, much was learned by all and a well deserved four days of rest and relaxation were had before getting down to the business at hand, the long trip to Antarctica and Operation Deep Freeze.

Steps were made at the New Zealand ports of Auckland and Wellington for liberty and Christchurch for logistics and refueling. It was during this period that the "fuel crisis" came to fore. For several days the remainder of the itinerary was in a constant state of flux as fuel expenditures versus operational necessity was discussed at all levels. As a further complication, New Zealand imposed a fuel embargo. As a voluntary measure to save fuel, GLACIER altered its return itinerary which included liberty stops in Australia, New Caledonia and Fiji. In the end, only minor changes were made to the operating schedule, the return liberty stops were cancelled, arrangements were made to have the fuel embargo lifted, and, as a further measure to conserve fuel, all open water steaming was to be done at the most economical speed, a searing ten knots.

GLACIER, now officially under the auspices of Commander of United States Naval Support Force Antarctica, departed Christchurch on the 21st of December. The first task was a logistics stop at a New Zealand weather station on Campbell Island, some 500 miles south of Christchurch. Mail and supplies were delivered to the eight men who spend upwards of one year on the island providing important meteorological data.

McMurdo Station, located on Ross Island in the southern corner of the Ross Sea, is the largest and most supply port for the majority of American scientific research in Antarctica. It is a large station employing over a thousand men, military and civilian scientists,

during the summer and there are several hundred hasty tents which spend an entire year there. To keep this station operating it is necessary to bring in large ships with fuel and supplies. To get these ships and their supplies into McMurdo Station, a channel has to be broken through the ice which forms in the winter and does not melt or break up in the summer.

The 30th of December near GLACIER at the edge of the ice with McMurdo Station sighted miles away. The channel break started immediately and four days later CGC STAFEN ISLAND arrived. Both ships combined forces to break the remainder of the channel and after one day the job was completed. The next few days were spent working up and down the channel, smoothing the edges and keeping the ice free.

Around the entire continent of Antarctica there abound the most extensive and diverse ever and about which very little is known. It was realized, what with the ever growing world population, that these seals may one day have to be harvested for their natural resources. In 1967 the Seal Survey project was started, headed by Dr. A.J. Erickson of the University of Washington. The purpose of the survey is to determine the numbers, distribution, population makeup and reproductive potential of Antarctic seals. After accumulation of such data it would then be possible to control harvesting and prevent extinction, which has happened to so many other species of animals.

Every year since the inception of the Seal Survey a Coast Guard icebreaker has been assigned support of this mission. The survey is conducted over a certain segment of the Antarctic coast primarily using helicopters. It was hoped if this proven lead GLACIER was assigned as a part of Deep Freeze 74 operations. The coastal area to be covered was from 160° E to 150° E ending at Rasmussen Casey station where a logistics stop was to be made.

Dr. Erickson, his crew of 5 men and their equipment

were brought on the 11th of January after which GLACIER departed McMurdo sound for the edge of the ice pack at 160° E longitude. From the very beginning numerous problems were encountered. Helicopter problems limiting the range of survey flights, inclement weather causing lost days, and main diesel engine problems limiting the distance which the ship could penetrate the pack ice all combined to make the results being obtained from the survey minimal.

Better than halfway through the Seal Survey, word was received that the USNS MAUMEE, a tanker carrying fuel to McMurdo Station, had suffered severe rubber damage while backing in the ice and may require a tow. After several days of foul the clock, when the MAUMEE's huller was lary rigged such that the could steer on her own, however, an escort would be required in case of another failure. GLACIER was assigned this task and nominated for Seal Survey on the 29th of January and proceeded directly to Casey Station. After completing the logistics stop at Casey Station a rendezvous with the MAUMEE was set north of Cape Adare. Five days later GLACIER came within sight of the MAUMEE and assumed escort duties enroute Wellington, New Zealand. The strain went so smoothly that GLACIER was able to break away for a couple of days to return to Campbell Island for another logistics stop. Both ships pulled into Wellington harbor on the 13th of February, officially ending Deep Freeze 74 for GLACIER. For the crew, the rest and Deep Freeze 74 came on the 13th of March when GLACIER pulled into Long Beach after a long, slow and uneventful journey across the Pacific from New Zealand.

