

## SHIP'S HISTORY OF THE USS PC 1264

On 25 April, 1944, at Pier 42 in New York City, a ship's company of sixty-two men, and five officers, stood rigid at salute while a bright new ensign was raised smartly to the flagstaff. The USS PC 1264 was commissioned and put in command of Lt. Eric S. Purdon, U.S.N.R., of Garrison-on-Hudson, New York. It was then that it took its place as one of only two navy combat ships to be manned by a predominately Negro crew.

The initial complement consisted of five white commissioned officers, eight white leading petty officers, and fifty-three colored ratings and seamen. The eight white petty officers were ordered to the ship primarily as instructors, for as the ship's first skipper once said, "the strength of any fighting ship is in its non-coms." It was hoped that Negroes could qualify as leading petty officers, thus the white personnel could be transferred and Negroes promoted to replace them. Within six months the recommendation for such was able to be made, and the change effected.

Shortly after commissioning, the USS PC 1264, and its crew departed from New York City on its maiden voyage to Miami, Florida. There, the ship went through an intensive shakedown period. The lessons and experience which the crew learned and achieved successfully during this period were to become the vital factors in its success during the following assignments.

After completing its shakedown period in Florida, the USS PC 1264 was ordered to report to the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier for duty. Soon afterwards, the ship began its operations, making New York City its home port. Duty assigned to the ship varied from assignment to assignment. Ranging from patrol duty alone, or as part of a killer group, to the task of being one of several escorts for the many coastal convoys between New York and Cuba and intermediate points.

In early January, 1945, the PC 1264 was secured from convoy escort duty and temporarily assigned along with other anti-submarine vessels, to a far sweeping Atlantic patrol to help combat any possibility of buzz-bomb attacks which might be launched from German submarines, or disguised sea raiders. The ship took part in approximately ten of these patrols, many of which came during some bitter winter weather in the Atlantic.

With the increasing of enemy submarine activity against our convoys during the latter part of March, 1945, the PC 1264 was reassigned to convoy escort duty. Successive convoy trips were made to Charlestown, South Carolina, and Key West, Florida. The latter trip coming shortly after the cessation of hostilities in Europe. It was to be the last coastal convoy off our Atlantic shoreline.



At no time during these various assignments did the ship ever meet the enemy in actual combat. It is believed that the ship contacted enemy submarines several times and depth charges and ahead-thrown attacks were carried out. However, damage to enemy submarines was never actually confirmed.

Upon returning to New York, the ship began a short period of inactivity while awaiting further orders. In the middle of June, 1945, orders were received for the ship to get a complete engine overhaul in preparation for distant service in the Pacific. In July, the work was completed and ship and crew, with morale very high, sailed from New York on 31 July 1945, which all believed to be the start of a long journey to the Pacific theater of operations.

The 1264's first stop was in Norfolk, Virginia, where ship and crew underwent a rigid and complete material and personnel inspection successfully. The ship continued its journey with its next stop in Miami, Florida, where the crew was given five days refresher training.

From Miami, the ship proceeded to Key West, Florida. It was during its stay here that hostilities ceased in the Pacific and final peace was announced. The 1264's Pacific-bound journey came to an end.

Ordered back to Norfolk, Va., the ship soon began to feel the effects of the demobilization program. Lt. Ernest V. Hardman, U.S.N.R., became the ship's second skipper relieving Lt. Eric S. Purdon, U.S.N.R., who pioneered and brought worthy recognition to this ship with its predominately Negro crew.

On 23 October 1945, the USS PC 1264 sailed from Norfolk, Va. for New York City where it was one of fifty-one warships to take part in New York City's impressive and colorful celebration of Navy Day. The PC 1264 took part in the Fleet review by President Harry S. Truman, and although it was the smallest warship present, it played its part very well. It was during this brief stay in New York that the ship welcomed its third commanding officer in eighteen months when Lt (jg) Jack W. Sutherland, U.S.N.R., relieved Lt. Ernest V. Hardman, U.S.N.R., of command.

After Navy Week ceremonies, the PC 1264 sailed from New York for New London, Connecticut, where the ship has been assigned to the Commander Submarine Force of the Atlantic Fleet for duty in connection with training of submarine crews and submarine shakedown.

Thus, in its present duty, the USS PC 1264 remains, indefinitely, as a part of the active United States Atlantic Fleet.

