

RETIRED WORKBOAT GETS A SECOND CAREER

Volunteer restoration produces an educational vessel that will be a familiar sight on Long Island Sound

By Elizabeth Ellis
STAFF WRITER

The skies threatened to storm at the christening of the newly refurbished 39-foot Arctic Scout Oct. 8 at Brewer Pilot's Point Marina in Westbrook, Conn., but the weather cleared and everyone who had worked hard to restore the boat celebrated in sunshine.

Arctic Scout has come a long way from the day in February 1999 that Bernard Koether II, chairman of the Glacier Society, and Jack Erhard, Glacier Society director of restoration, found the abandoned workboat at a boatyard at the Coast Guard Station Curtis Bay, Baltimore. According to Koether, she was a wreck — but still in working condition.

"It had been out in the boatyard for almost 20 years," says Koether. "Curtis Bay is the Coast Guard's boatyard, and so when they didn't need the Scout anymore that's where they delivered it, and they let it sit out in the field."

The Glacier Society is a non-profit educational foundation dedicated to helping the indigenous peoples in the Arctic Basin of the eight circumpolar countries by delivering medical care to remote coastal areas. The means to do this work will be the restoration and operation of the 309-foot retired Coast Guard ice-breaker, Glacier, with plans to eventually have it certified as a school ship.

Arctic Scout, previously known as ASB 39020 — or by its nickname, The Icebucket — was built for the Coast Guard by United Boat Building in Bellingham, Wash., with a reinforced fiberglass hull for minor ice-breaking, a collision bulkhead and full keel. The keel is lead ballasted for self-righting capability. The boat also has a beam of 11 feet, 3 inches, a draft of 4 feet and a 12-ton displacement.

Launched in 1965, The Icebucket worked as an oceanographic reconnaissance boat stationed aboard Glacier from 1955 to 1966. It completed 39 missions, exploring territories between Greenland and Antarctica to conduct cold-climate surveys and depth soundings, assist in rescue operations, and serve as a lifeboat for the Glacier.

The vessel has three sister ships that have been spotted on eBay over the last few years, although their current locations are not known.

"It is a good, strong workboat and kids will be very safe on it," says Dr. Joseph DeFranco, program leader. "It will be a great boat for training and education."

The society set to work on restoring the single diesel engine, installing heat and charging batteries.

In May 2001, Koether and Erhard took the boat out onto the water to present it to the public during Fleet Week in New York City. For the next five years it would spend its time tour-



After a christening ceremony that bestowed the name Arctic Scout, the former Coast Guard workboat was taken out for a shakedown cruise.

ing the country, from Mystic, Conn., to Staten Island.

"But there were problems with the boat," says Koether. "The generator quit after a while and the bilge pumps didn't work well. When we tried using it as a survey boat for youths to learn marine skills on, the engine would

make a lot of noise and shake badly."

In 2004 The Glacier Society faced facts — the boat would have to be rebuilt from the ground up. After asking around, Koether says Pilot's Point Marina in Westbrook stepped up to the plate.

"I knew Ben as a sailor and I thought this was a good project to take on," says Rives Potts, general manager of Brewer Pilot's Point Marina. "It took a lot of time, and a lot of commitment, but this group of people has been unwavering in their support."

Meanwhile, the Glacier Society began appealing to various companies to donate materials for the boat to bring her back to her original grandeur. Among those at the christening ceremony were representatives from Caterpillar

Marine Power Systems, which donated an engine; Whitecap Industries, which donated hardware and fittings; and Solidworks Corporation, which provided computer software for up-to-date navigational systems.

"We had the boat completely stripped," says Jeff Burnett, project manager. "The cabinetry in the galley is the only original [part], and it has been completely put together with donated materials."

Amy Thompson from Caterpillar Marine had the honor of cutting the ribbon and breaking the bottle of champagne over Arctic Scout, to a cheering crowd.

"I never got to see what it looked like before, but now it looks great," says Thompson. "It has been wonderful to be a part of this event and this undertaking for the purpose of educating youth."

While the Scout will be a familiar sight on Long Island Sound, Koether says she will also frequent other ports all along the East Coast. www.glacier-society.org ■



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