AMERICAN LEGION
Columbia Post 300

Ice Breaking Wicomico River 1994

Anthony Reed, Petty Officer Second Class



I served aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Red Birch 157' buoy tender in Curtis Bay Maryland between April 1993 and April 1996 as a Second-Class Petty Officer Storekeeper. During the brutal winter of 1994, the Wicomico River froze. As a result, the Department of Transportation requested our unit provide navigation assistance by attempting to re-open the shipping channel to help supply desperately needed fuel oil to the Eastern Shores of Maryland in the Salisbury area. The Red Birch was primarily designed to maintain aid to navigation buoys along Chesapeake Bay. I recall hearing the ice thickness of the river was around 3-4 inches thick. Understandably there were questions and some anxious concerns regarding situational readiness as the Executive Officer briefed the Captain and the leadership team of the potential risk and response assessment. We then proceeded with the tedious mission of navigating through miles of ice breaking on the Wicomico River shipping channel. The potential concerns of receiving haul damage was short-lived through the realization of achieving our goal to the delight of the Salisbury and Eastern Shore community.

