CAPTAIN STEVEN J. CRAIG
U.S. COAST GUARD RESERVE (RETIRED)

ALL PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR

The 1972 Alaska Grounding of the Coast Guard Cutter *Jarvis* and the Heroic Efforts that Saved the Ship

Hellgate Press Ashland, Oregon

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To the thousands of men and women, past and present, who have served in the U.S. Coast Guard—active, reserve, civilian and auxiliary—and to the families who gave them unconditional support.

"When you go to sea you are mostly on your own. If you run into serious trouble, there are no first responders to get you out of it. You either remedy the trouble or die. The Coast Guard Cutter *Jarvis* and its crew was assailed by a sailor's worst enemy—hellish foul weather. The author makes you part of the crew pulling, you into peril with them. Your ship is sinking and being shoved toward a rocky Alaskan shore where it will break up, sending you into freezing seas where your chance of survival is nil. Although human nature rises to heroic action in the worst situations, after reading this book you may never want to get on a ship again!"

—CWO4 Paul C. Scotti, USCG (Ret.)
Author: Coast Guard Action in Vietnam

"Captain Steve Craig has captured the core values of the Coast Guard: Honor in the explanation of our service, Respect for those who came before us and the challenge of each Coastguardsman to equal or exceed their accomplishments, and Devotion to Duty in the daily routine of being underway and the can-do-and-persevere attitude when faced with the challenge of saving their shipmates and the *Jarvis*. BRAVO ZULU CAPT Craig."

—Admiral Steve Day, USCGR (Ret.)

"Throughout history, the dedicated men and women of the United States Coast Guard have unselfishly risked their lives to save those in peril on the high seas around the world. Captain Craig has accurately captured the riveting, untold story of CGC *Jarvis* and its crew, unexpectedly finding themselves on the brink of disaster in the treacherous, unforgiving waters of Alaska. His writing encompasses the raw emotion and desperation of the crew, as we fought to prevent the ship from sinking and the most certain death of all onboard. His book embodies the unwavering, heroic efforts of the crew to save *Jarvis* and themselves."

—Commander Richard G. Brunke, USCG (Ret.)

"It is a fine piece of research and writing that should be required reading for anyone in a leadership position who is entrusted with ensuring the safe operations of a ship that operates in harm's way."

—Rear Admiral Bobby Hollingsworth, USCG (Ret.)
Second Commanding Officer of the CGC Jarvis

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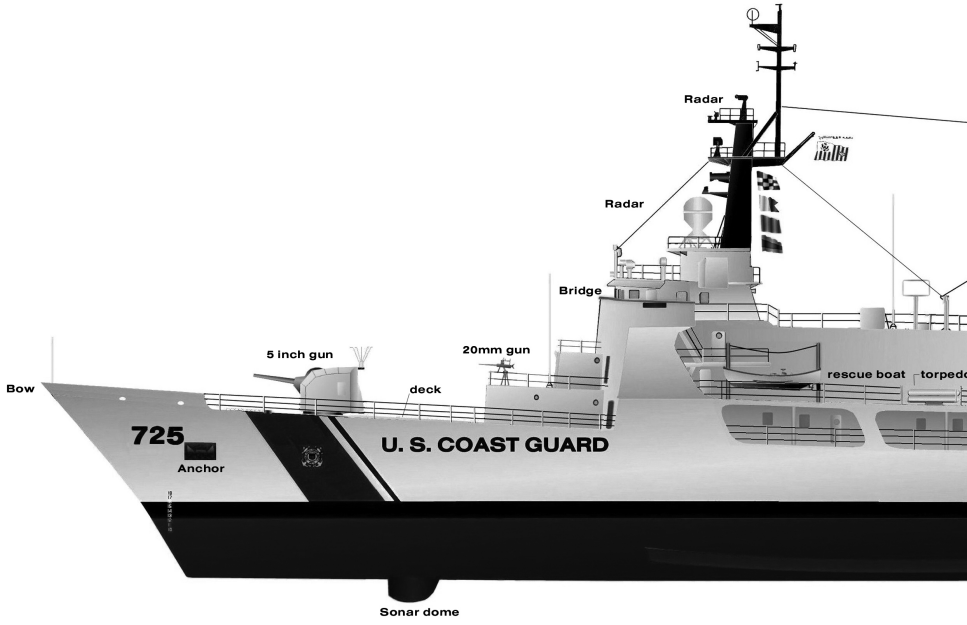
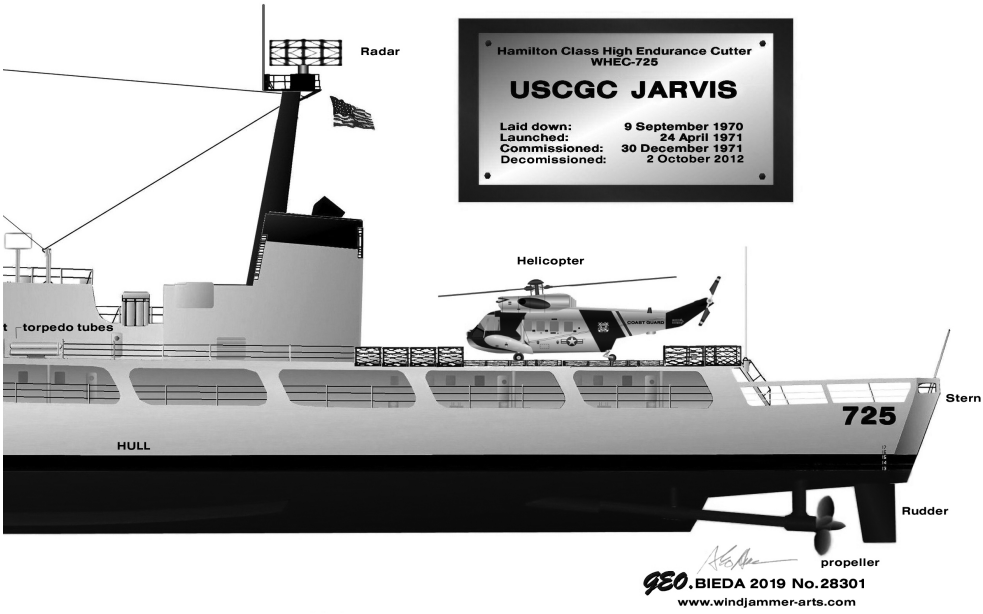


Built by Avondale Shipyards, New Orleans, LA

USCGC JARVIS WHEC-275



Displacement: 3050 tons

Dimensions: 378 ft. length, 43 ft. beam, 20 ft. draft

Main Machinery: Two gas turbines, two diesel engines, two shafts, 7,200 bhp., 28.4 kts.

Armament: One 5-inch, 38 cal. Mk30 gun; two 81mm Mk 2 mortars; two 50 cal. mg; and two triple-tube ASW torpedo launchers

Helicopter: One HH-52A Sea Guard

Complement: 20 officers and 158 enlisted

"*Jarvis* Log"

Anchored in the harbor
Unalaska by the sea
We spent Nov 13th
by the mountains for our lee

The quiet night woke us
as the ship began to roll;
the winds were blowing fiercely
pushing us to the shoal

Though we fought to hold her safely;
the winds our fearless foe,
We stood out the harbor
with a hole way down below

The crucial hours that followed
finally brought the cheerful sound
that the *Jarvis* was again seaworthy
and ready for homeward bound

Southward bound we set her
with every number of the crew
turned thoughts to homes and loved ones
on our island of Oahu

Two months ago, we left her
for the patrol in our 50th state;
now the time had arrived for leaving;
No-one foresaw our fate

Two hours out they caught us
these seas and winds we fear;
Our mighty ship was laboring
bad weather drawing near

Our damage control parties
gave their all high and low
but the water kept coming in
14 inches now below
Then a terrifying feeling befell us
the words came like a shout

An SOS sent thru the night
how long before we'd know
if help was coming to us;
40 inches now below

Not knowing what was happening
we feared the worst by chance
but our doubts soon were answered
as we heard our Captain's voice

"Our *Jarvis* may be crippled
but she's gonna make it through;
a Japanese vessel has heard us
by the name of *Koyo Maru*"

Certain precautions must be made
but do not be alarmed
We'll keep the *Jarvis* floating
safely and unharmed

Singing filled the ship that night
all ratings side by side
the spirit on the *Jarvis*
some simply call it PRIDE

An hour away from danger
our rescue vessel came,
a Japanese fishing vessel
Koyo Maru was her name

The rest is only history;
many tales will be told of that night;
did the spirit on the *Jarvis*
saved a Coast Guard ship that night

—QMC Jim Herman

PREFACE

The U.S. Coast Guard and America in the 1970s

IN 1972 RICHARD M. NIXON was President and Spiro Agnew was the Vice President. The average cost of a new house was just over $27,000 and the average price of a used home was $7,300. Gasoline prices were thirty-four cents per gallon, stamps cost eight cents, and milk was thirty-six cents a gallon.

The nation itself was in turmoil during the '70s; the Vietnam War was still three years away from ending, and race riots were hitting the streets of major cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago. Airline companies began the first inspections of passengers and baggage, but we all know how effective that was. China was known, universally as "Red China" and had maintained an isolationist posture until President Nixon visited the country that year. That visit was the beginning of the opening of China to the world. Communism had run rampant throughout the world, only to crumble a couple of decades later. The term, "Better dead than red," was often stated when referring to communism. I still remember the nuclear bomb drills in the first grade in Ontario, Oregon, where all the students had to drop beneath their desks upon hearing the sirens.

On the entertainment front, outdoor rock concerts, fueled by the success of Woodstock, abounded throughout the United States, quite often just as an excuse for thousands to get "high and loaded" in a group session. Future legislation and insurance requirements reduced these types of concerts to the history books of America. Released in 1972, *The Godfather* opened in movie theaters to huge audiences. The Home Box Office network, referred to as HBO, was launched to millions of television viewers. *The Waltons*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, *The Bob Newhart Show* and *M*A*S*H* premiered on

television networks. Dwayne ("the Rock") Johnson, Shaquille O'Neal the basketball star, and Cameron Diaz were born that year. The Summer Olympics in Munich observed the tragic massacre of eleven Israeli athletes, resulting in additional security measures enforced for other significant events or ceremonies.

Coast Guard

In those days the Coast Guard active duty personnel were all men, with the primary recruiting emphasis on bringing in minorities, and, a couple of years later, women. In an agreement with the Philippine government, hundreds of Filipinos served, proudly, in the Coast Guard as well as the U.S. Navy. When asked how the Coast Guard selected my fellow Filipino yeoman for enlistment, he said he just stood in a straight line with dozens of other applicants in Manila, and the recruiter went down the line picking every tenth person as Coast Guard, and the rest as Navy.

The draft was still in place, with many enlisting in the Coast Guard to avoid going to Vietnam. Most were good workers, while a few whined about the injustice of being in the service. The Coast Guard had two recruit training centers (boot camps): one was in Alameda on the west coast; the other located at Cape May, New Jersey. Later, Alameda was closed, leaving Cape May as the lone boot camp for the Coast Guard.

There were three primary advanced training facilities: one at Governors Island in New York City, another in Yorktown, Virginia, and the third in Petaluma, California. Later Governors Island was closed permanently due to budget and personnel issues. While students tended to get into various types of trouble in downtown New York City, those personnel problems disappeared when surrounded by dairy cows in the countryside of Petaluma or the fields of historic Yorktown.

During the early 1970s, personal computers didn't exist. "Whiteout" was an exciting discovery. If you were lucky, you had an IBM Selectric electric typewriter and plenty of carbon paper. Storekeepers maintained your pay records. Months could go by before a Coast Guard member was paid, should that record get lost. Contractors didn't mow the grass or paint buildings; Coast Guard personnel did. Television didn't exist on ships. Saturday night was a special night with pizza and beer to go along with the showing of 16 millimeter (mm) movies that had been checked out to the unit the previous week. Many

Coast Guard bases did not have manned security, let alone fences, to protect the personnel and the facilities. Coast Guard barracks often featured a common sitting room with one television and a beer vending machine. Bingo was quite popular at the larger bases, with the halls often filled with many of the nearby residents from outside the station. Petty officers in many Coast Guard rates (job classifications) could be transferred within the district by the District Commander. Due to some abuses and the need for better management by Headquarters, this personnel transfer policy ended in December of 1973.

The Pacific Ocean waters could be most treacherous, even in waters off the Hawaiian Islands. In 1973, while temporarily assigned on board the Coast Guard buoy tender *Planetree* out of Honolulu, I learned an invaluable lesson regarding the dangers of the sea. On my first sea voyage to the Big Island of Hawaii, we came upon a severe storm that night that rocked the 180-foot ship like a cork in a bathtub. As a young man from a landlocked community in eastern Oregon, I had never seen an ocean storm, nor realized the potential size of the waves. Curiosity got the better of me. I went topside to check it out, stepped outside, closed the hatch, and turned to see the front of the ship disappear into a huge wave, that sent me spiraling between the rails of the ship. I quickly grabbed the rails, then crawled back onto the deck and re-entered the ship, soaking wet. There I met a chief who very distinctly exclaimed, "What the f… are you doing outside?" Mortified, I explained I was curious, at which he spouted off a couple more lessons to learn by. Quite frankly, that was a lesson well learned without the commentary.

Farther north, just six months earlier, the CGC *Jarvis* had run aground during a violent storm near the Aleutian Islands, Alaska, resulting in a breach in the ship's hull. After temporarily patching the hole, the ship then proceeded toward Honolulu, only to be struck by a more violent storm— one that was described by the XO (Executive Officer), Commander White as "…the most tremendous seas I had ever seen with snow, wind, and rain."

Ensign James Richardson described the situation: "We were in seas thirty-five to forty feet high. A seventy-knot wind was off our starboard quarter. We were rocking with a tilt of about thirty-five degrees. Our bridge is forty-four feet high, but the tops of the oncoming waves appeared to be up to our feet."

The temporary patch failed, the engine room filled with water, the ship lost all power, and for one of the few times in Coast Guard history, the emergency message SOS broadcast was sent by a Coast Guard vessel.

In 1973, I was a young nineteen-year-old, working at my first Coast Guard unit at Base Honolulu. While there, I ran across another young man who was a crewmember aboard the *Jarvis*. He relayed the story of the near sinking to me and how the crew positively responded to the accident. As he said to me, "If anyone tells you they were not afraid, he is lying. There was no panic, but there was fear." Over the years, I have always felt a need to tell the story of the Coast Guard Cutter *Jarvis*, the Coast Guard's newest ship at that time, and the heroic efforts of the crew to save it from the treacherous and frigid waters of Alaska. From commissioning in 1972 to decommissioning in 2012, over 2,000 men and women would proudly serve on the Coast Guard Cutter *Jarvis*, the "Queen of the Fleet."

PART ONE

Chapter 1

"TRAPPED"

Point Barrow, Alaska
September 1897

> "A philosophical common sense is a great help in living in the Arctic regions, as elsewhere. If you are subjected to miserable discomforts, or even if you suffer, it must be regarded as all right and simply a part of the life, and like sailors, you must never dwell too much on the dangers or suffering, lest others question your courage."
>
> *—David Jarvis, March 16, 1898 log entry*

THE HUNT WAS on for bowhead whales, deep in the icy waters north of Point Barrow, Alaska. Buggy whips, clothespins, pie cutters, and carriage wheels, along with the extremely popular women corsets, were all profitable products made from whale bones. Nine whaling ships, including the *Alexander, Jesse H. Freeman, Belvedere, Orcas* and the *Rosario*, were convinced they had several weeks of good weather in which to complete their missions. On the morning of September 1, 1897, the temperature plunged, and a thick ice layer swept in from the distant sea.

The crew was not overly concerned, and many believed the nor'easter winds would arrive and drive the ice out. Benjamin Tilton, captain of the whaleship *Alexander*, had grave misgivings and became greatly concerned about the lack of discipline of the other captains, many of whom chose to party the hours away while waiting for the much-needed winds. Unfortunately, when the winds did arrive, it was too late. The sea surface was frozen solid. Those captains who previously were unconcerned now realized the precarious position of their vessels and crew members.

Weather in Alaska could be unforgiving, particularly in the winter months, and Tilton knew it. He realized their position near Point Barrow would mean twenty-four-hour days without sunshine, for months on end. Temperatures would drop to sixty degrees below zero; aided by severe winds, the ice could move with such force as to demolish a ship completely and with very little notice. The fact they only carried food enough to last a couple of more months further complicated the situation. If the *Alexander* were to survive the winter, the ability to escape the ice would not occur until later in the spring.

> "The difference between care and carelessness is slight, in Arctic travel, and the first let-up is sure to bring its reminder in the shape of a frosted toe or finger or a frozen nose. One must be on guard, and the slightest tinge in the nose or cheek must be heeded, and circulation started again by vigorous rubbing. Though somewhat disagreeable and painful, freezing these parts is not necessarily harmful unless too long neglected. It is the easiest thing in the world for a man to suffer severely in such a climate, but it is possible, by good care and attention, to avoid what one might call extreme suffering, and live there with only the unavoidable discomforts of the country, to which a man in good health sooner or later grows accustomed."
>
> *—David Jarvis's journal*

Fortunately, Captain Tilton was piloting one of the newer ships that was powered by steam as well as sail. For eighteen hours, Captain Tilton ordered the *Alexander* to ram the ice repeatedly. Slowly making progress, the *Alexander* finally broke free of the ice and arrived on open seas. However, none of the other eight whaleships had the same steam capability of the *Alexander*, and they were now trapped or destroyed in the Arctic ice. The ships *Orca* and *Freeman* were both crushed as both crews abandoned ship and boarded *Belvedere*. The *Rosario* was close to Point Barrow on the west side, while the other vessels *Newport, Fearless*, and *Jeannie* were at various distances close to Point Barrow. The whaleship Wanderer was known to be in the area; however, her whereabouts were still unknown. When realizing that no overland rescue expedition had ever been sent to Alaska in the dead of winter to rescue such a large number of individuals, the 300 stranded men grew more frustrated and

hopeless. Captain Tilton, understanding the seriousness of the situation, immediately set sail for San Francisco to relay news of the looming disaster.

Those men who had evacuated their ships managed to make it to other vessels that were still intact. However, 100 men could not be accommodated adequately on the other whaleships due to the lack of space. One solution included a nearby whaling station owned by Charlie Brower, Point Barrow's lead resident. An abandoned building, though in disrepair, was immediately overhauled to accommodate some of the men. However, there still existed a shortage of space, and a nearby resident, Ned McIlhenny agreed to use his building to meet the needs at this time.[1] Despite his family's business background, Ned had two primary interests: collecting biological specimens and seeking adventure. He pursued both by obtaining a commission from the University of Pennsylvania's Natural History Museum to retrieve samples from Alaska.

With the housing situation under control, Brower sent one of his assistants, along with Ned McIlhenny, by dogsled, to the ship Belvedere where he relayed the offer of lodging to those on board. Forty crewmembers volunteered and embarked on a treacherous sixty-five-mile journey through two feet of snow, in temperatures well below zero. Most of the men beginning this journey were well past middle age. A week later, the second group of sixty-five men arrived via dogsleds, with many frozen about the face and hands and several unable to walk.

Brower now turned his attention to providing food and heat for the stranded men. He soon began sending men out to collect driftwood along the beach, while also employing the local population to hunt for geese, ducks, caribou, and whatever else they could find. This food was stored below in his ice cellar, but there was a concern the food supply would run out for the stranded men remaining at this station. With the severe winter months approaching, hunting would soon come to an abrupt halt.

Conditions aboard the ships and at the whaling stations were deteriorating. With so many men crammed into the small cabin, the house would sweat, and in turn, would freeze, resulting in a foot of ice on the floor, thus cooling the environment even more. Morale was declining, with the whaling captains unwilling or unable to assist in maintaining discipline. Men were

[1] Ned's family was the infamous McIlhennys, founders of the popular food-seasoning sauce Tabasco.

selected to help with hunting for food but often refused, complaining of the bitter cold or claiming sickness. Further exasperating the situation, some of the crewmembers had taken to robbing the graves and cellars of the local community, searching for clothing or food. McIlhenny grew frustrated at the lack of order and honesty, warning anyone caught stealing would be shot.

On November 19th, the sun disappeared and would not reappear again until February. The onset of winter weather brought extreme temperatures, with many bitterly cold nights, some which were fifty degrees below zero. If help did not soon arrive, many of the whalers would perish.

October 1897

In late October, the whaleship *Alexander* steamed into San Francisco Harbor with Captain Tilton spreading the news of the trapped ships in the Arctic. Reports quickly spread throughout the west coast, notably in Seattle, a bustling maritime community. Almost immediately calls were made for a rescue to the remote region, despite the incredible odds of performing the mission. Company owners of the whaling ships, along with other organizations, and family members of the trapped crew, made passionate pleas to President William McKinley asking for immediate assistance in forming a rescue mission.

Three weeks later, the United States Revenue Cutter *Bear* arrived in Seattle. The *Bear* had just returned from a six-month trip in the Alaska region providing aid to local tribes and other ships in need. The *Bear*'s captain, Francis Tuttle, was on the deck, reading his latest set of orders, relayed on behalf of the President of the United States. The official papers outlined a mission to rescue of the 265 crewmembers in the Point Barrow area, who were at last report, in dire distress.

> "Report of the Cruise of the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Bear*: LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS. Treasury Department, Office of the Secretary, Washington, D.C. November 15, 1897. "Sir: The best information obtainable gives the assurance of trust to the reports that a fleet of eight whaling vessels are ice-bound in the Arctic Ocean, somewhere in the vicinity of Point Barrow, and that the 265 persons who were, at last accounts, on board these vessels are in all probability

> in dire distress. These conditions call for prompt and energetic action, looking to the relief of the imprisoned whale-men. It, therefore, has been determined to send an expedition to the rescue."

In further detail, the instructions outlined how the *Bear* would transit as far north as the icy conditions dictated, then put ashore three of its officers who would then proceed to Point Barrow, a journey of over 1,500 miles through the Alaskan territory.

Captain Tuttle was quite aware of the weather conditions in the Arctic region, where temperatures could plunge from fourteen degrees above zero to thirty-five degrees below, in just a few hours. Sunny weather could change just as fast to fierce storms as well. Those men selected would have to be physically fit and have knowledge of the Alaskan landscape. Despite it being 1897, much of Alaska was unmapped. Those few maps that did exist were inaccurate, at best. The three officers selected must be volunteers and realize it could take up to seven or eight months to complete the journey. Every member of the ship volunteered, including those who were inexperienced and unaware of the life-threatening challenges and severe weather conditions. After reviewing the crew for those best qualified, it was an easy decision for Tuttle to select his first choice: First Lieutenant (LT) David Jarvis.

David Jarvis was born in Maryland and appointed to the Revenue Cutter Service in 1881. Two years later, he graduated from its officer's training school and finished at the top of his class. After graduation, his primary duty was developing maritime activities in Alaska and the Bering Sea. It was during this period that he assisted in the rescue of several ships and a large number of individuals. An eight-year veteran of the Alaska Arctic, he had learned Alaskan Eskimo and the native dialects of every village along the Alaskan coastline. He was described as a "small, mild-mannered, seemingly placid but a man with an iron will and indomitable courage." Throughout his career, no matter how dangerous the task, he never assigned his men a job, without facing the same dangers.

The second man chosen was the *Bear's* surgeon, Dr. Samuel Call. His first experience in Alaska was serving as a doctor at an Alaskan trading post, a position which required traveling to various villages in extreme weather conditions. Despite the medical proficiency that could have rewarded him with a more lucrative job in the "lower 48," Dr. Call preferred the Alaskan wil-

derness, where his skills were much needed and were more rewarding than monetary gain. His selection to the team was crucial, as there surely would be medical needs along the way and on the scene in Point Barrow. Unknown to the other officers, Call also had another passion: photography. His skills would be invaluable in compiling a visual record of the trek to Alaska.

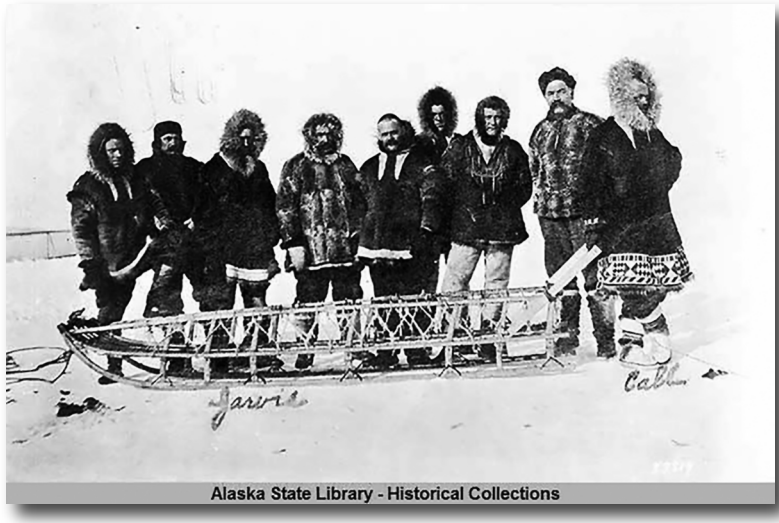
The third person chosen for the assignment was a newcomer to the *Bear*, Second Lieutenant Ellsworth Bertholf. Bertholf's background was colorful; he loved the sea, and at the young age of sixteen he was admitted to the U.S. Naval Academy. While seemingly quite intelligent, he had a side of him that disliked authority and loved to play pranks, which ultimately lead to his dismissal from the Academy. Learning his lesson, he soon applied and was accepted to the officer's training school with the Revenue Cutter Service, and shortly after he was assigned to the legendary ship *Bear*. Being chosen as part of the rescue effort was the dream of a lifetime, and he wasn't about to screw it up.

Once on the ground in Alaska, David Jarvis and his two accomplices were to proceed to two reindeer stations located on the Seward Peninsula. Once there, the plan was for the two stations to agree to give up their herds, and escort the reindeer to Point Barrow, where food provisions were running low. The owners, Tom Lopp, and local native, Charlie Artisarlook, were familiar with David Jarvis, and they would need to be convinced to donate their herds for the sake of saving the whalers. David was no stranger to reindeer; he had participated before in expeditions that brought reindeer over to Alaska from Siberia. Additionally, he was familiar with Point Barrow, where he had previously supervised the building of the whalemen's refuge station.

Winter 1897

On November 27th, the *Bear* departed Seattle en route to Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands. Loaded with provisions and barrels of salted meat, the *Bear* also carried a large contingent of noisy, sled dogs. Upon reaching Dutch Harbor ten days later, the ship took on more coal and purchased additional sled dogs for the upcoming trek.

On December 13th, the *Bear* made landing at the small village of Tununak where a small group of residents greeted the men and assisted with offloading of the supplies. There, Jarvis, Bertholf, Call, and a Russian dog handler known only as Koltchoff began their mission, with the provisions



David Jarvis, Dr. Call, and others. Photo courtesy of the Alaska State Library.

lashed to nine-foot wooden sleds. The first day proved to be quite arduous with the men having to cross a range of mountains 1,500 to 2,000 feet in height while herding a considerable amount of supplies, sleds, and dogs. Thus, they began their 1,600-mile journey, a trek that included many challenges along the way—harsh winds, freezing low temperatures, and rugged trails. Several dogs suffered fatigue, and finding replacements was difficult. When passing through the small villages, Jarvis attempted to hire local guides familiar with the region, to avoid getting lost or incurring a mishap.

Traveling through Alaska proved to be difficult, particularly when attempting to acquire sled dogs along the way. As David Jarvis wrote in his journal:

> "We would buy or hire dogs, only to have them run away and return to their owners after going but a short distance with us. Native dogs are very unlikely to remain with anyone but their owners."

Little more than two weeks later, they arrived at their first destination of St. Michael. After discussions with the local population, Jarvis and his crew were able to procure the necessary clothing required for the extreme temperatures they would encounter on their journey. However, the commander of the army post was alarmed at the exhausted status of Jarvis's dogs. Many of the dogs displayed cut and swollen feet, a condition that the commander felt would make it near-impossible for the dogs to complete the journey. But he offered a solution. As the military authority for the area, he would order Dr. Albert Kettleson, superintendent of the herd at Port Clarence, to provide enough of the strong reindeer to pull his sleds to their destinations.

Kettleson (Kittilsen) himself, had been educated at the University of Wisconsin and the Rush Medical College in Chicago and was living in Wisconsin at the time of his appointment in 1896 where he also served as assistant superintendent. As part of his contract, his permit allowed a limited private practice. As a pioneer doctor in northwestern Alaska, traveling was quite harsh in the cold environment, as he later wrote:

> "I am now, more than 200 miles from Port Clarence to call on a sick white child. A Lapp and I made the trip in five days with reindeer. We travel without tent or stove, hoping to arrive each evening at an Eskimo village and to sleep in a house; but one night we had to spend in the snow. This, however, did us no harm, as we are prepared for anything. We have sleeping bags made of reindeer skins; with them one can be warm anywhere. It is pleasant to travel with deer; on level surfaces they are much faster than horses, and they go through where it is so uneven that a horse wouldn't think of making it. Last year they did this, three times. So far, they have not got out of my control, although they have been able to smash two sleds for me."

Soon after, Kettleson would move to Cape Nome and lay claim to some of the richest gold claims in the area and later operate a saloon in Anvil Creek. While initially penniless when he first arrived in Alaska, Kettleson was now recognized as one of the richest men at Cape Nome.

Two days later, Jarvis departed for the next major destination, Cape Rodney, where they would acquire their first reindeer herd. Meanwhile back at Point Barrow, Charlie Brower and Ned McIlhenny were dealing with a sit-

uation that had gotten much worse. The snows had increased, temperatures had dropped, and thick ice now formed inside the building. To top it off, a number of the whalemen had come down with scurvy, a flesh-eating disease often resulting in death. Sanitary conditions were dismal, and a general lack of discipline amongst the crew added to the dire situation at hand.

January – March 1898

En route to Cape Rodney, on January 10th, Jarvis made his first contact with Dr. Kettleson, who would be asked to supply the first herd of reindeer needed for the expedition. Kettleson read Jarvis's orders to provide the reindeer, and immediately he agreed to the supply order and also to volunteer with driving the reindeer to the next destination. Jarvis and Call were now required to learn how to operate reindeer-pulled sleds versus dog sleds. The significant difference was in their handling and the speed of the reindeer; if any man were to fall off, they would never catch up to the sled.

Two days later, Jarvis, and his small contingent, departed for Cape Rodney with the reindeer, only to run into a fierce blizzard. They pressed on in the blinding storm, and if not for the natural instincts of the reindeer to seek the safety of a village, they all would have perished on the trail. Temperatures were now thirty below zero with snow blowing so hard, the men could hardly stand. They finally reached the village of Opiktillik where they were compelled to remain for three days because of the blizzard. But on the fourth day, Jarvis's patience had worn out and he ordered the party back on the trail. By now, the blizzard had actually grown in intensity with Jarvis and his men now having to don snowshoes to tramp down the snow in front of the dogs, and in some cases, dig a path for the animals. By late evening, the now cold and exhausted Jarvis and his party were forced to pitch their tents and wait until the next day to finish this leg of the trip.

The next day, they entered the village of Cape Rodney and obtained the second herd of reindeer from Charlie Artisarlook. The next phase of the rescue included a treacherous journey of at least a thousand miles. To assist further in this effort, Charlie agreed to lend himself and a couple of his herders who would lead the herd to Point Barrow. The next stop of the journey was Cape Prince of Wales to acquire the last herd of reindeer, owned by Tom Lopp.

After days of traveling through some of the worst weather yet encoun-

tered, including blizzards and temperatures of thirty degrees below zero, Jarvis and his group arrived at Cape Prince of Wales and then proceeded to Tom Lopp's house. Together with Charlie's and Kettleson's herds, the reindeer now numbered over 400 and would be required to traverse 700 miles over snow-covered mountains and across frozen bodies of water, with Tom Lopp and his herders leading the way.

The last 700 miles tested human endurance to the limit. The harsh, challenging weather conditions including blowing snow, blizzards, rough terrain, and short days, added to the misery. Jarvis and his fellow companions also had to manage the dogs and the reindeer as well. In his log entry, Jarvis describes the conditions:

> "We had ideal weather for traveling, clear and cold, the thermometer ranging from minus thirty degrees to minus forty degrees the whole way, and we had to keep moving. With plenty of food and plenty of driftwood along the beach, we were able to fortify ourselves against the cold, and by exercising care and paying attention to our noses and cheeks, we were not touched even in these sensitive places."

By mid-March, the supply of dog feed had shrunk, and during times of idleness, the dogs went unfed. The Alaska natives, as a rule, do not feed their dogs except when working, and now Jarvis and his crew had to do the same. The only feed the dogs received was a type of "flour" soup, which they received for two days. As a consequence, the dogs would eat everything not nailed down, including parts of the sled, or even more importantly, clothing. Anything edible, especially boots, had to be raised off the ground, out of reach of the dogs.

> "Upon telling one of the natives what we wanted, he simply told us to go into his ice house and help ourselves. No price was asked; no stipulation made. He saw what our needs were, and, so far as he was able, or as much as he had, he would help us gladly. It is refreshing to meet such simple, true-hearted people in time of need and to have dealings with them."
>
> *—David Jarvis, March 8 log entry*

March 26, 1898
Point Barrow

After 100 days and 1,500 miles, the relief expedition sighted the first of the marooned vessels, the Belvedere, and days later, the refugee camp. Of the 448 reindeer acquired during the trip, 382 survived. Lieutenant Jarvis writes in his journal:

> "We drew up alongside at 4 p.m. and going aboard announced ourselves and our mission, but it was some time before the first astonishment, and incredulousness could wear off and welcome extended to us."

Here Jarvis found outbreaks of scurvy, food shortages, and deplorable living conditions. Morale was non-existent, with many just waiting for death. The provisions of reindeer meat immediately provided the much-needed vitamins to offset scurvy. Jarvis took charge and organized baseball games and duck-shooting contests to counter the boredom and depression. He also imposed mandatory physical exercise by the crews through daily walking to and from the fields. The duck-hunting competition proved so successful that in one day, over 1,100 ducks were killed, helping add to the meat supply. Living conditions and morale greatly improved.

Jarvis immediately set upon improving the sanitation of the men and their clothing. Soap was increased to one pound a month, depending on availability. But challenges remained, as the water had to be melted from the ice, and the ability to accomplish this was limited. Jarvis continued his log:

> "It was difficult at first to get some of the men to make any effort to clean themselves; but later, after the majority saw they had the means to do it, and could, they united to complete the others and were quick to report any great neglect. It was not long before the general appearance of all was greatly improved. I instituted a system of daily inspection of the quarters and clothing by Surgeon Call and myself, and kept it up until the men were finally put aboard the *Bear*; and they were never allowed to lapse from the condition or order, discipline, good health, and cleanliness we instituted."

David Jarvis at Point Barrow. Photo courtesy of the Alaska State Library.

These activities and rules continued for months until help could arrive. There was not much else to do but wait for the ice break-up, and that would generally occur in late July. As Jarvis was in charge, he maintained discipline and arbitrated disputes where required. As he stated in his journal: "In the matter of exercising discipline and control, it was better that the men be divided into small groups, separated at good distances, as they now were, for so many idle men in one crowd would breed all manner of disturbances and troubles."

The weather continued to plague the region; in early July, a violent gale struck the coast, shoving ice against the beach and the *Rosario* whaleship. The crushing ice tore her keel away, took the rudder and sternpost, and put a hole in her bow. While it all happened in minutes, the crew managed to escape, and it was now necessary to lodge them at Point Barrow, with the other survivors. Nearby, the men of the Jeannie watched as ice floes were shoved repeatedly onto the beach, atop each other, to an incredible height of forty feet in some sections.

July 1898
Point Barrow

Jarvis knew the *Bear* would return and sent Bertholf to Port Lay, a 220-mile trek down south where he hoped he would be able to contact the ship. Upon finding the ship, Bertholf relayed Jarvis's message, that should the *Bear* not arrive by August 1st, the situation would be dire, and he would be forced to start sending the whalemen south along the coast and hopefully to safety.

Faced with the immediate deadline on hand, Captain Tuttle made repeated attempts, over a five-day time period to leave Port Lay, but the ship was turned back by the thick ice. Finally, on July 27th, enough open passages appeared, and the *Bear* departed in the late evening under the Arctic midnight sun.

The next day, the men at Point Barrow sighted the Revenue Cutter *Bear* approaching. James Allen, an engineer aboard the *Freeman*, would write:

> "How well I remember July 28, 1898! Smoke was reported to the south. Everyone was guessing what ship. Finally, the masts were sighted and then the yards. It turned out to be that grand old Revenue Cutter U.S.S. *Bear*, to me, one of the most beautiful ships that was ever built." As the *Bear* pulled next to the crushed hulk of a whaling ship at Point Barrow, one lone figure walked across the ice to meet the cutter. Lieutenant David Jarvis marched up the gangway, saluted the colors, and requested permission to come aboard.

Departing from Point Barrow proved to be a difficult task for the *Bear.* The ship was quickly surrounded by ice, trapping the vessel. Farther out to sea, those whaleships not severely damaged, were able to transit and set sail south, leaving the *Bear* behind until the ice broke up. With conditions improving, on August 16th, the Revenue Cutter *Bear*, packed with the whalemen from bow to stern, finally forced her way through the ice and into open seas.

September 1898
Seattle, Washington

On September 13, 1898, ten months after the men had been stranded in Alaska, the Revenue Cutter *Bear* arrived in Seattle. Astonishingly, of the 268 whalers and crewmembers aboard, 265 survived.

Captain Tuttle, Commanding Officer of the *Bear*, would write to the Secretary of the Treasury:

> "The officers and crew bore the monotonous isolation with the greatest patience, complaints being almost unheard of. The courage, fortitude, and perseverance shown by the members of the overland expedition is deserving of the highest commendation. Starting over a route seldom traveled before by dog sleds, with a herd of over 400 reindeer to drive and care for, they pushed their way through what times seemed impassable obstacles, across frozen seas, and over snow-clad mountains, with tireless energy until Point Barrow was reached and the object of the expedition successfully accomplished. I respectfully recommend that the heroic services of First Lieutenant D. H. Jarvis, Second Lieutenant E. P. Bertholf, and Surgeon S.J. Call should meet with such recognition as the Department sees fit to bestow."

Nearly four years later, Congress awarded LT Jarvis, LT Bertholf, and Dr. Call, Congressional Gold Medals for what President McKinley termed "a victory of peace." Additionally, one of the Coast Guard's most prestigious awards given annually is the David H. Jarvis Award for Inspirational Leadership.

Lieutenant Jarvis would later become captain of the *Bear,* succeeding Captain Tuttle. Returning to Alaska, Jarvis was instrumental in the rescue of dozens of miners trapped in freezing conditions near Kotzebue Sound, further enhancing his reputation throughout the country. In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him customs collector of Alaska. Three years later, he retired from government employment and retreated to the private sector. Ellsworth Bertholf would continue his impressive career in the Revenue Cutter Service. In 1915, the Revenue Cutter Service combined with the United States Life-Saving Service to form today's U.S. Coast Guard, a name suggested by Bertholf to President Wilson. President Wilson not only

took his suggestion, but appointed Bertholf as the first commandant of the new service.

A little over seventy years later, construction would begin at Avondale Shipyard, New Orleans, on the Coast Guard's cutter, the *Jarvis* (WHEC 725), named in honor of David Jarvis. Called the "Pride of the Fleet" by many, the *Jarvis* would participate in numerous search-and-rescue missions and fisheries patrols in the northern Pacific for many years after commissioning. But all of these missions would take a backseat to the events of November 1972 when, much like David Jarvis many years before, the crew would be tested beyond normal human endurance to save the ship.