



**Willet Edwin Thomas**  
**Fire Control Technician 2/C U.S. Coast Guard**  
**9 December 1952 – 7 December 1956**

Willet was born on 22 September 1932 in Northeastern Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He attended grades 1-6 at Joseph Brown Elementary School, grades 7-8 at Wilson Jr. High School, and grades 9 -12 at Frankford High School, all in Philadelphia. After graduating from high school in 1950, he worked at Morris-Wheeler & Company as a Draftsman/Structural Steel Detailer while attending evening classes in Architectural Drafting and Design at Temple University in Philadelphia for two years. He enlisted in the Coast Guard on 9 December 1952. His first assignment was aboard the Icebreaker *Westwind* (WAGB-281), homeported at Staten Island, New York. Willet served as a Seaman on the Deck Force and, while aboard *Westwind*, he crossed the Arctic Circle, becoming a "Bluenose," while the ship was resupplying bases in the Arctic from June to September 1953. From December 1953 to January 1954, *Westwind* broke ice on the Hudson River. In January 1954, Willet reported to USCG Training School at Groton, Connecticut, where he completed a five-month Gunner's Mate Course, after which he was assigned to an 83' Patrol Boat, WPC (83381), which conducted search-and-rescue missions in Atlantic waters out of Sandy Hook, New Jersey. Willet left the Patrol Boat in September 1954, and attended Fire Control School at Groton for 14 weeks. In January 1955, he was assigned sea duty again aboard Weather Patrol Ship *USCGC Rockaway* (WAGB 377), also homeported at Staten Island. *USCGC Rockaway* was used for law enforcement and oceanographic duties, and for search-and-rescue operations in the Atlantic. While Willet was aboard *USCGC Rockaway*, he served as a Fire Control Technician (Gunnery). His rate was considered that of a Day Worker which allowed him to man the Ship Service Store and work in the evenings as a Movie Projector Operator. Willet was discharged from active duty as a Fire Control Technician 2/C on 7 December 1956 in New York City, and assigned to the Coast Guard Reserves until 1962. He returned to Philadelphia to live there from 1956 until 1965, returning to Morris-Wheeler as an Estimator and later Salesman until 1969. He then worked as a Project Manager for Lotz Designers, Engineers and Constructors, Inc., in Philadelphia until 1991, and then marketed real estate for Hal Roberts & Associates for a year. He also was a Consultant and Secretary of Willet E. Thomas Associates, a Construction Management Company located in the Delaware Valley area offering real-estate services, from 1991 until 2002 while studying numerous real estate and other related courses at several schools including Temple University and Bucks County Community College. Willet married **Joy Alleen Powell** (born 28 March 1936) in 1954 in Philadelphia. After residing in Northeast Philadelphia from 1956 to 1965, they lived in Northampton Township (1965-1995) and Buckingham Township (1995-2001) in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and then moved to Lower Macungie Township, Pennsylvania. They raised three children: **Willet Walter**, **Suzanne Joy**, and **Amy Elizabeth**. Willet became very active in numerous professional, civic, religious, social, and community organizations. Willet's parents were **Willet Hicks Thomas** (19 March 1908 – June 1974) and **Grace Mae Tweedale** (23 July 1904 – 13 June 2003).



*USCG Westwind*



*USCGC Rockaway*