

The Officers, Directors and Members of  
US SAILING  
**are pleased to present the**  
ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL  
to

The Rescuers at Texas A&M University of Galveston  
"Open Team Race"

**for the rescue as follows:**

On February 23, 2002, an alleged suicidal man drove his minivan at a high rate of speed into Offats Bayou in Galveston Bay, Texas, landing and sinking twenty yards offshore in twelve feet of water. Inside the van were five passengers, six months to twenty-six years in age.

The van landed within thirty feet of the starting line of the Open Team Race Regatta, being hosted by Texas A&M University in Galveston, while the undergraduate sailors, coaches, and other volunteers were preparing a start. Approximately forty seconds later the non-English speaking driver emerged from the sunken van. Bilingual sailors ascertained there were still five occupants remaining in the van. Participants in the regatta dove into the sixty-degree water to the submerged van and made continuous, repeated dives, with visibility of less than twelve-inches, to try to rescue the trapped occupants.

Failing to get the doors or windows open, the rescuers called for rocks from shore which, along with an anchor, were utilized to smash the van's windows. The sailors spent approximately ten minutes recovering the five occupants, all of whom were unconscious. The victims were given first aid and CPR on shore by the sailor rescuers, and it was during this time that emergency vehicles arrived. All the victims were transported to the hospital and found to be in critical condition. Within two months, however, all five were released from the hospital with excellent prognoses.

Many of the rescuers received cuts and abrasions from the glass, but have recovered fully. Local emergency response professionals were amazed that no rescuers were themselves drowned, as the statistics for rescuers becoming trapped underwater are alarming.

For the rescuers' significant courage, seamanship, and compassion, and incredible spontaneous coordination, US SAILING is pleased to present the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal to the sailors turned divers, first-aid and CPR providers, and rescuers: Brence Bedwell, Jenipher Cate, Gerard Coleman, Jeff Daigle, Shannon Galway, John Gross, Kevin Gunn, James Loynes, Scott Marsden, Chris Noll IV, Spencer Ogden, Gretchen Poplinger, Luckey Reed, Robin Reger, Joe Richardson, Matt Romberg, Jake Scott, Bill Self, Gene Soltero, Laura Stover, Julie Svaton, Danna Svejkosky, and Andy Towles.

Ralph Naranjo  
Chairman, Safety at Sea Committee  
By Direction

**The Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal was presented May 11, 2002 at  
the Texas A&M University of Galveston graduating ceremony  
by James Tichenor on behalf of US SAILING.**

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Left to right: Jim Tichenor, Danna Svejkosky, Chris Noll, IV, Robin Reger, Jeff Daigle, Kelly Cunningham (Sailing team member) and Gerard Coleman (Team Director for TAMUG).

Teri Fowle, Photographer. Rescue Medal presented May 11, 2002 at the Texas A&M University of Galveston graduating ceremony by James Tichenor from US SAILING.

Chris Noll, III, Photographer.

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Left to right: Jim Tichenor, Robin Reger, Danna Svejkosky, Chris Noll, IV, Jeff Daigle, Kelly Cunningham, and Gerard Coleman.

Chris Noll, III, Photographer. Left to right: Jim Tichenor, Danna Svejkosky, Chris Noll, IV, Robin Reger, Jeff Daigle, Kelly Cunningham (Sailing team member) and Gerard Coleman (Team Director for TAMUG).

Chris Noll, III, Photographer.

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February 23, 2002. At the time both these photos were taken, only the baby was left in the van, the other 4 family members plus the driver had been taken ashore. These two photos were taken probably less than 30 seconds apart. The baby was brought to the surface a few seconds after I took the second picture. Lucky Reid hit the surface with a baby seat held over his head and a very blue baby strapped in the seat. At the time the baby was brought out, we were all shocked, I was not aware that there was a baby in the van and was totally unprepared for the sight. Dr. Timothy M. Dellapenna, Author and Photographer.

## Details

#1

A nomination for the  
ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL

It is an honor to present this nomination for the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal.

On February 23rd, 2002, Texas A&M University at Galveston was hosting a team-racing regatta on Offsets Bayou- an area of Galveston Bay. During the event a mini-van, carrying a total of six people, was driven at high speed off a dead end road - the van flew approximately 15-20 yards and sank in 9 feet of water.

The van landed within 30 feet of the starting line where the participants were maneuvering the 420's for a race start. The van sank almost immediately, and approximately 40 seconds later a man, the driver, emerged from the sunken van. Upon learning there were still 5 occupants remaining in the van, participants in the regatta swam to the submerged van and made continual, repeated dives in an effort to rescue the trapped occupants.

Failing to get the doors or windows open, the sailors called for rocks from shore to smash the windows- an anchor from the regatta motorboat was also used to smash the windows. With a water temperature of 60F and visibility of less than 12 inches, the sailors spent approximately 10 minutes successfully recovering the remaining victims- all of whom were unconscious.

The victims were:

- Rosalinda Martinez, age 26 years
- her daughter Linda, age 6 years
- her son Melvin, age 4 years
- Maria Rodriguez, age 21 years
- her infant daughter Brenda, age 6 months

After 5 minutes the sailors had rescued Rosalinda; by 8 minutes all but the infant Brenda had been rescued- she was strapped securely in a child seat. After a total time of approximately 10 minutes, baby Brenda was removed from the vehicle and brought to the surface. All five occupants were administered CPR/ first aid on shore, and it was during this time that emergency vehicles arrived.

All the victims were transported to the hospital, however baby Brenda was unable to be revived and was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. The doctors put the infant aside on a gurney, enabling them to attend the other triage victims. Seeing this, one of the paramedics went to the unattended baby girl, whispered a prayer to her, then kissed her on the forehead. At that time she started breathing.

As of March 25th, 2002, all five of the victims are out of intensive care- indeed all but Brenda are at home.

Many of the rescuers received lacerations, though none were seriously injured during this rescue. The two sailors who were most severely cut by the broken glass have made full recoveries. Local emergency response professionals are amazed that no rescuers were themselves drowned- the statistics for rescuers themselves becoming trapped underwater are alarming indeed.

It is important to recognize the sailing teams from the Texas A&M University at Galveston, the University of Texas, Texas A&M University (College Station), along with the non- student regatta participants, for their equally vital roles in the rescue efforts.

Several of the sailors have also been nominated for the Carnegie Lifesaving Award- a national award of merit.

In the process of effecting the rescue of the five victims from the submerged vehicle, every regatta participant demonstrated significant courage, seamanship, and compassion- greatly reflecting credit on sailors, humanity, and sailing itself.

Andrew McInnis

#2

I know the people rescued weren't in a boat, but does it matter in this case? This is above and beyond anything ...

I signed up for the SEISA email list so I could access messages about what happened and here's a posting from the District President (an undergraduate) who was personally involved. He's mentioned in the newspaper stories. It's got his phone number so more appropriate details can be acquired. To make it official, I hereby nominate all the rescuers involved for the Hanson medal. If there's more paper I need to push, let me know. If you want me to contact Jake for more complete names, I will, unless there's someone more official who makes a formal contact, anyway. Just let me know.

Gail Turluck MCSA Secretary

#3

SEISA,

I just wanted you to all know just how lucky we are to sail with people in our district. You never know who you are sailing with. This weekend we found out that there are several of us that need a congratulations, and a huge thanks.

At the team race classic in Galveston there was a major accident. Several of the sailors both graduates and undergrads jumped in to save 5 people. I just want to thank anyone that had anything to do with the rescue from the sailors that put the boats away to the people busting out windows. Personally I want to thank Gerard, Chris, Lucky, Jeff, Bill, Spencer, John, and Brandon. If there were any others that were working with the van I apologize because I don't remember everyone.

Anyone that is reading this I beg you to pray for all of the accident victims. God had us there for a reason on Saturday, and let's all pray that all of these victims pull through. As of Sunday all of the victims were in Critical condition. If you want the full story click on the two links at the bottom. Thanks again to all involved. Without us the victims would have perished. You are all blessed, and may God bless you.

Articles were published in the Galveston News paper.

In His grip,  
Jake Scott  
SEISA President  
Capt. TAMU Sailing

#4

I (Dr. Timothy M. Dellapenna) am the photographer, I am an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University at Galveston and we were using my C&C 26 Gunner Schooner, as committee boat for the races. I was on my boat, marking one end of the starting line when the van went in the water. I actually saw the van leave the road and hit the water. Imagine sitting on your boat around noon on a beautiful Feb. afternoon and you hear a vehicle roaring down a dead end street, you hear a boom and you look and a van leaves the road, with the engine still roaring and accelerating and it flies through the air and lands less than 50 feet from your boat. A back window blows out on impact, the van sinks and is out of site and for a few seconds it is almost out of mind. Then someone from the van hits the surface and the reality of the situation sinks in. One of the rescuers, Joe Richardson, was on my boat and dived in as soon as the van hit the water. Joe is on shore in red short in the photos, he is a Freshman and an EMT. He was in the water, on top of the van, before the father came to the surface. He was one of the first to start directing the rescue efforts and went ashore with the first victim to administer CPR and over saw that part of the rescue until the professional rescue workers arrived. This was an open regatta, so at least one of the rescuers was not a student. There were two other adults on my boat, myself and Ash Battey, I called a mayday to the Coast Guard and Ash called 911. Then, as the events unfolded I started pulling things off of my boat to help with the rescue, including an engine crank handle, a dive mask and a knife. The only thing which was really useful was the dive mask, it was used to free the baby.

Articles Online:

<http://media.www.thebatt.com/media>

[http://www.utexas.edu/opa/pubs/oncampus/02oc\\_issues/oc020403/oc\\_heroes.html](http://www.utexas.edu/opa/pubs/oncampus/02oc_issues/oc020403/oc_heroes.html)