

The Officers, Directors and Members of

US SAILING

are pleased to present the

U.S. YACHT RACING UNION RESCUE AWARD

now known as

ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL

to

DAVID and BARBARA LENSCHMIDT

FOR THE RESCUE AS FOLLOWS:

I met my husband David in 1988. He had received a heart transplant in 1987, but had remained a consummate sailor. He taught me to sail on his Buchan 40, but yearned to sail to Hawaii and searched for a larger, more seaworthy boat.

We bought the Lapworth 50 in Long Beach about six months after our July '89 wedding, brought it home, and began a hard 1 ½ years refurbishing it. By the time we left the dock in June 1991 she was renamed *Caprice* and she was gorgeous. She had all the modern gear available at the time, and months of paint and varnish. One of the last of the wooden race boats, she was designed for the Transpac, and completed that race in the 60's.

Our plan was to do the Ancient Mariners' boat race out of San Diego to Maui. To get there we opted to do a "feeder race" from Santa Cruz to Santa Barbara. So we pulled into the Santa Cruz Harbor one afternoon in June with a crew of five: my husband, David Lenschmidt; myself, Ray Duodell, Walter Knox, and Jim (last name forgotten.) Only David and Ray had any real sailing expertise, the others of us being of limited experience.

That evening we enjoyed the usual pre-race festivities and by fate wound up seated at a huge round table. Opposite our five were four team members of an Express 27 named *Light'n Up*. We chatted a bit before they asked the name of our boat. When we told them, they realized it was a large, wooden boat and very openly snubbed us for the remainder of the dinner.

It was a fun and foggy start, and a windy day for the race. My husband had been down that coast probably 60 or so times, and headed out to sea to take advantage of the wind. By evening we were around 20 miles off the coast in clear air, big wind, and could see ourselves slowly passing the large go-fast plastic boats that fancied themselves our betters.

It was around 9:30 and near to sunset when we saw the first flare. At the time we were on a broad reach and hitting 13 regularly on the knotmeter. The crew was having fun. But my husband, being a good boy scout (he'd been a sea scout, actually) immediately sent me to the radio. After another flare and some radio searching I heard just a few crackling words that let me know there was trouble out there.

So we changed our direction. The flares had come from much farther off the coast than we were. (We were off Cypress Point at the time.) As we sailed out the wind continued to increase and the seas got sloppier. I monitored the radio and finally made contact with the boat in trouble. It was a small boat, also racing, and had been dismasted. Of course along with the mast had gone the radio unit, but they fortunately had a hand held and thanks to our 60' mast we were able to talk to them throughout the rescue.

Once I had gotten sufficient information from them to be certain of their plight I radioed the Coast Guard. For the next four hours our principle duty was to keep in contact with both the troubled boat and the Coast Guard. The seas were bad enough that there was no question of our being able to do the boat any good directly.

By about 11:30PM we were close enough to the boat to try to see them. The seas were messy, around 10 - 12' with a close interval. It was enough to obliterate a small mastless boat from vision. And it wasn't an easy task getting a view of them. We sailed circles around them around them for 3 hours to do so. It involved lots of very wild jibing, a lot of noise, and some wear on our brand new sails. (To make the jibes we dropped the main and roller reefed the jib.) With each jibe I left the radio and joined the crew for the procedure. It was tough, wet work. But my husband was a superb skipper and we did well despite a lot of inexperience.

It took awhile to sort out the information from the boat in trouble. One woman aboard was very ill with boat motion and fear. The others were helpless as the boat did snap rolls in the heavy seas. Plus we had all shot into a south running current. As I interfaced with the Coast Guard they constantly questioned the rapidly changing coordinates. This little boat was heading for Mexico at 6 knots.

By about 1:30AM we had settled into a routine and the Coast Guard cutter *Pt. Heyer* was drawing near. An hour or so earlier I had realized to whom I was talking to when I asked the name of their boat. It was the Express 27 *Light'n Up* that had run 60 miles off the coast to lose their mast. I said to the fellow who was handling the radio:

"Do you remember the people who sat across the dinner table from you at the party?"

"Yea", he responded.

"That was us" said I.

The Coast guard finally showed up at about 2:00AM. We had spent about 3 hours circling the Express by then and were asked to stay another 1/2 hour while the Coasties passed a line to begin the tow. They didn't attempt to remove people from the boat. It was apparently much safer to take boat and crew together.

After we were dismissed we returned to racing. We pretty much flew down to the channel where we fell into the usual windless hole after rounding Point Conception. We finished around dawn. My husband made a few inquiries of the race committee about time credit, ("No problem", they had told him) and we all fell into sleep.

The next evening came the awards and we made some interesting discoveries. Firstly, we found that *Light'n Up* had indeed done that by leaving their auxiliary motor on the dock to spare weight. Without us they would have been out of luck and damned hard to find. And due to some glitch in the race rules, we were given no time credit for dropping out to help another boat. Six months after the race, the race officials sent a trophy acknowledging the rescue. We got to Hawaii with few other problems and while we were enjoying the islands, we were contacted by the Coast Guard. The Commander of the Oahu Coast Guard had been selected to give us the U. S. Yacht Racing Union Rescue Award. We met with him and a reporter and photographer from an Oahu newspaper. They did a nice article with a picture. The medal hangs behind me near my computer.

My husband was a remarkable sailor. He was a good leader and could manage a group of people with grace and firmness. The only time I ever heard him yell on a boat was when either the boat or a crew member was about to be hurt. As well as being a great manager, he had a thorough command of boat skills. He had sailed the coast alone in leaky boats and through huge storms.

Not every skipper could have pulled this off. It was a moonless night, the seas were ugly and we were forced to jibe about every 10 minutes. We were all pretty scared. Three of us had minimal experience. But David kept control of the situation and we got the job done. We had put ourselves at a lot of risk and did some damage to the boat in the process. (We damaged our heat exchanger which later almost sunk the boat.)

As far as I am concerned the ability to assist in this rescue put us in the "big leagues" of sailing much more than any trophy we ever took or competed for. It took a lot of guts and skill for us to do what we did and we were rarely that hard pressed in any race, even a deep ocean one. People need to be encouraged to help others. Amateur boat racing is as good a place to do that as any.

Barbara Lenschmidt

2/18/04

**The U.S. YACHT RACING UNION RESCUE AWARD was awarded to
David and Barbara Lenschmidt by the Commander of the
Oahu Coast Guard for this rescue event.**