

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

NINNESCAH RACE COMMITTEE BOAT

for the rescue as follows:

A houseboat and a Catalina 30 were rafted to each other for a dinner on Friday of Memorial Day weekend in 2000 using a single anchor on Memorial Day weekend in Cheney Reservoir, KS. With the air temperature in the low 50's and the water temperature in the low 70's a storm approached quickly at 11:30 PM raising waves to 4-feet and winds of 70-mph. A quick decision was made to break up the raft and the skipper of the Catalina 30, James A. Pierce, Jr., went forward to raise the anchor, but wind and waves hit suddenly that sent Pierce into the water without a PFD, leaving Marlys Frogge (new to sailing) and Pierce's 5 year old son on board. Sound and visual contact were lost immediately. Frogge issued a Mayday on the VHF radio.

Patrick Adams, had just arrived home at the lake when Jennifer Curfman was knocking on his other door relaying the Mayday. The location of the boats weren't given as Frogge was unfamiliar with the lake and there are no significant landmarks to help. Adams went to the dock and readied the Ninnescah Sailing Association's race committee boat (28' pontoon) along with Pat Coulter, Roy Schoenherr, Jennifer Curfman, and Terri Cramer and headed off. On their second attempted location, they saw the mast lights on the Catalina 30. Believing that those people were safe, Adams did some estimating about where the boats would have been anchored earlier based on the direction of the wind of the storm. They pulled up and shut off the motor to listen for sounds, and immediately heard, "Help! Help quick!" With their flashlights they could see, no more than fifty feet away, a head bobbing in the waves.

Curfman grabbed a PFD and line and jumped into the water to get to Pierce as quick as possible. The remaining crew pulled them to the pontoon boat and with the low freeboard were able to bring them aboard relatively easy. The rescuers wrapped dry clothes around the hypothermic Pierce.

Congratulations to the Rescuing Crew on the Ninnescah Race Committee Boat including Patrick Adams, Pat Coulter, Roy Schoenherr, Jennifer Curfman, and Terri Cramer for their strategic search pattern, technique of silent listening in the dark, rescuing and attending to the medical needs of the victim. US SAILING is pleased to present the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal in recognition of this event.

Bill Munster
Chairman, Safety at Sea Committee
By Direction

**The Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Award was awarded at the Ninnescah Sailing Association in Wichita, KS on
November 4, 2005 by Gary Jobson
behalf of US SAILING.**

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Left to Right: Patrick Coulter, Jennifer Curfman, Terri Cramer and Patrick Adams
Photo by Jim Carlisle

DETAILS:

From Patrick Adams:

Thank you for the opportunity to relate the circumstances of Jim's recovery. It may be that facts and circumstances of our experience can benefit someone else some day.

My lady, Terri Cramer, and I had dined in Wichita with friends that evening, and were driving west, home to the lake. I am the property manager for the Ninnescah Sailing Association, which leases land inside of Cheney State Park for our wet slips, boat yards, an Activities Center and a residence for me at Cheney Reservoir. (Safety Tip: It is good to have someone living around your Sailing Center who is familiar with and can access resources). On our way home, we encountered a pretty good storm front. The radio said the storm was producing 70 mph winds with quarter-sized hail in a little town west of our lake. So the front had hit the little town, gone over the lake, when I drove into it on the four-lane. There was terrific wind and rain, maybe a little hail, and I wanted to take shelter under an overpass, but all the other traffic had the same idea and there was no room under any of the bridges, so I crept on down the road.

It is a pet peeve of mine that our local media seems to "cry wolf" frequently, especially in the spring, when announcing bad weather. We do have severe weather here in the plains, and it bears watching, but our stations consistently exaggerate the situation so that folks might tend to become complacent. This particular storm was fairly limited in size, and isolated, but was fierce and cropped up quickly after sundown. As you know, Jim is a very experienced sailor, and lives at the lake near me. Without listening to a radio broadcast, he had no warning about the coming storm.

Jim had encouraged a friend of his into buying a big old houseboat. They had just commissioned it and the two couples were rafted together for dinner in a cove on the north side of the lake. Jim was the only experienced sailor among them. I guess that by the time he realized they were in for a blow, he felt their anchorage was inadequate for their raft-up, being shallow and confined. I suspect they had thrown out only the Catalina 30's Danforth, and bumpered the houseboat along side. They were just going to be there for dinner, so why not? When the weather came through, Jim cast the houseboat off, and leaving Marlys at the helm of the 30 with the motor running, went forward to weigh the anchor. It was then that the gust front came through at 70 to 80 mph, with torrential rain, in the dark, and the boat rolled Jim off the deck. (Safety Tip: put on a PFD on deck in bad weather). With the storm howling and the engine running, Marlys did not hear Jim yelling at her as the boat blew away from him. He could not catch it, I don't know if she had it in gear or not.

Jim told me later that he quickly lost sight of the boats, and in the chop became disoriented. There are no shore lights in the area he was rafted, but with the waves washing over him, and all the rain, he could not tell a bright light across the lake from a dim light nearer him down the shoreline. He said it was indeed everything he could do to tread water in the chop. He tried to make a float out of his jacket, but like a lot of stuff you read about, that didn't work. I believe my friend was in the water for at least an hour and a half. He had no reasonable expectation of being picked up, knowing that the only two boats on the lake that night had limited experience. He could not tell which direction to swim, nor could he maintain a constant heading in the water, as the waves would disorient him as he struggled to keep breathing. He is a very strong swimmer and a tough person. But I am sure Jim thought that night that he was going to die.

Terri and I arrived home, having driven through the storm. The rain had mostly quit and the wind was still blowing, but probably only 15-20 mph. As I came in my back door, I heard someone at the front. It was Jennifer Curfman, a friend of ours and daughter of a club member. She was about 18 then, a beautiful and brilliant girl, a certified Youth Sailing instructor with lifesaving training. She said, "Marlys is on the radio, she and Cooper are on Moby and the motor won't run. Jim is not on the boat. They don't know where he is." I told her I would meet her at the committee boat, a 28 foot pontoon we run races with. I grabbed my sail bag. (Safety tip: Always keep a bag ready to go when you need it.) Moments later Terri and I were on the dock at the pontoon boat.

There were a number of people there. One was our Wildlife and Parks Law Enforcement Supervisor, my friend Jody Schwartz. He has been involved with recovering several drowning victims over the years. When we heard how long

Jim had been in the water, we exchanged glances. Neither of us thought that we would find him alive. Our Club had provided the park officers with mobile VHF radios. Usually when they need a boat, they call me or the county Sheriff. Other sailors had gathered around the dock. I asked Jody to monitor his VHF on shore, and I loaded everybody on the pontoon and headed out. (Safety Tip: Always keep your rescue craft gassed up and ready to go.)

It was still lightning almost constantly, but the wind was "puffing down" and the chop was manageable, maybe two feet, but confused, not rolling down the lake. I told the crew not to hang on to the aluminum railing and awning of the boat due to the lightning, they were quick to comply.

I got Marlys on the radio. (Safety tip: make sure your crew at least knows how to use the radio.) Being new to the lake, she really had little idea where they had rafted up for dinner. She was in pretty good shape as I talked to her, considering she was very afraid of the water, had just been through a tough storm, and she was on a disabled boat with a five year old boy and she had lost her man overboard. Get this: When Scott Vickers, on his shakedown cruise on his big old houseboat, found out Jim was overboard and Moby's engine was out, he asked his wife to motor around in a circle, and jumped off his boat into the storm and swam to Marlys on the 30 to help her. Scott is a stud. He was able to help her with the lights and radio, but the engine was no go.

On my way out of our slips at the club I determined that Marlys and Cooper were physically OK, with no motor, probably aground. The only rocks on our lake are a few jetties and the dam, so I figured they would be OK. I told here to turn on all her mast lights and I would look for Jim and get her later.

I know a few of Jim's favorite anchoring spots. One is near our club, and I made a quick run towards that cove. The frequent lightning made that trip short, as a flash revealed no boat there, even at quite a distance. So I turned and headed across the lake, and fairly soon made out mast lights, which I knew must be Moby. I had Marlys blink the lights to be sure I had her on visual. As she was not on the lee side of the lake, I figured she must have run aground not far from where they had been anchored, and so I felt I knew about where Jim had gone into the water. I calculated roughly where the wind would have taken him, and ran the boat to that area. I told my crew to be quiet, and listen. I shut the motor off and we listened. It was on the first or second stop that we heard a faint, "Help! Help quick!"

And with our flashlights we could see, no more than fifty feet away, a head bobbing in the waves.

My crew being enthusiastic but untrained, in an instant all manner of lines, throwables, and a Lifesling were flung off the boat. I should have anticipated that but did not. (Safety Tip: Don't throw crap in the water too early.) With all the lines in the water, I dared not restart the outboard. Jennifer said, "I can get him." In an instant she shucked off her pants, put on a life jacket, grabbed another, and dove in. She reached him very quickly and had him back to the boat right away.

We got him on board easily with the pontoon's low freeboard. We determined that he was unhurt, very cold, but alert. We covered him with our jackets, and I assigned Terri to keep him awake and warm as possible. I asked him if we should return him to shore or go get Marlys and his son. He said he was good to continue to the other boat.

I then had the pleasure of calling Marlys and telling her "We have Jim on board and he is going to be alright". It was a defining moment in several people's lives. Our success was due to a number of factors, primarily Jim's incredible swimming endurance, but secondly, my pure good luck in guessing where he might be in the lake.

We reached Moby. I don't know if Scott was already back on his houseboat, or if we ferried him. His wife Lisa had done a great job of keeping that old boat in the area and off the shore, she could hardly see out the windshield. They had no idea where on the lake they were, so they followed us back to our Club after we pulled Moby off the mud. Our crew got on Moby, discovered her anchor and rode on deck, with a rafting line overboard fouling the prop. I pulled her free, with a man at her helm, we made a little convoy back across the lake.

On shore, Jody had summoned EMS, who checked Jim over at my house and declared him OK. I drove Scott and Lisa back around the lake to their truck, and finally we all went home and went to bed.

That ends my recollection of the evening. The club members who were with me were Pat Coulter, Roy Schoenherr, Jennifer Curfman, and Terri Cramer. On the houseboat were Scott and Lisa Vickers. Judy Schoenherr made initial radio contact with Marlys from her boat in the slips.

As far as correcting Pam's hearsay account, it is pretty good... The committee boat operated perfectly, the club does own another speedboat that was not operable that night, and I don't know that I would have taken it over the pontoon anyway. The pontoon has low freeboard, and an awning you can put people on for a good view. There are a number of shore navigation lights on the lake, none of which can be seen during a thunderstorm. As I mentioned, the Catalina 30 was not first on my "itinerary", we did not approach that boat until we had found Jim.

I hadn't been drinking because I had to drive home. I damn sure had a drink afterward. I am flattered that Pam told you about the deal, although as I stated, my success was in large part due to dumb luck, at least I knew how to start a boat, and was not afraid of the lightning when somebody was treading water alone in the middle of the lake. Living out here and working around boats and the water and the weather, I am used to dealing with stuff that other people may not be.

Jim has always been a good friend to me, and a wonderful neighbor. He introduced me to the Virgin Islands, scuba diving, yacht racing, and has helped me in many ways. Without question, he would have done the same for me in a heartbeat. But I could have never treaded water as long as he did.

Jim Pierces Edits:

50 MPH Wind. 72 water temp. Not wearing PFD. Rafted with a friend on a powerboat. They were blown into shore as well. Jim went forward to clear up lines up forward wave hit and tossed him over. He shouted to GF and she couldn't hear him. The line was blown over and wrapped around prop making GF helpless. In water over 1-1/2 hours. Jennifer Curfman jumped into water to get to Jim.

Nominators Name: Pamela S Parks
Event Name: ... Memorial Day Weekend 2000
Sponsoring Yacht Club: Ninnescah Yacht Club
Date of Event: May 2000
Event City: Cheney
Event State: KS
Date of Incident: Sat., Mem Day wkend
Body of Water: Cheney Reservoir
First Victims Name: James A Pierce, Jr
First Boat Name: Moby
First Boat Length: 30
First Boat Make Model: Catalina 30
Rescuing Skipper: Patrick Adams
Rescuing Boat Make Model: Pontoon.... Race committee or alt.
Rescuing Boat Length: ? 16
What was the nature of this incident: Man overboard
Did a Mayday call go out: yes
Who responded: after 10=15 minutes other members of Ninnescah Yacht Club
Was any injury sustained by the victim: Y
Can your story be published: Y
Can you provide articles about this event: ??N
Was a PFD worn: N
What position was the victim working before they went in: Skipper, crew
Was this day or night: night
Wind speed: 30-5
Wave height: 4ft-0
Water temperature: 73
Air temperature: 50's?
How much time did the victim spend in the water: 1 1/2 hours
Did the victims boat lose site of the victim: Yes, entirely
What search pattern was used: Read above

Was electronic MOB function used to locate the victim: N

Was a rescue swimmer put in the water: Y

Did the victim have a strobe light or whistle: N

What color clothes were visible above the water: ??light.???

Was the victim able to help in the recovery: N

Was a Lifesling aboard: N?

Rescuing Crews Names: Patrick Adams and others from Ninnescah Yacht Club

What happened: First, the reason I don't know a lot of details is because I wasn't involved in the rescue. I heard at the time it would be publicized, but apparently nothing was done.

So... Late on Sat night of the Memorial Day weekend, in 2000 (I think) My brother, Jim Pierce, Jr. and his SO and son were anchored out with friends in another boat in a shallow cove on Cheney Reservoir. A storm approached and Jim became concerned that they weren't anchored deep enough to handle the waves, etc. He summoned Marlys, then his SO... who is deathly afraid of the water!!!... to steer while they motored to a safer location. I believe they had already pulled the anchor and he went forward to secure things. It was 1130 at night. Winds were high and lighting was all around. (Helped him see)

Jim is a VERY experienced sailor. He raced or was backup crew for me in 1968 Sears cup when we raced against John Kolius.... Yep, Kolius won the big prize, but we were first to the first windward mark! Jim has continued to be involved in racing and race and regatta management since then. He ran the Olympic Speed Trials supported by Bill? Koch on Cheney Reservoir a few years ago.

After Jim went to the foredeck in his jacket, shoes, shirt and shorts, he was washed overboard with the anchor. It was several minutes before Marlys realized he was no longer on the boat. (Wind, rain, dark... etc.) This was her worst nightmare. She gathered her wits, went into the cabin and got his then, 5 yr old son (whose mother died from a brain tumor when he was 5 months old..) up from sleep and sent him out to steer the boat. She went in and spent 10-15 minutes of utter frustration on the radio with her May Day call. Being inland, early season, no one really monitors the radio. Finally someone heard her call, but the RC boat was out of commission. Patrick was not home (close to the yacht club). Patrick was the YC manager and knew the ropes of the various boats they had. There are no set shoreline lights. The only identifying lights were headlights of a car parked onshore. Little did the car owner know they were the only visible mark for the location of the event.

After the call was finally received, Patrick had just arrived home, midnight or so. He was summoned and came to the Yacht Club and they got the one functional boat underway with some crew to help spot the victim. By then, Marlys and Cooper, Jim's son, had washed into a sand bank since the prop had become tangled with the anchor line. They were first on the rescue missions itinerary. They were verified to be safe as the seas had died and they were left in place. The race committee head into open water, to find a victim, or not, no one thought they'd find Jim.

Jim was in cold water... maybe low 70's, though I wonder. At least survivable cold. He had tried to inflate his jacket for floatation and said it was exhausting and not useful and he let it go. He kicked off his shoes. For some reason, he took off his shirt and tucked it into his pants.

Patrick and his solemn crew from the Yacht Club set about their final mission of the night. Find Jim. Patrick realized that the only way they'd find him was by sound. It was still pitch black, but the storm was gone and the lake was calm. Patrick motored to the place he thought Jim would be. I'm not sure about the headlights used for location... He explained to the crew that they would turn off the engine and be totally silent. Everyone was to listen for Jim. I have heard 2 versions of what happened next. One is that they heard Jim say 'hurry', the other is that someone saw his T shirt floating on the water. At this point Jim had been in the water for 1 1/2 hours. He was very cold and unable to get himself onto the rescue boat. Someone got into the water to get him up into the rescue boat. EMS by then was standing by... I think they warmed him, but he was ultimately sent home. I don't know details about the recovery of his boat, Marlys and Cooper, but all are fine to this day.

At the time, Jim was the managing partner of 3 siblings purchasing a boat in Germany to have and charter in the BVI's. He was the surviving parent of a young son.

Many are truly thankful for his rescue and survival. He sent us all an Email the day or so after. His usual Emails are 1-2 words and never more than 2 lines. The family heard about this via Email, thankfully. This one was a long paragraph entitled, "swimming."

What type hypothermia included:

Hypothermia... unknown degree by me... He says temp wasn't taken. He is asplenic, making him susceptible to numerous infections. He did have sinus problems for a bit following this, but required no intensive medical care...LUCKILY. I'm a doctor... that's why I sail much less than my brothers.

How did the victim get hoisted onto the deck: Lifted by rescue personnel