

The Officers, Directors and Members of

US SAILING

are pleased to present the

ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL

to the crew of

WAR BABY

FOR THE RESCUE AS FOLLOWS:

MIRACLE AT SEA

Midnight Rescue of Man Overboard in Rough Seas

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June, 1990. The 27th Sailing of the Newport to Bermuda Yacht Race. I was aboard Warren Brown's 61-foot sloop War Baby (formerly Ted Turner's Tenacious), winner in record setting time of the Marion to Bermuda Race in '89. Warren was not out to break records in this race – War Baby was heavy with gear for her next Arctic expedition, scheduled to leave Bermuda five days after she crossed the finish line. For that reason she was entered in the Cruising Class (a new division as of this year).

The crew was an interesting assortment of ages, sexes and nationalities. Twelve men, and three women ranging in age from 21 to 74. Half the crew were Bermudians and the other half was made up of an international mix from the U.S. , England , Australia , Scotland and Canada , topped off by a dash of Chile in the form of a charming young man named German (pronounced Hermann) Schacht with a smile that lit up the whole boat.

The fourth night out from Newport around 2300 hours, I was in my bunk. I'd given up on sleeping, and resigned myself to listening to the sounds of War Baby's hull smashing through the heavy seas. A thunderous crack rang out over the other sounds. This was not the bow plunging down another chasm and into another wall of water. This had to be serious. And it was. The pin had broken in the block for the running backstay.

Time and again during our passage, I was amazed at the ability of the crew to quickly make repairs at sea which I would have thought required waiting for a safe harbor and still waters. But then I'm a

photographer, and the past three days had been an eye-opener for this novice sailor. The resourcefulness and stamina shown by this crew have constantly amazed me.

Now here we were in heavy seas on a pitch-black night in driving rain, with no running backstay on the starboard side. But they did it again. In a remarkably short time, we were forging ahead with a new block in place.

Shortly after midnight, I was finally drifting off to sleep in spite of the tumult of sea and storm.

A shout from Warren Brown snapped me awake, and the words went straight to the pit of my stomach: "MAN OVERBOARD!"

The night was dark and seas were rough. When Warren had reviewed the Man Overboard drill in Newport, I remembered his saying that the chance of finding a man overboard in such circumstances were probably nil.

People were scrambling back and forth through the cabin, locating the searchlight, rushing up on deck with life preservers. Warren was on the radio calling all ships at sea and giving our position. No-one knew who the man overboard was. In the dark and turmoil, there could be no stopping to figure it out. The four of us who were below deck decided to stay put—any more crew on deck would have been too many. We readied ourselves for what we hoped would be the arrival of a man who would need a lot of T.L.C. One of our crew, Lesley Butterfield, a physiotherapist, supervised the gathering of supplies—dry clothes, towels, hot water bottle, duvets, first aid kit.

On deck, the sails were down and Warren Brown, Jr. had taken the helm and circled around. In a very few minutes, a miracle occurred—the searchlight picked up our man. He appeared to be floating on his back waving his arms. But the crisis was far from over—crewmember Kevin Horsfield, a trained lifeguard, was afraid that the slow flapping motion was that of a drowning man. Kevin put on a life preserver on a 30-foot tether. But after swimming a few feet Kevin realized that the rope had become hopelessly snarled, and he continued on without it. The man he found in the water was Jim Leonard. Jim, a Scotsman, had sailed with Warren many times. Although a professional sailor, Jim had only learned to swim a few years earlier, and then only in the quiet pool, not encumbered with foul weather gear and boots, and battered by waves. Kevin got his arms around Jim and started back to the boat, but the wind was taking War Baby away from them. Warren Junior motored the boat around in a circle, while the searchlight was kept on the two men in the water. The reflective tape on the life preserver did its job. The two men now found themselves near the bow of the boat. Kevin tried to get a halyard around Jim, but the waves prevented him. Now a new threat presented itself—the plunging bow of the boat was coming down closer and closer to the two men. Jim raised his arms in an effort to keep the bow from crushing him. As he did, three of his fellow crewmembers grabbed his outstretched arms and pulled him up on deck. Seawater shot up from his stomach as he was hoisted up. Kevin, with incredible strength that comes to some in emergency situations, pulled himself up on the deck.

Warren Senior is a caring and generous man who is much admired by all who have served with him. Safety has always been his highest priority. He had tears streaming down his cheeks when Jim was brought aboard.

Once safely below deck, Jim's delightful sense of humor hadn't deserted him, and he wondered aloud why, when he was so happy to be pulled onto the deck his rescuers looked so gloomy and serious? He thought that broad grins would be more appropriate to greet his safe return.

However, after being stripped, towed off, put in dry clothes and installed in a bunk with duvets and hot water bottles, he soon became much more subdued as the anticipated shock set in. Lesley sat by him monitoring his vital signs for hours, finally dozing off herself near dawn.

The next day Jim was found that he could feel the effects of whiplash in his neck and bruises around his chest, but other than that he was in remarkably good shape, and was able to give us his account of the episode.

He had gone forward to secure a loose reaching strut. He snapped his harness to a lee rail stanchion. A big wave swept over the bow and when it passed, Jim realized that the harness strap was between his legs. Afraid that if it remained in that position he would, as he put it, no longer be able to father children, he was working to reposition himself when a second wave hit. The next thing he knew he was somersaulting through the air. He had a sensation that he was freefalling—then he realized to his horror that he was free. As he somersaulted, he believes that his foot kicked his harness clip, releasing it. He managed to grip the lifeline as he went over, but "hanging onto a boat moving at eight knots in 32 knots of wind in breaking seas was like hanging onto a freight train at 40 m.p.h." The bow went up, and he realized that when it came down, it would come down on him so he let go. As he slipped by the helm, his garbled cry for help was heard by German who was at the helm at that point and sounded the first alarm.

Jim tried to swim toward the Man Overboard Module which had been thrown overboard (along with cushions and anything else that would float and serve as a marker), but the wind was blowing it away from him, so he opted to swim towards the boat. This proved to be too strenuous, and he decided to lie on his back and try to stay afloat. His foul weather gear did not have flotation, but air was trapped in the chest area and kept him from sinking. But just barely, because at the other end his boots were pulling him down.

When asked the inevitable question of whether he was afraid at that point, Jim said that he had complete faith in Warren and never doubted for a moment that he would get him back.

However, when Kevin swam up to him, and Jim said, "Where's the rope?" and Kevin announced that he didn't have a rope, Jim said, "Oh, (expletive deleted)", and admitted to a moment of doubt.

As of this writing, Jim is back visiting his family on his farm in Wales, and will be rejoining War Baby shortly and continuing on with her for her Arctic Expedition.

Warren Brown, Sr. issued this statement upon our arrival in Bermuda: "Due to the immediate action of all the crew, both those above and below deck who acted in a seamanlike and practiced manner in such an emergency, War Baby was successfully able to retrieve its crewmember on a very black night under adverse conditions. As owner and skipper I am very proud of their response."

Congratulations to Warren and his capable crew for a job well done—for a miracle at sea.

Francie Manning, a professional photographer, is a Bermudian who now lives and works in Palos Verdes , California .

Hamilton , Bermuda

June 23rd, 1990

To:

The Royal Bermuda Yacht Club

The Cruising Club of America

Dear Sirs:

I have given Mr. Barker a summary of my crew's reactions to the man overboard the other night. Inasmuch as my son was handling War Baby's maneuvering during this period, I was attending to the radio and plotting our position. I carry on board GPS SatNav and Loran C. The GPS was temporarily off the air, as was the Loran, due to ground waves, and the SatNav had not had a fix for some time, so my position was not completely accurate. There were several white lights in sight from other boats around me, and I was broadcasting on Channel 16, asking these boats to stand by if we were unable to locate the man overboard. I had no acknowledgement from anyone. I made this broadcast at least six times. I also broadcast on SSB on the Bermuda Race frequency, but again received no acknowledgement. We had many thunderstorms around us, and a terrific amount of static on the radio, plus about three Spanish conversations going on at the same time, so it is possible that no one heard us. On the hour, I broadcast again on 16, advising that I had had a man overboard, and received one acknowledgement from a Bermuda Race competitor asking me to repeat the location of my beacon. In case our man could not be found, I had flares ready to be lit, but held off as I felt they might blind the crew in the search; I regarded this as a last resort, and consider that it was the right thing to do.

What I am concerned about is that I believe our present system of reporting is good in one sense, but in another very dangerous. War Baby was in contact with Bermuda on two occasions regarding boats that had damage, through Sound Wave 2 through a local ham operator; I advised re Toscana and Kittiwake. However, I was disturbed that I could not reach a single boat on 16 VHF when I had my man overboard. Has the present system led all boats to turn off their radios except when it is their turn to report? If so, I think we are leading ourselves into a dangerous situation when one needs immediate help and not long-term help, e.g. if the boats around me had heard me on Channel 16, at least they could have come to my assistance if I was unable to locate my man overboard, and set up a search pattern.

I think this situation should be looked into.

Respectfully submitted.

Warren A. Brown, Sr.

Owner/Skipper War Baby

STATEMENT

About midnight on Monday night, beating to windward in rough conditions with about 8 knots of hull speed, we were unfortunate in having two large waves crash over the foredeck, the second of which took one of our crew overboard.

Due to the immediate action of all crew, both above and below decks, who acted in a seamanlike and practiced manner in such an emergency, War Baby was able successfully to retrieve its crewmember on a very black night under adverse conditions. As owner and skipper, I am very proud of their prompt response and positive actions, without which it was extremely unlikely that we would have recovered our man in sufficient time.

I am very pleased with Warren Brown, Jr. of Bermuda in handling the direction of the pick-up. However, all of us wish particularly thank Kevin Horsfield of Bermuda , who was instrumental in the recovery of our man overboard. Inasmuch as the man overboard being hampered by heavy-weather gear, was unable to reach various safety devices in the water, Kevin personally went over the side, at great risk to himself, to take a life preserver to our overboard party. With Warren Jr. ordering the maneuvering of the boat, and Kevin who succeeded in reaching the man overboard, we were successful in bringing them both back on board.

We owe a debt of gratitude for a rescue well done.

Warren A. Brown, Sr.
Owner/Skipper War Baby
Hamilton , Bermuda

BY JIM LEONARD, MAN OVERBOARD 01.05 HRS. JUNE 19, 1990

Just after 0100 hrs, the reaching strut was reported loose on the port leeward deck. I was wearing a Henry Lloyd offshore jacket with built-in harness. I removed my short lanyard (three feet) from my pocket, clipped it on to my harness, and moved forward to work. The seas were bouncy and wind about 32 knots. On the lee-side, I faced forward and clipped onto a stanchion base, turned aft, and was re-tying the reaching strut, when the first wave rolled over. No problem; I was washed aft about one-foot and checked by my lanyard. I moved backwards (forward direction) that same one-foot and carried on working. At this point, my right foot was getting a grip on the lee rail stanchion area. I could easily have pushed my caribine hook open, as this has happened before! Another, bigger, wave came aboard, with War Baby slamming hard into the trough. Now a full wave picked me up and somersaulted me overboard. I now knew I was no longer clipped on, but managed to make contact with the lifelines. Hanging on, I could still see the lights from the crew through the spray and water. War Baby was still moving at over 8 knots, and the sensation could only be akin to hanging on to a train at 40 mph. Once again, we were lifted off a wave, and sure enough War Baby slammed right down on top of me. I then became part of the surf, and shot off to leeward. I was sure I must have been seen, and although badly winded, I managed to shout. I didn't hear any response, but relaxed knowing they would be back. Warren has taken the crew through the MOB procedure many times, and I wasn't worried. All I wanted

was to be in the right place when they returned. I saw the man overboard module light which was released, only she gybed. They seemed a long way ahead and I was concerned about the compass course they would be returning on. I was swimming with all my clothes still on, and quite comfortable, towards their bow, as I reckoned if I missed the boat I could always get to the MOM. I was giving the occasional shout, and sure enough they were getting closer, but seemed to move to my right with lights sometimes on me, and some lights to their port beam. I rolled over on my back for a breather and a slow back crawl, thinking that my arms would be easier to see, and thinking they had missed. I knew they would be back, but how long?

I rolled over, and they were there in front of me again. I didn't understand how they could have passed me but now appear dead ahead of me again? I didn't care, and again started to shout, shout, shout. Lights on me now and I could relax. It had been a lung buster of a swim and I didn't have much energy left.

Suddenly Kevin Horsfield appeared right in front of me and had a grip around my arm that said: You aren't going anywhere. It suited me fine, and Way Baby came alongside and I was plucked out of the water before I realized it.

What a team effort!

32 knots – black as heck – bit of rain – breaking seas – sails down – waterline cleared – engine started – other boats notified – back on board in 15 minutes. Thanks to you all!

REPORT:

On a dark and moonless night in the 1990 Bermuda race, Warren Brown's S & S 61 "*War Baby*" was sailing on a starboard tack in 35 knot winds with a number 3 jib and 3 reefs in the main. A crew member had gone forward to check a loose spinnaker pole. A wave washed him over the side without PFD as his harness tether either broke or came loose from the stanchion base. An inflatable man overboard pole was released by the helmsman after a 20 second delay. (The helmsman was also trying to gybe the boat.) The pole did not inflate properly and lay on its side some distance from the man overboard. (about 300 feet.) However, "*War Baby*" could see the light, went head to wind, dropped the jib and returned under power to the vicinity of the light. A high intensity light was used and spotted the man overboard, who was not a strong swimmer and who was not wearing a life jacket. A *Lifesling* was deployed, but the trailing line was tangled. Another crew member jumped over the side, and took a line with him- the line was too short to reach the man overboard. Finally, "*War Baby*" drifted down on both swimmers, and they were retrieved manually by the crew on deck. The recovery took approximately 20 minutes.

**The ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL was awarded to
the crew of War Baby for this rescue event.**