

The Officers, Directors and Members of

US SAILING

are pleased to present the

ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL

to

JACK KLANG and Crew

FOR THE RESCUE AS FOLLOWS:

Retold by Jack Klang

February 29, 2004

I was awarded the coveted Rescue Medal sometime around early fall of 1989 for saving six lives in three separate open water rescues. I will try to detail as much of the three events as I am able to remember. As an USCG licensed captain and sailing instructor, I have taught and practiced several different rescue approaches and recoveries. None of my three rescues followed the patterns that I had taught. However, I used parts of each pattern to save the six people.

Rescue #1

Sometime in 1985 approximate location Lat 45° 06' 00" N, Lon 85° 33' 00" W
Grand Traverse Bay , Lake Michigan .

My wife Marilyn and I were sailing from our homeport of Suttons Bay to Northport for an overnight stay. We noticed some commotion well offshore that upon viewing through our binoculars, appeared to be a vessel in trouble. When we approached two miles, we were able to determine that two people were in the water. We could not yet identify the type of craft. We notified the Coast Guard Station Charlevoix (MI) and proceeded toward the scene.

We came upon an overturned catamaran (probably a Hobiecat 18 ft.) with two people trying to right her or at least stay aboard the turtled craft. The catamaran kept rolling repeatedly. Sails had been lowered but the craft was unstable.

The two teenage boys in the water at first refused to board our boat and declined assistance. After some discussion, they agreed to come aboard. We found them to be shivering and bleeding from minor scratches incurred in their attempts to right the craft.

When they were wrapped in blankets and our vessel was headed for the marina in Northport they confessed. The overturned sailboat was not their own. In fact, they had borrowed it without permission from a friend. They were on a sailing adventure, but had made a significant mistake. They had forgotten to insert the drain plugs in the hulls resulting in both hulls filling with water.

Upon arrival at the Northport marina, many weekend boaters who had overheard our conversations with the Coast Guard over the VHF marine radio greeted us. The boys with blankets still wrapped around them, probably to conceal their identity as much as possible, hurried from the dock. Soon the Sheriff Marine Patrol arrived to retrieve the catamaran. You may think it ends here, but read on.

It seems that the family of one of the boys operated the local ice cream shop. For the remainder of that summer and for several succeeding summers my wife and I were treated to free ice cream every time we appeared in Northport.

Rescue #2

Summer of 1987 location Lat 45° 15' 00" N, Lon 85° 25' 00" W
Lake Michigan

While my wife and I were sailing toward Charlevoix, MI aboard our Chris-Craft sailboat, we sighted what appeared to be a person standing on the surface of the water. The person would appear to stand up and then disappear, possibly falling into the water whose depth at that location, we learned later, exceeded 50-feet.

We proceeded under sail to investigate a person standing on the water at least two-miles offshore. Upon arriving, we determined the scene to include one Native American fisherman, surrounded by dead fish, gasoline tanks, jackets, nets and items from his overturned aluminum boat. He had been trying to stand on the bow of the overturned boat to wave for help.

In this case too much success nearly cost the fisherman his life, probably cost him the loss of the vessel, the catch, and probably his job. I assume that the nets were retrieved. Approaching the scene was difficult due to the dead fish on the surface, nets awash and a fair amount of wave action. I believe that fish filled the aluminum boat beyond its capacity and it capsized. An air pocket in the overturned bow of the vessel kept only that part afloat while below the surface of the water was a large outboard motor attached to the stern.

The reply to our call to the Coast Guard station at Charlevoix, MI for help, was met with "we're too busy to deal with that." Marilyn and I got the fisherman aboard our boat, wrapped him in blankets, and proceeded to motor to the port of Charlevoix. The fisherman said nothing – not a thank you; I'm cold, or anything. His only words were, "Is this as fast as you can go?"

Arrival in Charlevoix took nearly an hour. As we entered the river it was necessary to temporarily hold our vessel against the seawall until the lift bridge would open allowing us to proceed into Round Lake and the marina. As soon as we stopped our boat against the seawall, the fisherman dropped the blanket and bolted from the boat. He scaled the railing of the seawall and was never seen again.

Rescue #3

Summer of 1998 Location Lat 44° 59' .7" N, Lon 85° 37' .5" W
Suttons Bay, Lake Michigan.

As a licensed master for vessels 50-ton Power and Sail, I was concluding a four-day American Sailing Association training course with four students aboard a 38-foot Morgan Sailboat. I was teaching for Bay Breeze Yacht Charters of Traverse City with four students that included three doctors and a hospital manager all from Illinois.

We were proceeding from Northport, MI southward toward the charter company base at Traverse City sailing on West Grand Traverse Bay of Lake Michigan. After completing a lesson on weather observations and storm procedures, the students had an unplanned opportunity to practice their skills.

A summer storm was approaching rapidly from the west as we headed into Suttons Bay for shelter. With rain gear on and sails furled we prepared to weather the approaching squall. It was a Sunday afternoon in late summer and the bay was speckled with small boats.

The squall line hit with winds in excess of 40-knots wreaking havoc among the boats on the bay. We observed a sailboat about a mile away as it became airborne; its passengers scattered like rag dolls. Surely with all of the other boats on the bay someone closer to the occurrence would assist the people in the water. No such luck!

We were already under power attempting to maintain control of the charter boat by pointing our bow into the wind. It became apparent that the rescue was going to be up to us. Seeing the violence of the event we were sure that multiple people had been tossed in the air and were now in the water.

Bucking strong winds and choppy seas we were successful in retrieving all three victims. However, they had been in the water for some time when we were able to reach and board them. We took them below and were attended to by two of the doctors (sailing students) who soon informed the helmsman (the hospital administrator) that they needed emergency care ASAP.

I radioed the marina, but was unable to hear their responses due to the noise of our engine and the roar of the wind. I announced a MAYDAY and directed the harbormaster to summons an ambulance to the end of the pier. We also requested 100-feet of clear parallel dockage and assistance in catching lines and securing the boat. We estimate that sustained winds were not nearly 55-knots and controlling the 38-foot charter sailboat was becoming a problem.

Upon arrival in Suttons Bay Marina, we found the ambulance, dock and assistance in place. It took over fifteen minutes to travel to the marina although it was only two miles away. The students (doctors) on board informed me that all three of the victims were in shock and one was losing consciousness. Emergency Medical personnel boarded our boat immediately as we arrived. The victims were quickly placed on stretchers and moved to the waiting ambulance.

During the time from our MAYDAY call to our arrival at dock, the marina staff did a wonderful job of providing what was needed. The local Sheriff marine patrol, a police cruiser, a mobile television crew and newspaper reporter also monitored our MAYDAY call. All were in the area attending to the weekend festivities of the tourist community.

Forty-five minutes later when the victims walked from the ambulance, the newspaper reporter had finished interviewing the students and the television crew had completed their filming for the 6 PM news, I returned to the scene. I congratulated the student crew and indicated that they all had passed their ASA requirements with flying colors.

Almost in unison they all said, "Where the heck have you been Captain?" My reply: "I've been on a boat across the fairway watching a great crew follow the tradition of the sea by helping others in need."

**The ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL was awarded to
Jack Klang and crew for the three rescues performed.**