

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

CASUAL CONTACT

for the rescue as follows:

On August 3, 2001 during a Berkeley Yacht Club Friday Night Race Series in San Francisco Bay during lighted hours, in 20-25 knots of wind, 2 to 4-foot seas, 55-degree water and 60-degree air temperature, the starboard tack Merit 25 Challenger approaching the mark for a starboard rounding, had two port tack boats coming in on her. The leeward of the two port tack boats ducked Challenger, however, the windward boat, a J/40, was bearing down on them hard. Challenger tacked in an attempt to avoid collision, and the J/40 hit them at the port stern rolling the Challenger over into a capsize, on its side, and forcing the J/40 over onto starboard tack after they separated. Two crew on Challenger were thrown overboard by the collision, suffering injuries to their wrist, elbows and back. In the struggle to bring the victims back on board Challenger, the boat took on water through the collision hole, quickly sinking and all four PFD equipped crew, skipper Doug Chew, Taryn Ertle, Walter Martin and Dave Johnson, abandoned ship. The boat sank to the bottom, leaving the top of the mast above the water. Complicating matters further, this occurred in very close proximity to the dilapidated Berkeley Pier constricting rescue efforts. Challenger skipper Doug Chew had his handheld VHF radio on his PFD and called a mayday.

The J/40 using their Lifesling was able to bring one Challenger victim aboard after 10 minutes. Then another competitor came in to attempt a rescue and missed. Along came Casual Contact, a J/24, who dropped their headsail and was confident that they were more maneuverable than the larger boats circling. Casual Contact went from a reach to dead to wind, stopping just to weather of the remaining victims. Casual Contact picked up two victims of Challenger by hauling them over the leeward side, and the third victim by pulling the victim around to the transom and used the outboard motor mount as a step. All victims showed symptoms of mild hypothermia after being in the chilly water for 25-30 minutes. Casual Contact credits the Olympic Circle Sailing Club for the repetitive crew overboard recovery drills in that the rescues went calmly and flawlessly. Casual Contact withdrew from the race taking the victims to shore and warmth.

Congratulations to Casual Contact skipper Edward (Ned) Walker, crew Mariko Tanaka, Tim (Mick) McGuinness, Jack Ehlers and Caroline Walker of Casual Contact for their preparedness and ability to make quick recovery. US SAILING is pleased to present the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal in recognition of this event.

Ralph Naranjo, Chair
Safety at Sea Committee

By Direction

The Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal was presented to Casual Contact skipper Edward (Ned) Walker, crew Mariko Tanaka, Tim (Mick) McGuinness, Jack Ehlers and Caroline Walker at the Olympic Circle Sailing Club holiday party on December 1, 2001 by US SAILING Board of Directors member Janet Baxter.

Rich and Ned

Crew of Casual Contact receiving award

Ned Walker and Rich Jepsen (OCSC).
Photo by Anthony Sandberg

Caroline Walker, Edward (Ned) Walker, US SAILING Director Janet Baxter, Mariko Tanaka, Tim (Mick) McGuinness, and Jack Ehlers.
Photo by Phil Shull

DETAILS:

Event: Berkeley Yacht Club Friday Night Series, Berkeley California, San Francisco Bay, August 3, 2001 in the evening between 7 and 8PM.

Rescuing boat: Casual Contact--J24.

Skippered by Ned Walker.

Names of victims: Doug Chew-skipper of Merit 25, Challenger-picked up by Casual Contact, Taryn Eittle-picked up by Casual Contact, Walter Martin-picked up by Casual Contact, Dave Johnson (picked up by vessel that hit Challenger, Argonaut).

Skipper and owner of rescuing boat: Edward (Ned) Walker.

Crew names of rescuing boat: Mariko Tanaka, Tim (Mick) McGuinness, Jack Ehlers, Caroline Walker.

Nature of incident: Collision and sinking with victims in the water.

Did a Mayday call go out? yes.

Coast Guard, Berkeley PD, and Berkeley Fire Department-paramedics responded-USCG and Berkeley PD responded to scene of collision-Paramedics and other police met victims and rescuer at the docks of OCSC (Olympic Circle).

Injuries sustained? Yes.

Nature of injuries? Mild hypothermia, sprains and whiplash backaches requiring out patient treatment and analgesics. The skipper of the Merit and one of the crew members were hurled from the Merit by the force of the collision.

Ned gives his permission to have this story published. There is an article due out in September Latitude 38.

PFD specific questions: PFDs were worn by all. Doug Chew had a Type II on at time of rescue (possibly donned during abandonment?). Taryn Eittle-Type I, Dave Johnson-Stearns belt pack-ripped off during collision, put on a Type II after collision, Walter Martin-Type II.

Positions before overboard? Driver, trimmer, foredeck, mast.

Evening race.

wind speed 20 knots, average, gusts to 25.

Waves 2-3 feet.

Water temperature 50-55 degrees.

Air temperature 60 degrees.

Victims spent 25-30 minutes in the water.

Casual Contact used a close reach approach and luff to stop procedure to pick up the victims. (essentially used the last part of a quick turn maneuver or figure eight maneuver, since Casual Contact had not lost the victims and was not returning to pick them up) Put them to leeward of the J24, but kept them aft of the shrouds to protect them.

Rescue swimmer? not needed.

Victims have strobes, lights or whistles? Yes.

What color clothes were visible above the water? None.

Was the victim able to help in the recovery? Yes.

In what way? see account of story.

How did the victim get hoisted from water level up onto the deck? two victims were pulled by Casual Contact Crew over the leeward quarter of the boat- and one was helped over the transom, using the lowered adjustable engine bracket.

Not sailed under ORC special regulations.

Doug Chew

Challenger, a Merit 25, was traveling about 5 knots, closehauled, on the starboard tack layline approaching racing mark E for a starboard side rounding. At the same time, two other boats, La Bruha and Argonaut, were approaching

E on port tack. La Bruha, a Santana 22-like sloop, was on the inside. Argonaut is a 18,500 lb. J40. La Bruha ducked our stern. Argonaut tried to bear off to duck out stern but couldn't clear us. When I could tell a collision was highly likely, I gave the "Ready About" command. I turned Challenger head-to-wind and what must have been past it (after Challenger was raised I noticed three wraps around the starboard side jib winch). The hit occurred on our aft port quarter. Challenger was capsized like a dinghy until Argonaut extracted itself from her, and the collision also spun "Challenger" back over onto starboard. I was immediately thrown back first from the cockpit high side into the water. One other crew member was thrown into the water, too. After much struggle to get me aboard, the three of us on board tried to recover the 4th member. Unfortunately, our combined weight was heeling the boat over far enough to dip the collision hole underwater. After the 4th member was on board, I noticed the cockpit awash in water. I looked into the cabin and saw the water level just as high. I then felt the cockpit fall away from my feet and I was suddenly afloat again. I realized that she was not going to make it and, to prevent anyone from getting caught on the rigging as the boat was about to sink completely, I gave the "Abandon Ship" command. "Argonaut" had tossed us a horseshoe with a man-over-board pole attached. I keep a VHF attached to my lifevest so I put out the "Mayday" call. (I later learned that Argonaut had not done so.) Argonaut tried to pick us up with a Lifesling, and after about 10 minutes, they were finally able to reel in one of us. After what felt like another 10 minutes, other race boats were returning from the leeward mark. One boat made a failed attempt to reach us. Not too long after that, I saw the bow of another boat approaching us on starboard tack. This boat was Casual Contact, a J24 skippered by Ned Walker. Ned brought Casual Contact in for a perfect landing, stopping right next to us. Two of us were hauled aboard on the leeward side, aft quarter of the boat, and the third came over the stern. We went below Casual Contact to keep warm as Ned sailed us back to the Berkeley Yacht Club. A few days after the accident, I saw a doctor for pain to my left wrist. The 4th crewmember saw a doctor for back and both left/right elbow injuries.

Edward W. Walker

We were sailing in a Friday night Berkeley Yacht Club "beer can" race around the Berkeley Circle in San Francisco Bay. After two years of cajoling, I had finally convinced my 13-year old daughter to race with us in my J-24, Casual Contact, but we were short a foredeck. With the wind at the start of the race gusting to 25 knots and waves at 2-4 feet or so, we decided discretion was the better part of valor and that we wouldn't fly the kite. We had a good windward and then leeward leg, which put us in good shape at the first leeward mark, with one boat which owed us time ahead. As we made our way up the second windward leg, we spotted a sailboat (which turned out to be a Merit 25, "Challenger, skippered by Doug Chew) close to the windward mark that seemed to be in distress, pinned up against the two mile long (now no longer functional) Berkeley pier with its main and jib still up. There were a number of larger sailboats which appeared to be motor sailing around the distressed boat, and I assumed that they were going to throw the Merit a line and tow it to safety. We approached the scene on starboard trying to discern what was happening, and then tacked to port toward the windward mark as we got close. At that point, two members of my crew spotted three heads in the water, about 75 yards off our port quarter and maybe 30-40 yards from the pier, huddled together with a man overboard pennant below them on a line they were holding on to. I told my daughter to go below, tacked back to starboard toward the figures in the water, and dropped the headsail. All of us had practiced man-overboard drills countless times in various size boats in training sessions at the club we sail out of, the Olympic Circle Sailing Club (OCSC) in Berkeley, so I was confident we could get three people in the water onto our boat more quickly than the larger boats which seemed to be having difficulty in the wind and waves maneuvering near the pier. We approached the three figures on a close reach, with our foredeck/mast, Mariko Tanaka, acting as a spotter. As we neared, I luffed the main and brought them under our lee. The trimmer, Jack Ehlers, and tactician, Mick McGuinness, helped drag the three on board. After getting them on board we accelerated and tacked back to port to clear the pier. It turned out that the Merit had been struck on the first upwind leg by a J-40 and that, with the boat rapidly taking on water, they had abandoned ship. The three crew members we picked up had been in the water about 25-30 minutes. A fourth crew member had been taken aboard the J-40. We immediately returned to the Berkeley Marina, where an EMS team was waiting. A Coast Guard boat as well as a Berkeley Police boat arrived perhaps 5-10 minutes after the victims were taken out of the water. The victims were taken to OCSC and treated for mild hypothermia by the OCSC staff-blankets, hot drinks and dry clothes where possible while EMTs and police interviewed them and checked their vitals to ensure there would be no post incident shock or trauma.

My crew handled the situation calmly and with skill. We were all grateful that we had so much practice at OCSC with man-overboards that we were able to go into automatic pilot and get the very cold victims on board quickly.

NEWS FLASH: "OCSC'S, NED WALKER & HIS CREW RESCUE 3 SAILORS out of the San Francisco Bay this past Friday night."

Using skills learned at OCSC, Ned Walker and his crew of OCSC members pulled three sailors out of the Bay after their Merit 25 was struck and sunk by a larger 40 yacht during a Berkeley Yacht Club sponsored Friday Night Race last Friday night.

Ned was sailing upwind, North of the Berkeley Pier when he noticed several boats circling near the pier. Although he was racing his J24, Casual Contact, (J#34), he stopped racing and sailed to the scene.

There were four people in the water and the Merit 25 was resting on the shallow bottom with her mast above water. As many as 10 boats attempted to offer assistance but with the strong breeze, seemed to have difficulty getting their boats slowed into a position to be of any help.

Ned and his crew immediately whipped over and with one approach were able to retrieve 3 of the 4 crew of the sunken Merit. They then sailed back to the Berkeley Marina where

the Coast Guard and paramedics were waiting. The fourth crew was brought in by the boat that survived the collision. The four were wrapped in blankets, brought into OCSC for a cup of hot tea and to thaw out while being interviewed by the Coast Guard. While all four were in shock and showed signs of hypothermia, they appeared to be in good spirit nonetheless.

Our proudest congratulations to Ned Walker, Mick McGuinness, Jack Ehlers, Mariko Tanaka and Ned's daughter Caroline for their immediate and competent response to a situation we all prepare for, but rarely are forced to face.