



The Officers, Directors and Members of
US SAILING
are pleased to present the
ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL
to
Rescuing Crew on *S/V Shmokin' Joe*
for the rescue as follows:

With a crew of 8, the *J/111 Shmokin' Joe* was participating in the 36th HOOK Race, a 189-mile race that originates in Racine, WI to Menomonee, Michigan. The race started July 18, 2020. Before departure, the skipper personally reviewed each crew member's safety equipment.

At approximately 4:00 AM on Sunday, July 19th, more than 13 hours into the race, a squall hit with winds above 50 knots. Two crew members were washed overboard. One tethered crewmember was immediately recovered into the vessel by the others. The second, Sarah Walker Pederson, was swept away when the snap shackle of her tether inexplicably released.

The boat was pinned on its side, rudder above the water, for about 4 minutes. A quick headcount determined Sarah was overboard and the entire crew was alerted. Mickey Nielson was standing in the cabin when the boat was knocked down. She had to climb up to the GPS on the high side of the boat to attempt to activate the MOB button. When it would not lock in, she took a picture of the GPS bearing display with her phone to establish critical location information. Mickey radioed a Mayday call while the boat was still pinned on its side, bringing the Coast Guard rescue boat to the search.

Shmokin' Joe suffered a second broach and knockdown as they began searching for Sarah. A heavy downpour and darkness limited visibility. It took the crew just over an hour to spot Sarah's strobe light, then hear her whistle. Sarah had both the strobe and whistle attached to the foam lifejacket she wore at night. The crew recovered Sarah back on board, then transferred her to a Coast Guard vessel which transported her to a hospital where she was treated for hypothermia and released.

For preparation, seamanship, and quick thinking resulting in rescue of a crew member in peril in the water, US Sailing is pleased to award the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal to the rescuing crew on *Shmokin' Joe*.

Sally Honey
Chairman, Safety at Sea Committee
By Direction

Presentation



(Jeff Schaeffer, left, receiving Hanson Medal from Matthew Gallagher of the US Sailing Safety at Sea committee)

January 23, 2021: Presenting the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal ceremony at a ceremony at the Racine Yacht Club was Mathew Gallagher of the US Sailing Safety at Sea committee. According to Gallagher, these awards represent the best of the best in a rescue situation.

In attendance were captain Jeff Schaeffer, crew members Rob Walker, Mark Lewis, Randy Bredin, Mickey Nielsen, and Sarah herself. Sarah said she was delighted to travel from Florida to Wisconsin in January for the event, for the opportunity join in celebrating her rescuers!



Nomination

Date of Incident	07-19-2020
What was the nature of this incident?	People Overboard
What happened?	<p>The 2020 HOOK Race had a successful two person overboard recovery</p> <p>of Sarah Walker Pederson, Ft. Myers, Florida, and an unnamed male, from the</p> <p>J/111, Shmokin' Joe. This story is from input from John Weiss and Randy</p> <p>Bredin and an interview with Sarah Walker Pederson, the recovered sailor.</p> <p>More than thirteen hours into the 2020 HOOK Race, on Sunday morning at about</p> <p>0215, Shmokin' Joe reduced its sail plan by taking down their A2 spinnaker and</p> <p>setting the #4 jib, as they were aware from public weather forecasts that a</p> <p>storm was approaching. Shortly thereafter the main sail was taken down. There</p> <p>was lightning for an hour before the squall hit. The crew watched boats to</p> <p>the west when could see them for clues of incoming weather. Sarah was the</p> <p>forward most crew, on the coaming. This was the second squall of the race.</p> <p>They were about 5 miles northeast of the Sturgeon Bay</p>

shipping channel.

The wind built, they knew it was coming in, and three crew were on the

coaming but not feet over the rail. Shmokin' Joe was on port tack making

about 7 knots on jib only.

At about 0400, Shmokin' Joe was knocked down during the second storm endured

during the race. The microburst suddenly shifted the wind direction almost

180 degrees to the northeast for a brief time; it eventually returned to the

west. This caused a slam tack from port to starboard tack, suddenly

putting the "high side" crew on the low side, in the water. The wind speed

was high enough to foam the surrounding water. The crew estimated over 70

mph. Shmokin' Joe was on its side, rudder above the water. Shmokin' Joe was

pinned down for about four minutes.

All crew on deck were tethered in when the storm hit. Sarah's stepson, Matt

Pederson, was aboard the Tartan 10 Monitor on the helm in the storm; he said it

was raining so hard he couldn't see the instruments on the boat's mast. In

the J/111's broach, two crew were washed overboard. As the boat rounded

up into wind, Sarah grabbed a winch but couldn't pull up. As the boat was

rounding up, water washed along the deck; this lifted Sarah out of the boat. The

snaphackle on Sarah's tether released for unknown reason. Sarah did not

panic, but remembered all of her safety training and years on the water. She

quickly illuminated her strobe, pulled out her whistle and began making noise

while conserving energy in the 56° water. One tethered crewman was pulled back

onboard promptly. A headcount was done quickly while pinned and Sarah was

determined to be overboard. Later inspection shows the spring and pin on

Sarah's tether to be intact; it was new in 2017.

MOB called by the crew and all crew engaged in the search. Micki Nielson was

below, off watch, standing when the knockdown happened. The VHF radio is

on the starboard side. She had to climb up to it. Mickey attempted

to push MOB button, it wouldn't activate and it wouldn't lock in. She

took out her phone and took a photo of the GPS bearing display with her phone

camera so they had a reference for Sarah's location. This was critical

information for the successful recovery. Mickey radioed a Mayday call

while Shmokin' Joe was on her side. Communication through the hatch board

wasn't easy, as the wind, rain and rushing water on the hull was loud. The

boat also suffered a second broach and knockdown.

Locating Sarah was difficult while the storm moved east. It was raining, dark,

and seas while diminishing, were still present.

Sarah says she bobbed up out of the water, free of the boat, and could still see

Shmokin' Joe on her side. Then there was a heavy, torrential downpour,

she couldn't see and lost sight of boat. She turned on the Forespar

strobe. Sarah said, "I was lucky. I didn't have the cold shock,

even though the water dropped to 56 degrees. I didn't feel like it was

really cold. I had on full high-top Sperry boots and kicked them off.

I had on inshore weight trousers, an inshore weight Henri Lloyd smock with

no hood, kept those two on, and had no head covering.”

Rather than a currently popular inflatable Personal Flotation Device, Sarah was

wearing an Extrasport foam PFD, a kayaking model with open arm holes.

Sarah said, “I feel that I survived because I was in a regular foam life

jacket, not an inflatable. I had back and front flotation which help maintain my

position like a cork, rather than laying on my back, which helped navigate the 5

foot waves. I felt I could ride over the top of the waves better when

treading water, I was kept more upright position.”

She said she shifted body position so her shoulder was turned to the waves as

bigger waves came that were going to wash over her, to not swallow a lot of

water. She initially blew the whistle, but when she couldn't see the

boat anymore, stopped to conserve her strength. She has no time frame for

the experience, only that time passed. Later on when trying to use the

whistle, she said, “My breathing wasn’t regular. I strove to not hyperventilate, so would blow the whistle intermittently.”

It took the crew just over an hour to spot her strobe light, after regaining

control of the boat, dropping the #4, clearing lines, and getting underway under

power.

At one point Sarah saw a spot light scanning. It was the emergency light

carried and deployed by Shmokin’ Joe. When the rain let up, she could

see Shmokin’ Joe coming at her. They had seen the strobe light. As

they approached they heard the whistle! Randy Bredin said, “Best sound

I’ve ever heard. Emotions were noticeably high, but Sarah’s voice

straightened us out!”

They had a throw bag ready. They threw it, she was able to swim to it and

hold on. The crew pulled her alongside and brought her aboard. The crew of

Shmokin' Joe recovered Sarah about 0500. It was starting to get light

out and the rain had let up.

The water temperature was 65-70° until the storm, but the Coast Guard reported

that the lake water had turned over which led to the water temperature dropping

to 56°. The Coast Guard came alongside Shmokin' Joe almost immediately after

she was pulled aboard, helped Sarah into a basket and transferred her to the

Coast Guard boat. The Coast Guard took her to the Sturgeon Bay Coast Guard

station, right at the end of the shipping channel. EMS was waiting on

shore to take her to Door County Medical Center in Sturgeon Bay. She was

diagnosed with hypothermia. She said she had really bad leg cramps due to

the hypothermia and was in the hospital for about 4 hours. She was treated

with warm saline, a warm blanket, got normalized and was released. She

suffered no physical injuries other than a few small bruises.

Sarah said, “My biggest fears were that the strobe light would go out and

copied with the leg cramps that were making treading water difficult. The

Forespar strobe materials state that with a fresh battery it will light for 24

hours. I told myself in the beginning, ‘I know what to do, after 55 years of

sailing this doesn’t have to be my end.’”

Sarah said that she swims a lot, does exercises in the water regularly, and

thinks that helped a lot. She believes it important to be able to handle

and be comfortable with being in the water for an extended time.

Sarah said initial on board reports had wind speeds at 50 mph, but Shmokin’

Joe’s instruments stopped registering. Other boats reported highest

speeds of 70 mph and 80 mph, but that’s heresay. Sarah said the crew

collectively used their experience and preparation to find her. She did

not see any other boats.

Aboard the J/111 Shmokin' Joe were owner Jeff Schaefer, with crew Micki

Nielson, Rob Walker, Mike Reisinger, Nick Ponsonby, Mark Lewis, Randy Bredin,

and Sarah Walker Pederson. The crew was delighted to hug, cry, smile and

laugh later that morning in Sturgeon Bay with all the Shmokin' Joe crew

together.

Sarah, a Kenosha native and recent retiree to Florida, said she will get out and

do more racing. She plans to get a water-activated strobe light.

Even after her experience, she said, "EPIRBS are expensive. I don't know that I'll get one. I wear a foam life jacket at night to keep

warm and will keep doing so."

She had an inflatable PFD on during the day because it was 90 degrees and the

foam vest would have been hot. However, for night time, she likes comfort

of the foam PFD, both for warmth and for comfort on the rail and lifelines.

She also said she has a concern with inflatable PFD's that she doesn't

want to worry about a mechanical failure.

Sarah is a Fifth grade teacher, now entering her second year in the Lee County

schools in the Ft. Myers, Florida area, having retired from Kenosha Schools

after 25 years. She has taught sailing at the Offshore Sailing School at

Sanibel, Florida.

Sarah's purpose for telling the story is to help others. She stated that

safety equipment is important, but it's equally important for users to know

how to use their equipment and be comfortable with it. She also wants to

publicly recognize Jeff Schaefer and the crew for their great work in her

recovery.

Event Name	2020 HOOK Race
Sponsoring Yacht Club	Racine Yacht Club
Event State	Wisconsin
Event City	Racine

Body of water	Lake Michigan
Was the race sailed under the World Sailing Special	
Regulations Governing Offshore and Oceanic Racing including US Sailing	No
Prescriptions?	
Which category?	1
Time of incident	Night
Air temperature	75
Water temperature	70 down to 56
Wind speed	20 to 70 mph
Wave height	3-5'
How many victims were involved in the incident?	2
Name	Sarah Pederson
Address	Street Address: unknown City: Ft. Myers State / Province: FL
Boat name	Shmokin' Joe
Boat length	36
Boat make & model	J/111
Was a PFD worn?	Yes
Type of PFD	Extrasport foam
Name	Namenot Disclosed
Address	Street Address: unknown street City: unknown State / Province: WI Postal / Zip Code: 53004

Boat name	Shmokin' Joe
Boat length	36
Boat make & model	J/111
Was a PFD worn?	Yes
Type of PFD	unknown
How many boats were involved in the rescue?	1
Skipper Name	Jeff Schaefer

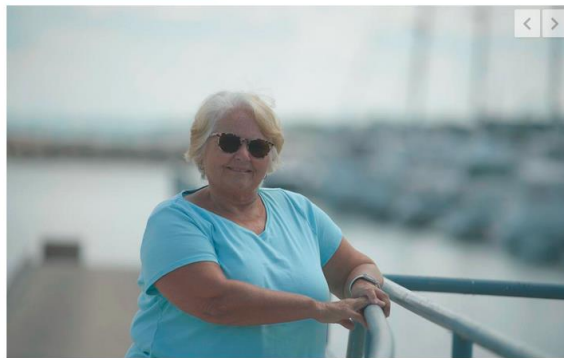
News Reports

Swept overboard in a storm, Kenosha native survives with help of safety gear and devoted crew

Deneen Smith Jul 23, 2020 Updated Jul 23, 2020

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1 of 3



Sarah Pederson, a Kenosha native, survived being swept overboard into a stormy Lake Michigan in the pre-dawn hours early Sunday.

Sarah Pederson's first thought in hitting the water was a simple one — breathe.

"The first thing I said to myself was 'you have to regulate your breathing,'" Pederson said. Slow your breathing down, she told herself, and don't panic.

Which, in the circumstances, was easier said than done.

Pederson was bobbing in the water about four or five miles off the Lake Michigan shore. It was about 4 a.m. It was pitch dark.

The wind was howling and it was raining so hard that on another sailboat in the annual HOOK race a crew member reported he could not see the mast from his place at the tiller.

"It was really poor weather," said Petty Officer German Bahena Cardozo, who was in charge of the U.S. Coast Guard rescue boat at the Sturgeon Bay Station early Sunday.

"There was a really thick fog and a huge rainstorm, thunder and lightning. The air temperature was in the low 60s and the water temperature dropped to about 57 degrees. There were four-foot swells."

A sailing life

Pederson, 65, grew up in Kenosha and has spent most of her life sailing from the harbors of Kenosha and Racine.

Although she and her husband moved to Florida a year ago, she had returned to Wisconsin to take part in the HOOK Race last weekend.

On Saturday morning she left Racine as part of an eight-person crew on a 36-foot sailboat, planning to race nearly 200 miles from Racine to Menominee, Mich.

“I’ve done this race 23 times,” she said. She was sailing with a “very experienced crew” including her brother.

The crew knew a storm was expected overnight Saturday, and Pederson said they were prepared. They had reduced sail and were wearing safety gear, including life vests with strobes, and Pederson and each of the other crew members on deck clipped to the boat with six-foot lines attached to safety harnesses.

But when the storm struck, the wind suddenly shifted and the boat broached. Pederson and the other crew members who had been on the high side of the boat were suddenly flung backward as the boat shifted and water swept down the deck.

When the water hit, Pederson said, the clip holding her safety harness failed. She was swept away into the darkness.

Calling the Coast Guard On the boat, Pederson’s fellow crew members had seen her swept into the water and they instantly went to work trying to get the boat under control, to drop sails, to secure lines and start the engine.

One crew member noted the coordinates where she had fallen. They called the Coast Guard for help.

“It’s a pretty intense situation,” said Pederson’s husband, David, an experienced sailor who had remained on shore that day. “They had to right the boat so they didn’t lose anyone else.”

In the darkness and the storm, Pederson and the crew immediately lost sight of each other and she was alone in the water in the darkness.

She remained alone, drifting through the storm, for an hour.

Was she scared? “I have a hard time answering that question, because I surprisingly managed in my own mind to stay calm,” she said. “The first thing I said to myself was you have to regulate your breathing. I do a lot of swimming and I guess I would call it water awareness, that helped me a lot.

“I also told myself—I had a lot of self talk—I said things like ‘this doesn’t have to be your end, you can do this ... although I’m not going to lie, there were times when I wasn’t really sure.’”

As she drifted, she tried to keep herself oriented using distant lights on signal towers on shore. She scanned for the lights of boats. When she caught sight of scanning search lights, she blew her whistle.

Prepared for this Pederson insists this is not a story about her, it is a story about preparedness.

When she hit the water, she was wearing her life jacket. Not the inflatable life jacket she would wear while sailing during the day, but a full life jacket that allowed her to stay upright and tread water.

Attached to the jacket she had a strobe light that acted as a signal beam, and a whistle, a simple child's whistle, that she could blow to bring attention to searching boats.

"My story is about how I was able to survive because I had a full life jacket on. I had a strobe. I had a whistle, I had water awareness because I know how to swim," she said. "And I had a group of people who worked very hard to find me."

Throughout the storm, the crew of Pederson's boat was sweeping the search area looking for her strobe and listening for her whistle. Cardozo's crew from the Coast Guard station quickly joined them.

Cardozo said nighttime water rescues in stormy weather are rare. "But we were pretty hopeful," he said, "If she had not been wearing a life jacket with a strobe," he said, it would have been a different story. "That's part of the reason she is alive right now."

As the weather began to clear Pederson's crew spotted her in the water. They pulled her aboard, then transferred her to the Coast Guard boat.

"We took her to the station at Sturgeon Bay, where I had EMS on standby," he said. Pederson said she was taken to the hospital for treatment for hypothermia.

Pederson returned to Kenosha Wednesday, She said she hopes to use her experience to highlight the importance of being prepared and for using safety equipment on the water. She also is thankful for the work of the crew and the Coast Guard in searching for her through the storm.

“It’s not about me,” she said. “It’s about the people who worked very, very hard to bring me home.”