

The Officers, Directors and Members of

US SAILING

are pleased to present the

ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL

to

**RYLE RADKE, JONATHON YELDA
BRUCE SCHWAB and JOAKIM JONSSON**

FOR THE RESCUE AS FOLLOWS:

In the 1999 Double Handed Farallones Race, out of San Francisco, the F-31R trimaran Boogieman with Gary Helms and Casey Cadwell aboard pitchpoled in 35 knot winds as it rounded the Farallones Island leaving the hull upside down and being washed into the crashing surf and inhospitable rock walls of the Island by wind and wave action guaranteeing total destruction.

Ryle Radke and Jonathan Yelda on the J/35 Friday Harbor saw flares up ahead. Ryle and Jonathon recognized the upturned F/31 now with its two crew hanging onto the bottom of the hull. Ryle and Jonathon lowered their sails, double checked that no lines were hanging overboard, turned on their motor and headed into the breaking waves hoping not to run aground. "I didn't know if we were going to make it in and out or not," notes Radke, "But I knew I couldn't watch them die on the rocks." They headed in, u-turned and bumped Boogieman when Casey Cadwell leaped onto the J/35, leaving Gary Helms behind. The second approach back into the breaking surf was unsuccessful. On the third approach, which they considered their last approach due to the closing distance to disaster, they got their Lifesling to Gary. Gary was pulled into the water and dragged through the surf out into the open sea. Gary could not hold on any longer and floated free. Friday Harbor swung around one more time, but could not grab Gary.

Azzura the prototype Azzura 310 with Joakim Jonsson and Bruce Schwab saw the flare too. As they approached, they saw the upside down Boogieman and some flotsom in the water, looking carefully in the flotsom for crew. They rolled up their jib, started their engine and stood by watching Friday Harbor's rescue attempts on Gary. It was now Azzura's turn to step in. They saw the chance and dropped the double reefed main. On the first approach, they motored just to leeward of Gary and headed up, but didn't have the Lifesling ready. They spun around again and got the Lifesling in Gary's hands with Gary 10-15 feet away. Backing down hard to keep from adding any distance, they gently pulled him up through the open transom into the cockpit. Both victims were placed below, dried and warmed. Hoisting sail again, Friday Harbor and Azzura went home fast. Azzura past outside the finish line, enjoying the life-saving in its place. Friday Harbor crossed the finish line, redressed and was awarded 2nd place.

It is with great honor US SAILING bestows the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal on Ryle Radke and Jonathan Yelda for this daring rescue where not only were the victims in great peril, they placed themselves in great peril as well with remarkable seamanship, and undaunted courage.

Ernie Messer
Chairman, Safety at Sea Committee

**The Hanson Medal was presented November 3, 1999 to the crews of
FRIDAY HARBOR and AZZURA
at the Oakland Yacht Club
by Chuck Hawley
on behalf of US SAILING.**



Left to right: Ryle Radke, Jonathon Yelda, Casey Caldwell, Chuck Hawley (US SAILING Safety at Sea Committee Advisor), Gary Helms, Bruce Schwab, Joakim Jonsson. November 3, 1999 at the Oakland Yacht Club.

THEIR STORY:

The doublehanded Farallones race is typically rough, but this year was extra windy. By most accounts, the wind was steadily over 35kts at times, especially near the islands themselves. There was quite a strong north to south current running, causing many boats not to lay the island, including ourselves. I was sailing aboard Azzura the prototype Azzura 31 (owned by Sven Svendsen & Arne Jonsson) with Arne's son Joakim. I was cursing myself for footing too much early on, before we noticed the set. This cost us a good 15 minutes on port tack to get to a layline, but the delay turned out to be a good thing. Just before bearing off to round the backside of the island, we saw a flare launched not far ahead. We had been passed by an F-31 and a J-35 while we were on port tack, but now could only see the J. As we got closer we saw the upside down tri and some flotsom in the water. The J-35 Friday Harbor had lowered their sails at least part way, and almost immediately snatched the first crew of the tri in a daring (in the large seas) close pass. We made sure none of the stuff floating around was a person, and then rolled up our jib, started our engine and stood by, reaching back and forth just to weather of the scene. We could see Gary Helms (a fellow participant in the 96 singlehanded transpac) sitting on the upturned tri. The J was still close to him so we let them do their thing first. Somehow they got Gary their Lifesling and began towing him away from the tri. Unfortunately, Gary couldn't hold on and let go. We saw our chance and Joakim dropped our double reefed main and went for our Lifesling. I motored just to leeward of Gary and headed up, but we didn't have the sling ready yet. I just spun around again (the Azzura powers very well) and we got the line in Gary's hands with him 10-15ft away. I backed down hard to keep from adding any distance, and shouted encouragement to Gary to hold on, since he didn't look so hot. We gently pulled him up to the open transom, paused for a moment while Joakim and I got in position, and drug him into the back of the cockpit. Gary contributed with a last bit of strength, and then lay face down, completely spent. It would have been extremely difficult to pull him aboard without the open transom. We made sure no lines were in the water and got the heck out of there (we were just outside the surf on the windward side of the island!). After a few minutes Joakim got Gary fwd, and eventually down below, out of his gear and in a sleeping bag. We rehoisted the main and unrolled the jib

and blasted home. We passed several boats on the way back, but crossed outside the finish line, I didn't want to mess with redress issues, as we were happy to get Gary back. Besides, I'd blown the beat out!

Bruce Schwab
Rigging Shop Mgr.
Svendsens Marine

Earlier in the day, White Lightning was one of almost 40 race boats that had radioed the Coast Guard to report an overturned trimaran in the surf on the windward side of Southeast Farallon. It was the Corsair F-31R Boogieman that had started out the race with skipper Gary Helms and crewman Casey Cadwell aboard.

Like other boats, Boogieman had had a quick run to the Island. As they rounded the west end, they passed Ryle Radke and Jonathan Yelda on Radke's J/35 Friday Harbor. Radke was debating on whether or not to round a little farther offshore, but told Yelda "Keep an eye on that tri. If he looks like he's making it okay, maybe we'll go in a little closer."

"The next time we looked, the tri had disappeared," says Radke, a longtime Bay and ocean sailor. "Then we saw the flares."

Huge surf was crashing onto the island and Radke knew they could never maneuver in it with the sails up. So they dropped the main and jib and - making double sure all lines were out of the water - powered toward where Gary and Casey were waiting on the upturned bottom of Boogieman. When Friday Harbor made her first pass, the multihull was actually in the shorebreak. "I didn't know if we were going to make it in and out or not," notes Radke. "But I knew I couldn't watch them die on the rocks."

Radke ran the J in and spun it around, so close that he actually bumped the trimaran with his quarter. Cadwell jumped aboard, but Helms couldn't make it. Radke put full power on his engine and blasted out through the surf. On the next pass, Casey and Jon tossed the Lifesling toward Gary, but missed. At that point, Radke could see the roils in the foam from underwater rocks and he knew they had only one more chance.

Fortunately, on the third pass, when Friday Harbor again bumped the trimaran, Helms was able to grab the Lifesling and get off the doomed boat. But he was still in the water. Radke says it was very dicey getting out through the surf towing the weakened sailor. After 150 or 200 yards, Helms was unable to hold on any longer. Now clear of the surf, Radke swung Friday Harbor around again and tried unsuccessfully to grab Helms.

By this time, another boat was on scene. Bruce Schwab and Joakim Jonsson aboard Azzura (a 31-ft, open-transom sportboat owned and designed by Joakim's father, Arne) had also seen the flares. They had rolled up their jib, started their outboard and were standing by. When Schwab, a local rigger and veteran shorthanded sailor, saw Gary slip out of Friday Harbor's Lifesling a second time, he ordered the main dropped and powered over.

"I motored just to leeward of Gary and headed up," Schwab wrote later. "We got the Lifesling in Gary's hands with him about 10-15 feet away. I backed down hard to keep from adding any distance and shouted encouragement to Gary to hold on, since he didn't look so hot. We gently pulled him up to the transom, paused for a moment while Joakim and I got in position, and dragged him into the back of the cockpit. Gary contributed with a last bit of strength, then lay face down, completely spent. It would have

been extremely difficult to pull him aboard without the open transom."

Both Friday Harbor and Azzura got their charges below, out of wet clothes and wrapped in blankets or sleeping bags. They then both hoisted their sails and sailed home. Azzura crossed outside the finish line, but Friday Harbor officially finished. With redress, Radke claimed second in class. At the awards ceremony, a fully recovered Gary Helms admitted he had gone too close to the island and thanked his rescuers "for saving my life."

We at Latitude commend the actions of Ryle Radke, Jonathan Yelda, Bruce Schwab and Joakim Jonsson - as well as the actions of Mark Van Selst of White Lightning. Just in case no one else has done it yet, we're sending a copy of this article to US Sailing and recommending each of these sailors receive the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal, which that organization awards to recreational sailors for heroic and selfless efforts in rescuing fellow sailors.

The event, an annual rite of spring for what has to be about 20 years now, is called the Doublehanded Farallones Race. Like the other Farallones races (there is a singlehanded one and crewed one, too, at other times of the year), it rounds only the largest of the group of four islands, Southeast Farallon, which lies about 28 miles west of the Golden Gate. To add to the trivia bank (never know when you might see the category on Jeopardy), only a handful of researchers live on the island for any period of time, including a fellow who studies the white sharks that feed on the resident sea lion population. The islands are inhospitable and rarely visited otherwise. Oh, let's just say it: they are windswept, godforsaken rocks that reek for miles downwind of guano from the zillions of birds who live and nest there. In the old days, the lighthouse duty was so lonely that one 'wickie' called the duty "almost as bad as the state prison." And to at least one local Indian tribe, they were the place where dead souls went.

Doublehanded Farallones Race - tragedy and triumph

The Doublehanded Farallones Race has long been one of the most grueling events on the Northern California racing calendar. In its 20-year history, it has also become the most infamous race on possibly the entire West Coast. Held early in the year and thus subject to late winter storms and extreme conditions, this race has claimed six lives since its first running in 1979. The sixth occurred on March 27, despite valiant efforts by a co-crewman and Coast Guard rescuers.

Only through the quick actions of two other boats in another, unrelated rescue was that toll not higher.

For most of the race, Harvey Shlasky and crewman Mark Van Selst were doing well aboard Shlasky's Berkeley-based J/29 White Lightning. In their second year racing the Double Farallones together, they'd won their start, were the first boat in their division out the Gate and, in a building wind and swell, had a fast passage to the only 'turning mark' in the race, Southeast Farallon Island. They even had the thrill of passing a pod of whales spouting.

By the time they were homeward bound, White Lightning, under double-reefed main and #3 jib, was broad reaching before northwesterly winds in excess of 30 knots and surfing down 12 to 14-ft swells, some of which were breaking. "We were aware the conditions were dangerous," says Van Selst. "But we were feeling very good, very dialed in. The boat was pretty much in control."

The 'fatal' wave, says Selst, did not appear to be larger, faster or steeper than any of its predecessors. As he had been doing for two hours, Mark dumped the main to ease the helm and prepared to take it back

in as Harvey steered down the face. The next thing he knew, he was underwater. The time was about 4:30 p.m., and the boat was at the entrance to the shipping channel, about 5 miles from the Golden Gate.

"I don't remember leaving the boat at all," recalls Mark. "In fact, for a moment I didn't even realize I was in the water. My next thought was, 'Don't swim until you know which way is up.'"

Van Selst didn't have to worry about swimming. A moment later, he was jerked through the water as the broached boat regained her feet and started dragging the two sailors through the water by their harnesses. Both Shlasky and Van Selst were wearing 'automatic' inflatable SOSpenders vests, which double as harnesses, and both men had been clipped onto jacklines since sailing out of the Bay. When the boat went over, Mark's was clipped to the high-side (port) jackline; Shlasky to the low-side jackline. Mark went out under the leeward lifelines. Luckily, his strap had taken a wrap around the starboard primary, which brought him up on the low side of the boat only inches from the rail. Harvey was behind the boat, being dragged face-first through the water.

As with many extreme situations, Mark could not put a time frame on the sequence of events that happened next. Other witnesses estimate the following took place over about 20 minutes.

Only when he surfaced next to the boat did Mark realize what had happened. He dragged himself through the upper and lower lifelines and started to climb the steeply angled cockpit to release the windward-cleated jibsheet. (The mainsheet had been released when they broached.) "But I found now the harness was pulling me down," says Mark. He looked around to discover that the harness was wrapped around the lower lifeline, where he'd climbed through. "My immediate thought was to unclip and reclip," he says. "But that didn't last long. I fully expected the boat to broach again." So, laboriously, he climbed back out through the upper and lower lifelines and back aboard under the lowers - at some point surprised to find that part of his awkwardness was due to his SOSpenders PFD that had automatically inflated. He finally got to the windward side and released the cleated jib.

It was only then that Mark realized Shlasky was in trouble. He looked back to see the 51-year-old software developer being submarined through the water, "just like somebody who won't let go of a waterski rope," says Mark. Van Selst said Harvey was trying to say something to him, but it kept getting lost in the wind. He also noticed that Shlasky's life vest hadn't inflated.

Mark knew he had to work fast, but he was shocked to find the cockpit almost completely empty - no lines, no winch handles, no nothing. Further complicating factors included a partially jammed rudder and a broken boom.

He blew the entire bank of rope clutches on the boat - which included the main halyard - to try to slow it down, but the high wind only plastered the top part of the main against the shrouds and White Lightning kept on going. He tried to jam the tiller hard over to bring the boat head-to-wind, but without a boom, the howling wind and waves just pushed the bow down again. Motoring was out of the question, as the boat's outboard was strapped down below in the cabin.

In between trying to slow down, Mark recovered a lazy sheet, tied it to Harvey's tether and tried to get him closer to the boat - or at least get his face out of the water. It was a difficult process without a winch handle, but he managed to muscle Shlasky in a little bit. From then on, it was a matter of "steer, steer, do something, steer. . . ." He got several more lines around Harvey's tether, including the yellow polypro line from the Lifesling, which he'd opened for just that purpose. By the time he got the now unconscious

Shlasky "about eye level with the transom", the cockpit was a spider web of lines. Mark was just planning to run forward to grab a spare halyard to get Harvey aboard when he realized he was surrounded by other boats.

Mark recalled that the Olson 34 Razzberries had been sailing just to leeward of White Lightning when the broach happened. Now he saw that they had dropped their sails and were standing by under power. He also saw the Pilot Boat, which had been inbound, and two Coast Guard rescue boats hovering close by. (Razzberries had called the Coasties.) One of the Coast Guard boats with two rescue swimmers at the ready came up behind White Lightning and - it being too rough to come alongside - shouted to Mark to pull up all trailing lines. That accomplished, "They started yelling at me to lower Harvey back to them," says Van Selst, a 31-year-old associate psychology professor at San Jose State.

"I looked around for a line to do that, but they were all being used for other things," says Mark. "So the next thing I did was probably the weirdest thing I've ever done in my life - everything I'd ever read or been taught says to stay with the boat, but I knew this transfer had to be done quickly - so I unclipped Harvey." Van Selst never saw the recovery; he was too busy trying to get the boat under control and get it home. Witnesses say the Coast Guardsmen yanked Shlasky from the water and instantly began CPR as the boat raced back to its base at Station Golden Gate. Unfortunately, Harvey Shlasky could not be revived. He was airlifted to Marin General Hospital where he was pronounced dead.

John Siegel's account

A tough day on the high seas last Saturday.

I was sailing with Robert on the Express in the DH Farallones Race. We struggled upwind to get to the island in those conditions but seemed in control. On the way home however just passing the Farallones, we were knocked down by a GIANT Wave that broke on us and lifted me up and threw me into the water. Fortunately, I was clipped in and had the mainsheet in my hand (I was stupidly trying to pump the main so we could surf this killer wave) and I was able to pull myself back into the boat rather quickly. I was in the water less than 20 seconds and got right back on the helm and raced home the last 25 miles in 2.5 hours. The J/29 driver who had the same thing happen to him was not as fortunate, however.

Doublehanded Farallones Race - Latest Update:

I did the doublehanded Farallones race on March 27 with Jeff Madrigali (the Man of Steel).

For the record (especially to the newspapers who had trouble with the basic facts), it is sponsored by the Bay Area Multihull Association (BAMA), and is a 58 mile race from the Golden Gate Yacht Club, out, around the SE Farallon Island and back to the Golden Gate.

Of the 114 boats that started the race, 73 finished. There are now reports of five people going in the water during the race, one of which did not survive. My guess is it was blowing about 30 (my wind instruments don't yet work - they're on 'the list') with higher gusts. We were overpowered with two reefs and the #3 partially rolled up. Javelin (J/125), who was the first monohull to finish at 3:15 (6 hours, 55 minutes), said they saw a gust at 38. We were the third monohull to finish at 3:54. Mark Rudiger was on a BOC 50, Lightwave, and was the 2nd monohull to finish.

We were very worried that we rounded the islands too close on the windward side as the steep breaking waves were making a nasty lee shore against the high, jagged rocks. I wish I had thought to take pictures, although that was the furthest thing from my mind at the time.

Needless to say, rounding was a great relief and we were all too happy to surf those waves and get back in. We sailed back in with the full main and #3, never did fly a kite (neither did Javelin.) We did 13 - 16 knots all the way back, with some faster surfs on the waves. It was hard to catch them because the angle at which there we coming was a little high, we needed them more behind us. Jeff sustained one surf over 20 knots. Gotta love those Santa Cruz 50's! The only disappointment was that the Mumm 30 off our port quarter wasn't going much slower. They eventually popped their chute just inside the bridge.

The waves were quite steep and breaking, especially where the ebb was still a factor. Buoy information seems to indicate 12 - 15 foot wave heights and sustained winds between 25 - 30 knots. My guess is that the waves were higher in the channel outside the bridge. Unfortunately, the Lightship has been down for quite some time, so no information is available from that buoy. It is due to be replaced in April.

BAMA has posted the results.