

The Officers, Directors and Members of

US SAILING

are pleased to present the

ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL

to the crew of

IAIN CHRISTENSON

FOR THE RESCUE AS FOLLOWS:

On April 28, 2001, during the Smith Island Race at Seattle Yacht Club, Capriccio, a 30' sailboat was motor-sailing due to a torn mainsail. When the headsail was being lowered, one crewman slipped and started to go over the side. The alert bow-person, Nicole Clouser, prevented the crew from going overboard by catching the crew in the sail. The crew in great pain suffered a wrenched knee. With reduced crew, the decision was made to continue under power. Shortly thereafter the engine quit. Capriccio was off a lee shore, in 30 knots of wind without an engine, with an opposing current of 1/2 knot, the sails stowed below, and an injured crewman. The crew put up a jib, and proceeded upwind. The skipper reported some waves in the neighborhood of 8-feet and progress was slow. After dark it was suggested that it was time to call for a tow. The call was answered by the Portage Bay, the Seattle Yacht Club Race Committee boat, while on station taking finishing times.

Race Committee skipper Denny Johnson, a retired career Coast Guard veteran, suggested to 17 year-old Iain Christenson that he tow the Capriccio to Shilshole. After donning a full flotation suit, Iain headed out in the club's 16-foot Whaler alone.

The crew of Capriccio were skeptical of the ability of the Whaler to tow them against the wind, which was now blowing at 40 knots. Iain stayed alongside for two hours at which point, after making no headway, Capriccio accepted a tow. According to the skipper of Capriccio, there were times when the Whaler was virtually vertical climbing over the waves. Iain towed Capriccio to the Marina fuel dock. After Capriccio was tied up, one of the crew, a professional firefighter, stated the experience was the closest he had ever come to his own death. Iain went back out to Portage Bay to assist in the finishing of the race.

Congratulations to Iain Christenson for risking his own safety in securing a distressed vessel with doom close at hand. US SAILING is pleased to present the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal in recognition of this event.

Ralph Naranjo,
Chairman, Safety at Sea Committee
By Direction

The Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Award was presented at the Seattle Yacht Club Awards Banquet on November 17, 2001, by US SAILING National Offshore Council Chair Bruce Campbell on behalf of US SAILING.

Left to right: Bruce Campbell, Iain Christenson

Photo by T.K. Wegg

DETAILS:

Nominators Name: T.K. Wegg

Event Name: Smith Island Race.

Sponsoring Yacht Club: Seattle Yacht Club.

Date of Event: Aug 16, 2001

Event City: Seattle.

Event State: WA.

Date of Incident: April 28, 2001.

Body of Water: Puget Sound.

Victims Name: Mary White, Enrico Pozzo, Alex Charoni, Nichole Clouser.

First Boat Name: Capriccio.

First Boat Length: 30'.

Rescuing Skippers Name: Iain Christenson.

Rescuing Boat Make/Model: Boston Whaler.

Rescuing Boat Length: 17 feet.

What was the nature of this incident: Rescue of vessel in immediate danger.

Did a Mayday call go out: No.

Was any injury sustained by the victim: Yes.

Can your story be published: Yes.

Can you provide articles about this event: Yes.

What happened:

Capriccio was returning to Shilshole Bay, in Seattle, from Kingston, WA, a distance of about 20 miles. She was motor-sailing on headsail, due to a torn mainsail. Halfway across the wind picked up to 30 knots with an opposing current of 1/2 knot. While the headsail was being lowered, one crewman slipped and started to go over the side. The alert bow-person, Nicole Clouser, prevented his going overboard by catching him the sail. He was in pain due to a wrenched knee. With a reduced crew, the decision was made to continue under power. Shortly thereafter the engine quit. Capriccio was off a lee shore, in 30 knots of wind without an engine, the sails below, and an injured crewman. The crew got a jib up, and proceeded upwind. The skipper reported some waves in the neighborhood of 8 feet, progress was slow. After dark it was suggested that it was time to call for a tow. The call was answered by the Portage Bay, the SYC Race Committee boat, taking finishing times. The skipper, Denny Johnson a retired career Coast Guard veteran, suggested to Iain Christenson that he tow the Capriccio to Shilshole as it was obvious they were not likely to make it on their own. After donning a full flotation suit, he headed out in the 16 foot Whaler. The crew of Capriccio were skeptical of the ability of the Whaler to tow them against the wind, which was now blowing at 40 knots. He stayed alongside for two hours at which point, after making no headway, Capriccio accepted a tow. According to the skipper of Capriccio, there were times when the Whaler was virtually vertical climbing over the waves. Iain towed Capriccio to the Marina fuel dock and then went back out to Portage Bay to finish the race. After Capriccio was tied up one of the crewmen, a professional firefighter, stated the experience was the closest he had ever come to his own death. Iain is 17 years old.

What type of injuries were sustained (hypothermia included): Wrenched Knee.

