

The Officers, Directors and Members of
US SAILING
are pleased to present the
ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL
to
Mary Kovats, Jacob Karlin and Dave Stix
for the rescue as follows:

US Sailing awarded the Hanson Rescue Medal to sailors Mary Kovats, Jacob Karlin and Dave Stix of Chicago, Ill. for the bravery they displayed during their rescue of three distressed sailors from the cold, stormy waters of Lake Michigan on May 7, 2011. US Sailing has awarded these sailors with a Hanson Rescue Medal for the seamanship and regard for safety they exhibited.

Peter Kovats was returning to the Chicago Corinthian Yacht Club (CCYC) in Montrose Harbor from a birthday celebration sail on the lake with his friends Daniel Tenuta and Will Jablonski in Peter's Rhodes 19 sloop, Peter Pan. They were hit by a storm with winds over 40 knots, hail, and steep waves with a water temperature below 50 degrees. The boat swamped and could not be righted despite several attempts.

Fortunately, Peter had left a float plan with Mary Kovats, his wife, who was the Chicago Corinthian Yacht Club's Rear Commodore. Concerned that they had not returned by sunset, she rounded up two other sailors, Karlin and Stix, and the three of them headed out from Montrose Harbor into the lake in a small powerboat, which they were trained to use. Peter Pan was soon discovered swamped, drifting, and without the crew. The sailors were discovered wearing life jackets with whistles about 100 yards away. They had been in the cold water for at least 45 minutes and all three sailors – two of whom were in their sixties and the other in his forties – were suffering from hypothermia. Read Mary's detailed account of the rescue:

Without discussion, Jacob went right for the radio and called in the Mayday. David and I scanned the water for the men. When I spotted something in the distance, David and Jacob handled the boat so I could remain pointing at the object. When we approached the object and realized it was Peter (nonresponsive and semiconscious), Jacob used what he learned in safety and rescue classes to slow the boat and steer around Peter to make his approach. When we got Peter alongside the boat, we knew we had to position him onto his side so we could grip his body and easily roll him into the Whaler. We were all familiar with this technique from our US Sailing (Safety-at-Sea) classes. We just did it. It was efficient and priceless minutes were saved. We repeated the same technique with all three men.

Fortunately, when all the sailors returned to Montrose Harbor after 9 p.m., many CCYC members were there for meetings. The victims were treated by Dr. Andrea Krasinski, the Club Secretary, and George Quinlan, a ski patroller with OEC/EMT training, until a Chicago Fire Department Emergency Medical Service ambulance took the three sailors to a local hospital for treatment. Other CCYC members went out onto the lake and towed Peter Pan back to the harbor.

“If the wife hadn't gone after them, they would probably be dead by now because nobody would have gone looking for them,” said Fire Department spokesman Larry Langford.

All three rescuers had taken a US Sailing Safety-at-Sea Seminar. Additionally, Mary and Karlin are US Sailing Certified Instructors.

“The training we had was put to use by all of us,” said Mary. “Every boater should take the (Safety-at-Sea) seminar.”

Dr. Gino Bottino, MD
Chairman, Safety at Sea Committee
By Direction

NOMINATION

Date 5/12/2011 9:55:38 PM

Date of Incident Wednesday, May 11, 2011

What was the nature of this Incident? 3 people rescued 3 sailors in the water on Lake Mi

What happened? "A woman, Mary Kovats, and 2 helpers, Jacob Karlin and Dave Stix, rescued 3 men from the frigid waters of Lake Michigan when their Rhodes 19 capsized in a storm. The men had been in the water for 45-50 degrees in PFDs, and would likely have perished had she not gone out in the CCYC club whaler in the dark to look for them.

What happened?

Three CCYC members and sailors from the Vanguard 15 fleet, Mary Kovats (CCYC Rear Commodore), Jacob Karlin, and Dave Stix saved three lives last night, and are being nominated for the US Sailing Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal. We sail out of Montrose Harbor on Lake Michigan, and are members of Chicago Corinthian Yacht Club, CCYC.

(front of storm rolling in over Soldier Field)

About 8pm on the evening of Wed 5/11/2011, the Rhodes 19 "Peter Pan" was just outside the harbor on its way back in when the storm hit (So were 3 V/15's which Donny Massey towed in just before the front hit). Peter Kovats was out for a birthday sail with Danny Tenuta and Will, all three seasoned sailors. They reported 70 mile an hour wind front hit and swamped the boat.

The crew tried to right the boat several times, but swamped a R19 is very difficult to stabilize without help, and they were in frigid water, later reported to be in the high 30s/low 40s, in a severe storm with high winds, hail, stirring up large waves.

Mary Kovats was aware of their float plan, and concerned they weren't in the harbor and were not answering calls to their cell phone. Mary rounded up 2 helpers, Jacob and Dave, and took the club whaler out in the dark and rain, to look for them after the front passed. By this time it was dark.

They found the boat drifting, all her sails up, then they discovered the three crew about a 100 yards away. They were able to lift all three out of the water into the whaler and rush them back to shore, to the club dinghy dock. All three were in the water, wearing life jackets for about 45 minutes and suffering from hypothermia. 2 of the 3 victims were already unresponsive when they arrived at the dock, and the concern was that 2 of the victims are in their 60s, and third was early 40s in age, and hypothermia causes potential heart defibrillation.

Luckily most of the board and fleet captains were at the club for the CCYC Crew School Graduation. Andrea Krasinski, our club Secretary, T-10 skipper, and doctor by profession coordinated the medical treatment and first responders, along with George Quinlan, a Beneteau 36.7 skipper and ski patroller with OEC/EMT training, until the ambulances arrived. Andrea treated Peter, the more critical patient, while George attended to Will who was in serious condition but not as grave as Peter's condition. CCYC club members then went out and rescued "Peter Pan" and brought her back safely to the harbor. With the quick thinking and coordinated effort from several club members a disaster was averted. All three were admitted to the hospital, and are now doing fine. Crew and boat are resting fine and are expected to fully recover.

I would like to nominate the 3 individuals who heroically saved the 3 sailors' lives last night for the US Sailing Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal. Were it not for the efforts of Mary Kovats, David Stix, and Jacob Karlin, this would have been a tragedy and they surely would have lost their lives, 2 of the victims were in critical condition when they arrived back at the dock.

Honorable mentions to those who provided EMS first response, and the many CCYC members who helped us obtain blankets and huddled with the victims to lend body warmth until the Chicago Fire Department EMS arrived on the scene.

Editorial comment / lessons learned:

One of the lessons learned here is that yacht clubs should have a current, functional, and tested AED on hand. As a trained medical first responder, I called for a bystander to grab the AED from our yacht club. My OEC / EMT training from ski patrol (Where we see a lot of hypothermia) tells me that someone in severe hypothermia may have a heart attack, and then the treatment would be CPR and to shock them with an AED. So quick thinking, call for the AED on hand at the scene. Someone ran into the club and grabbed ours, and then we learned it is 7 years old and the battery is dead in the unit.

One thing US Sailing might be able to do is to help spread the word that AEDs can save lives, but only if your club has one, and it's in good condition. AEDs are expensive, through National Ski Patrol I am trying to find out if NSP National can help us get a discount on a new unit for CCYC. US Sailing might want to consider looking into some kind of a national relationship with a medical device supplier, and offer AEDs and first aid kits for yacht club member organizations at a group discounted rate. This would be a great service, and could help save lives down the road!

Press on the incident:

<http://www.suntimes.com/5330876-417/wife-helps-rescue-men-in-capsized-boat.html>

<http://www.chicagobreakingnews.com/news/local/chibrknews-woman-rescues-husband-friends-from-capsized-boat-20110511,0,7868008.story>

Three men tossed into Lake Michigan Wednesday night by thunderstorm-driven waves were rescued by a team led by the wife of one of them who got worried and went searching for them, officials said.

Authorities said the 48-year-old woman called her husband aboard the sailboat earlier in the day to tell the men that severe weather was moving in.

Sensing something was wrong when her subsequent calls went unanswered, the woman went to Montrose Harbor and used a power boat to launch her own search for the men, according to Fire Department spokesman Larry Langford.

The woman found the capsized boat and the three men bobbing in the cold, murky water about a half-mile out, said Police News Affairs Officer Laura Kubiak. The woman -- along with two boaters from the harbor she enlisted -- managed to get all three men aboard the power boat. The woman called 911 just after 9 p.m. after the rescue.

When fire officials responded, all three men were resting on the harbor, Langford said.

The woman's 62-year-old husband was taken to Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center in serious condition, Langford said, adding that the man was suffering from uncontrollable shivering when fire officials arrived.

Another man was taken to Illinois Masonic in better condition, though Langford was unsure whether the man was in fair or good condition. The third man refused medical treatment.

Langford said the men owe their lives to the woman. ""If the wife hadn't gone after them. . .they would probably be dead by now because nobody would have gone looking for them,"" Langford said.

Authorities made an early guess that the men had been in the water from a half hour to 45 minutes, Langford said.

The lake's temperatures were estimated to be in the upper 30s or lower 40s at the time, according to the National Weather Service.

A storm with high winds had moved across the lake at about 6 p.m. There was a lull at 7 p.m., followed by another storm around 8 p.m., according to weather service meteorologist Samuel Shea.

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Observations from the Chicago Crib..

Air temp approximately 60 degrees.

Water temp was reported in the press by NWS as "high 30s / low 40s".

Wind speed was quite high, a large storm front had hit, on the leading edge of it we were reading regular 30 knot peaks on my boat's instruments in the harbor. The crib reported a peak wind of 40 knots at that time. The victims reported getting knocked down or capsized by a gust they reported at 70mph. The crib is 3-4 miles south of Montrose Harbor so local conditions or a microburst could have been far more severe than what was recorded at the crib.

Wave Height – undetermined there were local wind waves reported by the victims in the water though.

<http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/metdata/chi/>

Event Name No formal events, it was Peter's birthday though.

Sponsoring Yacht Club CCYC

Event City Chicago

Event State IL

Body of Water Lake Michigan

Day or Night? Night

Air Temperature 60

Water Temperature 38-40

Wind Speed gusts to 60-70 knots

Wave Height 3-4 feet

Name and Home Town (City, State) Peter Kovats, Chicago, IL
Boat Name Peter Pan
Boat Length 19
Boat Make & Model Rhodes 19
Name and Home Town (City, State) (17) Danny Tenuta
Boat Name Peter Pan
Boat Length 19
Boat Make & Model Rhodes 19
Name and Home Town Will (last name unknown)
Boat Name Peter Pan
Boat Length 19
Boat Make & Model Rhodes 19
What position(s) was/were the victim working before they went in? not sure / undetermined
Was a PFD worn by the victim(s)? Yes
Skipper's Name Mary Kovats
Boat Make & Model Boston Whaler / club RC tender
Crew's Names and function each performed in the rescue: Mary Kovats, CCYC rear commodore
skipped the RC boat and rounded up 2 crew, David Stix and Jacob Karlin. All 3 searched for the 3
survivors in the dark water at night, and pulled each victim onto the rescue whaler boat. They then
contacted 911 and drove the boat to the CCYC dinghy dock where first aid care was rendered to 2 of the
victims dockside by Andrea Krasinski and George Quinlan, until Chicago Firefighters and EMS arrived on
the scene.
Boat Name Dark Cloud
Boat Length 22
What recovery method was used (Quickstop, Reach Method, Figure 8, etc)? none
Did the victim's boat lose sight of the victim? They eventually separated
Was GPS or other electronic MOB function used to track or help locate the victim? No
Was a rescue swimmer put in the water Y/N? No
Did the victim have a strobe light, a light or whistle? not sure
What color clothes were visible above the water? not sure
Was the victim able to help in the recovery? No
In what way? Victims were unresponsive and exhausted and in late stages of hypothermia when the
rescuers found them. Unable to assist in really any way.
How did the victim get hoisted from the water level up onto the deck? The 2 crew members David and
Jacob pulled them onto the whaler out of the water.
Was any injury sustained by the victim? Yes
Was a Lifesling aboard? No
What type (hypothermia included)? All 3 victims suffered varying degrees of severe hypothermia.
The primary victim ended up in the ICU with heart arrythmia, a very serious potentially fatal condition
caused by the hypothermia.
Was it used? No
How much time did the victim spend in the water? 45-50 minutes
Did a Mayday call go out? By the rescue boat, yes.
Who responded? Coast Guard eventually mostly Chicago Fire Dept
Nominator's Name George Quinlan
Do you give permission to have this story published? Yes
Can you provide copies of articles published about this event Y/N? Yes