

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

GERONIMO

for the rescue as follows:

On January 30, 2004 The St. George's School training vessel Geronimo, a Hood 70-foot cutter, was in the Northwest Province Channel, Bahamas on a passage from Palm Beach, FL and the Bahamas in early daylight with winds at 10-15 knots. The United States Coast Guard had issued Pan Pan radio alert that a seaman was lost overboard from the merchant ship Pilica a day earlier in their vicinity. A USCG airplane was conducting a search pattern. Suddenly the airplane dropped a smoke flare about 400 yards away from Geronimo and asked them via radio to investigate.

Sails were stowed and the engine turned on to approach the area. They found the 49-year old Polish seaman, Suchy Ryszard, who had been afloat for 22-hours without a PFD. Just the day before, Geronimo had practiced overboard recovery drills. The Ryszard got himself into the cloth ring fashioned for hauling victims aboard the Geronimo.

Besides not wearing a PFD, Ryszard had ditched his clothes and the only article of clothing he was wearing was his wedding ring as the 7 female crew and 2 male crew brought the victim on board. While checking his condition, the Geronimo found Ryszard had injured his wrist in the initial fall, had mild hypothermia and was dehydrated. The USCG directed Geronimo to take the victim to Great Harbor Cay, where upon they determined that the low tide would prevent their entry and a powerboat was arranged to transfer the victim to the hospital.

The merchant ship had stayed in the area and contacted Geronimo to thank them for coming to the rescue of their fallen sailor.

Congratulations to Captain Deborah Hayes, John Beebe-Center, mate Tiffany Krihwan, 2nd mate students Callie Baker, Charlotte Born, Jes Dwyer, Dani Helfet, Bev Kansteiner, Hays Sibley, and Bill Taylor for maintaining radio watch, responding to a call of assistance from the United States Coast Guard, rescuing a fallen mariner, providing first aid and delivering the victim to safety. US SAILING is pleased to present the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal in recognition of this event.

Bill Munster
Safety at Sea Chairman
by direction

On September 21, 2005 the Crew of Geronimo received the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal in the New York Yacht Club Trophy Room presented by US SAILING Board Member Hannah Swett.



From Left to Right: Hannah Swett, US Sailing Board Member and St. George's class of 1987, Eric Peterson, Head of School, Deborah Hayes, Captain of Geronimo, John Beebe-Center, 1st mate January '04, Tiffany Krihwan, 2nd mate January '04.
Photo by St. Georges

DETAILS:

Geronimo, the sail training and research vessel operated by St. Georges School in Newport, Rhode Island was on a passage between Palm Beach, Florida and the Bahamas. They were transiting the Northwest Providence Channel under sail in light conditions in early morning of January 30, 2004.

A Polish seaman had fallen from a freighter. The USCG issued a radio alert and a CG aircraft was flying a search pattern in the vicinity of Geronimo. The crew, made up of professional crew and high school students, spotted a smoke flare about 400 to 500 hundred yards from them which the aircraft had dropped, and the CG flight crew asked them by radio to investigate the area.

They doused the jib, centered the main, turned on the engine and went into the overboard recovery drill they had practiced days before.

Geronimo found the 49 year-old sailor who had been treading water for 22 hours. He was waving his arms, they threw him a rescue ring and he was able to help himself into the sail cloth sling that Geronimo uses for recoveries. Not only was he not wearing a PFD, he was completely naked. (He landed aboard a vessel with five 17-year-old girls, two women and two guys.) He had injured his wrist in his initial fall and had mild hypothermia and dehydration. The crew gave him fluids. Following CG instructions they proceeded to Great Harbor Cay where there was a hospital. Because of low tide they had to transfer the sailor to a sportfish vessel to get him into the harbor. The freighter stayed around to thank them for their rescue.

I received this information from Chris McNally, the alternate skipper of Geronimo. He asked that if anything is to be published, we should contact St. George's School, Suzanne McGrady at 401-847-7565 401-847-7565.

How did victim help himself back onboard: he grabbed the life ring and helped himself into the sling

This is a copy of the report I sent to the school the morning of the rescue. Hope this helps, Deborah Hayes

"Hi there, we were involved in a rescue today and I thought you might be interested in reading my brief report to the school. I would add that I can not get over how vulnerable this man looked as we pulled him naked from the sea. He was middle aged, over weight and bald with nothing on but his wedding ring: A person was reported to have fallen off of a freighter yesterday in the Northwest Providence Channel near the Berry Islands.

This morning C.G. Rescue Plane 1706 was conducting a search in the waters nearby. They were conducting a standard search grid, flying long swaths back and forth. Periodically, they sent out a Pan Pan announcement asking all mariners in the vicinity of the Berry Islands to keep a sharp look out for the sailor reported lost. About 9:45, we saw a red flare in the water about 300 yds from GERONIMO. I contacted the CG Rescue plane to report the flare. They radioed back to say they had dropped it to mark the location of a person swimming in the water waving his hands. At

that point the Coast Guard asked us to act as the rescue vessel. I called for "all hands" and the crew began to follow the normal MOB (man- over-board) procedure.

The jib was struck, Main Engine turned on, mainsail was centered and MOB recovery gear was gathered on deck. This consisted of a life ring, the MOB sling (a soft swing like device that the victim puts under their arms and behind their back to facilitate lifting), blankets and warm fluids.

Lookouts were posted to help locate the victim. After spotting him, we came along side the sailor and Mr. Beebe-Center and Bill Taylor hauled

Him out of the water with the sling. The sailor was wrapped in blankets and after talking with him briefly, he was given warm water with honey, followed by more water and later on, some soup. He was completely coherent, just a little tired and thirsty. He was given clothing (he

Had nothing on when pulled from the water). He identified himself as Ryszard Suchy, a steward on board the Polish freighter PILICA and said he had fallen overboard yesterday (Jan 29) at around 10:00. That meant that Ryszard had been in the water with NO flotation device for 24 hrs.

After talking with the Coast Guard, it was decided that a power boat " Little Flea" that was a few miles away would transport him to Great Harbor Cay for medical attention. All in all, the crew responded very well to the situation, took in sail quickly and cared for our patient in a very professional way. The Coast Guard said they would be sending something along as a " Thank You" to our students for their help. We are hoping they are Coast Guard baseball caps. I mentally canceled the MOB drill I had planned to do this afternoon underway, because the crew had already had their real rescue for the day. We resumed our course to Spanish Wells and expect to be there this evening. "

1/30/04
News Flash!

This morning Geronimo was involved in a rescue at sea!

When the skipper checked in at 8:30 this morning she included in her description of the morning's events, note that the Coast Guard was mounting a search above and around them. A man had fallen overboard from a freighter that had passed through their area yesterday. She was fearful for the man's life because it had been 24 hours since he'd fallen.

The crew were on lookout. Soon after our contact with the boat, the crew actually spotted a flare that the Coast Guard had dropped into the water. They radioed the Coast Guard and were instructed to approach the flare- they thought they might have spotted something in the water. It was, in fact, the man. He'd been treading water for twenty four hours.

Geronimo went right into the man-overboard drill the crew had learned just days before- They struck their jib, turned on the engine, loosened the main and approached to collect the man in the water. They threw him the life ring and then hauled him from the water with the use of the boat's sling. Having been in the water so long, he was cold and dehydrated as well as having a wound on his wrist from his fall.

The Coast Guard asked Geronimo to transport him to Great Harbor Cay where there is a hospital. Because the tide was dead low and the water was not deep enough for Geronimo's keel, the help of a nearby boat was enlisted. A couple who had been in the area fishing in their small power boat transferred him from Geronimo to the island hospital.

The freighter had remained in the area and called Geronimo to thank them.

Before this all happened they were 65 miles from their anchorage. Because the tide would not have allowed entry until tomorrow (high tide during daylight hours) they were going to do some sail training before settling in at anchor off of Spanish Wells this evening. They certainly had their sail training exercise for the day!

Begin forwarded message:

- 1) What was the wind and sea state? Wind- S 10 kts, seas 1-2', 10% cloud cover, unlimited visibility.
- 2) What kind of flotation was deployed? Attached or unattached to the boat? Standard size life ring, not attached to the boat.
- 3) Is the sling you used to lift the sailor aboard like a soft bottomed bos'un's chair? Similar, it is a Dacron sling reminiscent of a "soft" schoolyard swing. A single line is attached to it on one end with a large D-ring on the other end. The sling goes under the victims' armpits, with the line lead through the D ring.
- 4) Was the sailor able to get into the sling himself or was a rescue swimmer needed? Sailor was completely coherent and conscious, and was able to put the sling on himself.
- 5) Was a block and tackle used or a winch? No, the first mate and a student, both averaged sized individuals, were able to pull the sailor up unassisted. When debriefing with the first mate, he said that is the victim had been heavier or unconscious, he would have needed a halyard to assist.
- 6) Are there any correction you would make to the school website report? Unfortunately, I haven't seen the website, so I don't know what it says. We have email out here, but not Internet access. If you could email me it's contents, I will get back to you.

Respectfully, Deborah Hayes Captain- Program Director SSV Geronimo

Date of Incident: Jan 30, 2004
Body of Water: Northwest Province Channel, Bahamas
Was this day or night: day
Wind speed: 10-15
First Victims Name: Suchy Ryszard
First Boat Name: Pilinea
First Boat Make Model: Merchant ship
Was a PFD worn: N
Rescuing Skipper: Deborah Hayes
Rescuing Boat Make Model: custom Hood designed cutter
Rescuing Boat Name: Geronimo
Rescuing Boat Length: 70
What was the nature of this incident: PIW
What recovery method was used: approach under mainsail and engine
What search pattern was used: only by aircraft
Was electronic MOB function used to locate the victim: n
Was a rescue swimmer put in the water: N
Did the victim have a strobe light or whistle: N
What color clothes were visible above the water: none
Was the victim able to help in the recovery: Y
Was any injury sustained by the victim: Y
Was a Lifesling aboard: N
Was it used: N
How much time did the victim spend in the water: 22 hours
Did a Mayday call go out: yes
Who responded: USCG
Was the race sailed under ISAF regulations: N

Nominators Name: Sheila McCurdy

Can your story be published: y

Can you provide articles about this event: n

Rescuing Crews Names: John Beebe-Center, mate Tiffany Krihwan, 2nd mate students Callie Baker, Charlotte Born, Jes Dwyer, Dani Helfet, Bev Kansteiner, Hays Sibley, Bill Taylor

What happened: See Above