

The Officers, Directors and Members of

US SAILING

are pleased to present the

ARTHUR B. HANSON RESCUE MEDAL

to

WESLEY LITTLE, BILL STROW, DAVID HOWIE,

RICHARD EDE & CARL DEAVER

FOR THE RESCUE AS FOLLOWS:

On June 20, 1998 Wesley Little was skippering his boat *Ragazza* in the San Fernando Valley Yacht Club "Around the Horn Race" from Marina Del Ray, to Long Beach, CA. Weather was clear with a twelve-knot wind, two to three-foot seas, water temperature was 65F and air temperature was 80F. As *Ragazza* sailed around the Palos Verdes Peninsula, the crew spotted two men in the water waving and clearly in distress. Little ordered the headsail dropped, turned towards the men and called the Coast Guard.

The two men were free divers who had been swept away from their small boat by the one-knot current. The divers had drifted about 200 yards from their open powerboat, which was tended by one of their girlfriends (who did not know how to operate the boat). Having become exhausted, they dropped their weights but were unable to swim back to their boat. The divers did not wear PFD's or BCV's. Little brought *Ragazza* alongside and the two divers were hauled on board by the stern ladder of the thirty-four-foot S2.

Little then sailed *Ragazza* as close as he dared to the surf where the divers' boat was anchored. After thanking the crew, the divers, now feeling safe and refreshed, swam the few feet to their boat. *Ragazza's* headsail was raised and she started racing again. It was twenty-three minutes between the time Little called for outside assistance and the time the Baywatch boat powered into view. *Ragazza's* crew felt sure that the bigger of the two divers would not have survived and perhaps the second would have succumbed as well. The Protest Committee awarded *Ragazza* twenty-three minutes for the rescue of the divers. This put them in first place by a minute and a half.

Wesley Little and his crew are commended for maintaining a vigilant watch and going to the assistance of other mariners in distress. US SAILING is pleased to present the Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Medal to the crew of *Ragazza* in recognition of this event.

Ernie Messer
Chair, Safety-at-Sea Committee
By Direction

**The Arthur B. Hanson Rescue Award was awarded at a Southern California
Yachting Association meeting at Dana Point Yacht Club on July 10, 1999**

by US SAILING President Charles Kober.

DETAILS:

June 20, 1998, "Around the Horn", Palos Verdes, CA

COMMODORE OF SAN FERNANDO VALLEY YACHT CLUB:

On June 20, 1998, Wes Little was skippering his boat *Ragazza* in a yacht race from Marina Del Ray, California to Long Beach, California. As he raced around the Palos Verdes Peninsular, he and another boat (*Perseverance*) were exchanging the lead. *Ragazza* was inshore, the other boat was offshore.

His crew spotted two men in the water waving, and obviously in distress. Wes ordered his headsail dropped, turned towards the two men and simultaneously called the Coast Guard.

The two men were divers who had been swept away from their small boat. Having become exhausted, they had dropped their weights but could not swim back to their boat. Wes brought *Ragazza* alongside and the two divers were hauled on board.

Ragazza was then sailed as close as Wes dared to the surf where the divers' boat was anchored. The rescued divers now feeling relieved, safe and refreshed swam the few feet to their boat and with many 'God Bless You's', 'You are good people', etc., etc. All concerned waved their good-byes. *Ragazza's* headsail was raised and was racing again. Twenty-three minutes had elapsed. The Baywatch boat that had responded to Wes' call powered into view. *Ragazza's* crew were all sure that the bigger of the two divers would not have survived the intervening twenty-plus minutes, and possibly the second would not have survived either.

I would have mentioned the divers' names, and their boat name, except that Wes and his crew only saw themselves doing their seamanly duty of rescuing the divers and seeing that they were safely underway.

A report of this rescue at sea appeared in The Log and The Baywater.

All of this is typical of Wes: he is always helpful to others and unassuming. The Club only found out about the rescue when skipper Wes asked the Race Committee if he could possibly have a time allowance for his action.

Footnotes:

1. The answer to Wes' 23 minute time allowance question was 'yes'. He won the race by 1.5 minutes.
2. The Log and The Baywater are Marina Del Ray publications.

Weather was clear, 12 knot wind, 2'-3' seas, water temperature was 65F and the air temperature was 80F, visibility was clear.

The two men were free divers who had been swept away from their small boat in a heavy 1-knot current.

Having become exhausted, they dropped their weights but could not swim back to their boat. The divers did not wear PFD's or BCD's. Wes brought *Ragazza* alongside and the two divers were hauled on board on the stern ladder of the 34' S2. They had drifted about 200 yards from their open powerboat which was tended at anchor by one of their girlfriends who could not operate the boat.