



# AFRAS *Newsletter*

*Association for Rescue at Sea, Inc.*

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Spring 2014

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## *Letter from the President*

Dear Members and Friends of AFRAS,

After several months delay due to scheduling issues beyond our control, the Association for Rescue at Sea was able to reschedule and conduct the annual awards ceremony on Capitol Hill in early March (from the previously scheduled time in October, 2013).

Though delayed, it was no less gratifying to be in the presence of heroes, as we recognized AST2 Robert Emley as the recipient of the VADM Thomas Sargent III Gold Medal and the Captain and crew of the M/V Horizon Reliance as this year's recipient of the Amver Award. Our deepest thanks to Congressman Howard Coble for again hosting us this year and for the attendance, support and meaningful words of VADM John Currier, Vice Commandant of the United States Coast Guard.

We were also privileged this year to honor other entities for their heroic works, namely Captain Les Trafford and Captain's George Farrell and Dan Higgins who shared the C-PORT Award (commercial provider industry) and the Bahamas Air Sea Rescue Association (BASRA) for the AFRAS Caribbean SAR Award. A special award was also provided to the R/V Atlantis from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute for their efforts in saving the lives of 93 Egyptians in the Red Sea.

The Association for Rescue at Sea also realized a major accomplishment in our efforts with the "Caribbean Initiative," to assist voluntary maritime SAR organizations in the Caribbean Basin. After careful analysis of multiple requests from our solicitation, we provided the Grenada Coast Guard Auxiliary with a \$12,000 grant to purchase two 150-HP engines to render their single inoperable vessel operational again. After installation of the two engines, they will again be able to conduct their mission.

Our efforts to recognize heroic acts and to assist voluntary SAR organizations can only be accomplished through the support of our sponsors: EADS-NA, Lockheed Martin, SEATOW, and ACR ARTEX.

In closing, it is with deep regret that I announce the resignation of our Chairman, VADM Terry Cross – whose steady hand at the helm has led the Association for Rescue at Sea to financial viability and the stability to take on new initiatives. I will personally miss VADM Cross' leadership, inspiration and wise counsel. Due to his efforts as our Chairman for seven years, the Association for Rescue at Sea is a much better and stronger organization than ever before.



Captain Steve Sawyer, USCG (ret)

# 2013 AFRAS Vice Admiral Thomas R. Sargent III Gold Medal Award

## Robert D. Emley

*Aviation Survival Technician Second Class  
United States Coast Guard*

Aviation Survival Technician Second Class Robert D. Emley was awarded the prestigious AFRAS Gold Medal for his heroic life-saving actions on 25 May 2012 while serving as Rescue Swimmer aboard Coast Guard Helicopter CG6044.



*Robert Emley and his family accept the Gold Medal from VADM Terry Cross, AFRAS Chairman and VADM Currier, Vice Commandant USCG*

The helicopter launched in response to a night distress call from the 55-foot fishing vessel ST JOSEPH, located six nautical miles east of Kayak Island in Prince William Sound, Alaska. Seas above 30 feet and winds in excess of 30 knots had broken the vessel's rudder, leaving only bow thrusters to keep the vessel upright and into approaching waves.

The crew of CG6044 launched from Aviation Support Facility Cordova and flew through gusty, turbulent conditions, and navigated below 300-foot ceilings with less than one mile visibility to reach the disabled vessel. Petty Officer Emley assisted the pilots to locate and establish communications with the vessel, which had lost generator power and ability to maintain steerageway.

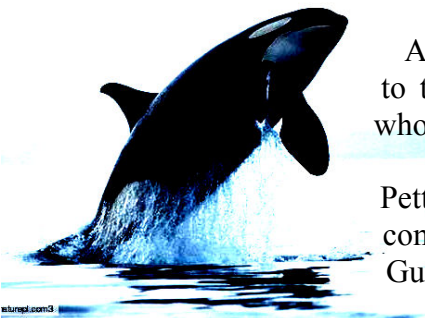
With the F/V ST JOSEPH in danger of capsizing in the towering seas, the crew prepared to deliver Petty Officer Emley directly to the vessel to hoist all five crewmembers. Thwarted by wildly swinging deck rigging, the aircrew reassessed the situation and directed the five crewmembers to don survival suits and enter the water one at a time for recovery to the helicopter.

Emley deployed from the helicopter, quickly located the first two crewmembers, and hoisted them to safety; he then re-entered the water to hoist a third crewmember. While preparing the third survivor for hoisting, a killer whale surfaced approximately 20 feet behind him. After being alerted to the presence of dangerous marine life and told emphatically by the survivors that a pod of killer whales had been trailing the vessel for some time, Petty Officer Emley re-entered the water without hesitation and meticulously executed the remaining two hoists in the face of significantly increased danger.



After recovering all five crewmembers aboard the helicopter, and while proceeding to the nearest hospital, Petty Officer Emley stabilized a severely injured survivor who was having trouble breathing because of a punctured lung.

Petty Officer Emley's courage, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.



# AFRAS Amver Award 2013

## M/V Horizon Reliance (United States)

*Horizon Lines LLC*

AFRAS presented the Amver plaque to the captain and crew of M/V HORIZON RELIANCE, a United States flagged container ship managed by Horizon Lines LLC for taking part in two rescues in 2012 which resulted in saving 3 Canadians and an 81-year old American sailor.

On 8 February 2012, the 38-foot sailboat LIAHONA contacted the Coast Guard Cutter Kiska when their sailboat became disabled. The crew reported damage to their top forestay and engine, eventually losing their mast in the 40 knot winds and 20-foot seas.

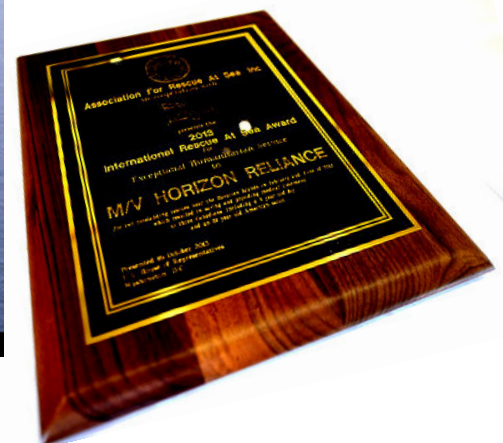
Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Center Honolulu, using an Amver surface picture (SURPIC), contacted the 893 foot container ship and asked them to divert to assist the crew of LIAHONA. HORIZON RELIANCE was 149 miles away from the sailboat's location.

At approximately 2:00 a.m., Captain James Kelleher and the crew of the container ship reached the vessel. As they approached, a swell caused the sailboat to capsize and sink, throwing all three passengers in the sea. The crew of HORIZON RELIANCE lowered a ladder, rescuing the first Canadian sailor, but the others, a 32 year old man and a 9 year old boy, drifted away. Because they were wearing lifejackets with strobe lights attached, the rescuers were able to keep them in sight and eventually bring them aboard safely.

On 12 June 2012, the crew of HORIZON RELIANCE received word of a possible medical evacuation from a sailboat 1,100 miles east north east of Oahu. The container ship was again identified by the Coast Guard using an Amver Surface Picture. Captain Barry Costanzi, master of the HORIZON RELIANCE diverted and with the help of his crew, brought the 81 year old sailor aboard by deploying the gangway in the 8-10 foot seas. The sailor had suffered a stroke on 10 June and was partially paralyzed and unable to speak. The crew of HORIZON RELIANCE provided medical treatment and kept him comfortable until returning to Honolulu the following day.



*VADM Terry Cross, AFRAS Chairman (right) presents the AFRAS Amver Plaque to Mr. Pete Strohla, Vice President & General Manager Ocean Transportation Services.*





AFRAS President Steve Sawyer and Congressman Coble

Present & future AFRAS Gold Medal Winners



Rear Admiral and Mrs. Rabago with Petty Officer Emley

Congressman Howard Coble & VADM John Currier



AFRAS Director James Olsen with the Vice Commandant



Captain Peter Martin, USCG; Bob Backhaus, Sea Tow; AFRAS Director Joe Frohnhoefer



AFRAS President Steve Sawyer and VADM Currier



Pete Strohla, Ocean Transportation Services & VADM John Currier



Photos courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> class Annie B. Elis

# AFRAS would like to thank our 2013 Corporate Sponsors

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*We never forget who we're working for™*



*Silver*

**SEA TOW**

THE SCIENCE  OF SURVIVAL



# AFRAS/C-PORT Lifesaving Award 2013



**Captain George Farrell**  
**Captain Daniel Higgins**



**Captain Les Trafford**

**A**FRAS and C-PORT (Conference of Professional Operators for Response Towing) presented the distinguished **Lifesaving Award** at the 27<sup>th</sup> C-PORT Conference held in January 2014. “The excellence of service depicted with this year’s nominations was some of the highest we have seen,” remarked Capain Steve Sawyer, USCG (Ret.), President of AFRAS. “It was impossible to select one recipient.” Receiving the award were Captains George Farrell and Daniel Higgins of TowBoatU.S. Yonkers and Captain Les Trafford of Sea Tow Shinnecock/Moriches.

On the evening of January 27, 2013, Captain George Farrell was at his marina when he received a phone call from the local police about a single-engine plane crash in the icy Hudson River off Yonkers. They asked if he had a boat in the water that he could use to search for survivors. Meanwhile, Farrell’s part time captain, Dan Higgins and two other off duty Police Officers were at the marina unpacking their cars from an ice fishing trip. Farrell explained what happened and all made their way to the Pilot Boat station about three miles away where there was a Hudson River Pilots boat they could use.

Farrell had Higgins pilot the boat while he supervised the deck and crew and assigned lookout positions. Farrell knew the general location of the plane crash and knew they had a full ebb tide going so the victims should be heading their way. After several minutes they heard a shout for help, and placing a spotlight in the area, they observed two people completely immersed in the river wearing life jackets. Higgins skillfully piloted the boat toward the survivors and ring buoys were thrown to the male passenger who was semi conscious. He was able to grab the ring and was brought alongside and pulled into the boat where first aid was administered.

While the crew was pulling the male passenger on board, Farrell was throwing a ring to the female pilot who was obviously in bad shape and not responsive. Farrell then threw a rope bag at her striking her to get her attention. This worked, she was able to grab the bag and was pulled alongside and on board where first aid was administered. Both victims were transported to the Pilot Station Dock where Emergency Medical Crews were waiting. The water temperature was 32 degrees and the victims had only a few more minutes to survive.



*(l-r) Captain Steve Sawyer, USCG (Ret.) President AFRAS; Captain Les Trafford & Captain Dan Higgins*

## *AFRAS/C-PORT Lifesaving Award, continued*

**O**n May 12, 2013, Captain Les Trafford was notified by Hampton Bays (NY) Fire Department about a water rescue in the treacherous Shinnecock Inlet. Subsequently, he was updated that the 45 foot trawler PAULINE IV capsized on the bar with two people onboard. Within 10 minutes, single-handed, Trafford was underway in his 24 foot boat arriving at the inlet.

The day was bright and sunny; winds were steady at 20 knots, with gusts of 25-30 creating short period 6-12 foot surf on the Shinnecock Inlet bar. Outside the bar, sea conditions were 6-8 feet. As Trafford approached the bar, he expertly maneuvered through the surf zone and circled the bar to where the F/V PAULINE was bottom side up leaving a debris field.

While patiently searching the debris field and operating his small boat in rough conditions, a Suffolk County Police helicopter arrived on scene, located the deckhand clinging to a lobster buoy and

vectoring Trafford to the location for pickup. Demonstrating expert boat handling skills, determination and focus, Trafford quickly clipped a life ring to his towline and maneuvered his boat within 10 feet of the conscious deckhand quickly pulling him onto the boat.

Verifying one more person on board, Trafford and the deckhand continued to search for F/V PAULINE'S captain, but finished their efforts when relieved by a Coast Guard 47 Motor Life Boat. Trafford returned the deckhand to shore to an awaiting ambulance. His actions that day led directly to saving the deckhand's life. Tragically, F/V PAULINE'S captain was later recovered deceased.

"C-PORT congratulates these heroic captains for their efforts in saving these lives," stated Terry Hill, C-PORT chairman. "Assisting boaters is what we do and it's great to have C-PORT members recognized with such a prestigious award."

***The AFRAS/C-PORT Lifesaving Award was established in 2011 to annually recognize a deserving member of C-PORT that has shown exceptional skill and determination to save lives during a rescue incident in the maritime environment.***



Fishing Vessel Pauline  
(Credit: YouTube / News 12)



# *R/V Atlantis*

## Rescue Efforts in Mediterranean recognized by AFRAS

By Ed O'Brien

On 28 April 2013 Directors CDR. James Quinn, USCG (ret.) and Ed O'Brien presented an AFRAS Plaque in recognition of the efforts of the research vessel *Atlantis* rescuing 93 Egyptian refugees. The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, operates the 274-foot *Atlantis* which is the mother ship of the deep submersible *ALVIN*. The award was accepted by the Master of the vessel, Capt. AD Colburn III, at Iselin Pier in Woods Hole.

The rescue commenced on 25 November 2011 at approximately 2100 hours. The *Atlantis* was diverted from a science mission by a mayday call from a sinking fishing vessel. Rescue coordination began between the *Atlantis*, the Greek Coast Guard and the Rescue Coordination Center. Following standard security procedures, Capt. Colburn raised the Security Level from I to II for the 50 crew, scientists and technical staff of

*Atlantis*. This procedure put protective actions in place to secure all scientists and technical staff inside the vessel.

By midnight all 93 refugees were aboard the research vessel due to the seamanship of the *Atlantis* crew. The ships stewards department made efforts to feed and provide essentials as the 93 Egyptian refugees showed signs of dehydration and general hardship at sea.

*Atlantis* made arrival in Kalamata, Greece at 0800 the next day. The 93 refugees disembarked the vessel and Greek officials processed the Egyptians. *Atlantis* departed at 1030 and resumed its mission for Science.

An excerpt of Captain Colburn's statement to "all hands" can underscore this proficient time line. The Captain wrote, "We can be proud that we did our duty as seafarers. It was a long and satisfying night, knowing we

concentrate on our science mission."

Captain Colburn is from a long tradition of seafarers. Captain Colburn's father, A.D. Colburn,

**By midnight all 93 refugees were aboard the research vessel due to the seamanship of the Atlantis crew.**

Jr. was the Master of the original *Atlantis* that inspired the naming of NASA's space shuttle *Atlantis*. The original *Atlantis* was a sailing sloop built for multi-disciplined oceanographic work by its first Master, Captain Columbus Iselin, in which the Institution's pier is named after.

The last few years the Mediterranean has seen several disasters at sea ranging from the *Costa Concordia* to refugee vessels foundering with great loss of life such as the incident in Lapedusa, Italy. An ancient seafarer's code is still well alive today to "help those in peril on the sea". In this spirit, AFRAS is delighted to recognize the crew of the *Atlantis*.

helped others in need. Now let's

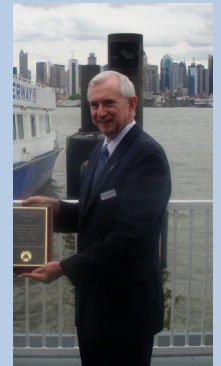


AFRAS Directors Jim Quinn & Ed O'Brien present the award to the crew of Atlantis



## *AFRAS Chairman VADM Terry Cross Retires*

We regret to announce that VADM Terry Cross, AFRAS Chairman since 2006 has announced his retirement from the AFRAS board of directors. VADM Cross, a former Vice Commandant of the US Coast Guard has brought much stability to the organization, allowing AFRAS to pursue many new initiatives in the past seven years. His leadership and comradery will be missed by us all and we wish him happiness and success in all new endeavors.



## *Rick Kenney retires from the AFRAS Board*

AFRAS would also like to acknowledge the retirement of Board Member Rick Kenney in October 2013. Rick, along with board members John Chomeau and Nick Ludington negotiated the establishment of the AFRAS Amver Award in 1996 and upon his retirement from the Coast Guard in 2004 he was asked to join the AFRAS board. Rick was a great asset to AFRAS for many years and he will be sincerely missed!

## **The AFRAS Caribbean Initiative**



In 2013, the Association for Rescue at Sea embarked on a plan to provide grants to deserving Voluntary Maritime Rescue organizations within the Caribbean Basin. Our solicitation resulted in several requests for our Board of Directors to consider, but it was almost unanimously agreed to assist the Grenada Coast Guard Auxiliary with their request for two engines.

According to their application, their boat, The Vigilant, was in urgent need of repair, and its two existing engines were destroyed and required replacement. Without their boat, it was difficult to maintain an auxiliary organization as most of their activities require them to be out at sea, to include SAR cases, beach patrols and safety and providing support to Regattas and other boating activities.

We then worked with Mercury Marine to procure and ship two 150-HP engines to fill their needs, using dedicated funds provided by Lockheed Martin and matched by the AFRAS Board of Directors.



For 2014, the AFRAS Board of Directors will solicit a “shopping list” from Caribbean Basin voluntary SAR organizations, with our goal to solicit donations-in-kind from the maritime and boating industry.

## Join AFRAS

AFRAS is here to provide you with a means of supporting worldwide voluntary lifeboat services and at the same time, providing you with a tax deduction here in the United States.

### ***AFRAS offers two basic membership packages:***

The first, a joint membership with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) for dues of \$100 per year will provide you with a quarterly subscription to the RNLI's *Lifeboat* journal, their annual *Watermark* catalogue and other RNLI press releases and mailings throughout the year. We will also send you periodic AFRAS newsletters, press releases, and an invitation to our annual Gold Medal/Silver Medal/Amver award ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The second, a sole AFRAS membership for \$20 per year will entitle you to all AFRAS mailings including newsletters, press releases and miscellaneous information from our counterparts throughout the world.

***All dues and donations given through AFRAS are tax deductible in the United States.***

If you are interested in joining AFRAS please fill out the information below and send along with your dues/donation to  
*Association for Rescue at Sea, Inc., P. O. Box 565, Fish Creek, WI 54212-0565.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening) E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Membership (check one) \_\_\_\_\_ AFRAS/RNLI (\$100 dues) \_\_\_\_\_ AFRAS (\$20 dues)

Dues enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ (amount) Donation enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ (amount)

I would like to find out more about AFRAS. Please send me more information.

***Have you considered AFRAS  
in your estate planning?***

