

Louis J. Spizziri



July 17 ,1994

Admiral Robert Kramek
Commandant, United States Coast Guard
2100 Second St. SW
Washington, DC 20593-0001

Dear Admiral Kramek:

I am writing to you to inform you of some recent experiences we had with personnel and units of the US Coast Guard. These events took place on Monday June 27 and Tuesday and Wednesday the 28th and 29th. Our vessel was a thirtyseven foot C&C sloop homeward bound to Chesapeake Bay from Bermuda after participating in the Annapolis to Bermuda Ocean Race. I want to advise you that during the entire sequence of events from our first SSB radio contact to the final debriefing after tying up at the marina in Little Creek Virginia, every member of your organization performed in outstanding fashion. They were all most competent in their jobs which they performed in a thoroughly professional manner. I feel that their behavior displayed an extraordinary level of ability and training.

The first event took place 200 miles east of the entrance to Chesapeake Bay and consisted of the air rescue of the badly injured owner of our vessel by a USCG HH 60 J Jayhawk helicopter. The victim suffered a severe scalp laceration that required fifty stitches to repair. This left us with three remaining crew members all of whom were physically pretty well beat up with contusion type injuries resulting from the rough sea conditions during our passage home. One member later proved to have a broken pinky and spinous process. Neither was serious but both were painful limiting his ability to function. I had bruised but not broken ribs which similarly limited my activities. Our third crew member pretty much hurt all over.

The second event took place the next two days. At the discretion of Coast Guard Rescue the 110 foot CG Cutter Aquidneck met us at about 0830 hours on the 28th. The Aquidneck asked if we required an escort back to port. Very shortly after we had advised them that we did not we encountered a violent thunderstorm. Despite the fact that the only sail we had up at the time was a 90 % jib the micros sheer winds that both preceded and accompanied the storm itself knocked us down flat onto our beam ends four times in the space of about ten minutes (I was alone on deck at the wheel at the time. Alertly one of the two crew below put the hatchboards in and closed the sliding hatch cover of the main companionway hatch to prevent entry of water into the boat). Its my guess that the winds strong enough to do this to us with such little sail up must have been in the range of 75 to 100 knots. Our masthead wind instruments had previously stopped functioning.

Following these four knockdowns our engine alarm went off. When we could not solve the problem the Aquidneck kindly sent BM 1 Jim Ziolkowski and MK 3 Stephen Karkashian aboard. When MK 3 Karkashian was unable to solve our problem the Aquidneck elected to tow us to port to Little Creek Virginia which was now 180 miles west of our position. Once inside Chesapeake Bay the 41 foot cutter # 41500 took over the tow bringing us to the dock at Little Creek Marina.

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Dear Admiral Kramek:

Following is a list of the Coast Guard personnel and units that were involved as I was able to determine from my calls to the units involved. Incidentally my requests for information were met promptly and efficiently. I would like to draw special attention to the following:

Lt. Dan Taylor who was the pilot of the helicopter. He showed great skill and patience in maneuvering his aircraft into position to get the guide line to us. As you know he had to get close enough for us to grasp the line at the same time avoiding our 50 foot mast. Several passes were needed and his care and patience provided for success without endangering us by overly aggressive tactics. The same holds true of AE 3 Thomas Parker who I understand handled the winch and the dropping of the initial guide line and then the rescue basket. Special praise goes to ASM 2 Michael Thomas who was the rescue swimmer. He dropped into the water from the chopper, swam to our boat examined our injured crew member and managed the process of retrieving the guideline and basket and the ascent of the basket and later himself into the aircraft. BM 1 Jim Ziolkowski attached the tow line from the Aquidneck to our boat. His expert work included applying enough chafing gear to the bridle that the line did not wear through. This was important in that the tow took at least thirty hours. The others were:

RM 3 Anderson and Diaz of Group Cape May, CG Station were my radio contacts on SSB. Communication was difficult since our radio could only function on channel 2182 and conditions were poor. Officer of the Day at Group Cape May was QM 1 Kuchta. SAR Mission Controller at District 5, Portsmouth Virginia coordinated the operation.

Lt. Cdr Joe Hanson was Aircraft Commander of the C 130 Hercules that was the first Coast Guard unit to arrive at the scene. Copilot Lt. John Sullivan was then my radio contact via VHF radio in coordinating the remaining action. Before the Hercules left the scene Lt. Sullivan made great efforts to secure alternative means of radio contact for our vessel in order to monitor the condition of the boat and three crew members remaining on board. Despite his efforts which we greatly appreciate this was not successful.

Lt. Cdr Dave Gundersen was AC and copilot of the helicopter and HS 2 Philip Stoddard the Health Service Technician.

PO Reed and watch officers Lt. Cdr Dennis Sens , Lt. John Daly, and QM 1 Rick Barret of SAR Command Center, Portsmouth, Virginia coordinated the medivac rescue efforts.

Lt. Cdr Ross Bryant was CO of the Cutter Aquidneck

BM 1 James Jones CO of CG Cutter 41500

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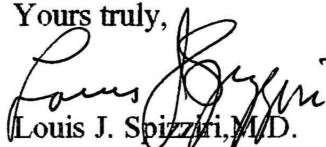
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Derar Admiral Kramek:

In closing I know I speak for the owner and the other two crew members of the Kanoa Kai in thanking all the many people who participated in the rescue operations and commending them for their outstanding abilities and dedication to service. Some of them as you well know literally put their own lives at risk. The Coast Guard certainly lived up to its mission of saving life and performing rescue.

Yours truly,



Louis J. Spizziri, M.D.

PS By way of background I have over twenty five years experience operating small boats including a previous passage to Bermuda aboard the Kanoa Kai, have completed all the courses given by the United States Power Squadron and hold a Coast Guard license for 100 gross tons since 1987. I do not believe I am easily impressed.

cc; Representatives Jerry Studds, Chairman of the Committee on Merchant Marine & Fisheries; Billy Touzin, Chairman of the Coast Guard Committee; and Marge Roukema and Eva Clayton. Senators Ernest Hollings, Chairman of the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportaion; Frank Lautenberg Chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportaion; and William Bradley. Frederica Pena Secretary of Transportaion.