

THE ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA

C-PORT Award

2013

Presented to:

Captain George Farrell And Captain Dan Higgins of TowBoatUS Yonkers

AND

Captain Les Trafford of Sea Tow Shinnecock/Moriches

Captain George Farrell and Captain Dan Higgins:

TowBoatU.S. Yonkers, Captain George Farrell and Captain Dan Higgins are cited for their performance on January 27, 2013. Farrell was at his marina when he heard about a plane crash.

Farrell received a phone call from the local police who wanted to know if he had a boat in the water. Since there was ice in the marina, the boat had been hauled two weeks previous.

Farrell told the Sergeant that he did not have a boat ready but he would go and take out the Hudson River Pilots boat, as Farrell is a fill-in captain and is familiar with the boat.

While Farrell received this call his part time captain, Dan Higgins and two other off duty Police Officers were at the marina unpacking their cars from a ice fishing trip.

Farrell explained what happened and all made their way to the Pilot Boat station about three miles away.

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.

They started a search and after several minutes heard a shout for help. They placed the spotlight in that area and observed two people completely immersed in the river wearing life jackets.

Higgins piloted the boat in that direction and ring buoys were thrown to the male passenger who was semi-conscious. The male passenger was able to grab the ring and was then brought along side and pulled into the boat where first aid was administered.

While half of Farrell's crew were pulling the male passenger on board, Farrell was continuing to throw a life ring to the female pilot who was obviously in bad shape and not responsive. She would not, or was not able to, grab the ring.

Farrell then threw a rope bag at her striking her on her body in an attempt to get her attention. This worked, as she was able to grab the rope and bag. She was brought alongside the Pilot Boat and pulled 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.

Farrell spoke to the male passenger a few days later and he admits that he was losing it and that he would not have survived more than two more minutes. The victims were both released from the hospital.

Captain George Farrell and Captain Dan Higgins are to be commended for their actions that day, as they certainly saved the lives of both victims.

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Captain Les Trafford:

Sea Tow Shinnecock/Moriches owner Captain Les Trafford is cited for his performance on May 12, 2013. At approximately 1400, Trafford was notified by Hampton Bays (NY) Fire Department about a water rescue in the treacherous Shinnecock Inlet.

Subsequently, he was updated that the 45ft. trawler Pauline IV capsized on the bar with 2 POB. Within 10 minutes, single-handed, Trafford was underway in his 24ft. boat arriving at the inlet.

The day was bright and sunny; winds were from the SW steady at 20 kts. with gusts of 25-30 kts. creating short period 6-12ft. surf on the Shinnecock Inlet bar. Outside the bar, sea conditions were 6-8 ft.

In the meantime, the bay constable who also responded turned back due to the rough surf. As Trafford approached the bar, he expertly read the conditions, determined he could make it through the surf zone, and circled ocean side and east of the bar to where the F/V Pauline capsized and was bottom side up leaving a debris field.

Remaining in deep water, Trafford searched the east side of the bar; patiently scanned the debris field as best as could be expected while operating a small boat in rough conditions, but did not locate survivors.

Shore side observers directed his search to the west of the east-drifting debris field. Again, he found no one, but during that period, a Suffolk County Police helicopter arrived on scene and commenced their search. When near the debris field, the helo crew located the deckhand clinging to a lobster buoy 1 mile offshore to the east of the bar, and vectored Trafford to the location for pickup.

Demonstrating expert boating boat handling skills, determination and focus, Trafford quickly clipped a life ring to his towline, then maneuvered his boat to within 10 ft. of the conscious deckhand (still in 6-8 ft. seas) and trailed the ring and towline, quickly pulling him on to the boat.

Remaining focused on the big picture, Trafford verified there were only two POB on F/V Pauline, and learned the boat's captain never came out of the cabin when it was caught by a large following sea and immediately capsized. Trafford and the deckhand continued to search for F/V Pauline's captain, but finished their efforts when relieved by a Coast Guard 47 MLB.

Trafford returned the deckhand to shore and delivered him to an awaiting ambulance. Trafford's actions that day led directly to saving the deckhand's life. Tragically, F/V Pauline's captain was later recovered deceased.