



# AFRAS *Newsletter*

*Association for Rescue at Sea, Inc.*

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Autumn 2011

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## *Letter from the President*

Dear Members and Friends of AFRAS,

First of all, I'd be remiss without thanking the AFRAS Board of Directors for their trust and confidence in my abilities in electing me to serve as their next President. It's a true honor to be able to lead this fine organization, and I hope to be able to take what's been accomplished to date and add to it by focusing on those initiatives that will take us to the next level. This is no small task as I'm filling the shoes of past-President Gabe Kinney, who is internationally respected in SAR circles for his work with not just AFRAS, but with the World Maritime University, the International Maritime Organization, and the International Maritime Rescue Federation as well. Fair winds and following seas Gabe!

Secondly, I'd like to thank everyone on the AFRAS, Coast Guard SAR program and Coast Guard Congressional Affairs staff for making our annual Awards Ceremony another resounding success! At each AFRAS Awards Ceremony I've attended, the harrowing stories of dramatic rescues have literally sent shivers down my spine, and the evening of 22 September on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. was no different. On many an occasion I would shake my head in disbelief and wonderment of where our nation finds these fine individuals, who have forsaken their own safety under the most dire of circumstances to save the lives of others. That's what makes the AFRAS Awards Ceremony special -- hearing the citations as they're read and visualizing the sacrifice that the rescuer has made to affect a successful outcome...it literally sends jaws dropping throughout the room.

On a third note, I want to thank our Corporate Sponsors, who, without their unflinching support, we would be hard-pressed to recognize the heroic deeds of those we recognize on an annual basis. Thank you to EADS of North America and thank you to Lockheed Martin Corporation. By underwriting our efforts, we have been able to recognize heroism at its best -- and all of us are the better because of it. I look forward to your continued sponsorship of our organization, and, in doing so, rendering the seas a safer place.



Lastly, I would also like to thank and recognize Congressman Coble (Captain, USCGR Ret), who honored us with his presence and kind words of support, while also helping to arrange the use of our ceremonial venue at the Rayburn House Office Building. It goes without saying that the leadership of the Coast Guard values our efforts and the further recognition of our heroes as we were again honored with the attendance of the Commandant, Admiral Papp; the Vice Commandant, Vice Admiral Brice-O'Hara, and other senior leaders. Admiral Papp's heartfelt words echo the fact that SAR is and always will be a core mission, and I can't think of a better endorsement than that for the continued importance of AFRAS to remain a strong, viable and engaged organization. Again, thank you all for your continued support.



Captain Steve Sawyer, USCG (Ret)

# 2011 AFRAS Vice Admiral Thomas R. Sargent III — Gold Medal Award



*Chief Aviation Survival Technician*

**Kurt G. Peterson**

*United States Coast Guard*



*AFRAS Chairman Terry Cross presents the Gold Medal to Kurt Peterson.*

Chief Aviation Survival Technician Kurt G. Peterson of US Coast Guard Air Station New Orleans was awarded the prestigious AFRAS Vice Admiral Thomas R. Sargent III Gold Medal for his heroic life-saving actions on the night of 20 April 2010.



*l-r: Noel Peterson, Congressman Howard Coble, Kurt Peterson, USCG Commandant Admiral Papp.*

At approximately 2220 hours the crew of Coast Guard helicopter 6605 departed the airstation to respond to the report of a rig explosion on board the Deepwater Horizon Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit (MODU) located approximately 100 nautical miles south of Air Station New Orleans.

A rig failure, 5000 feet below the sea surface caused a huge explosion crippling the structure, immediately killing 11 and forcing workers on board to abandon the rig. An Offshore Supply Vessel, less than 400 yards from the exploding rig, embarked 115 survivors from the structure and the surrounding waters.

First on scene, Chief Peterson and the crew of CG6605 maneuvered below a 600-foot tower of flames, searching the base of the oil-rig for possible survivors. After the initial search resulted in no survivors, the crew hoisted Chief Peterson to the Supply Vessel to provide a proper survey of the injured survivors. While trying to avoid flying debris from secondary explosions, Peterson made his way across the oil-slicked deck and teamed up with two civilian medical technicians already on board to triage the survivors. He assessed and prepared the most critically injured for helicopter transfer to advanced medical care.

As his helicopter prepared to depart the scene due to critically low fuel, Chief Peterson identified one severely burned survivor and quickly carried him back across the oil soaked deck to the awaiting rescue basket. He then continued to group the 114 remaining patients according to medical priority for evacuation. Horrific injuries included compound fractures, severe 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> degree burns, and multiple head and neck lacerations.



For four grueling hours, Chief Petty Officer Peterson tirelessly led a team of civilian medical technicians and Rescue Swimmers to prioritize injured victims, render First-Aid, and coordinate transportation for 17 survivors, ultimately saving their lives.

Chief Peterson's professionalism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.



## M/V Adrian *Komrowski Group Shipping*



**A**FRAS awarded its Amver plaque to the captain and crew of M/V ADRIAN, a Liberian flagged container ship managed by Komrowski Befrachtungskontor of Germany for the rescue of seven Dominican Republic crewmembers on 22 September, 2010. (Award accepted by Captain David McBride, Chief, Office of Search and Rescue, USCG).

Having received a Mayday distress call from M/V OCEAN BLUE, the master of the 600-foot M/V ADRIAN altered course and proceeded to the vessel in distress, rescuing seven Dominican Republic crew members from their life rafts. With the crew members safely on board, and pursuant to instructions from the US Coast Guard, M/V ADRIAN proceeded to a designated meeting point to disembark the crew of the Ocean Blue onto a Dominican Republic naval rescue boat.

Due to technical difficulties, however, the naval boat was unable to complete the rescue operation after taking on board three of the crew members, and the remaining four stayed on board the Adrian which proceeded towards San Domingo, 51 nautical miles away. Once there, they were safely transferred to a pilot boat in the port's outer anchorage. The professional actions of the master and crew of M/V ADRIAN reflect great credit upon themselves and were instrumental in saving seven lives on 22 September 2010.

The Automated Mutual Assistance Vessel Rescue System (Amver), sponsored by the United States Coast Guard, is a unique, computer-based, and voluntary global ship reporting system used worldwide by search and rescue authorities to arrange for assistance to persons in distress at sea.

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*The Association for Rescue at Sea received several nominations this year for outstanding rescues made by volunteer Coast Guard Auxiliarists across the country. However, as none of the rescues quite met the criteria for the prestigious AFRAS Silver Medal, the AFRAS board chose not to award the Silver medal this year.*

*This year's awards ceremony in Washington, DC proved to be an exceptional event yet again, due to the heroism of our awardees, the attendance of our USCG Commandant, ADM Robert Papp, Jr., USCG Vice Commandant Sally Brice-O'Hara, co-host Congressman Howard Coble (R-NC), and a record attendance by other Congressmen including U.S. Representatives Nick Rahall (D-3<sup>rd</sup>/WV), Frank LoBiondo (R-2<sup>nd</sup>/NJ), John Mica (R-7<sup>th</sup>/FL), and Richard Nugent (R-5<sup>th</sup>/FL).*

# Thank you to our 2011 Corporate Sponsors

*Platinum*



*Gold*



*Left: (l-r) Congressman Mica, Admiral Papp, Petty Officer Kurt Peterson.*



*Above: Admiral Papp addresses the group*



*Left: Captain McBride accepts the Amver plaque on behalf of Komrowski Shipping*

*Right: Admiral Papp and Congressman Richard Nugent*



*Left: Mrs. Peterson and Congressman Howard Coble*



*Right: (l-r) Kurt and Noel Peterson; Jackie and Karl Peterson; Admiral Papp*





## AFRAS Presents First AFRAS/C-PORT Lifesaving Award



It was a very bad situation. At the entrance to Puget Sound in Washington State, the sun was beginning to set at about 2000 on 23 July 2010. At this convergence of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Admiralty Inlet, where there is a notorious bar and tidal rip, conditions were deteriorating. On this particular night, winds were 25-30 knots, gusting to 45. Seas were 10 to 15 feet with a strong ebb current.

Earlier in the day, as part of a birthday celebration; a mother, her two children, and an adult female friend, had gone out for a boat ride off of Fort Warden State Park in a 10-15 foot open boat. Three of the people had never been on the boat before, and the mother only once. As winds and seas rose, the boat lost power and was pulled out of the protected bay by the strong ebb current, sending the four on board (with no lifejackets) into panic, and putting their lives in grave danger. Fortunately, people on shore saw their situation and notified local authorities and the Coast Guard.

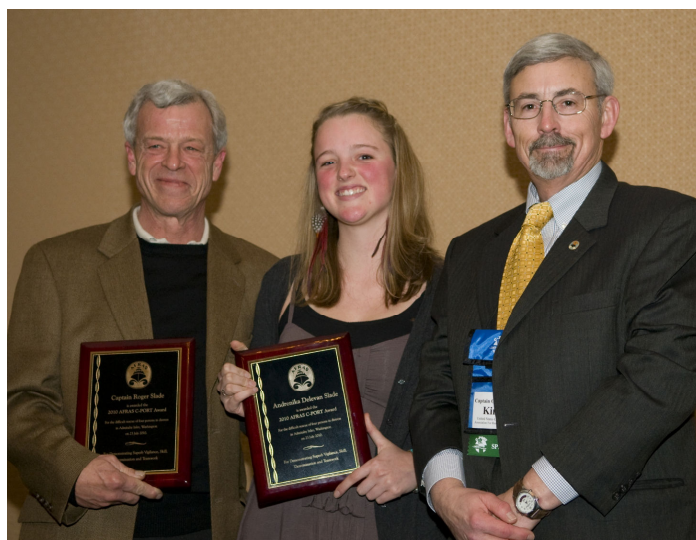
USCG Group Port Angeles immediately relayed the report to the closest rescue resource, "Vessel Assist Port Hadlock". Captain Roger Slade, with his daughter Andrenika (Nika) as crew, immediately launched in their 26 foot response boat, the *Negotiator*. (Vessel Assist Port Hadlock is a member of C-PORT, the Conference of Professional

Operators for Response Towing). As the Slades arrived on scene, the small boat was nearly awash, with the women and children not only in panic, but beginning to show signs of hypothermia. Using his exceptional professional abilities and extensive experience, Captain Slade skillfully maneuvered the *Negotiator* close to the drifting, sinking boat. Nika, on deck, lifted each of the victims on board, got them into life jackets and blankets, and calmed their panic, injuring herself in the process.

Captain Slade then expertly piloted back through the hazardous rip while Nika provided first aid and assurances of safety to the survivors, who were transferred to waiting EMTs when they reached shore.

It is clear that Captain Slade and Andrenika saved four lives that night. Because of their superb vigilance, skill, determination and teamwork during this very difficult rescue, they were presented with the 2010 Association for Rescue at Sea/C-PORT Award. The Award was presented on 25 January 2011 at the C-PORT Annual Conference in Long Beach, CA by Captain Gabe Kinney, USCG (Ret), President of AFRAS. This is the first time that this Award has been presented. Captain Kinney also delivered the Keynote Address for the conference, thanking all C-PORT members for their cooperation and efforts to save lives.

*Captain Roger Slade and his daughter Andrenika were presented the 2010 Association for Rescue at Sea / C-PORT Award for their exceptional efforts in saving four lives. CAPT Gabe Kinney, former AFRAS President presents the plaques.*





# *AFRAS/C-PORT Lifesaving Award*



The Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS) was formed in 1976 to foster traditional maritime search and rescue values through suitable recognition of deserving personnel, and to facilitate cooperation in search and rescue. Since that time, AFRAS, among its other activities, has developed a highly respected awards program where Gold and Silver Medals are presented to members of the U.S. Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary who perform exceptional lifesaving rescues at sea and an Amver plaque is presented to an Amver participating vessel for exceptional humanitarian service in aiding in a rescue at sea.

The AFRAS Board of Directors decided in 2010 that it would be in line with the AFRAS mission to also develop awards programs with other organizations whose members become involved in Search and Rescue, in order to recognize their members who have shown exceptional skill and determination to save lives during a rescue incident in the maritime environment.

C-PORT (the Conference of Professional Operators for Response Towing) and its members, have had a very close relationship with the U.S. Coast Guard for many years. Because of their wide network of member companies, and “24-7” ability to respond, their members regularly assist in or conduct lifesaving SAR cases, in addition to their regular business operations providing non-emergency towing, assistance and salvage to the boating public throughout the U.S.

It was obvious to AFRAS, that C-PORT would be a very logical choice as an organization with which to develop one of the first of these awards programs. C-PORT was very much in favor of the idea, and the leadership of the two organizations has developed a process for the nomination, review, selection and award of the “Association for Rescue at Sea / C-PORT Award”. It is envisioned that this will be an annual award to a C-PORT member who has performed an exceptional lifesaving rescue.

*Two prominent Board Members have retired this year and AFRAS would like to acknowledge their many years of service and outstanding support of the organization.*

**Captain Gabe Kinney, USCG (ret.),  
past president of AFRAS**

*and*

**J. J. Marie, former CEO of Zodiac of North America**

# AFRAS CAR-SAR Award

## (Caribbean Search and Rescue)

AFRAS has begun a new awards program that recognizes a maritime search and rescue organization in the Caribbean region engaged in coordinating or making a heroic rescue at sea. This new award will be called the AFRAS “CAR-SAR” award. In 2010 AFRAS presented the award to the MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Center) in Fort de France, Martinique for a very unique rescue. To recap events from 2010, the MRCC was cited for its efforts to coordinate a challenging rescue at sea, resulting in a textbook example of the coordination and performance required between flight personnel from two aircraft, a deployed physician on the rescue helo, and the MRCC watch officer.



*MRCC Fort-de-France helicopter and the rescue crew including the attending doctor (in white)*

It all started with the US Coast Guard MRCC in Puerto Rico informing Fort de France that the M/V ROSBORG’s chief engineer had fallen three decks and seriously injured himself. Understanding the dire circumstances and the emergent need to provide rescue resources, the Fort de France MRCC immediately set the wheels in motion in making the necessary notifications and pulling together a rescue team. Because the vessel was in the French Search and Rescue Region of the Caribbean, a quick phone call to France for medical consultation confirmed that this was a serious injury and the officer needed to be evacuated immediately. Next the air force in Fort de France provided their only PUMA helicopter capable of flying the 240 mile round-trip sortie to the vessel’s location. A local hospital offered the services of a physician with good experience in the treatment of maritime wounds and finally the French military provided a fixed-wing transport to fly with the helo and provide a communications link. Making the rescue even more complex, it had to be completed in less than three hours due to the night flight limitations of the helo.

The aircraft reached the M/V ROSBERG in a timely manner, and the doctor was lowered to the vessel’s deck to provide medical treatment to the injured chief engineer despite the fact that they had only 30 minutes to complete the operation before darkness set in. Due to the long distance transversed and the imminent arrival of dusk, there was no room for error to effectively conduct this rescue and to reach a successful outcome. All involved are congratulated for a job WELL DONE!

For the 2011 award winner, the rescue services from the island country of Guadeloupe will be honored for saving the owner of a sailboat as hurricane Earl approached. More on this rescue will be showcased in the next newsletter.

AFRAS takes great pride in providing recognition of maritime rescues, no matter where they occur. The Caribbean area has been of special interest to AFRAS for more than ten years, and we hope to have the opportunity to make similar awards in recognition of other Caribbean rescue services in the coming years.



**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.

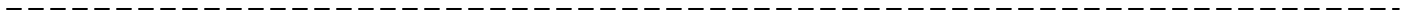
***AFRAS offers two basic membership packages:***

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.

