



### **Rescue of a Sinking Crew done Perfectly**

*CCA Member John Jourdane sailed the 2008 Hobart Race on the Spencer 65, Ragtime. He witnessed a successful rescue of all the crew off a sinking boat. The following is from John's journal.:*

It was the first night out of Sydney, and the wind was blowing steady 25 knots with gusts to 30. The seas were 4 to 6 feet, and we were sailing south under spinnaker in the East Australian Current, giving us a 3-4 knot push. The sun had gone down and it was dark. We saw a flare behind us, and I went below to listen to the radio. The yacht, *Georgia*, a Farr 53 out of Melbourne, came on with a Mayday. They had hit something, and lost their rudder. The collision tore a hole in the boat where the rudder used to be. They were taking on water; couldn't stop the inflow. They gave their position, and we saw that they were about three miles behind us. We called the communications boat, and said we were dropping our sails, and were on our way, upwind under power, to help them. The yacht, *Telcoinbox Merit*, a Volvo 60 out of Brisbane, came up and said they were close and were heading to *Georgia* also.

*Merit* arrived first, and were discussing the rescue of *Georgia's* crew when we arrived on scene. When we arrived, *Georgia* was so low in the water, the navigation lights were occasionally underwater. We saw that *Merit* had the rescue underway, so we said we would stand by, and brought our life raft on deck, and prepared to help any way we could.

*Merit* motored well to leeward of *Georgia*, who had already inflated their life raft, which was in the water to leeward. The *Georgia* crew attached the life raft painter to an anchor rode, put seven of their 14 crew in it. The wind and seas blew the raft downwind, and *Merit* maneuvered to catch it. The seven crew from *Georgia* climbed onto *Merit*, and they attached an anchor rode from *Merit* to the raft, and *Georgia* pulled the raft back, now with a line connected to *Merit*, and a line connected to *Georgia*. The remaining seven crew climbed into the raft, and let out the rode as *Merit* pulled them back. When all the crew were aboard *Merit*, they detached the line connected to *Georgia*. The rescued crew had been in the water, and were cold and wet. *Merit* took them all below, and gave them warm clothes and hot drinks. About 10 minutes later *Georgia* sank.

*Merit* headed toward the coast to rendezvous with a Coast Guard launch. We, on *Ragtime*, were cleared by the Race Committee to resume racing. We motored to the position we had stopped racing, set sails, and headed for Hobart.

It was a perfect rescue of a sinking crew. We can all learn from the calm, professional work of the *Telcoinbox Merit* crew.

*Ed.Note: Some critical issues: the damaged boat was sinking fast; there was clear communication between rescuer and victim; there was an agreed-upon plan; it was executed as calmly as possible. Also, the receiving boat (Merit) did the maneuvering. Implied is the excellent seamanship of Merit to be able to hold relative position so the raft could remain tied to two boats at once, for the duration of the transfer down and the return trip of the empty raft, in four- to six-foot seas and 25 to 30 knots of wind!*

*Kudos to Ragtime for continuing to stand by even though Merit was on-site already; Merit or Georgia may have needed some other aid. Third-party help comes in to play more often than one might think.*

*Remember, even if your boat is not sinking, you may be the rescuer! Yes, there are legal requirements, but even more, the traditions of the sea demand that you give aid to other seamen.*

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