



Help Is Coming - How Hard Will You Be to Find?

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When I teach seamanship classes, I eventually get around to the fact that the sea is a dangerous and hostile place - but, if prepared, you can increase your odds dramatically if you view yourself as an astronaut on a far-away planet. Help is on the way. It will take time to get to you. What have you done to stay alive while the rescue team is heading for you? This column is about those steps.

Leave Her When She Has Sunk from Beneath You

The advice I always give to mariners is, "Never leave the boat, even if you can only cling to her up-turned keel, until she has sunk out from under you." It is hard to imagine how much easier it is to find an over-turned hull than it is to find your lonely head peering out from the waves - and it isn't easy to find that hull. It is like crossing the street at night. You can see the headlights of the car racing down the street quite clearly. But the driver can't see you, especially if you are blending into the night's colors. While you are bobbing in the waves, you can see the plane, helicopter or rescue boat - but your head can easily blend in with the waves and wave-caps, especially if you have no distinctive coloring or reflective material to help you stand out

from the steely blue and white of wind-tossed seas. So, unless the vessel has sunk beneath you, stay with her. And get up on her if you can since water will draw your body heat from you 25 times faster than air of the same temperature (see *SSP*, "Surviving Hypothermia," 2/14/07).

Thar' She Goes - Time to Leave

There will be conditions, God forbid, when you must abandon ship. Do you have a "ditch bag?" What's that? This is a bag - preferably water-proof - that contains as much vital material as you can bring. Remember, you're marooned on Mars and it will take time for the rescue rocket to get to you - will you survive until help gets there? What should be in your ditch bag? Well, obviously, priorities are implied since you can't drag the entire boat with you - she must have disappeared beneath the waves by now.

Here are some thoughts:

1. Per above, the bag itself should be water-tight. Buoyant and brightly colored is an absolute "yes" too. If you don't have a raft, the bag itself will work as a supplemental life-jacket, keeping you above water.

2. Drinking water. You can survive for weeks without food; days, without water.

3. Water-proof handheld VHF radio; maybe it comes with a hand-cranked charger too.

4. If your cell phone isn't water-logged, it might make a lot of sense to have a hand-cranked charger.

5. First-aid kit

6. Flashlight and spare batteries

7. Flares, flares, flares and only set them off when you can see the rescue team/vessel/plane/helicopter. Day-smoke distress signals are great too.

8. A signaling mirror might even be more useful than day-smoke distress signals since you can throw a mirror's light signal for miles.

9. If your boat had an EPIRB aboard, take it with you (see *SSP*, "EPIRBs, GPIRBs and PPIRBs", 11/29/06).

10. Your life-jacket should be on, not in the bag.

Done, Now What?

Now the question is this: How hard - or easy - have you made it for others to find you? Clearly, coloration matters so be sure that your life-jackets, flotation devices and your ditch bag are brightly colored and have reflective materials attached. Secondly, if you haven't invested in an EPIRB yet, consider this. Per USCG records, at 0500 hours on May 13, 2008, an EPIRB signal was generated by the

captain of the 48-foot *S/V Wolf*. At the time, the *S/V Wolf* was 200 miles off-shore, abeam of Brunswick, GA. She had been holed by some submerged object and was sinking. Within the hour (obviously implying the good luck combination of a USCG patrol and a near-by disaster), the USCG Cutter *Reliance* was alongside. Do you know how much that EPIRB cost the skipper? Close to zippo. He had rented it from BoatUS.

But, there is nothing like having your own gear and ensuring that it is always in readiness. What used to be over \$1,200 is now in the mid-hundreds. Over a 5-10 year life, what could be a cheaper or more reliable "come and get me!" beacon? What a pity it would be to survive the initial catastrophe, including getting off the may-day - but no one can find you and your crew.

Think like an astronaut. You have to survive the rescue-cycle - and you have to be found by determined parties searching for you in a dangerous and hostile environment.

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux2008@aol.com or go direct to MaryJo Cruickshank, who is in charge of new members' matters, at FSO-PS@emcg.us and we will help you "get in this thing..."

It's Just Something I Noticed!!

by Rita DiBella

I started writing this week's article about friends but I made a phone call to my third grade teacher Mrs. Ritz and decided the friends thing will have to wait until next week.

Mrs. Ritz, anyone who may have had her at Nathaniel Woodhull or William Floyd elementary schools or even knew her would tell you how wonderful she was as a teacher.

She's everything you would want a teacher to be for your own children. I can honestly say I never remember her being in a bad mood. (*Many of us gave her good reason to be in one!*) Back then (*hey, don't ask how long ago-it's rude!*) female teachers and students were not permitted to wear pants to school so I have memories of Mrs. Ritz in dresses and always looking her best, a big smile and a great attitude. A true teacher. A wonderful teacher. An inspirational teacher. A teacher that to this day when her former students mention her name, smile and talk of the good year we had in her class! Imagine decades after being in a class your teacher actually writes you to tell you she remembers you! I hope that my daughters will say the same one day about at least one of the teachers they had.

This evening's conversation with this wonderful, spunky and funny

woman made me smile and think back to so long ago and I remembered a great time in life. Something we all forget to do in our busy lives but when we do think back, it makes us feel great! Just the smallest of memories can bring back the child in us.



I had that feeling tonight.

Fine, I will admit I was the crier in my class. From day one in kindergarten through the fourth grade, I was the crier.

It really didn't take much to make me cry (*remember from past articles I ex-*

plained I was the skinny tall kid-an easy target!) and I did regularly!

It's great that people like Mrs. Ritz can touch our lives and be a lasting part of who we are and what we took with us from such a young age.

Last year a few dozen of my graduating class celebrated our 30th high

school reunion. What memories we shared! Really, if you never attended your reunions, do it, you'll never forget the experience! It was like time stood still and there we were again, maybe a little larger, balder, older, but that's all that really changed.

What was inside us then was still inside us. Most of us together since kindergarten, coming together from all over the country. A terrific weekend!!

You see, adults, teachers like Mrs. Ritz, Mr. Turpin, are the reason we can go back even if only for a weekend, day or a 30 minute phone conversation. Adults, teachers, coaches, role models, these are the people who help to shape the young. To give those lasting memories that help us be that child again if only for that 30 minute phone conversation.

No matter what we do in our daily lives, we all have the ability to make an important imprint in a young one's life. The smallest of things can be carried to adulthood. A blueprint, a foundation, a memory.

Mrs. Ritz, after retirement, substituted at several elementary schools in the area. My two daughters were fortunate to have her several times throughout their elementary years. My oldest daughter is now a 1st grade teacher herself! Hey, maybe this wonderful woman helped to build her foundation, too!

It's just something I noticed!!

Please remember that October is breast cancer awareness month!! Be smart, be safe, get checked out!!