

FOR POSSIBLE RELEASE

The sailing craft, "DEAMON OF HAMBLE", which had successfully competed in a one man transatlantic yacht race was enroute from Newport, RI to Fort Lauderdale, FL. Manned by Mr. Angus PRIMROSE and Ms. Dereka DODSON of Sussex U.K., the sailing craft had stopped at Beaufort NC (near Morehead City) to have a sailmaker do some repair work on the spinnaker. The yacht left Beaufort Wednesday morning. The wind was hardly stirring. The auxiliary engine and jib had to be used to maintain steerage way. On Thursday the wind freshened. By Thursday night, Dereka stated that the waves were towering over their vessel. When Ms. Dodson came off the 9 to 11 watch, (2100 to 2300) she remembers telling her companion, "I hope that's the most adventuresous thing I have to do." Ms Dodson was below in the cabin when the yacht capsized. It didn't right itself straightaway. Before the yacht righted, Ms. Dodson remembers Mr. Primrose commenting that they may have to swim for it. She remembers them throwing themselves desperately at the bulkheads attempting to right the yacht. After an interminable length of time, the yacht did right itself. As they hastily made their way to the bow, Ms. Dodson noticed that the stern was already awash. Her friend launched the inflatable liferaft, but it became entangled with the rapidly sinking yacht and inflated in an inverted position. Mr. Primrose immediately jumped overboard and set to work freeing the lifeboat from the yacht. Ms. Dodson remembers her friend yelling for her to jump into the water, which she did just as the yacht slipped below the waves. Mr. Primrose helped her to the inverted raft, which they held on to. Dereka noticed a mountainous wave descending on them. She slipped an arm through one of the liferaft lifting straps and held on for dear life. The gargantuan wave swept her companion free from the liferaft. Dereka remembers him implicitly telling her not to let go of the liferaft. They both struggled to reach each other. The last thing he said to her, was, "Hold on to the liferaft." Dereka saw many of the liferaft's provisions slide away into the water while it was upside down. She managed to catch a flare, an air pump and a packet of rubber patches

(which she mistakenly thought was a chocolate bar). By and large most of the provisions slipped away into the sea. After untold attempts, Dereka was able to right the raft with the help of an obliging wave. She deposited her meager possessions in the raft, but she was spent, she couldn't find the strength to lift herself into the waiting sanctuary. After sometime, Ms. Dodson sensed that a large white form was lurking just beneath the surface, (she admits it could have been her imagination). With typical British aplomb, Dereka resolved that after surviving all she had been through, she wasn't going to allow a dumb old shark to chew her up. With enough adrenalin flowing to simultaneously jump start six cardiac arrests, Ms. Dodson pulled herself into the liferaft. From late Thursday (23 OCT 80) until rescued shortly after 0800, EST Tuesday, 28 October, it was Dereka Dodson against the elements. She subsisted largely on rainwater and seaweed. One particularly bountiful piece of seaweed was encrusted with small crabs and shrimp, Dereka closed her eyes and unceremoniously devoured them. She spread-eagled herself inside the cramped confines of the covered liferaft for hours on end. The raft capsized several times. Dereka was able to right it without too much trouble. She saw no sign of a ship or a plane until Monday night.

Aboard USS CANOPUS (AS-34), the 0400 to 0800 bridge watch was slowly winding down. The Chief of the Watch, DKC HAFTMANN asked the Junior Officer of the Deck, LT(jg) KEMMERER if the lookouts had reported an orange object in the water several thousand yards ahead. (DKC HAUFMANN, who is the ship's senior Disbursing Clerk, can reportedly spot a seemingly insignificant mistake in a Leave and Earning Statement at a hundred paces). The JOOD notified the Officer of the Deck and the ship's Commanding Officer, Captain MARXER, who was already on the bridge. Captain MARXER promptly decided to determine if the miniature orange object bobbing on the horizon could indeed be a liferaft. CANOPUS closed the contact. Dereka heard the sound of powerful engines. She said that the silhouette of that "great grey ghost", backlit by the rising sun was the most wonderful, beautiful and awe inspiring thing she had ever seen. Dereka was afraid to

look out again. When she finally did venture another peek, she temporarily panicked. She couldn't spot the CANOPUS straight away. The wind and current had spun her raft part way around. Her fears soon abated. The ship's motor whaleboat (manned by the boat crew and the CANOPUS rescue and assistance detail) was dispatched. Ms. Dodson and her fragile craft were plucked from the sea. Events were best summed up when the CANOPUS crew broke out in spontaneous applause as the boat davit lifted that most precious commodity, a human life, from the cruel grip of the sea. Dereka's survival can be attributed to her indomitable will to live and her determination to tell the story of the selfless sacrifice of her companion to give her a second chance at life.

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Excerpts from 28 October 1980 Ship's Deck Log of USS CANOPUS (AS-34), original log in central files maintained by the Chief of Naval Operations. Data extracted from information retained onboard.

- 0721 Small orange object sighted on horizon off starboard bow.
- 0723 Captain on the bridge.
- 0724 Commenced maneuvering ship at various courses and speeds to close orange object off starboard bow.
- 0747 Orange object sighted at 0721 determined to be liferaft. Single occupant of liferaft acknowledges need for assistance. Called away the rescue and assistance detail and mustered the ready lifeboat crew.
- 0749 Dispatched the Port Motor Whaleboat with crew, ship's diver and two hospital corpsmen embarked.
- 0750 Transferred one person of undetermined nationality from liferaft to motor whaleboat. Liferaft taken aboard motor whaleboat.
- 0754 All engines stop. Motor whaleboat alongside to port.
- 0800 Motor whaleboat cradled.
- 0801 Liferaft passenger onboard.
- 0802 Liferaft passenger escorted to ship's dispensary.

H. E. MARKER
Commanding Officer