

"The Sea's Fury"
By Mike Hazard

Excerpts from Chapter One

CG40501 was the lead boat out of the harbor after the alarm had sounded at Carlyle Bay. With the boat's streamlined hull and top speed of 21-knots, it would be on scene first. On it were Josh Stewart and Paul Johnson-Josh as the duty rescue swimmer and Paul the certified EMT. They had donned their survival suits as soon as they were underway from the dock.

Close already, Josh and the crew of the 40-footer could see what was happening with the two men in the water. They could all see that they needed to separate those two men immediately or one of them was surely going to drown. Brian Reed, the backup coxswain, threw a bright orange life ring squarely in front of the sailboat skipper, who immediately released the death grip he'd had on the Thompson's operator and abandoned the limp, motionless body as it settled deeper under the water.

Josh dove into the frigid ocean hovering at fifty degrees, grabbed the back of the man's shirt collar, and pulled him to the surface with a few powerful kicks. Holding his lifeless body on his back and supporting his head, Josh closed his mouth over the drowning man's purplish-colored lips and gave him two quick breaths. No response. The man's face had turned bluish and pale, devoid of any sign of life. Josh gave him two more quick breaths. The man unconsciously lifted his arms erratically and jerked his head forward and coughed as vomit and seawater spewed forth.

By now CG40501 had been maneuvered right up beside Josh and the second man in the water. Two pairs of strong arms reached over the side of the starboard gunwale and positioned the Stokes Litter deep into the water and under the victim's still body. As he was lifted aboard, Josh glanced in the

direction of the Thompson and saw what he assumed were the man's wife and children leaning over the starboard gunwale, mouths open, hands gripping the gunwale and being pelted by the storm.

"Carl!" Josh yelled at the boat's coxswain. "Is there a chopper on its way out of Port Angeles?"

"Left ten minutes ago. I just gave the pilot a short count on 2-6-7-0 kilohertz and it should be on scene in fifteen minutes."

"Thanks," Josh said, satisfied they were doing everything to save the skipper's life. Nonetheless, the man was going to need a lot of help to get through this. It was help Josh hoped they had the means to deliver.

Carl signaled to the Thompson in the distance by picking up the handset of the radio. "Thompson this five-zero-one. What is your husband's name and age, over?"

Linda fumbled with her own radio's handset trying to respond. "His name is Oscar Murray and he's thirty-eight years old. Is he going to be okay? Is he breathing?"

"Ma'am, we're doing everything possible at the moment. The other rescue boat will be alongside to assist you shortly. Please standby frequency 2-1-8-2 kilohertz."

As she watched, the fear and doubt of not knowing Oscar's condition gripped her like a shadow she couldn't escape. Her stomach churned with anxiety as she tried to deal with the unknown condition of her husband. Looking at her children and pulling them close to her, she vowed to remain strong for them. Somehow they would all get through this ordeal.

With increasing doubt about the victim's survivability, Carl now knew they had "Oscar Murray" on board the 40-footer. The crew quickly lifted him out of the Stokes Litter and placed him prostrate on the square-edged metal cover that straddled the exhaust tubes in the middle of the rear deck of CG40501. Overall, the deck of the 40-footer was wider and more open than the 44-footer's, which provided the space they needed to perform CPR. Still, there was no sign of breathing and his pulse was very weak. Paul kneeled near Oscar's upper body and gave him two more quick breaths. Holding his arms together, he pressed the heels of his hands hard against the center of Oscar's chest. He pressed down several times, trying to stimulate the natural breathing process again. Once more he covered Oscar's deep-blue-colored lips with his mouth. His lungs filled to capacity, then sagged again, deflated as before, but Oscar remained lifeless.

Linda and her children watched in anguished anticipation from a distance for a sign from the crew that Oscar was recovering. Each second seemed like an hour each minute an eternity. The 44-footer with her diesel engines rumbling at a low idle filled the air with an acrid smell of pungent fumes and smoke as it maneuvered into position alongside the Thompson to pick up the family and place them in the warmth of the after compartment. There they would be warm and out of the persistent downpour, yet still see what was happening to Oscar.