

LOCAL NEWS

Yacht race experiences first death

Crews remained in rescue mode Sunday after Farallon wreck

By Andrea Koskey
S.F. Examiner Staff Writer

A 105-year-old race turned deadly for the first time in its history Saturday after a wave broadsided a sailboat, sending the crew overboard while killing at least one person.

Rescue crews spent Sunday searching for four of the eight sailors aboard Low Speed Chase; three were rescued Saturday when the body was found.

The boat and its crew were racing in the Full Crew Farallon Race, which began in 1907. It's a 54-mile course that begins and ends at the San Francisco Yacht Club after circling the Farallon Islands. This year, 49 boats set sail early Saturday morning.

When Low Speed Chase was rounding the largest island on the southeast portion of the Farallon cluster, it was broadsided by a large wave, knocking several of its crew members overboard, yacht club board member Ed Lynch said.

The boat then turned around, attempting to rescue its fallen crew members, but was hit by another wave. That impact knocked all but one person overboard; the crew member reportedly suffered a



Rescue: A Coast Guard rescue helicopter hoists a survivor, left, after the yacht Low Speed Chase was caught by major waves on Saturday. Three sailors were rescued from the vessel, which was competing in the Full Crew Farallon Race.

fractured leg. The boat then washed up onto rocks.

At the time Low Speed Chase's

crew was being rocked by waves, the Coast Guard received a distress signal and mayday call from the

boat. Rescue crews were dispatched about 3 p.m. Saturday, Coast Guard Lt. Chris Hanzlik said.

Lowering flags raises big bill, activists told

By Dan Schreiber
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If you want to fly a flag at half-staff for an occasion in San Francisco, it could cost up to \$1,500. Local blogger and LGBT activist Michael Petrelis found that out the hard way when he asked The City's Department of Public Works to do that in the Civic Center to commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia on May 17.

"I mean, c'mon," Petrelis said. "If San Francisco, of all cities, can't find a way to lower two flags for 24 hours to honor dead gay people from around the world, what does that say about San Francisco?"

Gloria Chan, a DPW spokeswoman, said union contracts require station engineers to lower the flags and be compensated at \$90 per hour for a minimum of four hours, no matter how long the task actually takes.

If the duty has to be performed at night or on the weekend, overtime payments are required.

For those of you keeping score at home, that could be up to \$135 per hour for two four-hour sessions — one to lower the flags, one to reraise them — for a total of \$1,080. What makes up the remaining cost is unclear.

Chan said Petrelis was provided with a fair, "across-the-board" cost for the activity, but considering the circumstances, the department plans to work with the inquiring group — Gays Without Borders — to lower the final bill.

Petrelis, who has raised the ire of some city officials in the past, noted that the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a resolution in March to recognize the day. Chan said it remains unclear if Gays Without Borders would still have to cover the cost of the flag-lowering in the case of a citywide recognition of the



COURTESY PHOTO

Recognition: Activists want to lower flags to recognize the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.

day, but details are still being considered.

"We're not here to gouge anybody," Chan said. "We're always willing to work with community groups."

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Boat rejoining world race after rescue from ocean

A yacht that was crippled by a Pacific storm this month while taking part in an around-the-world race set sail from Oakland on Saturday for the next leg of the contest.

The Geraldton Western Australia, a 68-foot yacht competing in the Clipper 11-12 Round the World Yacht Race, sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge after more than a week of repairs in Oakland, race organizers announced.

It was accompanied by nine other boats competing in the race, which will make its next stop in New York via the Panama Canal. The race began in Southampton, England, on July 31, and will end there July 22 of this year after traveling more than 40,000 miles and visiting six continents.

The Geraldton was heavily damaged March 31 when it was struck by a large wave in a storm about 400 miles off the California coast. The wave swept away the steering wheel and mounting, along with communications equipment, race



REUTERS FILE PHOTO

Medical aid: Specialists attend to sailors Jane Hitchens, center, and Nik Brbrora after their rescue earlier this month.

organizers said.

The Coast Guard brought two injured crew members — Jane Hitchens, 50, and Nik Brbrora, 29 — to Oakland on April 2, a day after they were transferred at sea from the Geraldton to the Coast Guard cutter Bertholf.

The yacht itself sailed into the Bay on April 3 using partial motor power and an emergency steering system.

Brbrora was back onboard today when the Geraldton set sail, organizers said. — Bay City News

Upon arrival, the air rescue crew spotted three sailors — Low Speed Chase captain and owner James Bradford, and crew members Nick Voss and Brian Chong — who had made their way onto the rocks. Shortly after, the body of Marc Kasanin was found.

Alan Cahill, Alex Busch and Jordan Fromm are among the missing, according to Lynch. Busch was the only female aboard the 38-foot vessel. The identity of the fourth missing sailor was withheld pending notification of family.

Lynch said Low Speed Chase was a "well-traveled" vessel and it was registered with the San Francisco Yacht Club. All crew members knew one another and many had raced together before, Lynch said.

"This was a major, major event that knocked everybody," Lynch said of the incident. "We've never experienced [an incident] of this magnitude."

A private vigil was held at the yacht club Sunday.

In a statement released on its website, the Offshore Yacht Racing Association expressed its "deepest sympathies at this time of sorrow to the family and friends of the lost crewman of the 'Low Speed Chase.' We offer our thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of the missing crew in hopes they are returned home safely."

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