October 25, 1973

Adm. Chester R. Bender
Commandant (G.C.)
U. S. Coast Guard
Nassif Building
400 7th Street, S. W.
Washington, D. C. 20592

Dear Admiral Bender:

The purpose of this letter is two fold:

First of all, I would like to thank the United States Coast Guard for saving my life from the sea.

Secondly, I would like to pay some small personal recognition to the men who did it. Today we live in troubled times. Duty is often a shabby word. Discipline unthought of in many places, and compassion is often confused with pity.

It is a wonderful revelation indeed to find a service that still practices these virtues. To the men of Coast Guard helicopter HH3FCGNR 1483 LCDR and to the men of the USCG Cutter "Boutwell" go the honor of having functioned with the highest degree of professional proficiency, above and beyond the call of duty, and at times in disregard of their personal safety. I have made a cassette tape of the entire sequence of events, if you should care to investigate my statements. I make these statements as a man who is proud to have served in the United States Coast Guard aboard the Coast Guard Cutter "Icarus" two and one half years, and aboard the USS "Calcaterra D-E 390" one and one half years.

I would like to commend just a few by name. I regret I cannot name all of them. I would request that you investigate the incident with the possibility of some sort of award for heroism. I request that you would consider an entry to the fact into these men's service records. I know this is possible, for I was promoted from S.O.M. 3/C to S.O.M. 2/C by special order of the Commandant.

I would recommend to your attention the crew of the helicopter, who located us by radio direction finder, in complete darkness, fifteen foot seas, and 50 knot winds, under most hazardous conditions. I would commend Captain F. J. Lessing, U.S.C.G., whose intercept of our poor little ship was a most brilliant maneuver, executed swiftly, in spite of radar malfunction. I would especially commend the small boat operators and crew, as one who has served as stroke oarsman in whaleboats in World War 2. I was dumbfounded by their skill.

I list the following men who were outstanding in the performance of their duty. In a service where bravery is routine, theirs deserves recognition:

Lieutenant J. G. Kinghorn, 2nd Damage Control Party. Without his leadership, the vessel "Sun Dance" would have sunk. He stayed aboard, refused relief, so that he could insure the safety of his men.

Norman V. S. Sharp, B.M. 2/C

Cecil P. Scott, Jr., O.M. 1/C Helmsman First Time

Delbert O. Johnson, Chief Q.M., Second Helmsman, stayed aboard until Kodiak, - a long, long time.

George A. Azavedo, D.C.C., First Damage Control Party.

I should say that we had taken aboard large quantities of water and our 35' seiner was down by the bows. The fear of pitch poling in the heavy seas was a really real fear to me, the fear of broaching was constant, because a shoal draft tunnel ship has very little rudder control in this situation. The vessel was handled with skill, and with complete disregard for personal safety.

You, sir, are to be commended for keeping alive the proud traditions of our service.

When, at last, I was received aboard the "Boutwell" and had thanked all those wonderful people, each and every one responded with the same reply: "It's our job."

I am taking the liberty of sending a copy of this letter to Congressman Young of Alaska, and Senator Stevens of Alaska, in the hope that they will forward it to the proper committees for recognition.

I would ask for the names of the crew members of the helicopter, for I would like to send them a thank you note.

With highest respect and regard,

William F. Rabich
WILLIAM RABICH

William Rabich S.O.M. 1/C U.S.C.G.
233-067
1941-1946

cc: C.O. U.S.C.G.C. "Boutwell"
C.O. Kodiak Coast Guard Air Base
Honorable Congressman Don Young
Honorable Senator Ted Stevens

35' Seiner "Sun Dance", enroute from Kodiak, Alaska, to Homer, Alaska, October 17, 1973, two men aboard. The "Sun Dance" pumps failed, in heavy seas, and was rescued by U. S. Coast Guard; crew and vessel saved.

William R Rabich, A.B.
53 Years of Age. Served as
crew member of "Sun Dance"

William R. Rabich