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Cruising Club of America to Present 2009 Rod Stephens Trophy to Maurice and Sophie Conti

New York, N.Y., USA (January 21, 2010) – The Cruising Club of America has selected Maurice and Sophie Conti to receive its 2009 Rod Stephens Trophy for their rescue of the crew of the 10m ketch *Timella* on October 12, 2008. The trophy will be presented to the Contis on March 5, 2010 by CCA Commodore Sheila McCurdy (Middletown, R.I.) during the club's annual Awards Dinner at the New York Yacht Club, in New York.

The Contis and their two small children were aboard their Catana 471 cruising catamaran *Ocealys* about 60 miles from Suva, Fiji, when near midnight they heard a mayday call on their VHF radio. Some 12 nautical miles away, the ketch *Timella* had struck a submerged reef and had begun taking on water. The yacht's three crew, New Zealander Ali Timms and Australians Cameron Slagle and Liz Schoch, needed urgent help.

By radio Maurice contacted Rescue Coordination Center New Zealand and the New Zealand High Commission in Suva about rescue options. There were few options; search and rescue vessels were many hours away. Then another radio call came from the stricken yacht, "We've gone down mate.... We are getting in the dinghy." *Ocealys* responded, "Roger that *Timella*... We are coming to you."

On board *Ocealys*, the Contis begin heading to *Timella*'s last given position, braving rough seas and strong winds. Just as the sun was coming up they reach the reef. *Ocealys* circled the reef looking for signs of life. They decided to circle again and saw something in the middle of the reef despite the heavy swell. It was the partially sunken dinghy.

Maurice, a trained rescue diver, donned a wet suit and with a radio, flares and other equipment, managed to launch the dinghy in rough seas with Sophie's help. He found a relatively calm spot to cross the coral on the outer reef. Inside the lagoon he spotted the wreck of the ketch and her haggard crew hanging on to their partly deflated dinghy. He got them aboard in less than two minutes, and to ease the tension he said "Good morning ladies and gentlemen. My name is Maurice and I will be rescuing you today."

Sophie was able to hold *Ocealys* in position in the swells, and the exhausted crew were able to get aboard. From there they were taken to Robinson Crusoe Island Resort a few hours away.

The New Zealand High Commission recommended Maurice and Sophie Conti for heroism awards and in November 2009, they traveled to London to receive the United Nation's International Maritime Organization Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea.

In addition to presenting its **Rod Stephens Trophy**, the CCA will present the following 2009 Award Citations:

The Blue Water Medal awarded to Annie Hill and Trevor Robertson in recognition of a life of cruising and voyaging that best exemplifies the objects and goals of the CCA. Together they have sailed *Iron Bark*, a 35-foot steel gaff cutter built in Queensland, Australia. From 2007 to 2009 the couple spent time cruising in New Zealand, Tasmania and Queensland, Australia.

The Far Horizons Award awarded to Lin and Larry Pardey in recognition of their lifetime of cruising and voyaging. The Pardeys hold the record for the smallest boat to have circumnavigated contrary to the prevailing winds around all the great southern capes. They are the only couple to have circumnavigated both east-about and west-about on boats they built themselves, using traditional means of navigation and having no engine or sponsorship.

The Richard S. Nye Trophy awarded to John P. Rousmaniere, who has brought distinction to the Cruising Club of America as a sailor, writer, and historian. He is best known as a prolific author, and his books such as *Desirable and Undesirable Characteristics of Offshore Yachts*, *The Annapolis Book of Seamanship*, *Fastnet Force 10*, *A Berth to Bermuda*, and many others have been a source of information and inspiration to sailors around the world. He has also served the sport of sailing as a moderator at Safety at Sea Seminars, as a lecturer, and researcher on man overboard recovery techniques.

About the Cruising Club of America

The Cruising Club of America is dedicated to offshore cruising, voyaging and the “adventurous use of the sea” through efforts to improve seamanship, the design of seaworthy yachts, safe yachting procedures and environmental awareness. Now in its 89th year, the club has 10 stations throughout the U.S., Canada and Bermuda, with approximately 1200 members who are qualified by their experience in offshore passage making. In even-numbered years, the CCA organizes the Newport to Bermuda Race in conjunction with the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club. It also sponsors several Safety at Sea seminars and hosts a series of “Suddenly Alone” seminars for the cruising couple.

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Photo file: CCA_2009RodStephens_Conti_courtesy Conti

Photo caption: Sophie and Maurice Conti receive the United Nation’s International Maritime Organization Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea. The Cruising Club of America has selected the couple to receive its 2009 Rod Stephens Trophy for their rescue of the crew of the 10m ketch *Timella* on October 12, 2008.

Photo credit: courtesy Conti family