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Cruising Club of America

Bob Arzbaecher and the crew of Sociable are presented the 2011 Rod Stephens Trophy

New York, N.Y., USA (January 26, 2012) – The Cruising Club of America's (CCA) 2011 Rod Stephens Trophy for Outstanding Seamanship is well deserved by Bob Arzbaecher (Milwaukee, Wisc.) and the crew of the Beneteau 40.7 *Sociable* for their dramatic rescue of the crew of the Kiwi 35 *WingNuts* during the Chicago Yacht Club's 103rd Race to Mackinac held this past July. The trophy is given "for an act of seamanship which significantly contributes to the safety of a yacht, or one or more individuals at sea" and will be awarded by Commodore Daniel P. Dyer, III at the annual Awards Dinner, March 2, 2012, at the New York Yacht Club in Manhattan.

Arzbaecher has been sailing for ten years with the *Sociable* crew, many of whom have competed in the Chicago-Mackinac and other long distance races on Lake Michigan. This year, his crew consisted of 11 sailors: Greg Adams, Cathy Patrick, Chris Miotke, Brian Adams, Matt Reising, Dave Patrick, Brian Nagle, Amy Marshall, Pete Duecker, Adam Flanders (all Milwaukee, Wisc.) and Matt Younkle (Madison, Wisc.).

The team's life-altering moment took place at 11 p.m. on Sunday, July 17, 2011, when a severe squall tore through the fleet of 361 racing sailboats 30 hours into the 333-mile offshore race. After the storm had passed and the sailors aboard *Sociable* had re-hoisted the mainsail, they heard a whistle in the distance. Shortly afterward, in the black of night, a faint light appeared to port, approximately a quarter to one-half mile away.

Without hesitation, the crew tacked *Sociable* in the direction of the light and turned on flashlights to signal their presence, which was returned with more light flashes. After lowering the main and powering up the engine, the *Sociable* crew headed in the direction of the unknown vessel, and as they approached realized that it was upside down with several people standing on its bottom. Though the squall had passed, the conditions were still rough, with three-to-five foot waves and winds upwards of 20 knots. *Sociable* used its radio to contact the Coast Guard, and as they came within hailing distance of *WingNuts* they counted five crew members on the boat and one in the water, clinging to the side.

Sociable deployed a Lifesling and circled *WingNuts*, trying to avoid the mass of lines tangled in the water. The team first managed to retrieve the man overboard, then continued to circle the overturned boat and retrieve the remaining crew members, who took turns jumping into the water and grabbing hold of the Lifesling. In ten minutes, the *WingNuts* crew – minus two who were missing – had been brought aboard, taken below and given blankets. *Sociable* continued looking for the missing crew members, but when the Coast Guard arrived with a helicopter and

rescue boat, it departed for Charlevoix, Mich., the closest port, and dropped off the *WingNuts* crew at the Coast Guard station, where ambulances awaited.

“Bob Arzbaeher and his crew of *Sociable* are to be congratulated for their organization and preparedness in executing the rescue of six sailors,” said Commodore Dyer. “But the world will continue to mourn the loss of the two crew – Suzanne Makowski Bickel and Mark Morely – who perished that night.”

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 90th year, the club has 11 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. Through the club’s Bonnell Cove Foundation, grants are made to 501 C3 organizations for safety at sea and environment of the sea projects. For more information on the CCA, go to <http://www.cruisingclub.org>.