

A friend emailed me this. If you are considering not having HF SSB on board your vessel and planning on crossing an ocean, read this as many times as it takes to change your mind. There are a few typos, but I decided to leave as sent.

Terry

This is a sad account of the loss of the S/V NIRVANA NOW.

I believe it is also an example of a well coordinated rescue using SSB/ham radio. Please note the lack of a SSB radio hindered the efforts of a second responding vessel, S/Y ATHOS OF LONDON. This account further supports the position of many experienced mariners, that a Sat phone alone, is not a suitable substitute for a SSB/ham radio aboard a well founded vessel.

Bravo Zulu to the crew of the S/V CONTINUUM, Ham Radio Operator Fred Moore, W3ZU, of Inverness, Fl, the Pacific Seafarer's Net (14.300), and the U.S. Coast Guard RCC Alameda for a job well done!

*Glenn Tuttle - Moderator
Cruisers Network Online
M/V Tothill
Great Harbour Cay, Bahamas*

The following article courtesy of <http://www.sailblogs.com/member/ortiz/>

End Events of S/Y NIRVANA NOW

On the 8th of April Nirvana Now sank to the bottom of the South Pacific Ocean at latitude 07 54' S, longitude 119 11' W in a section of ocean farther from land than anywhere else on earth due to damages from the heavy seas we had experienced for over a week.

After contacting the S/Y CONTINUUM through the Seafarer's ham radio network Bob and Mona sailed hard to weather for almost two days to our rescue as we floated disabled. Due to their efforts and skill we were able to transfer safely to S/Y CONTINUUM be carried to The French Marquesas as the boat that brought us so much joy for the eighteen years we owned her settled beneath the waves.

We are now in Tahiti and expect to be in Canada by the end of May.

The details

6 th April

I noticed that sea growth on bottom of the boat was slowing us down. We removed the barnacles at the water line.

Three coats of Mission Bay bottom paint were applied as to the manufacturer's directions in November 2015 while at Shelter Bay Marina in Colon Panama.

Afternoon of 6 th: I noticed that the forestay was loose. It is attached to the bow of the boat and the top of the mast to support the mast. Inspection showed that the deck where the forestay attaches had started to part from the hull. We attributed this to the state of the sea over the last three days which had been a 2-3 meter swell at a period of 3-5 seconds.

We rolled in the jib sail mounted on the forestay to reduce strain on the stay and kept the main sail up with three reefs. We helped support the forestay with a spinnaker halyard and a spare jib halyard attached to the port and starboard forward mooring cleats.

We steered a course of 265 degrees which was a downwind course, and our rhumb line course to

our destination Nuku Hiva, to reduce the strain on the forestay.

We noticed water accumulating in the bilge requiring to be pumped out several times.

0300 UTC: I checked into the Seafarer's Net on 14.300 Mhz and explained the situation as critical. I arranged with their assistance to have the S/Y CONTINUUM to change course and meet us to lend assistance if required.

0350 UTC: I called in on 14.300 Mhz and talked to W3ZU Fred to ensure that we were doing all we could be as far as requesting assistance. He told us he would monitor the frequency for a while to check on our progress.

0410: A large wave came up behind us and slammed the rudder over breaking the steering quadrant and separated from the hull the internal structure of the boat where the steering cable pulleys attach on the starboard side. We contacted W3ZU Fred and asked him to relay a May Day message to the Coast Guard that our situation had deteriorated and that we needed assistance. We then set up the emergency tiller system so we could maintain the boat in a heaved to arrangement to maintain stability.

US Coast Gard Group 11 responded and we informed them of our damages, that the barnacles were reducing our progress and that the bilge pump was keeping up to the ingress of water from the damaged deck.

We also informed them that S/Y CONTINUUM had changed course to meet us. They were going to see if there was another ship in the area that they could ask to assist and we arranged to send regular position reports to them through W3ZU Fred, which we did throughout the night.

7 th April

Pre-dawn: A large wave struck the rudder and broke the emergency steering linkages and the rudder started to swing free to it's stops pounding the hull of the boat.

Sun rise: After day light we lowered the main sail we were still using to stabilize us in the three meter swell and laid out the sea anchor from the bow and there by kept the bow to windward and the rudder out of the main flow of the swells.

We contacted S/Y CONTINUUM as arranged, explained the deterioration of our situation and agreed to meet every two hours on 6.209 Mhz as they progressed towards us.

We were not able to Contact W3ZU Fred as arranged due to poor radio propagation and the S/Y BLUE PELICAN agreed to relay the message of our deteriorating state and that the bilge pump was keeping up with the ingress of approximately one foot of water per hour, through the damaged deck and also in the area of the rudder support which had started to leak due to the force of the rudder striking the hull.

Throughout the day 2 - 3 meter waves continued to slam the rudder into the bottom of the boat as the rudder stops were damaged. We rigged a line from the midship mooring cleats then aft around the rudder to reduce the movement of the rudder and the damage it was imparting on the hull. With our situation critical but stabilized we continued to pump the bilges every hour to keep ahead of the ingress of water from the damaged bow and the deteriorating condition of the rudder mountings. We maintained radio contact routines with S/Y CONTINUUM, W3ZU Fred and the Seafarer's Net and waited for the arrival of S/Y CONTINUUM.

We were informed by the Seafarer's Net that the S/Y ATHOS OF LONDON had been diverted by RCC Alameda and was on a course to our location but would arrive after S/Y CONTINUUM.

The US Coast Guard contacted us on 6.290 Mhz and informed us that S/Y The Athos of London was diverted to us and would arrive the next day. They also wanted to confirm that we would accept help from S/Y CONTINUUM and that we would scuttle the sinking S/Y NIRVANA NOW to reduce the

time it would be a hazard to navigation. Unfortunately ATHOS did not have an SSB radio on board so we were unable to communicate with her until they were within sight, after we boarded CONTINUUM, and then by using the VHF radio which we both had.

8 th April

1500 UTC S/Y CONTINUUM arrived, we launched our dingy from the deck and managed to mount the out board engine on it in the swells which had increased to 3-4 metres. We loaded the dingy with our documents and a few personal belongings and transferred to the S/Y CONTINUUM successfully due to their seamanship skills and bravery in the rough seas. We left NIRVANA NOW sinking at position 07 54' S, 119 11' W.

ATHOS OF LONDON arrived about two hours later and offered to assist in any way they may. They informed RCC Alameda1 that we were safe aboard S/Y CONTINUUM, and of the state of S/Y NIRVANA NOW. It was decided for us to remain on, and progress with, S/Y CONTINUUM as opposed to risking another transfer at sea to join the ATHOS.

20th April

We checked in to the Marquesas and gave a statement to the Gendarmarie of the sinking and rescue.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the efforts of RCC Alameda1 and their radio watch keepers for their unreplaceable efforts.

Bob and Mona Jankowski on the S/Y CONTINUUM willingly endured great hardship as they motor-sailed 40 hours into strong winds and large seas while standing watches of two hours on/two hours off to enable them to reach us before we sank. The two hour watch routine made possible the radio contact schedule of every two hours which kept them informed of our position as we drifted disabled. It was a great moral booster to us to be to talk to our saviors on a regular basis.

I would like to impress upon all that it was the communications allowed us through the SSB radio giving us access to the land based ham networks and other boats that saved our lives. With the popularity and attributes of satellite phones increasing I think it is still prudent for all persons voyaging off shore to be skilled in the use of the SSB radio.

We will miss the boat that gave us so much joy for 18 years.

Randoll N Ortiz, owner/Captain, S/Y NIRVANA NOW

--

Chris Parker

Weather Forecasting & Vessel Routing

Weather & Communications - Hardware, Software, Sales, Consulting, Books,
Seminars

www.mwxc.com

Marine Weather & Communications LLC (and dba Marine Weather Center)

5130 Medulla Rd

Lakeland FL 33811

ph 863-248-2702

fax 863-248-4666