



CRUISING CLUB OF AMERICA AWARDS BLUE WATER MEDAL TO PETER PASSANO

New York, N.Y., USA (January 15, 2008) – Peter M. Passano of Woolwich, Maine was selected by the Cruising Club of America to receive its prestigious Blue Water Medal for 2007. The medal will be presented by CCA Commodore Ross E. Sherbrooke of Boston, Mass. at the club's annual Awards Dinner in New York on January 15, 2008.

The Blue Water medal was inaugurated by the Cruising Club of America in 1923 to “reward meritorious seamanship and adventure upon the sea displayed by amateur sailors of all nationalities that might otherwise go unrecognized.” Previous Blue Water Medalists have included such luminaries of the world of ocean voyaging in small vessels as Alain Gerbault, H.W. Tilman, Carleton Mitchell, Eric and Susan Hiscock, Sir Francis Chichester, Eric Tabarly, Bernard Moitessier and Minoru Saito.

Peter Passano is the skipper of his 39-foot, home-built steel cutter *Sea Bear*, which during the past 17 years has taken him on ocean voyages spanning the length and breadth of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Taken together with his previous boats, he has sailed over 125,000 nautical miles.

Passano's serious offshore sailing began in 1966 when he and his wife sailed a 35-foot steel sloop from Holland to San Francisco via the Mediterranean and Panama Canal. Following a period of local sailing, the keel was laid for a simple, strong steel cutter which was built on the bank of a tidal creek in Marin County, California and launched in 1990. The shakedown cruise which followed took *Sea Bear* to Hawaii and north to Puget Sound, followed by a cruise to Alaska in 1992 and a single-handed passage from the Northwest to San Francisco.

The next year *Sea Bear* embarked on a three-year cruise through the South Pacific as far west as Australia and as far south as Tasmania, including a detour to the Louisiade Archipelago in Papua New Guinea. At this point Passano decided to reverse course and sail to Maine via the challenging Cape Horn route. Lacking a reliable crew, he decided to make the voyage beyond New Zealand single-handed. All went well until 250 miles west of Cape Horn, Passano saw the barometer drop 15 millibars in six hours, a sure sign of a severe storm approaching. The wind blew between “violent storm, force 11” and “hurricane, force 12” for over 20 hours. At the height of the blow, *Sea Bear* was knocked down flat several times by breaking seas causing some damage on deck, but no harm to the hull. After rounding Cape Horn in fine weather, he continued on to Maine via Rio de Janeiro, Antigua and Bermuda.

After a summer cruising Maine, *Sea Bear* sailed a clockwise circle of the North Atlantic, including Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, the Azores, Madeira, the Canaries, the Windward and Leeward Islands, the Virgins, the Bahamas and back to Maine. During this cruise the boat's strength was demonstrated when it piled up one evening on a reef in the West Indies. In the morning the boat was dragged off with insignificant damage to the hull.

Following cruises north to the Canadian Maritimes and south to the Caribbean and the Bahamas, Passano sailed for Ireland, England, Spain, Portugal, and then back across the Atlantic to Brazil where he set off on a long solo voyage to South Georgia Island. SOn the next leg to Cape Town, he struck a "bergy bit" (ice) which damaged the boat's bowsprit and almost caused the loss of the rig. Emergency repairs – earning him the Rod Stevens Trophy for Seamanship – allowed him to finish the passage safely. By the time he reached Maine he had completed a giant "figure eight" the length of the Atlantic.

The last five years have been spent between Maine, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador in the north and the Caribbean and the Spanish Main in the south. The adventures continue to this day.

About the Cruising Club of America

The Cruising Club of America is dedicated to offshore cruising, voyaging and "adventurous use of the sea" through efforts to improve seamanship, the design of seaworthy yachts, safe yachting procedures and environmental awareness. Now in its 85th 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.

For more information on the CCA, go to <http://www.cruisingclub.org/>

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