

Lincoln Harbor Yacht Club and the Miracle On The Hudson

Scott's boat is the one against the plane

Thousands of words and photos have been used to describe what occurred on the Hudson River on January 15th, 2009 as flight 1549 went into the drink. Here is one fellow's account of his participation in the rescue. Scott Koen, a member of Lincoln Harbor Yacht Club, was on scene four minutes after the plane crashed.

Scott Koen owns a 46-foot (former) Coast Guard Buoy tender that he bought and named the Lt. Michael Murphy

in honor of the Navy Seal's valiant actions in Afghanistan.

(Lt. Murphy was a Navy Seal that lost his life in Afghanistan under terrible conditions trying to save his men who were under severe attack. Thank to Lt. Murphy's actions, some made it out. He was given the Medal of Honor, posthumously, for his courage.)

Scott recently left his job as Operations Director for the

by John H. Vargo, Publisher

Intrepid Air and Space Museum, in New York City. Scott's love of the Navy, and all things military, placed him at the right place at the right time. There is no question that at the moment that Scott's boat arrived on scene, the ferry boats assumed that Scott's boat was Coast Guard, with its huge gantry on the stern.



Scott Koen in cabin of the Lt. Michael P. Murphy. Note the gearshift lever in bottom left hand corner of photo



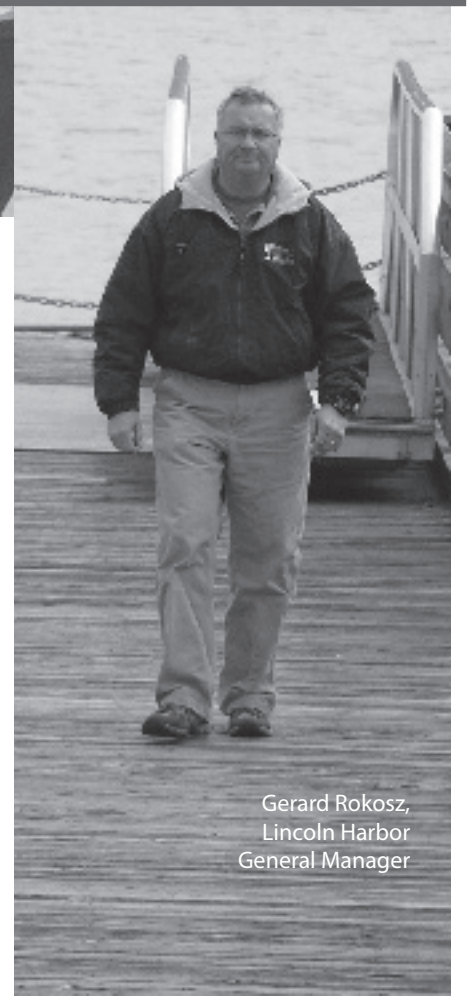
Debris on the deck of Scott's boat

Lincoln Harbor Yacht Club from Scott's boat.



Scott Koen aboard his boat the Lt. Michael P. Murphy.

<---- The Lt. Michael P. Murphy



Gerard Rokosz, Lincoln Harbor General Manager

The Story

It was 3:30 pm January 15th, 2009. Scott Koen was working on his boat, the Lt. Michael Murphy at Lincoln Harbor Yacht club. Gerard Rokosz, Dockmaster was in his usual place, the glass enclosed dock masters room overlooking the entire marina.

A cold front was coming and Scott, being Scott, was worried about the 6-71 diesel not being warmed up or prepared for the coming freeze.

As always Scott's radio was on VHF channel 13 while he worked. With the engine coming up to speed and cabin heat on, Scott heard a call over the VHF radio, "plane crash in the Hudson River." Looking out he could see over the top of the breakwater at Lincoln Harbor Yacht Club. (Scott's boat is on the second dock in and on the outside edge of the marina.)

From his docked position there did not seem to be anything unusual. Never the less, he immediately cast off all lines, backed into the Lincoln Harbor channel, drove around the bulkhead and out into the river.

At first he thought he saw a blue smokestack emblazoned with a

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logo from a cruise ship, but within seconds he knew it was the tail of a giant airliner in the river.

With the throttle wide open he sped to the crash site about a mile away. Upon arrival his attention immediately was drawn to fourteen passengers in a life raft and 2 men, standing on the wing, that were up to their waists in the freezing water. A man was holding the line of the raft with one hand, while holding on to the plane with the other to keep the raft from floating away. Scott never knew the fellows name but just called him "hero".

There were four New York Waterways' ferries and one Coast Guard Rib on scene as Scott arrived. These boats were doing a delicate ballet, each mindful of the precarious position that the victims found themselves in, most by this time standing on the wings, compounded by the wind, currents and other arriving rescue vessels.

The big brutish ferries were gingerly maneuvering fore and aft, starboard to port, picking passengers off in ones and twos, sometimes more, as the whole mess drifted south at one and a half knots. One momentary lapse could mean disaster and make what was arguably a bad situation much worse.

Scott's arrival was particularly helpful because his boat was lower to the water and it was more convenient for him to pick up the wet and scared passengers.

With everything going on at the same time Scott was also worried about keeping his boat in gear for fear of chewing up

any passengers in the water. Because of this reasoning, he was constantly running inside his cabin to adjust the position of his boat by touching the gear lever to engage and disengage the propeller. There was debris everywhere, which was another concern of fouling his boat's propeller.

He motioned to the "Yogi Berra" a New York Waterway's Ferry, with Captain Vincent Lucante at the helm to gently push his boat against the plane. This was immediately done. As the boat came against the plane, Scott being alone on board grabbed the first passenger he saw.

The passenger said "Thank you, please save the others!" The passenger then climbed from Scott's boat up to the ferryboat and a warm cabin.

At this point the ferry and Scott's boat had twisted around. Passengers from the plane were getting on the Yogi Berra's rescue ladder, which is similar to a cargo net. Scott abandoned his boat and climbed aboard the ferry to assist. The hero with the rope finally jumps into the water and slithers aboard the raft. Everyone on board the life raft says "him

first" pointing to the hero. With help from the passengers in the raft the "hero" is pushed forward and reaches the ladder. At this point the "hero" is extremely hypothermic, his limbs are shaking and he needs help. Scott climbs down beside him and start pulling him up, first by the arms, then the belt. Finally, the "hero" gets topside. Scott stays on the net and keeps pulling the others up. While he and others are doing this, the raft is moving in and out. Scott's boat is left drifting. Scott is more worried about

The big brutish ferries were gingerly maneuvering fore and aft...

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someone else going in the water than the fate of his boat.

The Coast Guard is on the other side of the raft and it's now a choice for the passengers standing on the wings, to climb up to a warm ferry or get into a raft.

By this time, Scott's hands are so cold they quit working and are just claws, but that works in this situation. The passengers are much worse, many of them soaking wet.

By this time a New York City Police Helicopter is overhead, a police diver drops out of the chopper and climbs onto the plane. Along with many other New York Waterways' ferryboats, New York City's fireboats and others, Scot is no longer needed.

The entire episode of removing the passengers takes a total of ten to fifteen minutes.

He begins picking up floating debris. After an hour of this he brings the debris to the dock, unloads it and goes home.

On February 18th, 2009, while at a ceremony held at the New York Waterway's ferry terminal, Scott Koen was awarded the Meritorious Public Service Award by Coast Guard commandant Adm. Thad Allen. Along with Scott, U. Senator Frank Lautenberg, D-NJ honored more than a hundred good Samaritan mariners who rescued the passengers and crew of flight 1549.

Also the Coast Guard and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano who was on hand awarded the Distinguished Public Service Award to Arthur E. Imperatore, founder of New Jersey based NY Waterways', whose crews were first to the scene of the downed plane. Imperatore lavished praise on his employees, including Vincent Lombardi of Fairfield, captain of the Thomas Jefferson and Capt. Brittany Catanzara of Fairview, who rescued 26 people on the Thomas Kean vessel.

A moment in time when everything came together in perfect unison.

Seafarers and NY Waterway Boats involved in the rescue:

From the Thomas Jefferson, Capt. Vincent Lombardi Deckhands Hector Rabanes and Wilfredo Rivera. They rescued 56 people from the plane.

From the Yogi Berra, Captain Vince Lucante and Captain Michael Starr. They rescued 24 including an infant and another child.

From the Athena, Captain Carl Lucas and Deckhands Luis Salerno and Danny Convery. They rescued 19 including the pilot.

From the Moira Smith, Captain Manny Liba and Deckhands Natale Binetti and Giulio Farnese. They rescued 14.

From the Thomas Kean, Captain Brittany Catanzaro and Deckhands Osman Berete and Cosmo Mezzina. They rescued 26

From the Admiral Richard Bennis, Captain John Winiarski and Deckhand Frank Illuzi. They rescued three.

From the George Washington, Captain Mohamed Gouda and Deckhands Jose Torres, Pepe Carumba and Gregorio Pages. They rescued one.

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