

The rescue of the crew of the Ho Ming 5 by HMCS Iroquois 280 on 05 Dec 1983

Four of HMCS Iroquois' Crew awarded the Star of Courage

Date of Instrument: August 13, 1984

Date of Presentation: March 15, 1985

Ordinary Seaman Joseph Roger Michel Bouchard, S.C.

Sub-Lieutenant David Peter Finch, S.C.

Able Seaman Dennis Christopher Morrison, S.C.

Leading Seaman Clyde Harry Sheppard, S.C.

Disregarding great perils on 5 December 1983, OS Michel Bouchard, Slt David Finch, AB Dennis Morrison and LS Clyde Sheppard, serving in HMCS Iroquois saved nine of the twenty seamen from the No. 5 Ho Ming a freighter listing precariously in heavy seas off the coast of Newfoundland. Just before dawn the Master radioed his decision to abandon ship. HMCS Iroquois responded to the distress call and quickly launched a Sea King helicopter and two Zodiac rubber rafts. OS Bouchard, Slt Finch, AB Morrison and LS Sheppard rode the ten-metre waves in the rafts to the Ho Ming and remained alongside the stern so that the survivors could descend the ladder. This proved to be an extremely dangerous operation: the freighter, with her propellers still turning, kept lifting out of the water and slamming down into the sea, causing a giant vortex into which the small rafts could have been sucked at any time. Slt Finch sustained a chest injury when, holding the ladder with one hand in an effort to steady the rubber boat, three men scrambled into the raft and he was pinned underneath the steel ladder. Shortly after its launch, one Zodiac experienced serious mechanical problems but OS Bouchard and LS Sheppard determined to continue their mission. En route to Iroquois with four survivors, the Zodiac's outboard motor broke and a huge swell tossed OS Bouchard into the freezing waters. LS Sheppard, disregarding the risk to his own life, managed with great difficulty to haul his comrade back into the wave-lashed boat. In spite of this frightening episode, they calmed down the mariners until the other Zodiac came to tow them back to the ship. There was nothing to secure a cable to in the Zodiacs so, in a feat of seamanship, although both exhausted and numb with cold, OS Bouchard held one end of the line in his boat while Slt Finch held the other in his. AB Morrison and LS Sheppard skillfully maintained their Zodiacs alongside the Iroquois until the seven sailors were lifted to safety and the crew and disabled raft recovered. Meanwhile, two crew members of the Ho Ming had been thrown overboard from their life raft. Knowing that without survival suits they had only a few minutes to live, Slt Finch and AB Morrison without hesitation re-entered the turbulent seas. They found the sailors nearly overcome by hypothermia and pulled them into their raft. They made their way back to Iroquois, then helped disembark the nearly-helpless men.