

Lost B.C. sailor saved by 'ghost boat's light'

VANCOUVER (CP) — Lost at sea, his face swollen from stinging salt spray, fisherman Randy Morrison was ready to open his survival suit and let the icy Pacific Ocean finish him off fast.

But a search light, one he later called a ghost light, cut through last Thursday night's hurricane-force storm, leading him to believe he was saved.

'Nobody out there'

In Milbanke Sound, between Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands, the Comox man lost track of time but believes he was in the water for 18 hours.

Though it disappeared, the light gave him hope, Morrison said Monday from Bella Bella Hospital, where he was taken after being picked up Friday by the Canadian Coast Guard cutter, Racer.

But the coast guard told him "there was nobody out there. It was impossible to fly, impossible to get a boat out, but I swear there was a boat out there. I saw the light."

Before the 70-knot gale subsided Friday, 18 men had had to be rescued and 11 boats had sent distress calls. Two other men, Neil Swan and Pierre McVie, were killed.

Morrison, 34, survived the capsizing of Pacific Traveller, a 12.5-metre (41-foot) trawler, but its skipper Leonard Egolf is missing and presumed dead.

Morrison donned his survival suit when he saw nothing but green through a wheelhouse window, but Egolf delayed putting his on, trying until the last minute to save the boat.

Alone through that long night, the strong swimmer and former lifeguard

forced himself to swallow salt water, so he could urinate in his suit because that was the only way to raise his body temperature.

"I was having hallucinations. . . seeing old wooden boats with fishermen in them . . . calling to me to come to them. I kept reaching out to them and my arms would go through the sides of their boats.

Swear it was real

"Then I saw the light that wouldn't come near me. It was either a ghost boat or some kind of animal or sea life. But I swear it was real."

He heard an aircraft, waved frantically, then the sound of the engines faded. Then he heard a boat whistle and voices beckoning him again. One urged him to grab hold and he felt something solid — the life buoy thrown from the Racer.

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From the desk of

ROBERT M. RICKOVER

I enclose a bit of Fortean news with my subscription renewal. Is there, perhaps, a Fortean connection between my name and that of Robert J. M. Rickard?

Robert M. Rickover
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