

**Lt Gen The Rt Hon Sir Jerry Mateparae GNZM, QSO
Governor-General of New Zealand
Royal Humane Society of New Zealand
Investiture Ceremony
Government House, Wellington
Wednesday, 19 September 2012
2:00 p.m**

TO RECEIVE THE ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND SILVER MEDAL

Godfrey Trevor Evans

On 29 September 2009, shortly before 9.17pm, Jack and Mary Jean Chaston, an elderly couple, were caught in their Rangiora home when a fire developed.

As he made his way down the hallway towards the conservatory Mr Chaston, told his wife to follow him. When he reached the sliding door that gave access from the conservatory to the outside, he found the door locked.

Godfrey Evans who was driving south down Victoria Street, Rangiora, saw the house on fire and went to investigate. He walked up the driveway, to the conservatory door (a metal grilled security door). He called out and received a reply from Mr Chaston. Mr. Evans tried to open the locked door and after some minutes was finally able to pull it off its hinges.

He entered the conservatory, leaning right over to avoid the heavy smoke and flames. He saw a man lying on the floor about 3 metres away. Conditions were extreme; visibility was very poor. The only light was coming from the flames. He went over to Mr Chaston to try and get him to explain the layout of the house and was told that his wife was in the lounge. Godfrey Evans then dragged Mr Chaston outside, down the driveway, and about 5 metres away.

He returned to the house intending to rescue Mrs Chaston. Windows were starting to explode and the flames were towards the rear of the house. By this time the fire had got much larger and the flames were bigger, some witnesses describing the flames being higher than roof height.

Mr Evans went back into the house through the conservatory. He was forced to crawl along the floor on his stomach because the smoke was so thick and heavy. He was unable to see more than half a metre. It was pitch black and

much worse than the first time. He was calling out to Mrs Chaston but there was no response.

He crawled past the glass door leading from the conservatory into the lounge and then crawled about 3 metres into the lounge. The smoke was even heavier in there with almost zero visibility. He could find no trace of Mrs Chaston.

At this stage, badly affected by the smoke, he realised that he would have to leave. He crawled back out of the house and made fire-fighters who had arrived aware that there was a woman still in the house. Fire-fighters first on the scene reported that there were flames over 3- 4 metres in height coming from the house and the heat and smoke were intense with the threat of a "flashover" very possible.

Jean Chaston was located by fire-fighters, in her bedroom; she died later that evening in hospital.

Kima Mathew Sampson

On the 5th September 2010, at 5.00am a fire started in a bedroom at the rear of a house in John Street, Trentham, Upper Hutt, trapping a 29 year-old man.

A neighbour, Kima Sampson was awakened by yelling and from his window saw extensive smoke coming from the house.

He ran next door and gained entry by forcing the back door open. He was met by smoke and intense heat. There was no visibility.

Guided only by a gargling sound coming from the trapped man, he crawled along the hallway until he found the man, unconscious on the floor. He dragged the man out of the house before he himself fainted on the driveway. The rescued man was only just breathing and Kima Sampson was also having extreme difficulty breathing . When fire fighters arrived minutes later, he was seen to be in a very distressed state, crawling on his hands and knees up the drive to safety.

Ambulance staff treated both men for smoke inhalation before they were sent to the Upper Hutt hospital and admitted. The rescued man suffered burns to parts of his body not covered by clothing.

Had Kima Sampson not acted as he did in the dangerous situation he faced, the occupant could have died or at the very least suffered debilitating injuries.

Dean Andrew Herrick, Geoffrey Albert Taylor, and Stephen James Smith

On the afternoon of 11 October, 2011, a 64 year-old solo yachtsman was in a life threatening situation approximately 62 nautical miles off Cape Kidnappers, Hawkes Bay. He no longer had sails or control of steering. The sea was rough and the weather was deteriorating. The location of the yacht was 35 minutes flying time away which, in the conditions, was near to the extreme range for a sea rescue by helicopter.

At 5.55pm the crew of the Lowe Corporation Rescue Helicopter Service, Pilot, Dean Herrick, Winchman, Geoffrey Taylor and St John Advanced Paramedic, Stephen Smith, headed off knowing that once committed they had few options if they experienced difficulties.

When the yacht was located it became obvious that with the boat pitching and rolling in winds gusting to 35 knots and seas of between 2.5 and 5 metres it was not safe to try to winch the yachtsman directly from the boat. A highly involved and challenging winching operation and rescue unfolded with four lives potentially at risk.

During the entire winching operation it was necessary for Pilot Dean Herrick and Winchman Geoffrey Taylor to raise and lower the helicopter and adjust the length of the cable as the peaks and troughs of the swell moved underneath them. Too much or too little cable in the water would have put Paramedic Steven Smith at considerable risk.

Mr Smith had been lowered into the water and reached the boat, but getting the yachtsman into the desired position away from his boat proved to be extremely difficult. He was finally able to get the yachtsman into the harness.

Complications which followed resulted in the winch line with Mr Smith and the yachtsman attached to it becoming entangled with a rope linking a life raft to the boat. It took great skill on the part of all three crew members to free the winch line. Mr Smith, in the water, was being repeatedly battered by the sea and against the yacht. Meanwhile, to compound their problems, the yachtsman endeavoured to climb back onto the boat, became entangled, and

fell out of the harness into the water. He could not be seen. The crew believed he had been lost.

Physically spent and gasping for breath Mr Smith was winched back to the helicopter.

The yachtsman resurfaced some distance away and was seen by the Pilot, Dean Herrick. Despite his condition Mr Smith went back into the water again. After being frequently submerged he managed to reach the yachtsman and place him in the strop, bear hugging him to prevent him slipping out again. They were then winched back to the helicopter. The man was unconscious, and a dead weight requiring Mr Smith and Mr Taylor to use all their strength to get him on board.

Once inside Stephen Smith was completely exhausted, he could barely speak and was vomiting sea water.

He required hospital treatment for secondary drowning. He had sustained a black eye and bruising to his neck, arms and shoulders.

By the time the helicopter had landed safely at the Hawkes Bay Hospital, with only approximately 20 minutes of reserve fuel remaining, the operation had taken approximately two hours, including the one hour winch rescue on location.