

Another Rescue Boat Adventure

By Joe Moore

(This is partially based upon fact.)

The call came in to the Sheriff's Department in Charlevoix, the dispatch center for the emergency services on Beaver Island. This call came from the USCG Sault St. Marie. A message had been relayed from a freighter passing on the north side of Garden Island out in the shipping channel.

A small group of people were living on a piece of property on the northern side of Garden Island. They had no electricity, but had a battery operated radio on the marine frequencies. This radio had some pretty poor transmitting power, but the freighter was able to hear the transmission on channel sixteen of the marine band:

" May Day.....May Day.....Vessel passing north of Garden Island in the shipping channel....vessel passing north of the islands in the shipping channel....May Day....May Day....May Day!" the small handheld radio transmitted.

The vessel will not be identified, but it will be named "Haven." Haven replied, "Caller of Mayday...caller of Mayday...This is the Haven," the vessel replied.

"We have a medical emergency on the north side of Garden Island. Our patient has a severely angulated fracture of his right leg just below the knee. Can you contact the Coast Guard and get us some help?" the little radio replied.

"Repeating your traffic...Medical emergency, north shore of Garden Island...angulated fracture. Is that correct?" the vessel responded.

"Yes, please contact help for us. Radio is getting low on battery. Unable to continue transmitting," the little radio went dead shortly after this transmission.

The Haven contacted USCG Sault St. Marie with a radio transmission providing the information about the emergency. The Group Soo Coast Guard contacted the dispatch center for Beaver Island at the Sheriff's Department by calling 448-2911. This emergency obviously happened prior to the Central Dispatch Center in Petoskey was put into service.

Instead of paging the EMS on the island using the radio, the dispatch at the Sheriff's Department contacted the Deputy Sheriff on Beaver Island via the law enforcement frequency. This was essential contact since the deputy was the captain of the Beaver Island Rescue Boat. Since there was no way to verify this Mayday without going to Garden Island, the deputy called his crew individually using the telephone.

"Hello, Joe," Jim said on the phone. "We have a possible angulated fracture on a male patient on the north side of Garden Island. Do you want me to page this?"

“Hi, Jim,” Joe responded. “How reliable is the information?”

Jim replied, “This is third hand information. A radio on Garden to a freighter. Then the freighter to the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard to the Sheriff’s Department. I just got the call. What do you think?”

“Let’s call our crew together. I’ll get an ambulance crew on standby. We’ll take the backup equipment from the garage including the backboard, splints, and meet you down at the boat. Anything else you can think of?” Joe asked.

“Let’s get moving. I’ll be down at the boat in five minutes,” Jim said.

I got on the phone and called the other Jim, Jim Stambaugh. The rescue boat crew consisted of the three “J’s,” Jim Owens, Jim Stambaugh, and Joe Moore. Jim was busy in the yard, but his wife called him in to the phone.

“Hey there, Jim, it’s Joe. How are you today?” Joe queried. “Are you available for a rescue boat mission? We need to leave Beaver for Garden in about ten minutes. Are you up to an adventure?”

“Of course,” Jim replied with an obviously excitement in his voice. “Where are we going? Northcut or Garden Island Harbor?”

“We’re on our way to the north side of Garden to the camping area for a possible leg fracture,” Joe said. “See you down at the boat in about five to ten?”

“I’ll be there,” Jim said, and we both hung up the phone.

I drove down to the ambulance garage, gathered the needed equipment, and got loaded. I went into the office, called used the radio pager to notify the EMS crew of a possible transport, and said,

“On-call EMS providers, please respond to the station for a possible patient transport. Please pull the rig down to Beaver Haven Marina and standby for a possible transport. The rescue boat is headed to the north side of Garden Island for a medical emergency. On-call providers only. Please standby at the Beaver Haven Marina.,” Joe paged and notified.

“Echo 3, do you need any extra hands,” the fire chief asked on the radio. “We can meet you at the boat with two additional personnel.”

“Come ahead. I’ll ask the captain, and we’ll make the decision at the dock,” Joe said.

Everyone converged on the dock at Beaver Haven Marina. Captain Jim was already there. So was the other Jim. The firemen helped load the medical equipment aboard. Then Joe asked, “Captain, can we take at least one additional person to help with the carrying of the patient from the shore to the boat?”

“We can take just one more to help out. We’ll let the chief decide which one,” Captain Jim said.

“I’d prefer it be someone with some medical training,” Joe said, “But chief, it’s your decision.”

“Okay, here’s your crew member. He’s a first responder just like Jim, and he should be a help. I can’t go unless you truly need me,” the fire chief said.

“We should be all set,” Captain Jim said. “Let’s get aboard, and we’ll get under way.”

So, Jim, Joe, and, yes, the fourth “J,” Jorge got on board the vessel, and were ready to leave the dock.

“Okay, guys, we need to put on our life jackets before we leave the dock,” Captain said. “It’s going to be a little bumpy out there today.”

As the rescue boat headed out of the harbor, passing Whiskey Point Light, and headed past Gull Harbor, the waves were about two to three feet. The Captain was sitting in his chair. The red and blue emergency lights were flashing, and the Captain said to Joe, “You want to let dispatch know we are on our way?”

Joe called the Sheriff’s Department on the Beaver Island frequency using the repeater tower and notified them that the rescue boat was headed to Garden Island. Then, Joe called the USCG Group Soo to establish a backup communication and to notify them that the rescue boat was in service.

Group Soo stated, “The last transmission received was twenty minutes ago. We have tried to re-establish communications with them, but are not getting an answer. We assume that their batteries are dead. Do you have medical personnel on board?”

Joe answered, “We have an EMT-Specialist and two first responders on board. We have the ambulance standing by at the dock. We’ll let you know of our progress every fifteen minutes. Beaver Island Rescue, clear.”

“Radio status contact every fifteen. Group Soo, clear!” they responded.

We passed the Garden Island buoy, lining up on the pathway toward the northeast point of Whiskey Island. Once between the islands, the wave activity decreased since the south wind was blocked by the bulk of Beaver Island. Routinely, radio contact was maintained with the USCG Group Soo every fifteen minutes as we continued on our way. Over the noise of the outboard motor of the rescue boat, the two first responders and I talked about our plan to carry the patient from the shoreline to the boat.

Jorge said, “It’s pretty rocky on the north side of Garden, so we’ll probably have to pull the boat in. We have a backboard and straps, so the patient, whether they need immobilization or not will have to be placed on the backboard just to be able to carry him.”

Jim said, “I think two of us,” pointing to Jorge and himself, “should be on the front of the board in case one of us stumbles due to the rocky bottom. That way Joe can carry the foot end of the board and maintain communication with the patient. If Joe stumbles, at least the patient’s head won’t go under the water.”

“I’m going to go in first when we get there,” Joe said, “so I can assess the situation. You guys bring the equipment and can come help me take care of whatever we find.”

After passing the Garden Island Harbor point, we kept an eye out for the marker, a big “X” in the shoreline of the harbor. That was our indication of when to turn north toward the west of the northwest point of Garden Island. The day was clear and very easy to see the “X” as we made our turn.

It started getting bumpy again as we headed toward the buoy marking Garden Island Shoal.

Jim shouted above the engine noise, “The coordinates on this navigation device are actually pretty accurate, but I’ve never made this turn before. Joe, notify Group Soo of our position, and then call dispatch and do the same thing. I’ll slow down a little bit.”

We were north and west of Graham’s Point of Garden Island Harbor headed to the Northwest Point of Garden Island quite a way out from Ninnegoes’ Bay when I called on the radio.

Group Soo reported, “No further radio contact with Garden Island. The freighter should be visible on the northern horizon. They are asking if they need to standby any longer.”

Captain Jim took the microphone, “Thank the Haven for us please. They should be able to continue on their way. We should be ashore in a little over a half hour from now. We’ll call you when we arrive.”

“Roger, sir,” Group Soo responded.

We were passing by Bomways’ Bay with Squaw Island off to our left when we began to see the rocks.

“I better slow down here and we’ll need two spotters on the bow. We don’t need to hit any rocks on our way around Northwest Point,” Jim shouted as he throttled down to three-quarters throttle, and then down to about half.

The waves were splashing over the stern of the rescue boat as we made our turn around Northwest Point of Garden Island. Joe’s legs were already sopping wet as were Captain Jim’s, but the other two crew members were high and dry on the bow. We dodged the bigger rocks as we headed into the shore just north and east of Northwest Point.

At one point, the throttle was brought to full to swerve away from a huge rock in the water that might have taken out our motor. Captain Jim was doing an amazing job of piloting the vessel with the help in direction from Jorge and Jim on the bow. Jorge was almost thrown in the water a couple of times when the boat swerved to the starboard when Jim yelled, “Hard right!”

As we round the point, we saw some people on the shoreline waving something. Jim checked down the motor to idle and continued to follow the directions of Jorge and Jim. Joe checked over his simple jump bag making sure he had bandaging material, several triangle bandages, and a blood pressure cuff. Joe cut a small cord of rope to create a backpack that would be easily carried. As the water became shallower, Captain Jim said, “Okay, Joe. I’m going to stop here. You’re going to have to pull us in toward

shore with the motor up and set an anchor out about fifteen yards from shore so we don't bump on the bottom."

Joe slid over the side of the boat and went up to his belly button in the water and said, "Ooooh, wow! Luckily this water isn't too cold. I'm glad I put my radio in the backpack while still there in the boat. They are still waving from the shoreline, so I'll head in. When we get to the point where you think I should drop the anchor, just tell me. I'll wade back to the boat and get the backpack. Why don't we throw the stern anchor off, so I don't have to wade the boat back out when we are headed back with the patient?"

Captain said, "Good idea, Joe. Jim, throw the stern anchor out and let out the rope slowly. It's already tied on to the cleat, so that's when we'll stop headed in toward shore."

"Okay, I'm off," Joe said as he began to wade and pull, wade and pull. It took about four minutes of slow wading for the stern anchor rope to be completely played out. The rescue boat stopped moving toward shore.

"Okay, Joe," Captain said. "Take the bow anchor about fifteen yards more and I'll set it and tie it up. I've got your backpack ready."

"Jim and Jorge," Joe said, "I'll go on in and do my assessment. Why don't you guys get the other equipment ready, and I'll call you on the radio for whatever I need. Maybe you can put the jumpkit and splints on the backboard and carry it in if it's needed."

"Okay, we'll wait here for your call," Jim said with a smile. "We'll only get wet up to our knees instead of up past the belly button."

"There's a little bit I'll say about that, but not till later," Joe said, and he was off toward the shoreline.

As he approached the shore, three campers met him and said, "It's up this way just off the trail. We left her right where she fell."

"What?" I said. "It's a her and not a him?"

"Yes, we reported it wrong. We thought she was okay when her partner came running back to get help. We left her right where she fell just covering her with blankets and providing a pillow for her head. Hope we didn't do anything wrong," the oldest camper said.

"My name is Joe. I'm an EMT. I'll need to get my equipment in here when I'm done with my assessment. Do you think you can leave someone here to guide the other guys in for me?" Joe said.

"Of course. No problem," the oldest camper said. "I'm Jean. Owen will wait here and guide the other two in."

We walked up a somewhat clear trail toward the campsite, but waving at the other campers, we continued through the camp and up a not so clear trail. We were climbing over downed limbs, huge tree roots, and rocks separated by dirt. We continued walking for about a half mile making turns onto a couple of other trails, and Jean became quite talkative.

“We all have partners here,” Jean said. “The reason for this is obvious. The patient’s name is Kathy. Her partner Jules came back to camp alone and reported the injury. That’s when we called on the radio. All our batteries are dead now, so we couldn’t call and let you know anything more. They must have misunderstood the “She” and only heard the “he” part of it. Kathy is an oriental college girl studying Native American culture. She has participated in the drum songs and the sweat lodge purification. She was on her way back from the trail walk through the island to Garden Island Harbor when she fell after tripping over something. She said it was a big root, but we couldn’t find anything. Anyway, she’s just up here a little further.”

“Okay, I’m going to get the guys on their way from the boat up here. You said Owen would help them get here?” I said.

“Oh, yes, no problem,” Jean continued. “By the way, there was quite a bit of flesh torn off from her right leg by the fall and the bone is poking up near the skin on the left leg. She is crying and in a great deal of pain. I think she is either hallucinating or maybe has passed out by now.”

“Beaver Island Rescue from Joe on talk around frequency,” Joe radioed.

“Go ahead Joe,” was the reply on the radio.

“I’m going to need all of the equipment based upon the description of the mechanism of injury just given to me. Also, there is a small drug box that has been opened already. Make sure you bring that with you also. We’ll need backboard, straps, lots of triangle bandages, and the whole jump kit,” Joe said.

We arrived at the side of the trail to find the female patient, an early or mid-twenties, unresponsive, but breathing with a strong carotid pulse ticking along at around one hundred. Her blood pressure was within normal limits as was her pulse albeit in higher range. She was breathing quite normally. Her pupils were dilated slightly and her eyes were red, so I turned to Jean and asked, “Has she been smoking or is this from the fire smoke? She smells like liquor,” Joe exclaimed.

“I know Owen gave her a joint before you guys got here. She smoked the whole thing. That’s why I said she might be hallucinating. I’m not sure if that was just weed or if it might have been laced with something. I don’t know about the liquor,” Jean said.

I continued my assessment in the woods there on Garden Island just about ten feet off the trail. When I touched the leg with the slight avulsion of skin, the patient moaned, but did not open her eyes. That ankle had a pulse. The avulsion was not truly serious and life threatening, but would need some attention in the hospital, cleaning and stitching, probably. When I touched her other leg, she screamed.

I noted the bone just under the skin on the inside of the leg. This looked like a dislocation, but it could also be fractured. The next part of the assessment included checking for a pulse in that leg.

“Shit!” I exclaimed and checked again. “No pulse in this leg. No radio contact with medical control, and we’re just going to have to work with what we have.”

Jean looked at me funny and said, “What does that mean?”

“Did anyone do anything to Kathy after she fell?” Joe demanded.

“Someone thought it would be a good idea to straighten the leg, so they pulled on it. I didn’t know what to do. Was that wrong?” Jean said.

“I don’t truly know, but I’m glad you told me. We’ll have to get some circulation back in that leg before we leave the island.” Joe responded.

Just then, Owen showed up with Jim and Jorge, and the real wilderness medicine rituals began. Using sterile saline, the avulsion was cleansed, tissue placed back into anatomical position, and bandaged by Jim and Jorge with Kathy moaning and letting out short yipes throughout the procedure. The vital signs stayed within normal limits while this was going on. Kathy screamed when we logrolled her onto the backboard and we strapped her hips and chest to the board. We carefully moved Kathy out to the trail area so we had more room to work.

Joe said, “Kathy, this is really going to hurt. My name is Joe, and I need to try to restore circulation to your left leg. Be ready. Okay, guys,” (said to Jorge and Jim) I’ve got to pull some traction on this leg to see if we can get a pulse in the ankle. If we get one, we’ll have to try to maintain the traction. I’ll need at least three triangle bandages if we get circulation in order to maintain the leg’s position. Here we go. One. Two. THREE!”

Pushing against the backboard with my feet, so it wouldn’t drag on the ground, I began pulling on the leg. Harder and harder Joe pulled, and Kathy screamed some nasty words, all the while calling him every bad name you can possibly imagine. Finally, after what seemed like a century, but was only about one minute, Jorge reached over and felt the posterior tibial pulse.

“I’ve got a pulse,” Jorge said.

“Okay, we’ll prop the leg up at this angle using the pillows that they brought out here. We’ll place rigid splints along both sides of the leg. One held in place by the inside of her leg and her crotch. The other will have to be held in place by using the opening in the board with the top of the splint tied there by a triangle bandage and tape. We’ll use the triangle bandages to make this contraption into something like a traction splint to pull the bone off of the blood vessel and maintain circulation. This traction does seem to provide the ability to circulate blood to the leg, so we need to maintain it. Let’s get this done and make this work,” Joe said.

Garden Island is just a little shy of 5000 acres of land. The southern two harbors are not that far away from the island that named the Beaver Island Archipelago. The northern part of the island doesn't really have any harbors near the location that we are. On the southeastern edge of the island there are two harbors named Jensen and Larsen harbors, but neither of those is anywhere close to where the rescue boat put in, and we are much close to the northern shore although we are inland about a half mile. There really isn't any other more accessible spot to meet the rescue boat. We just have to do what we have to do using our wilderness EMT skills.

Jim and Jorge are going to do this work even though I'm going to help direct them. We place a folded trauma pad in the patient's groin area and placed the long rigid padded board splint on the inside of her dislocated leg with padding of the board splint toward her leg. We tie that splint into position using roller gauze and tape to keep it from moving either up or down or side to side. We taped the second padded splint to the backboard using a triangle bandage to make certain it will not move up toward her waist, nor down. The padded side is facing her leg. Once the upper part of the splint is able to be kept from movement, the splint is also held in place by gauze bandage.

Using trauma shears, a one to two inch triangle cut is made in each of the rigid splints with the cut toward the sky being at 90 degrees and the other one being at forty-five degrees. Tape is placed over the two cuts so that there is no sharp edge. Since the rigid splint sticks out almost eighteen inches past the end of the patient's foot, this will work for maintaining traction. Another triangle bandage is used to form an ankle hitch, and yet another is used to make a tie to the end of the rigid splint. The ankle hitch is now pulled to take up the traction that Joe has maintained throughout this process.

"Pull it a little tighter," Joe says as he gets ready to move his hands. "Tighter, tighter, right there!"

Joe removes his hands and immediately feels for the pulse.

"YES!" Joe yells. "We still have a pulse!"

Now we need to get the patient back to the rescue boat. The patient is completely packaged. Her leg is stabilized. Her other leg is bandaged and is not bleeding anymore. The patient's eyes are wide open. She is conscious and alert now with all of the pain that we have caused her.

"What's going on?" Kathy asks as we pick up the backboard. We have a total of six people carrying Kathy down the trail, two at the head, two at the feet, and one on each side. "Damn, that hurts," Kathy says, somewhat slurring her speech.

"Kathy," Joe says, "you have had an accident. You tripped and fell over a big root, and you have injuries to both your legs. It smells like someone gave you some weed, AND it also smells like you were given some whiskey or something. You are immobilized for the protection of your legs. Your hands are tied to prevent injury to your arms as we walk you back to the shoreline." Joe paused.

"Careful there, guys," Jorge said as the others stepped over a downed branch. "Every bump is going to hurt her."

Jim spoke to the helpers, "We need to go slower. There is no good to be done by going fast. Slow and easy is the rule here, so we don't hurt her more than she is already hurt."

"Thank you for coming to my rescue," Kathy said. "What's going to happen now?"

"Sorry to tell you this," Joe said. "You're camping on Garden Island will be coming to an end. You are going to be taken back to Beaver Island and then flown to the mainland by plane. You'll just have to trust us that this is necessary, and you will also have to understand that you are dehydrated, might have low blood sugar, and are going to hurt throughout this whole procedure."

"Okay. Do what you have to do? Can I get my wallet before we leave?" Kathy asked.

Joe said to Jean, "Can you go ahead of us and get her wallet for her, so we don't have to waste any time getting her to the boat?"

"Yup," Jean said as she took off around the group and went ahead on the trail at a slow jog.

As well all approached the camp, Jean joined us again asking us we needed a drink of water or anything.

"No thanks," Jim said. "Not me. We need to keep going and get to the boat and get her to the hospital."

"Well, okay," Jean said sounding miffed as she handed Kathy her wallet, "I was just trying to be hospitable. You don't have to be rude."

"No rudeness meant by my comments," Jim spoke right back to her, "but we need to get out here before it gets too late in the day. If you can bring the water down to the beach, I'll take a drink before we leave."

"Me, too!" exclaimed Joe.

We continued right through the camp and were now on the clearer trail, so we could speed up a little bit. When we got in sight of the beach, we notice the rescue boat was pulled right up to the beach.

Captain Jim was waiting for us. "I had to have something to do while you guys were out in the woods playing around. I used the bow anchor rope and another length of rope on the stern anchor to get the boat up to the shore. We still have the stern anchor out there to pull ourselves back out. I figured this would be easier than wading in the water with the patient on your shoulders."

"You sure are right about that," Jim said.

"Thank you," Joe said.

"Oh, come on," Jorge said with a big smile on his face. "I was looking forward to some more adventure."

“We’ll have plenty of adventure getting back to Beaver,” Captain Jim said. “Let’s get loaded and get out here. We might make it back before dark.”

All six of us waded out into the water. Jim and Jorge got into the boat. Joe directed the campers after passing the head of the backboard over the side to Jim and Jorge. The patient on the backboard was loaded into the boat and placed on the deck. Joe climbed aboard too, and it was time to thank everyone for their help.

“We’ll take that drink of water now,” Joe said as he passed the canteen around. He even wetted a 4x4 gauze pad so Kathy could wet her lips. “It’s time to get to work.”

Captain Jim stated, “Okay, Jim and Jorge, you’ll help pull us out while Joe does his thing with the patient.”

As we pulled away from the shoreline, the campers began singing and drumming a song. We didn’t recognize the words nor the melody, but Jim described it as a ceremonial healing song. We could hear the song all the way out to the stern anchor placement.

Joe was busy with the patient. Kathy got an IV in her left hand. Joe used the blood from the IV to check the blood sugar to find that the blood sugar was low normal, but Kathy was dehydrated. The IV was run wide open for the first 200 milliliters of fluid. Of course, Kathy was covered with blankets and her temperature was normal. She got a little oxygen due to the oximeter reading of just below ninety. Her vitals were all within normal limits although the blood pressure was a low normal and the pulse was a high normal, so Joe was worried about shock. The pulse was weak in the dislocated left leg, so Joe tightened the triangle bandage by putting in an oral airway in the triangle bandage and twisting the triangle bandage. Then this was tied and taped in place, so it wouldn’t untwist. This pulled on the leg a little and took off the slack caused by the movement of the patient. The pulse was back good and strong.

Finally out in water deep enough to lower the motor, Captain Jim started the motor, and this would be the last time that a pulse could be checked before getting back to Beaver Island. As we pulled away from the stern anchor point headed toward the bell buoy of Garden Island Shoal, Captain Jim asked if everyone was ready to go.

We all answered in the positive.

Jim said, “It may get a little wet out there since we’ll be running head on to the waves in between the islands. It will probably slack off once we get in the lee of Beaver.”

Captain Jim stationed the two back on the bow of the boat to help dodge any rocks for a short period of time, and then he got on the radio notifying the dispatch in Charlevoix and Group Soo that we had successfully picked up the patient and were headed back to Beaver Island. Captain Jim also asked the dispatcher to check on availability for our local air transport provider on the island for a flight to the mainland after we arrived.

“Beaver Island Rescue, what is your ETA back to the Beaver Island dock, and then to the airport?” dispatch asked.

“We should be back within ninety minutes,” Captain Jim stated, “depending on the waves and the speed.”

“Copy. We’ll let you know on the availability in a few minutes,” dispatch stated.

“Beaver Island Rescue, USCG Group Soo,” the radio blared almost immediately.

“Go ahead, Group Soo,” Captain Jim responded.

“Beaver Island Rescue, do you need a helicopter to transport the patient?” Group Soo asked.

“We’ll call you back in a couple of minutes with an answer,” Captain Jim stated. “Right now, we are checking on other availability. It might be ten minutes or so to get an answer.”

In the meantime, the rescue boat was out far enough to see the point on Whiskey Island so a turn was made to head us in that direction. We were basically going to take the reverse directions from the trip out, and sure enough, Jim was right, there were some waves out there dumping spray over the deck of the rescue boat.

A simple tent was set up to try to keep the spray off the patient. It was made from a blanket and a rope tied to keep the blanket off Joe and the patient.

“Thanks, guys,” Joe said. “Kathy will stay drier now. “ They couldn’t see the smile on Joe’s face, but he continued, “I don’t think it will help me any. I’m already sopping wet.”

Dispatch called back, “The local air transport is available and will transport your patient. What is the destination?”

Joe told Captain Jim, “We want this patient to go to Harbor Springs. We’d like the medical center provider to meet us at the dock to provide some pain control.”

“Dispatch, have the medical center provider meet us at the dock, please. The destination is Harbor Springs Airport. We are still on the same timetable as given previously,” Captain Jim stated.

“Group Soo, Beaver Island Rescue,” Captain Jim called on marine frequency.

“Go ahead Beaver Island Rescue,” Group responded.

“No helicopter is needed at this time. Other arrangements will work out. Transport by air is arranged. We’ll maintain radio status checks until we arrive in St. James Harbor,” Captain Jim stated.

“Roger, sir. Thank you for your rescue. We’ll continue to monitor channel 21 for check in,” Group Soo stated, “Group Soo out.”

Once off Whiskey Island, we made the turn toward the east and could see the Garden Island buoy light as it began to get on toward dusk. The trip back would be made in the dark. The head mounted lights were located and strapped around our forehead to the back of our heads, with the red gel in place so we wouldn't blind anyone else, especially the captain. Patient treatment continued with vital signs taken every fifteen minutes. After the specified time, making the correct turns at the proper time, the rescue boat reached Paradise Bay passing the Whiskey Point Light in the full on darkness. The captain led us right in following the waypoints, and we arrived at the Beaver Haven Marina with several EMS and fire department helpers available.

We handed the patient on the backboard to those helpers on the dock, and they carried the patient directly to the ambulance cot and loaded her into the ambulance while we scrambled to gather our equipment and get caught up to them. Our paramedic PA was waiting for me in the back of the rig, took one look at the cobble traction we set up, checked for a pulse, and found one, and then smiled and said, "Looks like you have this under control. I'm going to give the patient ten milligrams of morphine to make her more comfortable. Are the vital signs stable?"

Joe reported, "Vitals are all within normal limits. The BP is much better with the fluids and the pulse is back down to the low 90's. Her oximeter is back above 94% on low flow O2, and we're ready to fly, unless you have another suggestion?"

"You did just fine. I'll notify Northern about the morphine, just so they know I gave it. Don't want you to get into trouble after all your work. Make sure you include the morphine in your radio report, okay?" the paramedic PA said.

"Okay, thank you, we'll head to the airport," Joe said.

We were off to the local air transport service. It was dark, fully dark. The red gel lights were the reason we could see quite well. The patient was loaded into the aircraft on the ambulance cot, so there were no issues in transfer from one vehicle to another. One of the head-strapped lights was placed by the patient's chest, so we could monitor the patient. The automatic BP cuff and oximeter were on, so we could keep track of vitals. The IV was being squeezed by the on-call EMT, who had met us at the dock. Everything was working like clockwork. We took off in the plane.

We heard the ambulance arrange for an ambulance from LifeLink to meet us at the Harbor Springs Airport and the Beaver Island ambulance clear the airport, heading back to the garage.

It was clear out. We could see the Mackinaw Bridge lights as we flew toward Harbor Springs. We marveled at the beauty of the night. We felt blessed to be in a position to help someone in need. As we approached the shoreline of the mainland, Joe put on the headset and dialed in the frequency of the hospital.

"Northern Michigan Hospital, Northern Michigan Hospital, Beaver Island EMS," Joe radioed.

"Go ahead, Beaver Island," the hospital responded.

“We are in route to Harbor Springs Airport with a twenty-three year old female who tripped in the woods of Garden Island. Upon arrival on scene, the patient had no spinal pain, but had an avulsion to the right leg which was cleaned and bandaged. She has a possible fracture dislocation of her left leg. When found, the patient did not have a pulse in that foot. Per protocol, traction was applied to the leg and circulation was restored. Traction is being maintained at this time, and pulse is present. Vital signs follow..BREAK.”

“BP is 110/70, Pulse is 88, respirations are 16, with an oximeter reading of 98 on oxygen at 4 liters per minute via nasal canula. We have an IV running at keep open rate after giving a bolus of 600 ml during the rescue and boat transport. The patient has received 10 milligram of morphine for pain, administered by the PA on Beaver Island. The patient is resting comfortably at this time with pain of 3 on the scale of ten. She has no known allergies, is on birth control, has no medical history, but has consumed some alcohol and another substance not verified. We will arrive at Harbor Springs Airport to meet LifeLink in approximately five minutes. Do you request anything further?”

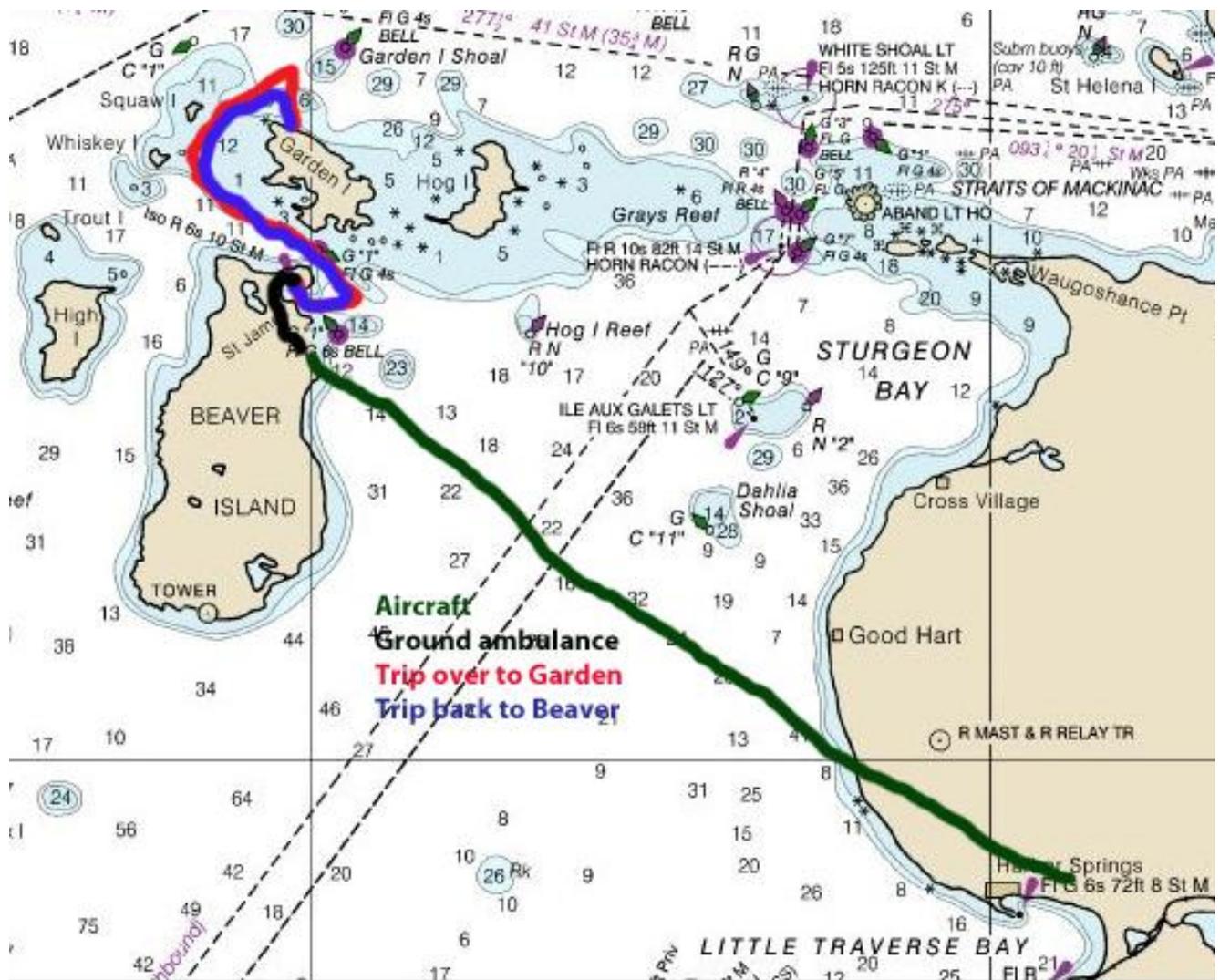
Northern responded, “Beaver Island, we will be awaiting your patient’s arrival. Clear.”

Upon landing the patient was moved using the backboard from our patient cot to the LifeLink cot. Report was given to the paramedic there, and patient care was turned over to the LifeLink paramedic. The patient thanked us for our help, and we walked back to the plane and loaded our empty cot.

The pilot asked, “Are you ready to head home?”

Joe said, “Amen.”

It had been a really long day. Being called into rescue boat service, finding the patient, boating the patient to the island, and then flying the patient to the mainland, and returning to the island and doing the paperwork took just a little over seven hours total. There was no trouble sleeping that night for any of the rescue boat crew. This was just another day in the service of the community visitors, friends, and neighbors.



Red marks the trip over to Garden Island.

Purple marks the trip back to Beaver Island.

Black marks the ambulance trip to the airport.

Green marks the flight to Harbor Springs and back to Beaver Island.