

DOG SAVES MAN'S LIFE

A STORY OF COURAGE AT SEA!

As told to staff reporter Milton James by a weary and dehydrated Captain John Braddocks who is now recuperating at a local hospital:

What started as a beautiful spring day set the stage for this remarkable story about a local fisherman and his beloved dog. On Friday morning Captain John Braddocks powered up his 36 foot fishing vessel, The Salty Dog, and headed for the deep blue sea.

John had spent his lifetime navigating these waters. Jake, his dog and faithful companion, stood on the foredeck and leaned into the wind as they made their way offshore to the fertile fishing grounds. They were traveling in a boat that the captain had built with his own hands. John and Jake would soon fish for grouper and snapper, then return home to sell their catch to the local restaurants. They had run this route many, many times in the past. A mutual love for the sea made the journey seem like fun, rather than the hard work that it would be.

They arrived at the Snapper Banks around 9 AM. John anchored the wooden craft directly over his favorite fishing hole. He set a chum line to entice the fish to bite his baited hooks. Jake lounged on the back deck and eyed the sea gulls that circled overhead.

John loaded an eight pound red snapper and several black grouper into the cooler within the first hour. Jake greeted each catch with his usual bark of appreciation. It seemed a perfect day for fishing. However, John noticed the sky begin to darken. He guessed it to be nothing more than a squall line that was moving through the area. He did, however, keep a watchful eye on the approaching storm as he reeled in another fine catch. Out of nowhere, The Salty Dog was slammed by a 20 foot rogue



JAKE "THE SALTY DOG"

wave. The wind whipped to 60 knots and lighting bolts filled the sky. Suddenly, the deck was awash with the cobalt colored sea. John quickly reeled in his lines and stumbled to pull the anchor. The Salty Dog could not survive another wave like the last. Jake dug his paws into the mahogany deck and attempted to fend off the storm with his mightiest growl.

John felt the full fury of the sea as another wall of water rolled over The Salty Dog. He had to get his vessel underway immediately. In a final desperate move, John grabbed his fishing knife and slashed at the anchor line. He was too late. The next 20 footer engulfed the craft. The sturdy little boat capsized, tossing John and Jake into the churning waters. They were all alone - free and adrift more than thirty miles from their home port.

John knew there was little hope for survival. He watched in disbelief as his vessel disappeared and then sank to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. He feared for his life and for the life of his best friend, Jake.

Jake was a strong swimmer, having spent hours chasing the bottlenose

dolphins that play in the surf at South Beach. He instinctively swam to his master's side. John grabbed onto Jake's collar and said a silent prayer. Could this dog keep the both of them afloat? And for how long? The captain began to lose hope as Jake fought against the raging sea. But Jake would not give up. He paddled hard and headed in a westerly direction. The rest of the story is now history. Jake swam for three days and three nights with the captain holding fast to his collar.

The shipwrecked fishermen made landfall near Calibogue Sound on Monday morning. The exhausted pair were spotted by a beachcomber as they crawled onto the sandy Sea Pines beach around 6 AM. The unidentified person called authorities and offered John some fresh water to soothe his parched lips. Jake collapsed onto the sand and fell into a deep and well deserved sleep.

To quote John: "Quite simply, Jake saved my life. I will spend a lifetime trying, but I will never repay him." The local townspeople are planning a gathering on Sunday to honor Jake for his heroic feat.

No one will ever know how Jake could have possibly known the way back to his home port. Was it luck or was Jake guided by his own navigational system? This remarkable story will be told time and time again. *One thing is for certain - Jake's place in nautical history is assured!*

BRIDGE REMAINS CLOSED TO TRAFFIC

Crews worked through the night to repair the draw bridge leading onto Hilton Head Island. The bridge was struck by a tug boat on Sunday.

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