

Meritorious Act of Marine Engineer Joseph C. Stark
Date: May 3rd, 2004

On the afternoon of May 3rd, 2004, the Officer on duty at Marine 1 was alerted by the NYC Parks Department Enforcement agents that there was a civilian in the river. Lt Ahern proceeded to investigate and confirmed a man in the river. Lt Ahern then transmitted a verbal alarm for Marine 1's home box, setting in motion the beginning of a not only a very difficult water rescue but also a very treacherous one.

Marine Engineer Joseph Stark donned a flotation jacket. Seeing the obvious life threatening distress of the victim, He entered the river without any hesitation. It must be noted that at the time of this rescue weather conditions were as follows: Temperature of the water was 48 degrees, wind was coming out of the north west at 25 knots accompanied by a steady driving rain. Engineer Stark then had to jump approximately 10 feet out from the top railing of the pier, and down another 10 feet into the water in order to avoid the jagged submerged pilings underneath him. He then began his very arduous swim towards the victim maneuvering his way through the jagged submerged pilings. Simultaneously Lt. Ahern ordered the launching of Marine 1's auxiliary rescue craft, a 25 foot Boston Whaler. Upon reaching the victim Engineer Stark took hold of the victim, who immediately began to resist assistance. It became evident at this point that Stark was not only dealing with the elements but also a very emotionally disturbed victim who was unaware of the danger he was putting both Stark and himself in. At this point the victim broke free and proceeded to dive underwater. Even after navigating through the very choppy waters, the dangerous obstacles in the water, and the debilitating effects of Hypothermia Engineer Stark now had to release his grip on the jagged pilings and somehow find the strength to retrieve his victim from underneath the water's surface. Expending all of what was left of his strength Engineer Stark once again was able to grab on and hold onto the victim. At this point Marine Wiper James Donovan who had donned an exposure suit and also swam out to the victim arrived on scene and helped Stark restrain this unwilling victim. Both rescuers were truly in their survival mode. Hypothermia could be life threatening based on their time of exposure to the frigid waters. The Marine 1 members who launched the rescue craft now arrived at the scene and immediately realized this victim was extremely combative. Time and time again they tried to pull him on board only to see him break free. Finally they were able to restrain the victim long enough to

pull him on board. Two of the three members onboard had to physically hold the victim down on the ride back so he was unable to bring harm to himself or the other members. Meanwhile both Stark and Donovan had to hold onto the jagged pilings until another boat could be launched to retrieve these exhausted members. The second boat a 13 foot Boston Whaler had to be launched from the Fireboat McKean. Both members were successfully pulled onboard and brought back to Marine 1's pier. They were then transported to St Vincents Hospital suffering extensive trauma and contusions along with hypothermia.

Joseph C. Stark at great personal risk to himself entered treacherous waters with dangerous obstacles in his path and coping with the effects of hypothermia managed to bring this extremely difficult rescue to a successful ending. His actions described here clearly epitomizes what truly is the highest standards we all as members of this great Department strive to achieve. It is in this regard I respectfully request Engineer Joseph C. Stark be considered for a meritorious act for this rescue.

AFFIDAVIT OF RESCUER

CITY AND COUNTY *Orange*
OF NEW YORK

Joseph C. Stark DO SOLEMNLY

AND TRULY SWEAR THAT THE FOREGOING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE, TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF.

SWORN BEFORE ME THIS 21st

DAY OF Aug 2004

Suzanne Watters
SUZANNE WATTERS
Notary Public, State of New York
No. 01WA4761505
Qualified in Orange County
Commission Expires Sept. 30, 20 06

[Signature]