

# Alaskan Monarch

# I trapped by Ice

By PAC Ed Moreth

Ice, an old time foe of Bering Sea vessels, claimed another victim March 15, but not before a Coast Guard helicopter hoisted the ship's six crewmen to safety.

The Kodiak-based helo managed to pluck four crewmen from the ill-fated crabber, Alaskan Monarch, before a wall of ice and water washed the remaining two men into the frigid water.

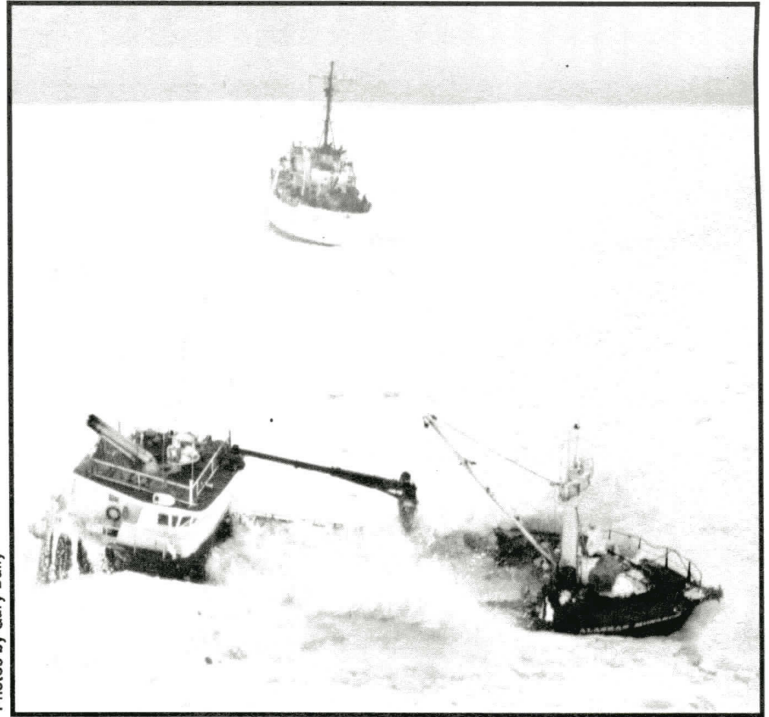
"The master and the engineer went to cross the deck to come over to the hoisting area on the bow, and the master slipped on ice," said LT Laura Guth, the helicopter pilot. "The engineer stopped to help him up and the wave just broke over the ship and washed them over." She said a second wave "hammered them" in the water.

"With the tremendous amount of ice in the water, I thought that they would have been critically injured," said AD3 Matthew Downs, the helo's flight mechanic.

"The helicopter was down there within minutes and picked up the people in the water," said CWO2 Matthew James, commanding officer of Coast Guard Loran Station St. Paul, who watched the rescue from shore.

"The chief engineer probably set the world record for getting into a basket; he moved awful fast," Guth said.

After the second wave hit, the captain became pinned under a block of ice, according to Downs. He said they had to use the helo's



Photos by Gary Daily

basket to pull the 60-year-old skipper from beneath the ice.

Once in the helicopter, ASM2 Joe Rock, an emergency medical technician, treated the skipper for hypothermia by stripping him and placing him in a "thermal recovery capsule". All six were taken to the St. Paul clinic, and later released.

The 96-foot Alaskan Monarch was on its way into St. Paul to offload 100,000 pounds of crab, when it encountered a two-mile-long field of crushed ice about 1,000 feet off shore.

At that time, the Alaskan Monarch's skipper told the Coast Guard that his vessel was in no immediate danger, but that his boat was "getting bumped hard by ice".


The skipper later radioed the Coast Guard for help after ice broke off the vessel's rudder and transducer. In addition, one of the ship's propellers was jammed in the ice and was unusable. Other fishing vessels in the area were unable to help.

When the medium endurance cutter *Storis*, which was diverted from patrol, could not get a towing line to the vessel, the vessel grounded. Alaskan Monarch's skipper immediately requested

that four of his crewmen be evacuated, particularly one, whose survival suit had been washed overboard.

The helo hoisted the four crewmen; the skipper and chief engineer elected to stay on board and try to get a line from the *Storis*. As the cutter was making its fourth attempt to pass a line to the Alaskan Monarch, the crabber's skipper radioed that his ship was hard aground and they were ready to

abandon ship.

The Alaskan Monarch rests on the rocks of St. Paul Island, with several holes in the ship's hull. GM3 Don Orvis, of the Marine Safety Office Anchorage, said that all of the vessel's 7,125 gallons of fuel products escaped. Only a light, non-recoverable sheen of diesel was spotted in the vicinity of the vessel, Orvis said. 



(Above) A wave of ice crashes over the deck of the Alaskan Monarch. (Right) The *Storis* stands by as the fishing vessel's crew is hoisted from the deck.