

The Washington Post

Date 12/26/70

TO Harold Weissberg

FROM J. V. Reistrup

RE:

Looks as if there turned out to be less here
than met the ear.

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U.S.-Cuba Rescue Bjt 360

MIAMI AP - The U.S. Coast Guard and two of Fidel Castro's patrol boats cooperated to rescue seven Americans from a partially submerged boat aground off Cuba on Christmas.

The Cuban patrol craft came upon the 85-foot Sea Rover, bound for Nicaragua, soon after it ran aground on a coral reef three miles off the northwestern tip of Cuba, survivors said after they were flown to Miami.

David Edwards, 30, of Statesville, N.C., said the Cubans offered their help and when the Americans were unable to free the grounded boat, stood by until the Coast Guard could reach the converted PT boat and the four adults and three children aboard.

"The water was only about waist deep inside the boat so we all scurried up to the deck," Edwards said. The Cubans arrived soon after the travelers radioed a distress call.

"The Cubans were very helpful. Five of them came over asking if they could provide us with any assistance," Edwards said.

"They made an attempt to help us get the boat off but failed."

A Coast Guard aircraft reached the Sea Rover a short time later, Edwards said, and dropped a salvage pump "that was too small."

A helicopter from St. Petersburg—about 350 miles away—picked up six of the boat's passengers late Friday and the seventh, owner Nikola Severdija of Miami, was taken aboard the Belgian freighter Pontos.

In St. Petersburg Coast Guard Lt. Bill Fisher, pilot of the helicopter, and his crewmen said one of the Cubans helped transfer the Sea Rover's passengers and personal gear to a raft.

The only difficulty, Edwards said, occurred when he attempted to go aboard the raft. Edwards said a Cuban officer asked him to remain aboard but subsequently agreed to let him go.

Severdija, 33, his wife Sylvia and their children—Nick, 10,

Dean, 8 and Gladys 11-were on route to Nicaragua as settlers, the wife said. Mrs. Severdija said they had planned to operate the Sea Rover commercially as a Nicaraguan river boat.

Edwards and his wife, Terri, who have been living temporarily in Miami, had planned to fly back to the United States.

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RESCUE 12-26 NX

MIAMI (UPI)--SIX PERSONS WERE RESCUED FRIDAY FROM A SINKING BOAT OFF THE NORTHWEST TIP OF CUBA BY THE U.S. COAST GUARD WITH THE COOPERATION OF CUBAN AUTHORITIES.

THE COAST GUARD SAID THE 85-FOOT CONVERTED PT BOAT SEA ROVER RAN AGROUND ON A CORAL REEF FIVE MILES NORTH OF BUENA VISTA KEY AND RADIOED FOR HELP.

A COAST GUARD AMPHIBIOUS HELICOPTER FROM ST. PETERSBURG LANDED AT SEA NEAR THE CRAFT AND PICKED UP ONE MAN, TWO WOMEN, THREE CHILDREN AND TWO DOGS FROM THE CRAFT.

THE OWNER OF THE BOAT, NIKOLA SEZERGIJA OF MIAMI, STAYED ABOARD IN AN APPARENT EFFORT TO HELP SAVE THE CRAFT WITH THE HELP OF TWO CUBAN GUNBOATS THAT CAME ALONGSIDE AND SENT MEN ABOARD.

THE COAST GUARD SAID IT RESCUED SEZERGIJA'S WIFE, NILOLA, AND THEIR THREE CHILDREN, NICK, DEAN AND GLADYS, ALONG WITH DAVID EDWARDS, 30, OF STATESVILLE, N. C., AND HIS WIFE, TERRY. THEY WERE REPORTED IN GOOD CONDITION AT THE COAST GUARD NAVAL STATION IN OPA-LOCKA.

THE SEZERGIJAS ARE NICARAGUAN CITIZENS AND THE CRAFT WAS EN ROUTE TO THAT CENTRAL AMERICAN NATION WHEN IT RAN AGROUND.

COAST GUARD OFFICIALS CONTACTED THE STATE DEPARTMENT, WHICH MADE THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS WITH CUBAN AUTHORITIES TO ALLOW AMERICAN RESCUE CRAFT TO GO TO THE SCENE.

COAST GUARD LT. WILLIAM E. FISHER, PILOT OF THE RESCUE HELICOPTER, SAID TWO CUBAN GUNBOATS WENT TO THE SINKING

VESSEL'S AID AND SENT A LAUNCH WITH FIVE ARMED MEN TO HELP FERRY
THE SIX PERSONS AND THEIR BELONGINGS TO THE HELICOPTER.

FISHER SAID THE CUBANS "COOPERATED ENOUGH SO THAT WE DID
NOT HAVE ANY FIGHTS--AND THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME."

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