



ESTABLISHED 1967

BRAVERY AWARD

BRONZE

Presented to

Michael O'Mahoney

for his courageous actions when the passenger ship Oceanos sprang a leak in horrendous weather conditions – hurricane force winds and 14 metre waves – off the Wild Coast of South Africa on the evening of 03 August 1991 and eventually foundered twelve hours later.

Michael O'Mahoney was a passenger on the Oceanos, cruising with his wife, small son and baby daughter between East London and Durban. When the Oceanos crew panicked on learning that the ship was taking on water and largely left everyone to their own devices, he played a significant role in assisting with the evacuation of passengers from the vessel.

In particular he helped passengers, including his family, to clamber into the lifeboats, a dangerous operation with the sinking ship rolling and pitching violently. When the lowering mechanism of the last lifeboat to be launched jammed, leaving it dangling in the wind and crashing into the side of the Oceanos from time to time, Michael and his friend Neal Shaw tried desperately to release the boat. After an hour's trying, they had to abandon the effort and heave the passengers who were on board back onto the Oceanos' deck. Michael then helped passengers,

especially the elderly, to scramble forward on the by now steeply sloping deck to where they could be airlifted to safety. His calm demeanour was a vital ingredient in keeping their spirits up until they were rescued. In one case, he came across an old man still below who could not move at all in the circumstances. Michael rigged a lifeline from sheets, got the elderly passenger to climb on his back, piggy-back style, and hauled the both of them up the sheet 'rope' to the upper, starboard, railing of the ship's main deck.

Finally, Lorraine Betts, the TFC cruise director who had taken over the task of organising the passengers' evacuation, in the absence of any of the Oceanos's crew, thanked Michael and Neal for their efforts and instructed them to jump overboard. They were picked up by a Navy diver in a rubber duck and carried across to the Nedlloyd Mauritius, one of the commercial vessels that answered the Oceanos Mayday call for help.

Michael O'Mahoney's bravery and selfless actions that day played a major role in saving many peoples' lives. As fellow South Africans we are proud to be able to recognise and honour his achievement, albeit so long afterwards.

Ronnie Stein
Chairman of the Board of Directors



Date