

Swift Reaction Saves Fishermen

Captain Rock
a Baldwinville
graduate

By Catherine Baum

Contributing writer

A former Baldwinville resident was commanding officer of a Navy ship last month that rescued fishermen adrift for three days off the coast of the Philippines.



Rock

Charles Rock Jr. was commanding the HSV-2 Swift on Oct. 19, when the ship's SH-60B Seahawk helicopter was

conducting a training flight. The helicopter spotted a white banner that four endangered fishermen were using to signal for help.

The Philippine men were out on the first day of a three- to four-day fishing trip when a wave tore away the bow of their boat, causing it to flood and disabling its engine.

The helicopter radioed the location of the crew, while circling the swamped boat. HSV-2 Swift arrived soon afterward.

"After seeing the condition of their boat, I knew that they had very little time left before completely sinking. Swift needed to rescue these four men immediately," Rock said via an e-mail from his assignment in the West Pacific.

The Swift launched a small boat, rescued the men and brought them aboard, Rock said. The men spoke Tagalog, the native language of the Philippines. They told Swift crew members through an interpreter on board that they had been without food or water for three days and took some extreme measures to survive.

The Swift crew provided the fishermen with clean clothes, a hot shower, stateroom and hot meals. The four were then transported to the port city of Zamboanga, Philippines, where they were met by more than 20 members of the Philippine press.

The HSV-2 Swift's homeport is in Ingleside, Texas. The Swift is 321 feet long; it is faster than most ships, with a top speed of

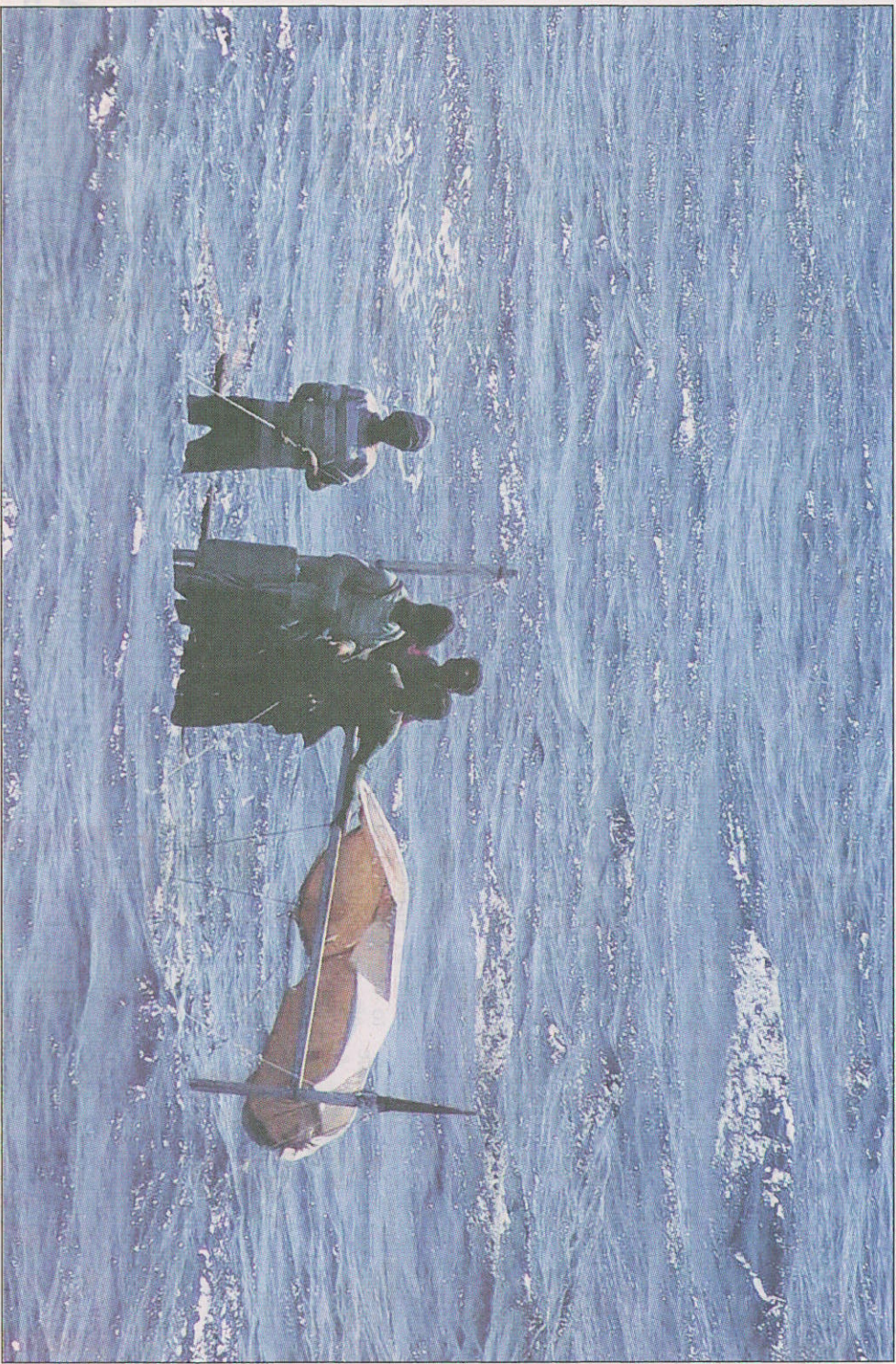


Photo courtesy of Charles Rock

THESE FISHERMEN were rescued last month off the coast of the Philippines.

almost 50 knots. The catamaran hulls make the ship ideal for missions in shallow coastal waters.

Rock, 42, is a 1982 graduate of C.W. Baker High School.

Rock has been the commanding officer of the Swift for 13 months. He resides in Corpus Christi, Texas, with his wife, Katherine, and three children, Austin, 16, Ashley, 14, and Kaitlin, 12.

Rock lived in the Baldwinville area from 1974 to 1982. His father, Charles Rock, still lives in Baldwinville with Rock's stepmother, Diane, and his brother, Patrick, who attends Northeastern University. Rock's brother, Christopher, lives in Maryland.

Rock plans to visit Baldwinville sometime next year. His current assignment at sea will be completed in January.

"I was last in B'ville for a short visit in June 2005. I enjoy the friendly people, the change of seasons and the outdoors of Central New York," he said. "I never visit enough."

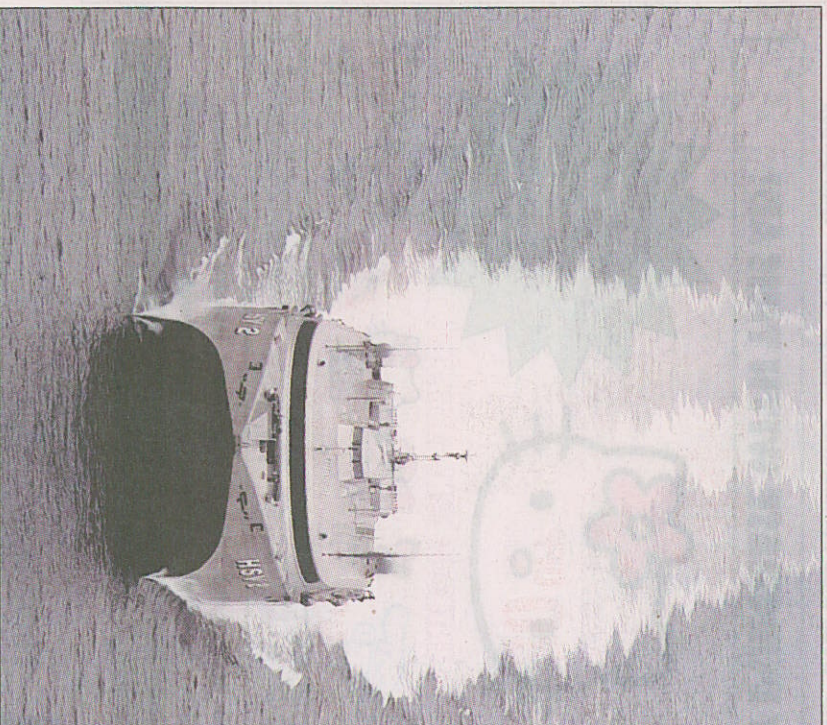


Photo courtesy of Charles Rock

HSV-2 SWIFT is a high speed catamaran, capable of speeds in excess of 50 mph. Only 3 years old, SWIFT is on its fourth circumnavigation.