

# DRUNKEN YACHTING

by Rob William, Newport Beach

On Thursday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002, a 52' yacht named the "Decadence II" ran aground at 7:48pm on the shores of Newport Beach. Newport Beach Lifeguard Dustin Worley witnessed the pleasure craft entering the 3'-5' surf at 11<sup>th</sup> Street on the Balboa Peninsula. He said the yacht was traveling at an estimated 10+ knots with no persons visible on the bridge when it headed for the beach. It crashed on the sandy bottom and came to rest at 12<sup>th</sup> street in just a few feet of water. With other lifeguards now on scene, Lifeguard Specialist John Moore boarded the vessel and assisted 3 persons on board safely off the vessel to the beach.

The Newport Beach Police Department also responded to the scene to assist with the beach operations and interview all persons on board. In interviewing the three persons on board, it was discovered that there was no one operating the vessel at the time it ran aground. The individual that had been operating the vessel went down below to use the head. The other two persons were in the cabin. The police department also gave a field blood alcohol test to the operator/owner. The results showed an approximately .12 blood alcohol level for this individual. The Sheriff's department took custody of the owner/operator on suspicion of operating a vessel under the influence and negligence. The Newport Beach Police Department also took one of the other persons on board into custody for Drunk in Public when he became unruly on the beach.

With all persons safely on the beach with no injuries reported, Newport Beach Lifeguards and the Orange County Sheriff's Harbor Patrol began futile attempts to remove the vessel from the beach and return it to the ocean. Lifeguards swam an approximately 300-foot towrope from the Harbor Department vessel and secured it to the Decadence II. With the moderate surf, and the distance of the line, the tow out attempt was unsuccessful. The Harbor Patrol then declared the operation to be a salvage effort, and turned it over to Vessel Assist.

With Vessel Assist now in charge of the salvage, it was determined that taking the vessel out through the surf would not be feasible. When inspecting the shafts and rudders, the hull and glasswork had begun to crack and leak a small amount of water into the engine compartment and that there was close to 300 gallons of diesel fuel in the vessel. With this information, it was determined that it had to be taken up the beach. The vessel was finally removed from the waterline to a safe place on the beach at 2:00am the next morning. However, it still had to be removed from the beach. This took until 6:00pm the next day. Vessel Assist brought in a crane to winch it up the beach then put it on a flat bed semi-truck to remove it from the beach.

The owner was charged for the entire salvage operation. This was not only Vessel Assist; it included the time spent by the Newport Beach Lifeguards, Newport Beach Police, Newport Beach General Services, and Orange County Sheriffs. The 22 hour salvage event cost the owner approximately \$37,000, not to mention the DUI arrest.

*All hands are below deck when this yacht crashed onto the beach*

