Man dives in to rescue dog trapped in truck

By Matt Hawthorne

Dave Pahl is planning to display a new "dog-saving hammer" at his Hammer Museum after a Hoonah man saved Pahl's Australian shepherd from a sinking truck last Friday by breaking a window with a hammer-shaped piece of driftwood.

Pahl was hooking a trailer to his truck at the Small Boat Harbor ramp when the vehicle jumped over a tire chock and rolled into the harbor. Dean "Deano" Sharclane and Charles Wheaton, who were on the dock looking for deckhand work, heard the commotion and saw Pahl's wife, Carol Pahl, next to the sinking vehicle.

"I seen the lady and thought maybe her coat was hung up on the door. I couldn't hear exactly what was going on, but the lady was in water up to her neck" said Sharclane, who wears hearing aids.

Wheaton, who can't swim, urged his friend to help. "I said 'Deano, nobody's doing nothing. You know what to do, go do it.'"

The 51-year-old Hoonah man stripped off his coat and dove into the water, swimming from the dock to the boat ramp, where the truck was partially submerged. Carol Pahl had abandoned the sinking vehicle for shore, but the family dog Polly remained trapped inside.

Trying and failing to open the truck's doors, Sharclane started beating on the driver's side window, when somebody threw him a piece of driftwood.

"If it wasn't shaped like a hammer, I don't know if I could have broken the window," said Sharclane, who shattered the glass on the third hit. "The water started

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pouring inside the truck so fast, the water was bubbling."

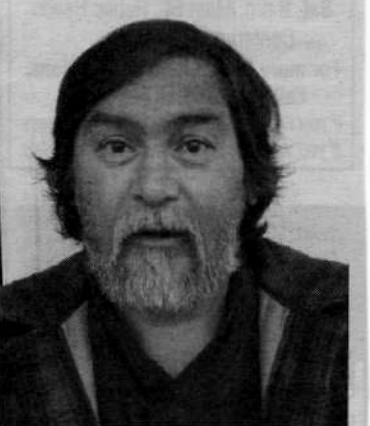
Fearful of cutting himself on the broken glass, Sharclane didn't climb in but reached around for Polly after water stopped rushing in. "I didn't know what part of the dog I had, but I knew I had him, so I just yanked him out of there."

Polly swam away from shore before Sharclane redirected the pooch and they swam back to shore together.

Onlookers gave a loud cheer, and an ambulance gave Sharclane a blanket and oxygen, while a boat owner loaned him dry clothing.

Sharclane said he was shivering all night, from both cold and nerves. "I didn't have much time to think about anything," he said of his response.

He's received a hero's welcome around town since, with strangers congratulating him and offering him money.



Dean "Deano" Sharclane

Pahl was out of town this week, but said upon his return he hopes to find Sharclane to take a photo of him with the driftwood hammer alongside Polly for display in the museum.