



GALLANTRY AWARD

BRONZE

Presented to

Johan Strydom

Johan, it gives me great pleasure to present you with this **GALLANTRY BRONZE AWARD** on behalf of all of us at the NSRI, in recognition of your courageous actions during a high-risk and complex rescue operation at Grootkrans on the evening of Thursday, 3 April 2025.

On that day, a 74-year-old woman had suffered serious injuries after a fall while hiking in a remote gorge upstream of the Elands River Mouth, between Storms River and Eersterivier. As nightfall approached and no helicopter rescue was possible, you and the crew were faced with the challenge of reaching the casualty by rescue vessel, in an isolated and treacherous environment. Conditions were extremely unfavourable, with 4-metre breaking swells across the river mouth, a rising tide, and light fog severely reducing visibility. Recognising that the only way to evacuate the casualty was by sea – despite the obvious dangers – a decision was made to launch the NSRI Oyster Bay rescue craft Caltex Challenger from the nearest launch site at Skuitbaai.

As crew aboard Caltex Challenger you helped navigate the rescue craft through the mouth, with breaking surf, over sandbanks, avoiding rocks and into the narrow gorge – timing your entry perfectly with the waves and using your experience and judgment to read the sea in near-total darkness. Once at the scene, you

helped stabilise and load the patient, who had suffered a fractured vertebra and was in a serious condition.

With no daylight remaining, little visibility due to the fog and the tide peaking, you assisted in keeping the patient secure and stable, while the rescue vessel was taken back out the river mouth, across the sandbanks, using a spotlight to judge the wave sets. At one point the boat faced a 4-meter wave head-on, the vessel becoming swamped and the motors hitting sand.

Once safely through the mouth you then endured a 12-nautical-mile return voyage in 30-knot headwinds and rough seas, maintaining the patient's safety and stability throughout.

Upon arrival at Skuitbaai, using lighting set up by NSRI crew on shore, the vessel was brought in through the narrow rocky inlet, timing the incoming swells, where once safely on shore, the patient was transferred to an awaiting EMS team and taken to hospital.

Johan, your actions that night were nothing short of extraordinary and directly contributed to saving the life of the 74-year-old woman. For your bravery, commitment, and selfless service.

We salute you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Velloza'.

Jonathan Velloza
Chairman: Board of Directors



15 August 2025

Date