



**NATIONAL
SEA RESCUE
INSTITUTE**

GALLANTRY AWARD

SILVER

Presented to

Lodewyk van Rensburg

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

When reports came in of a 74-year-old woman who had suffered a serious fall while hiking in a remote gorge near the Elands River Mouth, it became clear this was no ordinary call-out. As NSRI Oyster Bay Station Commander, you were faced with a rescue that combined extreme terrain, fading light and a treacherous, uncharted river mouth.

You coordinated across multiple NSRI stations, Relay Ambulance Services, EC Government Health EMS and SANParks rangers. While an initial team hiked into the gorge to stabilise the injured hiker – who was later confirmed to have suffered a fractured vertebra – you recognised that waiting until morning to evacuate her from the gorge was not an option.

With no helicopter rescue possible, and despite 4-metre breaking swells, light fog, and a dangerous river mouth, you made the difficult but decisive call to attempt a marine rescue. Before launching NSRI Oyster Bay's 5.5m RIB, Caltex Challenger II from Skuitbaai, Eersterivier, you liaised with the NSRI crew at the cliff edge to assess sea conditions, analysed incoming video footage and maps, and made the final decision to proceed with the rescue.

Lodewyk, you helmed the rescue craft through a narrow 10–15 metre rock channel, over multiple sandbanks and submerged rocks, using the incoming tide and breaking waves to full advantage. Once the patient was secured in the boat, with an EMS paramedic onboard to monitor the casualty, you attempted to exit the river mouth. On your first attempt, the motor died on the sandbank and the boat was nearly overturned by the waves. You remained calm and managed to turn the vessel around and safely surfed the wave back in.

On your second attempt, in pitch darkness, with the fog settling in, and using only a spotlight to read the swell, you made the call to go. You pushed the vessel to its limits, powering over the sandbank, feeling the motors hitting the sand. You succeed in exiting the river mouth, only to be faced by a 4-metre wave, curling. The wave swamped the boat yet you were able to get her over the second wave as it broke beneath the vessel.

And then you were faced with a 12-nautical-mile journey back to Skuitbaai in 30-knot headwinds and 4-metre seas.

Lodewyk, your seamanship, leadership, and resolve were pivotal to the success of this rescue. Your bravery under pressure led directly to saving a woman's life.

We salute you.

Jonathan Velloza
Chairman: Board of Directors



15 August 2025

Date