

Hats off to...

Connor Cross Son of HN Ryan D. Cross

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A fishing trip could have turned into a tragedy if it hadn't been for the quick thinking of a 4-year-old boy.

HN Ryan D. Cross was driving a rented skiff across Guantanamo Bay when his boat hit something in the water, throwing him overboard and sending his 4-year-old son, Connor, crashing onto the deck.

Cross was soon dodging the engine's churning propeller as the boat did high-speed circles around him. He could have tried to swim to a safer area but decided to stay close to the boat because his son was still aboard.

Connor could see his father in the water and was doing everything he could to stop the boat. Connor tried pulling on the kill-switch lanyard that automatically shuts down the engine as his parents had taught him, but he couldn't budge it. He pushed every button on the control panel, and nothing worked.

In the water, his father choked on mouthfuls of spilled gasoline and seawater as he swam under the boat to avoid the propeller.

After trying everything else, Connor pulled back the throttle and stopped the boat.

Another Sailor, who had been fishing nearby, HM1(AW/FMF) Ryan L. Montgomery, had seen the whole ordeal and arrived in his boat to lend a hand.

After the skiff was towed back to the marina and everybody was ashore, Connor said, "I knew I had to stop the boat. I just had to figure out how to do it."

Cross, who works at Guantanamo Bay's U.S. Naval Hospital, was proud of how his son handled the emergency. "He didn't jump into the water after me. He stayed calm and tried to stop the boat. And he saved my life."

Cross now extols the value of always attaching the kill-switch lanyard to himself while boating. If he had worn it, the engine would have stopped when he fell into the water. 

Photo by Lt. George Morris

