



U.S. COAST GUARD INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Matter under investigation: Tow breakaway and loss of the fishing vessels CAROL JEAN and HAVING FAITH in March 2023

Interview of: Charles Jones, owner/operator of CAROL JEAN & HAVING FAITH

Date/Time: 24MAR23, ~1310-1445

Location: Phone

Interviewed by: LT [REDACTED], Mr. Jon Furukawa (NTSB)

Others Present: N/A

Mr. Jones, a 73 year old male, has been the owner/operator of the commercial fishing vessel (shrimper) CAROL JEAN for about 5 years. He operates it to catch shrimp "every once in a while." Prior to the CAROL JEAN, he owned and operated the fishing vessels LADY VANESSA and SEA PROWLER, both of which had sunk. He has worked on fishing vessels throughout his life, but mainly maintained a career in law enforcement prior to retiring.

Mr. Jones recently bought the HAVING FAITH from an auction in Port Royal and intended to tow it to his local dock in Valona, GA for the purposes of stripping any parts and equipment in good condition for the CAROL JEAN and then scrap the HAVING FAITH. He did not know much about the vessel's history, only that it had offloaded all fuel/oil, the engine was inoperable, but most other machinery/equipment was in good, working condition. He stated the CAROL JEAN was in good, seaworthy condition, with all equipment operable and no history of flooding or machinery problems. The vessel was equipped with 2 depth sounders, 2 RADARs, a navigation system on a computer and on a Garmin, and an EPIRB on the side of the pilothouse. Below the main deck, it was configured with a bedroom forward, then kitchen aft, deep freezer, freezer hold, and second stateroom near the stern. On the next deck below fore to aft, there was an anchor hold, auxiliary machinery/hot water heater space, main engine space, and an additional empty space near the stern. Mr. Jones recently invested around \$50k to overhaul the main engine and address deficiencies noted on a recent CFV Exam by MSU Savannah. He had rectified most of the deficiencies with the following still pending: 1) FCC license was applied for but not issued yet; 15) no guards had been installed on the generator's exposed belts; 16) the homeport name needed repainting. He believed the value of the CAROL JEAN to be around \$100k.

Prior to and during the voyage from Port Royal on 16MAR23, Mr. Jones monitored marine weather using forecasts received on his cell phone; he anticipated good weather for this voyage. That day, the observed weather was calm with light seas and wind. Also onboard the CAROL JEAN was one crewmember, a 61 year old male names Russell Rogers. Both crewmembers had eaten breakfast that morning and were feeling normal. Mr. Jones had a good night of sleep the night prior, and had not taken any drugs or alcohol, with the exception of a prescribed nerve pain medication (Gabapentin). He does not allow Mr. Rogers to drink alcohol while working on the vessel. Mr. Jones tested the bilge high level alarm (located near the main engine) prior to getting underway in Port Royal.

Around 1130 on 16MAR23, Mr. Jones got the CAROL JEAN underway with the HAVING FAITH in tow behind. The vessel held a couple hundred gallons of diesel fuel and 7 gallons of oil. There were no shrimp/fish in either vessel. Mr. Jones used 100-150 ft of towline but did not recall the type/size of rope line used. The line was secured from the back boom of the CAROL JEAN to the two fuel tanks located in the front hold of the HAVING FAITH. They anticipated the voyage to take around 6 hours and were making 6 kts. Mr. Jones stated he conducts rounds of the vessel's spaces routinely while underway and had done so several times during the voyage with no concerns noted. Around 1500-1600 that day, Mr.

Jones heard a snap and discovered the tow had broken away; he was unsure if the line parted or came off from where it was secured. He assumes that the line had chafed where it passed through the deck to the fuel tanks.

Mr. Jones turned the CAROL JEAN about to reset the tow. As they approached the HAVING FAITH, Mr. Rogers attempted to haul in the tow line, but it became entangled in the CAROL JEAN's single propellor. This damaged the clutch and prevented Mr. Jones from operating the CAROL JEAN further. He and Mr. Rogers attempted to keep both vessels close together by tying another line from the CAROL JEAN to a cleat on the HAVING FAITH. At this time, he let go the anchor in approx. 17 ft of water; he was unsure how much anchor line (rope line) he used but felt like it was sufficient to hold the vessel. That afternoon/evening, Mr. Jones' daughter heard of the incident and called CG Sector Charleston out of concern. A CG boat came on scene, but Mr. Jones and Mr. Rogers declined assistance.

At some point between the night of 16MAR and the next day, Mr. Jones and Mr. Russell could no longer keep the HAVING FAITH tied off, and it drifted away. On Friday, 17MAR, the weather was also calm with seas at 3-4 and 5-10 kts wind. Mr. Jones eventually requested assistance from the CG, and a helicopter arrived on scene (unsure of time), with the CAROL JEAN still anchored. He and Mr. Rogers donned lifejackets and jumped directly into the water before being hoisted by the air crew.

On Sunday, 19MAR, Mr. Jones returned to the CAROL JEAN with a marine diver. The diver was able to free the propellor of the line, and Mr. Jones removed the clutch in order to take back home for repairs. He observed the vessel to be in good condition with no flooding, and the anchor was intact. The weather was observed to be calm with light wind and 1-2 ft seas. They returned home that same day, leaving the vessel anchored in the same position. Mr. Jones intended on going back to the CAROL JEAN in the coming days to reinstall the clutch and sail the vessel to Valona. However, a couple days later, he learned that the EPIRB had activated, indicating the vessel had sunk. Mr. Jones stated that he regretted leaving the vessel unattended while it was at anchor.

