



U.S. COAST GUARD WITNESS STATEMENT

Matter under investigation: SINKING/LOSS OF CFV HAVING FAITH (O.N. 641697) & CFV CAROL JEAN (O.N. 642785)

Witness: Matthew Hooper, Sector Charleston CFVE

Date/Time: 24MAR23

MISLE Incident Management Act #: 7652309

On 16MAR23, I was notified by SCC Charleston of a situation involving the CFV CAROL JEAN/ 642785 and the CFV HAVING FAITH/ 641697 which ultimately led to the total loss of both vessels. My understanding after speaking with the previous owner of the CFV HAVING FAITH (Charles Abner/ [REDACTED]) that he relinquished ownership of the vessel due to financial hardships and the vessel was sold at auction for \$50 to Mr. Charles "Chunk" Jones. On 8AUG23 I performed a CFV Dockside Safety Exam on the CFV HAVING FAITH at the owner's request. Results of this exam are logged in MISLE (Activity #: 6507306). At the time of the exam, the owner stated that he had just purchased the vessel and it needed significant mechanical and structural repairs. The vessel was not actively operating as a commercial fishing vessel and the overall condition of the vessel in my opinion was poor. I was told by Mr. Abner that he would contact me once all of the repairs were made to the vessel and the worklist items I issued were corrected but I never heard back from him. I do not have specific information regarding the actions that took place on or before 16MAR23. I was made aware by SCC Charleston that Mr. Jones was towing the CFV HAVING FAITH using his vessel the CFV CAROL JEAN when an issue arose causing the CFV HAVING FAITH to be set adrift. Mr. Jones was unable to recover the CFV HAVING FAITH and ultimately lost sight of the vessel. Some time later, it was reported the CFV CAROL JEAN lost propulsion due a fouled prop and was required to set anchor approximately 5NM SE of Port Royal Sound. Due to deteriorating weather conditions, AIRSTA Savannah was launched to recover the 02 POB and the CFV CAROL JEAN was left at anchor unmanned.

On 19MAR23, I was notified by SCC Charleston that the CFV HAVING FAITH had been located adjacent to the rock bulkhead surrounding the Turner House on St. Phillips Island. The vessel had sustained obvious damage to the wheelhouse area but was floating when located. SEC Charleston Prevention duty officers responded to investigate and prior to arriving were notified by SCDNR officers who were on scene that the vessel was breaking apart and sinking.

On 20MAR23, SEC Charleston Prevention and Response Dept. Heads had a teleconference with Mr. Jones regarding his plans to recover the CFV CAROL JEAN. Mr. Jones stated that a diver was able to successfully remove the line which was entangling the prop and shaft but his vessel's reduction gear "clutch" had been damaged and needed repaired. He was working on acquiring the parts that he needed to affect repairs and felt he could do so while the vessel was anchored in order to get the CFV CAROL JEAN back to its homeport (Darien, GA). Sector Charleston issued COTP Order #011-23 to Mr. Jones outlining expectation for actions needing to be taken to mitigate safety concerns.

On 22MAR23, I contacted Mr. Jones to get an update on the progress of repairs which were being made to the CFV CAROL JEAN. During this conversation he mentioned that he received a call from the D7 Command Center stating that the EPIRB onboard the CFV CAROL JEAN had been activated and was transmitting. He was concerned by this as no one was onboard to provide a status of the vessel. Several hours later, SCC Charleston received reports of debris identifying the CFV CAROL JEAN washing up on shore at Tybee Island, GA. An overflight by AIRSTA Savannah determined that the CFV CAROL JEAN was not able to be located but a large debris field was visible. It is suspected that the CFV CAROL JEAN sank while at anchor while unmanned.

I have read the above statement, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true and correct.

[REDACTED]
MATTHEW HOOPER, CFVE

Date: 24MAR23