Disaster Avoided In Charter Boat Fire

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passenger Jack Millwood of Spartanburg, S.C., who was to fish with his brother Johnny. "I think they had an electrical fire in the engine room. Smoke started boiling out. They tried to extinguish it for about 10 minutes, but ran out. Then the captain started taking life vests and telling people to get off."

Stevens and his crew freed one of four life rafts on top of the Capt. Jim. Two were burning, the third jammed in the railing of the lower deck.

"We had enough jackets and rafts on top—more than enough jackets," said Stevens. "But I couldn't get the ones inside the cabin. The flames were shooting up."

Even with vests available, some passengers and crew jumped into the water without them.

Stevens said overall passengers handled the situation well, though some panicked.

Crew member Mark Leonard agreed. "A lot of the people on the boat cooperated and helped get the others off," he said. "The overhead wires caught on fire, so it went up pretty fast."

Several of the older passengers were "real champs," according to Mitch House of Dallas, N.C.

One woman, however, jumped only when she saw no other way. "She was scared to get off, she was scared to jump," said Leonard.

Without radio, Stevens didn't have a chance to send a distress call.

Captain Everett Hoyle's Star II, the first boat to arrive at the scene, saw the smoke in the distance and did radio for help.

"We saw that they were burning and called it in," he said, then moved in for the rescue.

His boat picked up 15 passengers; the Black Fish, 28; the Splash, six; the Sea Hawk II, two; the Sun Gypsy, five; the Hurricane, four; and the Sea Hunt and Dirty Dozen, one each.

"It was pretty choppy and the wind was blowing about 15 knots out of the east," said Buster Gillis, captain of the Sea Hawk II, with air temperature in the low 60s and the seawater temperature about 71 degrees.

His boat, with fishermen Jerry Scott, Ed Trachal, Chet Rosiak and Mike McGrath from Ohio on board, came to the rescue from 3½ miles out. They picked up passenger Junior Keller and Captain Stevens, the last two people to enter the water and the last to be rescued. Keller, of Kannapolis, has a seasonal home at Shell Point. He lost his glasses and billfold.

Coast Guard airplanes circled the area looking for passengers for two hours.

"There was a lot of just sitting and waiting," Gillis continued, "while they got a head count and everybody was accounted for."

Passengers reacted differently to the near-disaster, now under routine investigation by the U.S. Coast Guard's Marine Safety Office in Wilmington.

Johnny Millwood said he had been out "10 or 12 times."

"But this is my last one. It would probably never happen again in a million years, but I'll never take the chance."

However, the four passengers picked up by the Hurricane lingered aboard to fish, Calabash Volunteer Rescue Squad personnel reported.

The boat was due to dock at Little River, S.C., at about 1:15 p.m.; however several passengers transferred to the Sun Gypsy for a ride back to Capt. Jim's Marina.

At least one, Paul Benton, stayed behind on the Hurricane.

His parents, Wayland and Sharon Benton, are both volunteers with the Calabash VRS. They were half-way to the Calabash docks before they found out it was the Capt. Jim in trouble. They knew Paul was supposed to be on it.

"All the bad things" went through their minds, Benton said, before they reached the docks and learned their son was safe.

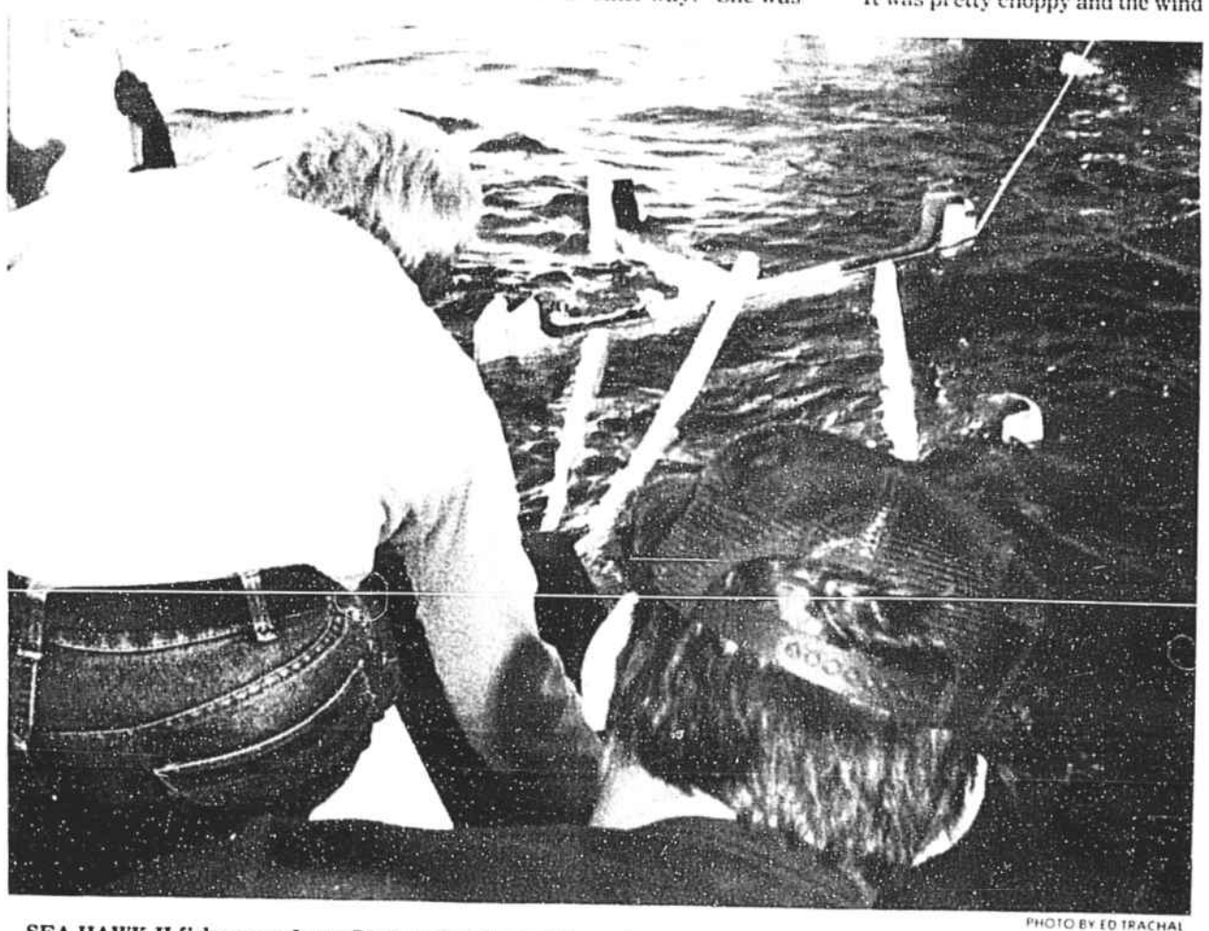

PHOTO BY ED TRACHAL

SEA HAWK II fishermen Jerry Scott and Chet Rosiak pull Junior Keller aboard. Keller, a passenger, and Capt. Jimmy Stevens were among the last to go into the water and the last to be picked up. They were clinging to a piece of wood, a support for one of the Capt. Jim's life rafts, and had jumped with only one life vest between them.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

THE WORST OF THE ORDEAL behind them, Capt. Jimmy Stevens and his wife, Juanita, are reunited at their Calabash dock. "We got everybody; that's what I'm proudest of," he said.

PHOTO BY ED TRACHAL

JUNIOR KELLER (left), a passenger pulled from the water following the fire on the Capt. Jim, rests inside the cabin of the Sea Hawk II, a charter out of Ocean Isle Marina.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

AS A CALABASH RESCUE VOLUNTEER ministers to his wife, Stephanie, Wayne Graves of Fredicksburg, Va., waits in the shelter of the ambulance.

Septic Tank Applications To Get Closer Look

(Continued From Page 1-A)

point."

Those results also raised questions among local health officials regarding some of the options allowed property owners in the past.

"At this point we're not sure what modifications can be made on these canals or the safest way to do them."

Soils have specific "carrying capacities," he noted, which aren't always easy to determine. "At some point you reach the point of saturation; we don't know when that will be reached."

Holden Beach is only 40 percent developed, but much of that development is concentrated along its finger canals.

Meanwhile health department sanitarians are evaluating each individual lot on its merits. It's possible, Crowder added, that of adjacent lots in a subdivision or on a canal, one might qualify for a permit and another not qualify.

"A lot of canal lots are 'made land', and it depends a lot on the fill material used and also on what was there originally," he continued.

Since July 1, permits have been denied for a lot in Harbor Acres and at least five lots in Holden Beach Harbor, many with the notation "1948c," which means that the health department has no recommendations of its own regarding modifications that could allow the lots to qualify.

However, permit applications have also been denied on other parts of the island, including one lot in the R.H. Holden subdivision and a lot in Holden Beach West.

Recent applications not yet acted on include ones for lots in Holden Beach Harbor and Colonial Beach subdivisions.

An existing system on Lot 323 in Holden Beach Harbor was recertified on August 6.

Septic tank permits are valid for up to three years from the date of issuance.

The original scope of the wastewater needs study was to determine if septic tank pollution of groundwater had led to the deterioration of water quality in the canals of three subdivisions on the northern side of the island—Harbor Acres, Holden Beach Harbor and Heritage Harbor. It was expanded to include the entire island.

Reporting to Holden Beach Commissioners on Sept. 14, Dan Latta of McKim and Creed said the study's results, based primarily on samples from 14 test wells, were inconclusive.

Specifically the report states, "The test results show no clear-cut pictures of what areas ae polluted and which areas are not polluted, as was initially hoped would occur. Instead, the results indicate a great fluctuation in coliform counts at all locations tested. The main indication of the sampling and testing program is that the island as a whole experiences severe water quality problmes which are evidenced by he wide range of coliform counts in the samples."

The study also noted that "it is apparent from the water table depths and from the soil analyses performed at the time of well construction that many site that have septic systems are unsuitable for such use" and that water table level in the canal lots "vary considerably" with the tides.

"The fact that there is a constant back and forth movement of water into the subsoils of these lots infers that pollutants are being carried out of the soils and into the canals."

McKim and Creed recommended an extensive inventory and inspection of all septic systems on the island, their operational status and maintenance, repair or upgrading needed.

Ash Man Charged In Murder Cases

(Continued From Page 1-A)

U.S. 17 and N.C. 904 in Grissettown.

Brunswick County Sheriff John C. Davis said Friday authorities believe the second shooting occurred near where the body was found.

Baker also died of multiple gunshot wounds, Perry said.

Williams said a handgun was seized, and that it was sent to the SBI Crime Lab in Raleigh last week for ballistics tests, to determine if the same weapon was used in both murders.

Shortly after Baker's body was discovered, Brunswick County lawmen located the van, for which Wilmington police had notified area law enforcement agencies to be on the lookout. The van was found abandoned on N.C. 904 about one mile east of where the victim's body was found, Perry said.

The vehicle was taken to the sheriff's department impoundment lot in Bolivia, where investigators searched it for clues into both murders.

According to the Brunswick and New Hanover clerk's offices, Piver had been given a 30-year prison term in 1973 after he was convicted of armed robbery and murder charges in connection with the May 1972 shooting death of Bobby Hamilton, a Wilmington service station attendant whose body was found in Brunswick County.

According to N.C. Dept. of Corrections spokesman David Guth, Piver's initial parole in October 1983 was revoked 13 months later after he was convicted of larceny in New Hanover County.

He said Piver was released from the Department of Corrections on July 7.

Cooler Temps To Continue

Temperatures in the Shallotte area are expected to remain below normal through the weekend, according to Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady.

Canady said this week's cool, windy conditions here have been influenced by the interaction of a high pressure system to the north and a stationary cold front to the south.

Gale force winds and heavy surf were reported off the North Carolina coast late Monday and early Tuesday.

He said local weather conditions mid-week were not directly affected by Tropical Storm Floyd, and he said it is unlikely that the tropical storm will affect southeastern North Carolina.

Canady's outlook for this area through the weekend calls for nighttime low temperatures in the low 50s and daytime highs in the low 70s.

He said rainfall should be near normal or around one-half inch.

For the period Oct. 6 through 12, Canady recorded an average daily temperature of 62 degrees, which is five degrees below normal.

The average daily high was 74 degrees, while the average nightly low was 51 degrees.

The maximum high temperature for the period was 80 degrees, recorded on Oct. 10. The minimum low temperature was 40 degrees on Oct. 9.

No rainfall was recorded during the period, he said.

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON
Established Nov. 1, 1962
Telephone 754-6890
Published Every Thursday
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Shallotte, N. C. 28459
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