Miller Freeman Crewman Scuttles Personal Yacht

Tuesday, 24 February 2009

Erik Wander/KMXT

CNN reported Sunday that a Seattle man has been charged with insurance fraud for allegedly sinking his own cabin cruiser, because of financial burdens and the frustration with maintaining the vessel. It turns out the man is a petty officer and electronics technician for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, who is stationed aboard the Miller Freeman, a ship frequently seen docked in Kodiak.

According court documents filed this month by prosecutors in King County, Washington, 50-year-old Brian Lewis scuttled his boat, the 36-foot Jubilee, a 1967 Chris Craft Cavalier, in Puget Sound on March 22nd last year. He rowed a borrowed dinghy back to shore. Later the same day, Lewis flew to Kodiak to join the crew of the Miller Freeman, an oceanographic research vessel.

The report says that three days later, Lewis filed an insurance claim with USAA Insurance reporting the Jubilee sank accidentally. Due to environmental concerns, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources salvaged the vessel at a cost of 2,866-dollars to the state.

A subsequent inspection revealed a hole, apparently drilled into the bottom of the Jubilee, and that two main engine sea strainers appeared to have been broken with a hammer. Officials concluded that the vessel had been sunk deliberately. After being confronted by investigators, Lewis admitted he intentionally sunk the Jubilee, but that his actions were motivated not by greed, but by frustration.

Prior to its sinking, the Jubilee had been listed for sale with Mahina (Muh-HEE-nuh)Yachts for 28,500-dollars.

Lewis, who is currently out at sea, could not be reached for comment, and officials from NOAA declined to comment on the ongoing case.

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