

Saugatuck Couple Drowns In Gulf Of Mexico Storm

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Yacht Breaks Up In High Seas

SAUGATUCK — The bodies of a man and woman, found in the Gulf of Mexico Thursday amid the wreckage of their boat, have been identified as Mr. and Mrs. Walter L. Coburn, both about 50, owners of Saugatuck's largest motel.

The bodies were found by the Coast Guard, ending a search that began Tuesday when the Coast Guard air station at St. Petersburg, Fla., picked up a distress call.

The alarm was received at 2:30 p.m. from a man who said that his boat, the Cara Mia, "is breaking up and taking on water." The location was given as seven hours, 13 minutes, out of Apalachicola, Fla., (northern section of the state) headed to Clearwater (midway on the state's west coast, near Tampa).

Sen. Zollar

The coast guard reported winds up to 50 knots with 6-foot seas in that area at the time. Visibility was less than one mile.

The air station dispatched a helicopter with auxiliary pumps intended to be dropped to the floundering boat, but the pilot found no trace of the Cara Mia.

The last radio contact with the stricken boat was 3:45 p.m.

When no trace of the boat was found by nightfall, a cutter was dispatched from Tampa. It and aircraft from St. Petersburg continued the search throughout the night.

EFFORTS ACCELERATED

The rescue efforts were accelerated daily throughout the week. Until in the final day, Thursday, there were five aircraft and two cutters participating in the search. In the final stages the search was directed by headquarters at Miami.

The bodies, supported in life

preservers, and surrounded by small pieces of wreckage were discovered at 3:50 p.m. Thursday.

An officer of the search said there was no charring or evidence of any burning found on the wreckage.

LUXURY CRUISER

The Coburns' boat was a 55-foot luxury cruiser, a twin-hulled catamaran, purchased last August. A sister ship is owned by Robert Grove of Grove Engineering, Kalamazoo, and is berthed also at Saugatuck.

Coburn and his wife, Betty, began their trip in late October, heading down the Mississippi to the gulf according to preliminary plans.

Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Wilson, Saugatuck, had originally intended to accompany the Coburns, but were forced to change plans at the last minute. However, they were reportedly

in contact through a mutual friend in Clearwater, Fla.

The Wilsons said that the Coburns mentioned having engine trouble with the Cara Mia before leaving on the trip, but they felt it was corrected before they started.

CAREFUL BOATERS

The Coburns were very careful boaters, Mrs. Wilson said, "and kept everything they could get on board for safety."

The Coburns owned and operated the Ship 'N Shore motel on the Kalamazoo river. It caters both to auto and boat travelers.

They built the motel about 10 years ago after many years as summer residents here. They came to Saugatuck from Chicago.

The Wilsons said the Coburns have no children, and funeral services and burial will probably be held at Detroit, where they have relatives.