

BIOGRAPHY, Alaimo, Joseph.

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# Bering Sea search suspended; Yakima sailor among missing

Compiled from staff and news service reports

The Coast Guard on Friday suspended its search for the bodies of nine men, including a Yakima man, presumed drowned after their fishing trawler capsized and sank in the frigid Bering Sea. Fishing vessels rescued 22 crew members who had abandoned the sinking ship on life boats. They were reported in good condition aboard a trawler that was taking them to Dutch Harbor, about 250 miles southeast of the accident site.



ALAIMO

The nine were lost Thursday when the 162-foot Aleutian Enterprise sank, according to the Coast Guard, which said there was little chance their bodies would be found.

"We had a very good search yesterday," Lt. Brian Flory said Friday in Juneau. "We think we would have found anyone who was afloat."

Joseph Alaimo, 45, of Yakima was identified as one of the missing sailors.

"We were the only family he had," said Grace Encinas, mother of Alaimo's common-law wife and grandmother of his 10-year-old son, Gianni.



Family members gathered Friday evening in the living room of the Encinas home at 67 W. Mead Ave., going through albums of pictures showing Alaimo at work on fishing boats.

An 8-by-11-inch portrait of him, taken three years ago at the Central Washington State Fair, sat atop a television with a darkened screen. Votive candles burned solemnly before the black and white photograph. A statue of the Virgin Mary stood next to it.

Alaimo's brother-in-law, Dino Encinas, an Alaskan fisherman on a month's leave between trips, said he helped Alaimo get his first job aboard a fishing vessel six years ago.

"He should have been home two weeks ago but was going to stay an extra 10 days because the money was good," Encinas said.

He said Alaimo was a cook and bartender at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas before he found a different calling at sea.

"He just had a knack for it and advanced in all the companies he worked for," Encinas said.

But though crew members can earn between \$15,000 and \$20,000 in four months on successful voyages, Encinas said, the work is hard, the hours are long and the elements can sometimes be fierce.

"That's our life," he said. "That's what we do."

"Rough weather is just part of the job. When you get in it, you keep working and try to keep your mind off it," he said.

"You try just to think of smooth sailing and not talk about the troubles until you're in the thick of it."

Encinas said the accident probably won't keep him from returning to sea.

"I don't know, I don't think it's going to stop me," he said. "I don't think Joe would want me to stop because of it; I know I wouldn't want him to stop if it happened to me."

"But once you board that boat, there's no going back."

The cause of the sinking was unknown, said Christopher Haley, a Coast Guard spokesman. Weather was reported to be fair when the early afternoon accident occurred.

The Coast Guard will convene a formal board of investigation into the accident at noon today in Anchorage, Haley said.

The Seattle-based ship sank about 60 miles south of the Pribilof Islands

town of St. Paul, which is north of the Aleutian Islands chain and southwest of the Alaska mainland. Water temperatures were between 32 to 34 degrees.

None of the crew was wearing survival suits, said Haley.

Coast Guard officials said a person couldn't survive the frigid water more than 30 minutes without insulated survival gear.

The survivors were transferred to the Bristol Enterprise, which wasn't expected to arrive in Dutch Harbor until late Friday, Haley said.

From there they were to be flown home as soon as possible, weather permitting, Roberts said. Most of the crew members are from the Seattle area, he said.

The Aleutian Enterprise was part of a fleet of so-called factory trawlers that fish for cod and pollock in the remote Bering Sea between Alaska and the Soviet Union. The large vessels catch the bottom fish, process and freeze them on board. The vessel is owned by Aleutian Enterprise Ltd.

Besides Alaimo, the company identified the eight other men presumed drowned as Javier Martin V. Castro, 27, Seattle; Robert W. Davis, 26, Renton; John A. Dieterich, 31, Seattle; Jeffrey A. Houston, 21, Warren, Ore.; David J. Jefferies, 19, Fontana, Calif.; Nello Marcell, 55, San Diego; Robert McCord, 35, Englewood, Colo.; and Matthew J. Schneider, 22, Issaquah.