

MIE MCGEE
Staff and Courier

S&R — Two men broke into a home early morning and held a woman at gunpoint before killing two men in what appeared to be execution-style slayings, Sheriff George Malone said.

"I was waiting for money," Malone said. "I was not a shooter, but the victims could not have survived."

O'Connell, Paris Bartley, 22, of Walterboro and Paris Bartley, 23, of Yemassee were found on Bluff at Harry Edwards Jr.'s home on Bluff Lane, about 12 miles outside of Walterboro, said Colleton County

third shooting was planned at the Medical University of South Carolina, the sheriff said. Washington and Edwards are related and Bartley was their friend, Malone said.

The woman who witnessed the shootings woke up when she heard two masked men break into the home between 4 and 5 a.m. Sunday, the sheriff said. The gunmen held her at gunpoint until the three men arrived.

In addition to multiple gunshot wounds to their bodies, Malone said all three victims were shot in their heads and arms. "We are all in shock," he said. "The way

all appears to be an execution, more something that just happened."

There are no suspects at this time, Edwards was in stable condition Sunday, and an investigation is under way, Malone said.

Family and friends filled the way of the home Sunday to comfort the woman who witnessed the killings.

Her cries could be heard from the house as others prayed with her in a room.

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Now safely back in port, Leland McClellan checks out his boat, The Provider, as it awaits repairs. Aboard the fishing boat broke down in heavy seas about 100 miles from shore and was towed in by two boats, including one piloted by a fellow fisherman who knew only that a boat was in danger and needed help.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIC SMITH/STAFF

The law of the sea prevails: If a boater needs help, do it

In dangerous waters, Mount Pleasant fisherman, crew rescued

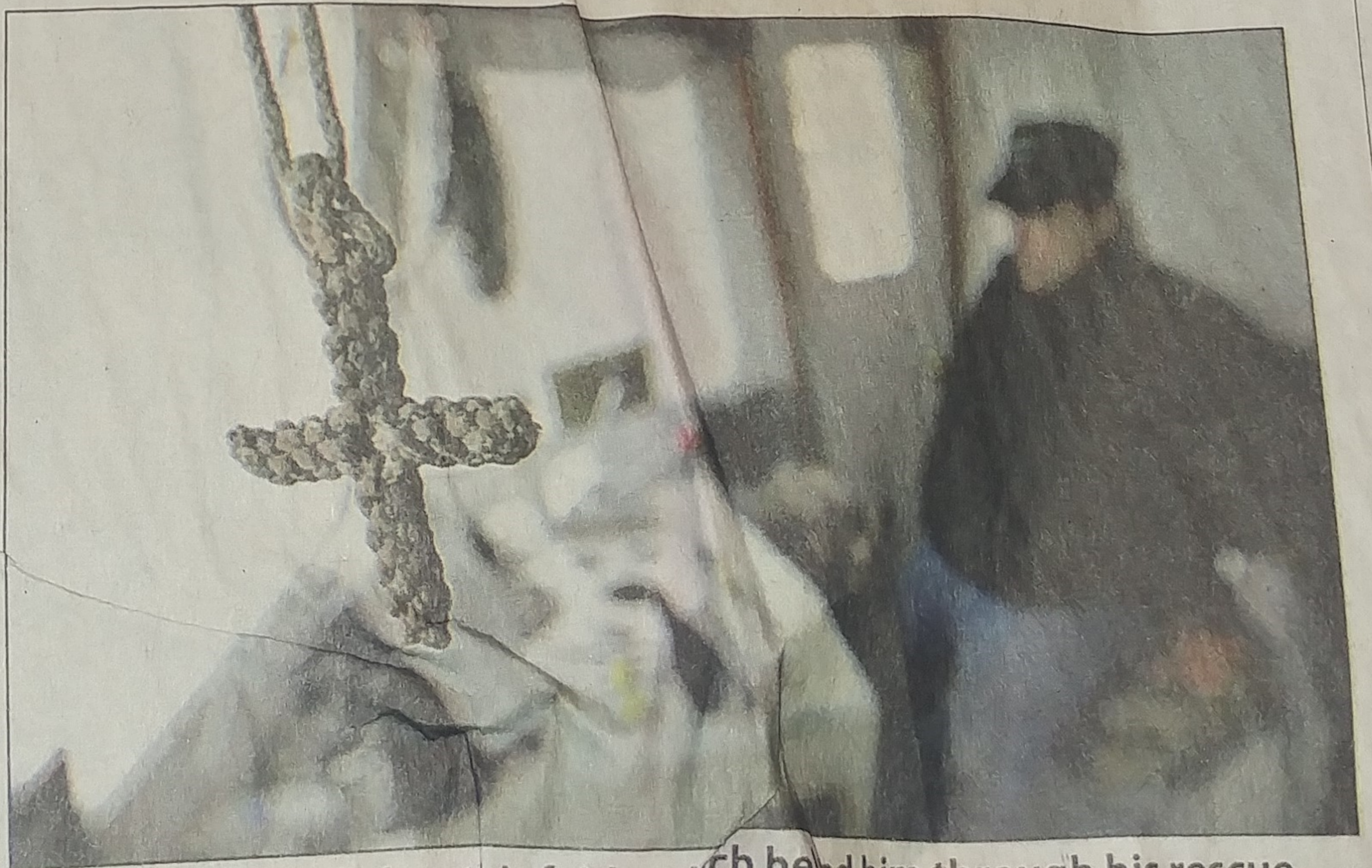
BY BO PETERSEN
The Post and Courier

The seas had been rough all night, the first of two nights of storms to blow. An hour into his watch, two hours before dawn, Leland McClellan rocked uneasily at the pilot wheel as The Provider drifted at the edge of the Gulf Stream.

It was the end of January and the forecast was for gales. McClellan planned to stay and fish, ride out the second night's blow and fish again, gambling on his cranky old diesel to hold out long enough to fill the hold before the season ended in two days.

"I was feeling kind of frisky. I've got a real strong boat and a real strong crew. I was trying to catch me a new engine," hoping to make enough money from the catch to afford it.

The gale hit out of nowhere and nearly blew out the windows, too soon and too strong for what had been forecast. The rigging that is his livelihood broke in five places and collapsed over the boat like a huge broken arm. For a half hour the storm blew. The seas swelled higher than the pitching boat.



McClellan talked about his faith, which heeded him through his rescue after his boat, The Provider, lost an engine during a gale in the Gulf Stream in late January. "I was praying intent," McClellan said.

"You can feel the wind pressing the glue in the wood (cabin walls) in that way. That's when you know you're in deep doo," McClellan said. "I was just trying to get my gear up and get out of the Gulf Stream."

The winds and waves died down. The crew got enough of the boat to bear

together. They were 100 miles south of Frying Pan Shoals, more than 100 miles out to sea in McClellanville. Other boats were trying to go in. They decided to fish, then try to beat the next storm to port.

Please see RESCUER Page 6B

Bixby convicted in killing

Could receive penalty for murder

BY MEG KINNARD
Associated Press

ABBEVILLE — A South Carolina man was convicted Sunday of murdering a law enforcement officer becoming irate over a land near his parent's project.

Steven Bixby, 39, faces a life sentence when sentencing for the shooting deaths of a small town near the state capital. His family was upset because he wanted about 20 feet of land to widen a road home to his father had threatened any officer on the land, according to witnesses.

Bixby had stored ammunition in his parents' home. He told a former friend he was ready for a fight, according to testimony in the case.

Later, he bragged in a letter that he had killed people.

"Well, he's just a man. He only shot eight people," he said during the trial.

Colleton County Sheriff Leland McClellan was the first to see Bixby's home. He said the family's dog was shot while his body was being taken to authorities.

State Court Judge McClellan said he stepped in on the way to court.

Police said the rest of the case ended after the trial was changed.

McClellan was wounded and charged with the shooting.

Rita Bixby was arrested as an accomplice. She knew the police and the shooting.

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ston Homes
century dream

FROM 1B

Fisherman, crew rescued in dangerous waters

RESCUED From Page 1B

That evening they turned to come in against the storm and made it 10 miles before the engine seized up. Suddenly they were being pushed out to sea by the winds, sucked as if by a vacuum into the flow of the stream, farther and farther from land. Ships can be lost in the deadly rip currents at the heart of the stream if they are caught in a blow.

McClellan is a longliner, the perceived bad guys of the fishing industry. They drag miles of a single line with baited hooks, an almost assembly-line approach to catching fish that is blamed for depleting stocks, entangling turtles and whales and causing other environmental troubles.

But talk to McClellan and others like him and you get a different story:

"We bust our (butts), risk our lives, to put food on people's tables," said fellow longliner Steve Biernacki, 40, who fishes out of Barnegat Light, N.J.

McClellan, of Mount Pleasant, is 52 years old. He and his wife, Elisabeth, have two sons, 9 and 1½.

McClellan is a descendant of one of those generations-old McClellanville fishing families. He has fished all his life, swordfished since 1980. He is built like a pair of Vise-Grips and talks in clips like a working man's grunts. It is what he does.

"He is a damn good fisherman," said mate Chanler Leland. "He's a little crazy. It takes that."

McClellan was in the face of another night of storm, the air barely above freezing and the water too cold to survive for long. By the time he realized he couldn't save the engine it was 10:30 p.m. His life and the lives of his three crew — not to mention the future of his boat — rested on a radio with a broken keypad able to broadcast only on one distress-call frequency. It was another piece of equipment he wanted to make the money to fix.

They had to hope one boat would still be near enough to hear, and that boat — facing the wind and swells — would turn around.

Steve Biernacki's Eaglet II was bearing for shore, 25 miles closer than the Provider. His was the only boat close enough to hear the distress call. The Eaglet II is a little larger than the 65-foot Provider and equipped with heavy-duty rigging support Biernacki uses to drag for scallops. It's also strong enough to hold onto a pitching and heaving boat in tow.

Biernacki had never met McClellan.

The seas were "wild, nasty, miserable," Biernacki said. "Like the man who was out there, I have a family at home who were worried about me." He looked at his three-man crew and they were of the same mind. "I've been a fisherman all my life. My father was a fisherman. There was a fisherman in need and there was a fisherman close by him. They needed help."

The Provider was drifting away from him, farther into the Gulf



MIC SMITH/STAFF

Now in much calmer waters, Leland McClellan can talk about his rescue from a storm in the Gulf Stream in January. His boat, The Provider, is being repaired in McClellanville.

Who are Longliners?

They drag miles of a single line with baited hooks, an almost assembly-line approach to catching fish that is blamed for depleting stocks, entangling turtles and whales and causing other environmental troubles.

They say they are being driven out of business by catch, season and fishing-ground restrictions they think are too severe for species such as swordfish, which have recovered. They are held to tougher restrictions than sport or recreational fishermen, who take or end up killing more fish because there are more of them out there.

Only two South Carolina port fisherman today hold swordfish longline licenses. In 15 years, their numbers across the East have dropped to a tenth of what they were.

American fishermen in the Atlantic in 2005 caught less than one third the country's quota for swordfish under an international agreement, the consequence of too many restrictions and too few boats, fishing-industry advocates say.

In 2006 the country was forced to turn over part of the unused quota to other countries, a move a federal fisheries official said was a temporary adjustment. Industry people worry that it's the beginning of the end of the fishery.

Stream. The Eaglet II chased for four hours before reaching it.

"By the time we got to him he was in 40-50 mph winds and 15-25 foot seas," Biernacki said.

They now had to throw, grapple and tie a tow line only 50 yards long, far too short a distance in high seas between two careening boats whose greatest danger was striking each other. The waves pitched so high the boats would disappear from each other in the troughs.

"It was the biggest seas I've ever seen," Leland said. "It was hairy

just sitting there broadsides with the rigging tore up."

Fishing boat crewmen develop the spunk and muscle to haul a 200-pound catch over the rail with one arm.

"I've got a few of them like that. They may look ordinary, but they aren't," McClellan said. The two crews went at it, working an hour to get the line tied in. Then they began the heaving, torturously slow lug back to shore in a storm. After an hour the line snapped.

The Eaglet II struggled to pull close to the Provider as waves broke over its stern. McClellan and his crew watched in horror as a mammoth wave rolled over the Eaglet II, "wheelhouse and deck and all," Leland said, the crew lunging to grab rails and one man nearly swept into the ocean.

They tied in and resumed the tow, still 100 miles from port.

The Coast Guard buoy tender Oak was 60 miles from The Provider when the distress call went out, returning from Charleston to Baltimore. They moved to help but with a "Good Samaritan" already towing the Provider and facing the same dangerous, heaving seas, they held back until dawn.

"It was nasty just for us, and we're 225 feet long," said Lt. J.G. Tracy Speelhoff. The Eaglet II towed all night. The Oak moved in after daybreak in 30 mph winds and 8-foot seas. "They could only do so much. They had been up all night getting thrown around. They were exhausted, pretty shaken up."

It took the bigger buoy tender 12 hours more to reach Charleston Harbor with The Provider in tow. The Eaglet II moved to refuge at Cherry Point on Wadmalaw Island.

"Those boys come up real big, those Jersey boys put it on the line for us," McClellan said.

There is a twist to the story. The last time McClellan had a boat in trouble, "busted open like a watermelon" in 1,500 fathoms off Delaware Bay, the same boat — with a

different name and different captain — came to his rescue.

"If he would have drifted (into the heart of the Gulf Stream) that night they would have ended up a wreck," Biernacki said. "That's the law of the sea. You do not leave a man stranded like that."

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Bixby could get death penalty in killings

BIXBY From Page 1B

On Saturday, Rita Bixby testified that she was proud of her son. "He has the right to protect his property by any means necessary," the 74-year-old mother said.

Defense attorney Bill Nettles said the Bixby family asked the governor and other officials to help resolve the property dispute.

After the verdict was read, members of both victims' families expressed joy and relief.

"It lifted a heavy burden off of us," said Marilyn Lee, one of Wilson's sisters. "We've been waiting quite some time."

Ouzts' grandson said he hopes for a death sentence when the penalty phase is completed.

"I hope for the death penalty. I hope for the trying. Biernacki

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