

# Magic Bus



Sank November 6, 2025 - all crew rescued

# Background

- 25-year-old (?) 54-foot Simonis Catamaran, considered well maintained and in good condition.
- 5 crew members: 55-year-old, experienced skipper; 4 fairly well experienced crew all 24 years old or younger.
- Delivery from Stonington, CT to the Bahamas
- Weather expected to be 30 knot winds and possible gale off US east coast.
- Track was intended to be within 200 NM from land.

# Timeline

Monday, Nov 3: 1900 underway from Stonington, CT

Tuesday, Nov 4:

- 30 knots sustained wind, 20-foot waves, making excellent time
- Family “shore team” in close contact via Starlink
- Late afternoon: discovered 5 feet of water in port engine compartment
- Rigged hose to starboard engine seawater suction to assist pumps

Wednesday, Nov 5

- Water level holding a couple inches lower than when it was discovered
- Dove bilge, source of leak not found.
- Good communications with family “command center” ashore.

Thursday, Nov 6:

- Gale conditions, 45 knots sustained. A little past Cape Hatteras.
- 0130 loud bang: Port jib sheet parted, starboard lazy sheet caught salon hatch and ripped it completely out. Ripped clew out of jib. Crew furled sails.
- 0200: starboard engine stopped due to clogging from port bilge debris.
- Dead in the water, rolling heavily.
- Attempted to call USCG on phone, did not have number, got voicemail. Shore team called USCG.
- 0330 abandoned ship to life raft.

# Timeline continues

Thursday, Nov 6 (continued):

- Everyone quickly got seasick in the raft. Deploying the drogue helped greatly.
- 12-man raft so plenty of room.
- Plenty of food and water.
- Took Starlink mini with them, not used.
- Primary EPIRB and hand-held VHF did not work.
- SPOT handheld device worked.
- 0600 (about) USCG C-130 on station. Dropped support pack with line to raft. Pack had VHF radio. Comms established.
- 0800 USCG helo on station after refueling on diverted aircraft carrier.



# Epilogue

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- 10 days later another boat saw the capsized hull. Photo showed the starboard rudder skeg had sheared off a couple inches from the hull.
- Hole was directly under the engine which is why it was not found.



# Lessons and thoughts

- Sailing into a gale. Departure date was recommended by a professional weather router.
- Bilges:
  - High-capacity bilge pumps and bilge high level alarms may buy time.
  - Once water rises, it is nearly impossible to see flow from a leak.
  - Clean bilges!!
- Emergency communications
  - Broadband (e.g. Starlink) proves itself again for robust communications
  - Emergency numbers should be programmed in phones or on checklist
  - Notify USCG as soon as there is an indication of a potentially serious issue. Do not wait until it get really bad.
  - Personal Locator Beacons can back up an EPIRB
  - SPOT, InReach and similar personal communicators work well and can be an excellent backup. Plus you can take these with you in the life raft.
  - “Layers” of methods.

# Lessons and thoughts

- Life Raft
  - Painter is long (50+ feet)
  - Prepare before boarding/ use a checklist – ditch bag, comms gear, personal documents, etc. Brief how to board. Inflate or not inflate PFD? Jump, step, or?
  - Where to launch to minimize chance of puncture and easiest boarding
  - Once launched, avoid anything that can puncture it.
  - Life raft's strobe is very useful for aircraft
- Checklists!!
  - Bermuda race safety checklist is a good start for offshore sailing
  - Monthly check of safety equipment
  - Abandon ship checklist

