Sailor missing at sea for 66 days found in good health

April 4 2015, byAlan Suderman And Emery P. Dalesio

Louis Jordan, second from left, walks from the Coast Guard helicopter to the Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Norfolk, Va., after being found off the North Carolina coast, Thursday, April 2, 2015. His family says he sailed out of a marina in Conway, S.C., on Jan. 23, and hadn't been heard from since. (AP Photo/The Virginian-Pilot, Steve Earley)

Adrift on the ocean, the mast of his 35-foot sailboat torn away, Louis

Jordan caught rainwater in a bucket, scooped up fish that were attracted to the laundry he hung over the side, and fervently prayed to God for help.

After 66 days missing at sea, he was finally rescued by a passing German freighter and brought ashore by the Coast Guard in good condition.

Early Friday, just hours later, the bearded 37-year-old man walked out of the Norfolk hospital where he was reluctantly taken, showing no obvious ill effects.

"We were expecting worse, with blisters and severe sunburn and dehydration," said Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Kyle McCollum, a member of the helicopter crew who brought Jordan to shore.

Jordan hadn't been heard from since Jan. 23, when he set out on a fishing expedition aboard the single-masted 1950s-era sailboat that had been his home for months at a marina in South Carolina.

It was unclear how long after leaving port that the boat was damaged, the Coast Guard said.

Jordan was plucked from the Atlantic about 200 miles off the North Carolina coast on Thursday afternoon after furiously waving down the container ship.

His boat was upright, but the mast had broken off in heavy weather, and the vessel appeared to have flipped over repeatedly, said Thomas Grenz, captain of the German container ship.

Jordan asked his Coast Guard rescuers to drop him off without seeking medical care, but he was taken to a hospital anyway as a precaution.

Louis Jordan, center, walks from the Coast Guard helicopter to the Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Norfolk, Va., after being found off the North Carolina coast, Thursday, April 2, 2015. His family says he sailed out of a marina in Conway, S.C., on Jan. 23, and hadn't been heard from since. (AP Photo/The Virginian-Pilot, Steve Earley)

He demonstrated a firm handshake and weary-looking blue eyes before declining an interview with The Associated Press on Friday.

In interviews with other news organizations, he described making pancakes out of flour fried in oil, collecting rainwater with a bucket, and using a net to catch fish that would swim in and out of his clothes when he put them over the side to rinse them.

He told WAVY-TV in Portsmouth, Virginia, (bit.ly/1FpmfUd) that he rationed his water to about a pint a day.

"Every day I was like, 'Please God, send me some rain, send me some water,'" he said.

Jordan had been living on his boat in Conway, South Carolina, near Myrtle Beach. He told his family he was going into open water to sail and fish, said his mother, Norma Davis.

Grenz, the German captain, said Jordan told him he had set out with about a month's worth of provisions.

On Jan. 29, the Coast Guard in Miami was notified by the sailor's father that he hadn't seen or heard from his son in a week.

Louis Jordan, right, walks from the Coast Guard helicopter to the Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Norfolk, Va., after being found off the North Carolina coast, Thursday, April 2, 2015. His family says he sailed out of a

marina in Conway, S.C., on Jan. 23, and hadn't been heard from since. (AP Photo/The Virginian-Pilot, Steve Earley)

Alerts were issued from New Jersey to Miami, and the Coast Guard began a search Feb. 8 but abandoned it 10 days later after failing to confirm any sightings, officials said.

Jeff Weeks, who manages the marina where Jordan docked his boat, said he is highly capable of fending for himself.

Louis Jordan, right, walks from the Coast Guard helicopter to the Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Norfolk, Va., after being found off the North Carolina coast, Thursday, April 2, 2015. His family says he sailed out of a marina in Conway, South Carolina, on Jan. 23, and hadn't been heard from since. (AP Photo/The Virginian-Pilot, Steve Earley)

"He is somewhat of a person who stays to himself," Weeks said. "I consider him a gentle giant with a good personality. But he likes to be self-sufficient. Here at the marina, he liked to catch most all of the food that he'd eat. He would eat a lot of rice and fish. And he would know what berries and what mushrooms to pick. He was really knowledgeable on some survival skills."

Grenz said he made a copy of Jordan's U.S. passport describing the American as weighing 290 pounds. Jordan is now probably only about 200 pounds, and he looked little like the man in the passport photo, Grenz said.

"It was a bit like the movie of Tom Hanks on that movie, you know, 'Cast Away,'" Grenz said.

The helicopter from the Elizabeth City Coast Guard Air Station carrying Louis Jordan arrives at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital in Norfolk, Va., on Thursday, April 2, 2015. His family says he sailed out of a marina in Conway, S.C., on Jan.

23, and hadn't been heard from since. (AP Photo/The Virginian-Pilot, Steve Earley)

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