

ACTIVITY: Sea disaster

CASES: [GSAF 1977.03.13.a](#)

DATE: Sunday March 13, 1977

LOCATION: The incident took place near Moreton Island in Moreton Bay, Queensland, Australia.

BOAT: A nine-metre fishing launch

OCCUPANTS: Three men were aboard: 32-year-old Verdon Harrison, 45-year-old John Hayes, and 74-year-old Victor Beaver.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Third Quarter, March 12, 1977

TIME: 17h15

NARRATIVE: The men were on a fishing expedition. On Friday night a 25,000-ton Japanese freighter bound for Brisbane ran their boat down in Moreton Bay near Moreton Island. No one on board the freighter noticed they hit the small boat. Unable to find life-jackets or free their dinghy, the three men clung to a blue ice-box they found floating in the debris. They managed to remain afloat throughout the night and all day Saturday but were drifting farther from the island. The sharks appeared at 16h30 on Sunday. As the first man was dragged underwater by a shark, he managed to say "Goodbye, mates, this is it." The second man succeeded, for a time, to hold onto the ice-box despite injuries inflicted by the sharks. Harrison continued to cling to the ice-box and kept kicking the sharks. At 17h45 he was rescued by charter fishing boat operator Richard McMullin who spotted the blue ice-box floating in Pearl Channel, and dragged Harrison on board.

INJURY: Hayes and Beaver were killed by sharks, Harrison's feet were bitten.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified.

SOURCES: The Daily Courier (Connellsville, PA), Monday March 14, 1977, The Modesto Bee, Tuesday, March 15, 1977; Sunday Mail (QLD), October 11, 1992, page109; A. Sharpe, pages 103-104



Survivor Relates Ordeal Of Sharks At Shipwreck

SYDNEY, Australia (UPI) — Verdon Harrison and two friends were on a weekend fishing trip and a freighter sliced through their 26-foot cabin cruiser in the darkness.

Harrison, 32, told police Sunday the collision in Morton Bay, 10 miles north of Brisbane, cut their boat in half, forcing the three to scramble aboard a splintered icebox.

Two days later the sharks came.

"A couple of the big ones came in for the kill," he said. "How I escaped I'll never know."

"It was a bloody nightmare."

He said Victor Beaver — the first man attacked — shouted, "Goodbye, mates, this is it," as a 20-foot shark dragged him out to sea.

The shark then lunged at John Hays, ripping off his arm and pulling him from the makeshift raft.

But, said Harrison, Hays struggled back onto the icebox and said, "I gouged his eye out. ... He won't be back."

Harrison then tried to apply a

tourniquet to Hays' bleeding limb, but the shark struck again, grabbing Hays for a second time.

"I tried to climb into the icebox for safety, but this big shark tried to climb in with me. Just then my rescuers came along."

A Brisbane hospital spokesman said Harrison was in satisfactory condition and under heavy sedation.

"He had bad bruising under the arms from clinging to the icebox, cuts to the legs from the bites of smaller sharks, and was suffering from exposure," the spokesman said.

A spokesman for the Queensland Harbor's and Marine Board of Inquiry said police were interviewing the skipper of the 25,000-ton Japanese freighter, Shun Oh, tied up in Brisbane with structural damage to its bows.

The spokesman said although the ship appeared to have hit something heavy, the skipper said he knew nothing of a collision with a smaller boat.



AP laserphoto

Verdon Harrison with his wife, Ruvae

Survivor tells how sharks killed his two companions

SYDNEY, Australia (UPI) — Two of three weekend fishermen whose boat was sliced in half by a freighter were killed Sunday in shark attacks. The survivor told how one of his pals screamed, "Goodbye, mates, this is it," as a shark carried him off.

Verdon Harrison, 32, of Petrie, a Brisbane suburb, told rescuers and police he and two friends were aboard a 26-foot-cabin cruiser in Moreton Bay 10 miles north of Brisbane when their boat was rammed Friday night.

Harrison said, "This big freighter suddenly loomed up on us in the darkness without warning and cut our boat in half."

The three scrambled onto a splintered icebox from their vessel, Harrison said, and spent 36 hours adrift.

He said a shark killed his companions 45 minutes before rescue boats arrived.

"It was a bloody nightmare," Harrison said. "A couple of the big ones came in for the kill. How I escaped I'll never know."

A shark, estimated by

Harrison at 20 feet long, took the first man, Victor Beaver, in one violent swoop. Harrison recalled Beaver's last words as, "Goodbye, mates. This is it."

The shark then lunged at the second man, John Hays. Dragging him into the sea and ripping his arm off. But Harrison said Hays managed to struggle back onto the icebox and said, "I gouged his eye out. He won't be back."

But, Harrison said, as he attempted to apply a tourniquet to his friend, the shark attacked again and swam off with Hays.

Harrison said, "I tried to climb into the icebox for safety, but this big bastard tried to climb in with me. Just then my rescuers came along."

A Brisbane hospital spokesman said Harrison was in satisfactory condition and under heavy sedation.

"He had had bruising under the arms from clinging to the icebox, cuts to the legs from the bites of smaller sharks, and was suffering from exposure," the spokesman said.