

**ACTIVITY:** Shipwreck

**CASE:** GSAF 1988.11.08

**DATE:** Tuesday November 8, 1988

**LOCATION:** The incident took place off Yeppoon, Queensland, Australia.

**BOAT:** *Christie V*

**OCCUPANTS:** 62-year-old Cedric Coucom and his sons: 33-year-old James and 17-year-old Bruce.

**NARRATIVE:** The three men left on a fishing trip on Sunday November 6, but ran into bad weather. By late afternoon their boat was taking in water in the huge seas off North Keppel Island. At 17h00, shortly before the *Christie V* sank, Cedric sent out a Mayday on the radio. The three men donned lifejackets and scrambled into their four-metre dinghy.



The dinghy lacked food, water and oars but they were confident of a quick rescue because the Mayday had been acknowledged. Huge seas kept swamping the dinghy so they took turns; one person resting in the water-filled dinghy while the others stayed in the water and held on to it. The seas pushed them northward. After nightfall on Monday, after more than 24 hours in the water, Cedric suddenly shouted, "Shark! It's got me!" His sons pulled him into the dinghy but he died of his injuries moments later. To draw the sharks away from the dinghy, they had no option but to place his body in the sea.

Early Tuesday morning Bruce let go of the dinghy, drifted into the path of the sharks, and was bitten. James tried to save him but he was too late.

The sharks continually nudged the dinghy and attempted to tip it over. At 1620, the dinghy was spotted by a National Safety Council Helicopter. Bob Hobson, the pilot said, "Two sharks, each twice the size of the dinghy, were pounding it and trying to knock James out." The dinghy had drifted 150 kilometres north of the area where Cedric issued the Mayday, far from where rescue vessels and aircraft were searching for them.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Although the press reported the sharks were six-metre bronze whalers, Edwards correctly notes that species does not exceed four metres, and believes tiger sharks were involved.

**SOURCE:** Hugh Edwards, pages 115-116, et. al.