

ACTIVITY: Air disaster

CASE: GSAF 1961.09.23

DATE: September 23, 1961

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean off Bermuda. 35°15'N, 65°10'W

NAME: Patrick J. Imhof, a US Navy crew man

DESCRIPTION: He was a 22-year-old male, and was wearing blue dungarees.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a sunny day and the air temperature was 70°F.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, September 24, 1961

SEA CONDITIONS: There were high seas (to 30 feet), the water was clear and the sea temperature was 70°F.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 165 miles

TIME: 06h00 (dusk)

NARRATIVE: Imhof was one of three survivors of the crash of a P5M US Naval aircraft. The survivors spent more than 12 hours in the water and were finally rescued the following morning. They reported "fighting off" sharks during the entire night. The sharks never attacked the men but kept circling in their vicinity. During rescue procedures by a merchant vessel, Imhof was swept away from the rescue vessel's cargo net and was immediately bitten by a shark or sharks. After spending another two hours in the water, a small boat from the rescue vessel managed to pull him onboard.

INJURY: He sustained lacerations on his right shoulder and back.

TREATMENT: He was treated at the US Naval Dispensary in Bermuda. The attending physician was Lt. Robert H. Meaders, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy.

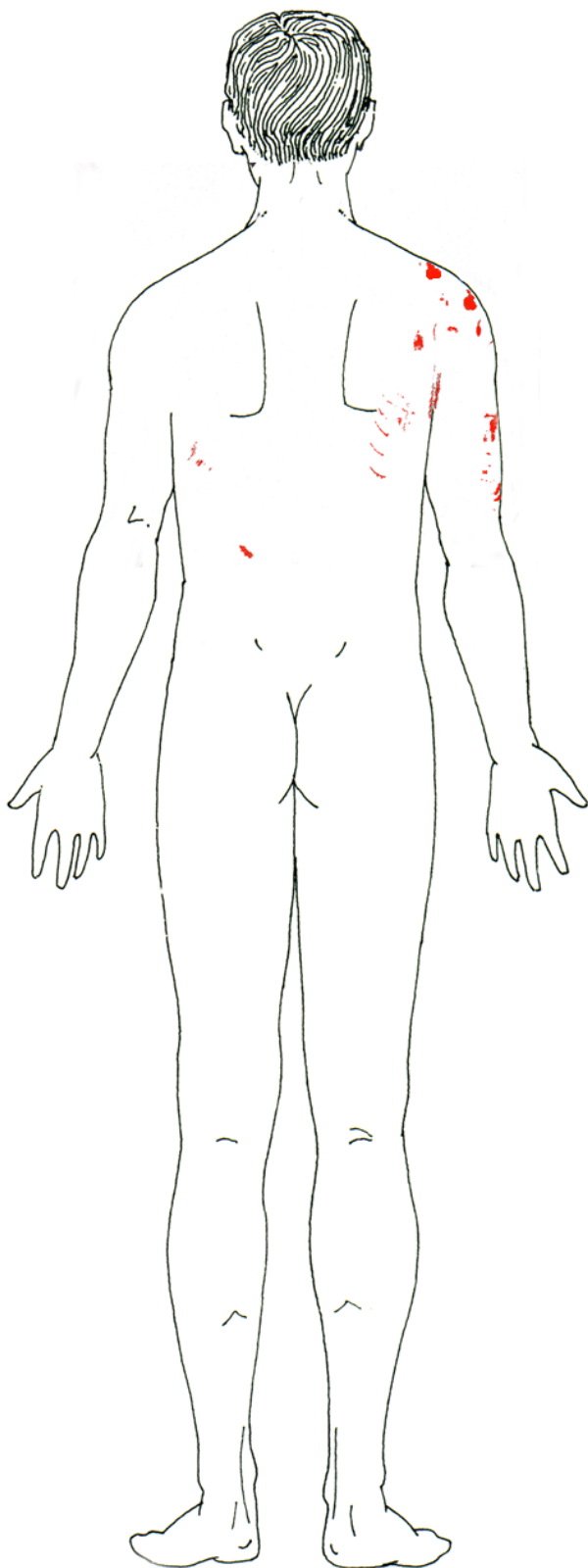
SPECIES INVOLVED: Oceanic whitetip shark, *Carcharhinus longimanus*, identified by Dr. William C. Schroeder on photograph, and by Dr. L.P. L. Schultz on sketch by observer

SOURCES: The Gettysburg Times, Monday September 25, 1961; Trinidad Guardian, September 25, 1961; .L. Wilton; Dr. Victor M. Coppleson (1962), page.246; H. David Baldrige, Shark Attack, page.102.



P5M aircraft

Photo by Coll B. Thouanel



SEARCH FOR 7 LOST IN OCEAN

HAMILTON, Bermuda (AP) — Three U.S. Navy airmen who survived a ditching in the Atlantic were under treatment here today as search continued for seven of their crew mates.

Planes and ships searched north of Bermuda where a Marlin P5M patrol bomber plunged into the sea Friday night after one of its engines caught fire.

The three survivors landed here Sunday appeared in good shape but one, Aviation Metalsmith 2C Patric J. Imhof of Lebanon, Pa., suffered from a shark bite. His injury was not serious

Also picked up by the American owned ship African Pilot were Lt. JG Peter D. Hofstedt, of Tarrytown, N.Y., and Aviation Technician 1C Jack M. Dockery of Hampton, Va

Missing are: Lt. Cmdr Albert J. Tait, Kansas City, Mo.; Lt. JG Cameron Page Cooper, Nashville, Tenn.; Aviation Machinist 2C Charles R. Dunaway, Fort Worth, Tex.; Aviation Technician 2C David W. Wood, Fond du Lac, Wis.; Aviation Electrician 3C Edwin D. Thompson, Baton Rouge, La.; and Aviation Ordnanceman 3C Charles Turner, Montclair, N.J.

Shark Bites Navy Airman

HAMILTON, Bermuda, Sept. 24 (AP) — Three U.S. Navy airmen who survived a ditching in the Atlantic and a brush with a shark were landed at Kindley Air Force base and hospitalised today.

A hunt continued by air and sea for seven missing members of the 10-men crew of the plane.

All the survivors seemed to be in good shape, except one who had been bitten on the leg by a shark. But he was able to walk ashore and his injury was reported not serious.

Trinidad Guardian, September 25, 1961