

**ACTIVITY:** Fell overboard.

**CASE** GSAF 1962.10.06

**DATE:** Saturday October 6, 1962

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean two miles off Santa Catalina Island, Los Angeles County, California, USA. 33°38'N, -118°42'W.

**NAME:** Marian Leaf

**DESCRIPTION:** She was a 43-year-old female. She was wearing white Capri pants, a blue/red/white-patterned blouse and tennis shoes.

**BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, October 6, 1962



**NARRATIVE:** Mrs. Leaf and her husband were topside on their 36-foot fishing cruiser when they became aware that something was wrong in the cabin. Her two children and guest were being overcome by fumes, possibly exhaust fumes blow over the stern by a strong following wind. Mrs. Leaf went into the cabin to investigate and threw open a side door for ventilation. As she did so, she apparently lunged over the narrow deck and fell overboard. Although her husband attempted to avoid hitting her with the propellers, her arm was apparently severely lacerated slashed by the propeller blades. She surfaced 25 yards astern, then sank below the surface.

About 60 to 90 minutes later, her body was spotted by a Coast Guard helicopter. Mr. Dudley Muth, who recovered her body, gave the following statement: "About 90 minutes to two hours after Mrs. Leaf had fallen overboard, a coast guard helicopter radioed us and told us to make the pick up of the body. The man in the helicopter could not make the pick up because sharks were around the body. They had dropped a flare so it was easy to find the spot where Mrs. Leaf was located. When we arrived at the scene there were three sharks circling Mrs. Leaf. They would swim up to her and kind of nose her a little, then they would swim off and make a circle and come back again. I would say the sharks were about six to seven feet in length, but I could be wrong. I could also be wrong about the number; there might have been more than just three, but I know that there were at least three of them around her at all times. In order to get her out of the water, I had to take the boat hook and keep pushing the sharks away from her until I had a chance to grab her arm with the boat hook and bring her close to the boat. Then I reached down and grabbed her right arm and pulled her toward me, then I grabbed her left arm and pulled her on deck. When she was finally on deck we could see clearly the injuries which had been inflicted by the sharks: Her left arm from the shoulder down to her elbow was almost down to the bone. It looked like someone had taken an axe and just hammered at her for a long time. Also there was, what I would call, a shark bite just above her right hip. It had torn down through her pants."

**INJURY:** Dr. Curphey, who examined the body, certified that the cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning (49% saturation), other conditions "drowning". He also stated

the wounds on the body could have been a contributing factor in her death.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** When asked about the species of sharks involved, Muth said, “They are the ones that are always out in the channel. They’re real common, because we’ve caught ones just like them when we’ve been fishing out there before. My guess is that the sharks were *Prionace glauca* (blue sharks); they are the most common to the channel.”

**SOURCES:** Long Beach Independent, October 9, 1962 edition; H. David Baldrige, pages 147-148; ISAF Case #1080