



March 24, 1951, the tuna clipper Mona Lisa skippered by John Correia, Jr. on her sea trial. Shortly afterwards, the boat left for for San Diego.

Richards Studio, Tacoma

ACTIVITY: Diving

CASE: [GSAF 1980.08.22.R](#)

DATE: Reported August 22, 1980

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Mexico, 1,500 miles south of San Diego, California.

NAME: Gerald C. Correia

DESCRIPTION: He was a 22-year-old male, the son of the fishing boat's skipper.

ENVIRONMENT: Porpoises swim with tuna schools and are often caught in tuna nets. U.S. government regulations limit the number of porpoises to be killed accidentally in tuna nets.

NARRATIVE: When Gerald Correia dived into a tuna net to free a trapped porpoise his arm was bitten by a shark that was also trapped in the net.

INJURY: Fatal. Correia sustained a five-inch gash in his arm. He later went into convulsions and died.

SPECIES: Not recorded

SOURCES: LA Times, August 20, 1980, page SD2

The Valley Independent, Friday August 22, 1980, page 16;

Sharks prowl off Florida Gulf Coast

United Press International
Swarms of sharks are prowling the warm waters of Florida's Gulf Coast — where two men have disappeared without a trace. On the West Coast, angry tuna fishermen blamed government regulations for the shark-bite death of a tuna fisherman.

Commercial fishermen say they have never seen so many sharks in the Gulf of Mexico off western Florida — and some have bitten holes in their nets "big enough to drive an automobile through."

There have been no reports of shark attacks, but two men — a sport fisherman and a water skier — have disappeared off the coast and schools of sharks were sighted around the drifting boat of the fisherman.

Some 1,500 miles south of San Diego off the coast of Mexico, a shark lurking unseen in a fishing net tore a 5-inch gash in the arm of Gerald Correria 22, as he descended to free a trapped porpoise. He later went into convulsions and died Monday. His horrified father, the boat's skipper, had sent him to free the porpoise.

Fellow tuna fishermen blamed Correria's death on strict government regulations, supported by environmental groups, which limit the number of porpoises allowed to be killed accidentally in tuna nets. Porpoises swim with tuna schools and often get caught in the nets.

"The cost of saving porpoises is getting too high when we lose a fisherman," complained Ed Silva, executive vice president of the American Tunaboat Association.

It was the first U.S. fatality relating to the rules on porpoises. Industry sources said there were several instances this year in which tuna fishermen were bitten by sharks while trying to free porpoises.

Government observers accompany about one-third of all U.S. tuna runs to enforce the regulations. One of the observers witnessed Monday's tragedy.

Off the western Florida coast, fisherman David Wilson, 45, of Albany, Ga., was reported missing Aug. 10 and a week-long search failed to produce any trace of him. His 16-foot boat was found drifting near Panama.

Searchers found a dead, 2½-foot shark, in the boat and a helicopter pilot participating in the search reported sighting "schools of sharks in the water." Wakulla County Sheriff's Deputy Charles Landrum said.

"We surmise he may have leaned over to pull it up, lost his footing and fallen overboard," Landrum said. "There's no question there was a lot of shark activity and if anything hit the water, the sharks would hit it."

The other missing man, John Powell Brown, fell off his water skis off St. George Island July 9. Friends saw him come up once, then disappear.

"We've caught from 30 to 40 sharks in the net some nights," Leon Crum, a Panama mullet fisherman, said.

"The big ones just take a bite through the net. We've had holes big enough to drive an automobile through. I've been fishing these waters all my life and I have never seen anything like it before."

In San Francisco, officials were having another kind of shark problem. A 7-foot female great white shark, caught by a fisherman in a flounder net, refused to eat chunks of sturgeon dangled before her Wednesday by workers at the Steinhart Aquarium. But experts said she was just taking her time and would eat "once she becomes oriented" to her new surroundings.

If the year-old shark survives, it would be the first such fish to survive in captivity.