

ACTIVITY: Sea Disaster

CASE: **GSAF 1943.12.04**

DATE: Saturday December 4, 1943

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean off Charleston, South Carolina, USA. *24.30°S,N, 74.32°W*

NAME: Julio C. de Cabarrocas

DESCRIPTION: He was one of the crew of the Cuban freighter *Libertad*.

NARRATIVE: On December 4, 1943 the *Libertad* was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine *U-129*. A number of the men that survived the sinking were bitten by sharks, including Julio C. de Cabarrocas.

SOURCES: Council Bluffs Nonpareil, Friday December 10, 1943; The Troy Record, Monday, December 13, 1943 (Photo below); J. Rohwer.



SEAMEN SAVED FROM SUBMARINE AND SHARKS—Their ship, the Cuban freighter *Libertad*, was torpedoed off Charleston, S. C. and sank within one minute. Eighteen survivors clung to overturned boats and a splintered hatch cover for 53 hours, while ten others became exhausted, dropped off, and were seized by sharks. Julio C. de Cabarrocas, shown receiving treatment, was bitten by a shark as he struggled in the water. The men were picked up after being spotted by a Navy blimp.

—Save Your Tin Cans—

Navy Reveals Sinking of Cuban Freighter

NORFOLK, Va., (AP)—An enemy submarine torpedoed and sunk the Cuban freighter Libertad off the United States east coast last week, killing seven crewmen and leaving 18 missing of the ship's complement of 43, the navy disclosed Friday. Survivors arrived here Thursday.

A naval vessel picked up the 18 survivors after they had clung to rafts, a capsized lifeboat and a broken hatch cover for 53 hours.

Julio B. Cabarracas, an oiler, and Melchor de Leon, quartermaster both of Havana, who watched helplessly as their seven shipmates drowned, said that after 36 hours a navy blimp appeared overhead and dropped a rubber life raft containing food and a first aid kit.

Cabarracas said that before the blimp dropped the raft, he and De Leon were surrounded by sharks. "We fought them off with our hands and our feet. After a while I got tired, and at that moment a shark bit me in my side." Naval physicians who treated Cabarracas said the wound bore teeth marks.

—Save Your Tin Cans—