

ACTIVITY: Sea disaster

CASE: [GSAF 1952.07.27.a](#)

DATE: Sunday July 27, 1952

LOCATION: The accident took place in the Pacific Ocean off Santa Monica, California, USA.

BOAT: The 33-foot fishing boat *Spare Time*

OCCUPANTS: Les Wiggins, Marvin Vollmer, Everett A. Turnipseed, Jack Fukunaga, Gerald Drenner, Al G. Barber, Leonard Yoshimo, Carl Jackson, Stanley Munn, Buzzy Sasche, Harold Haley and James Knight.

BACKGROUND

SEA CONDITIONS: Very rough seas.

NARRATIVE: When the *Spare Time* was 14 miles from shore, her bait tank motor failed. Some of the men were trying to repair it when there was an explosion and the boat sank. After spending the night in the water, three men were rescued. The others on board perished.

INJURY: Contemporary newspaper accounts state that one body was badly mutilated (either by the explosion or sharks), however, Leonard Shultz and Marilyn Malin (page 560) list this as a fatal attack and note that some of those who survived the explosion were bitten by sharks.

SOURCES: The Windsor Daily Star, Tuesday July 29, 1952, page 13; The Newark Advocate, July 29, 1952; page 1; The Lima News, July 29, 1952; Modesto Bee & News Herald, July 29, 1952 and August 7, 1952, page 15; The Spartanburg Herald, Wednesday July 30, 1952, page 1; Leonard Shultz & Marilyn Malin page 560

Search Sea For Blast Survivors

Fishing Vessel Is Shattered; Nine Are Listed As Missing

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP)—Boats and planes kept up the search today for bits of wreckage that might support any survivor of the exploded fishing vessel, *Spare Time*.

Three of the 12 men aboard the boat were rescued yesterday and part of a body was recovered. It was tentatively identified as that of Martin R. Vollner of Los Angeles. A piece of leather belt, found at another spot, was identified by his wife as belonging to the skipper and owner, Wes Wiggins, 29.

Plucked from the shark-infested waters yesterday were Harold Haley, 44, La Crescenta, Calif., Alfred (Buzz) Sasche, 16, Los Angeles; and James Knight, 23, Culver City.

Others aboard the *Spare Time* were listed as Gerald Drenner and Stanley Munn, West Los Angeles; Carl Jackson, Hollywood; Everett Turnipseed, Al Barber, Jack Sukanaga, Leonard Yshino, all of Los Angeles.

Haley said the blast came about 4 p.m. Sunday after repairs were made on the engine powering the pump on the live-bait tank in the boat. Some of the party, survivors said, were hurt so badly they sank at once. Wiggins tried to group the others on the wreckage, then struck out to attempt to swim the 14 miles to shore.

The three survivors were found yesterday morning.



DOWN TO DAVEY JONES' LOCKER

The 33-foot fishing boat, *The Spare Time*, with only her bow above water, slowly sinks into the Pacific 14 miles southwest of Santa Monica, Calif., after an explosion blew the 12 men aboard into the sea. Three of the men were rescued after hanging to wreckage in shark-infested waters all night. The other nine are presumed lost. The explosion occurred when the skipper, Capt. Les Wiggins, attempted to repair the bait tank motor. (AP Wirephoto).
