

SAW FISH NIBBLE HIS LIMBS

Court Told of Grim War Adventure

AN Indian tailor of Cape Town, Abdul Razak Hallim, of College Street, Woodstock, had his fingers, toes and other parts of his body eaten by fish while he drifted, injured and helpless, for three days in the Indian Ocean on a cabin door, after being torpedoed in November, 1942.

During those three days his body was first bleached white by the sea water and later burnt black by the sun and wind. He was more dead than alive when rescued by a British warship.

The account of his terrible ordeal was told in the Supreme Court yesterday and in an interview with a Cape Times reporter.

The Court version was heard by Mr. Justice Ogilvie Thompson, when he granted an application for the presumption of the death of Abdul Gaffoor, a younger brother of Hallim, who was on the ship with him when it was torpedoed.

WENT TO STUDY

Hallim said in 1927 he went to India to study and was joined there by Gaffoor. They lived in Rander in the province of Bombay.

In 1942 they decided to return to their parents in South Africa.

They sailed from Bombay on November 20, 1942, in the s.s. Tilawa, bound for Mombasa and Durban.

Ship Hit By Torpedo

"About 1 a.m. on November 21, 1942," said Hallim, "while my brother and I were asleep on deck, the Tilawa was attacked by a Japanese submarine and hit by a torpedo.

"Something heavy fell on me—smashing my hip—and pinning me down.

"Complete panic reigned among the passengers. Nobody, except my brother, tried to help me.

NEVER SEEN AGAIN

"As I was helpless and my brother was unable to move me—the object of a tank, pinning me down—I ordered him to leave me, as it would have been senseless for both of us to go down with the ship. My brother put on his lifebelt and left me. I never saw him again.

"Shortly afterwards the submarine surfaced and threw a searchlight on the Tilawa. The officer in charge of the submarine gave the passengers an hour in which to take to the boats.

"The Tilawa was listing heavily, and I saw a number of passengers jump into the water. I do not know whether my brother was able to get a seat in a lifeboat or whether he jumped over the side.

LEFT ON DECK

"I was left lying on the deck. Eventually another torpedo struck the ship and she went down.

"I can remember going down with her, but nothing further until I came to, to find myself floating in the sea in mid-ocean on a cabin door.

"I have no idea how I came to be on the cabin door."

"I was alone on the sea for three days and nights before I was sighted by an aircraft. Soon afterwards I was picked up by a British cruiser and taken to Bombay."

Hallim said he and his family, through the Red Cross as well,



Mr. Hallim

had tried to trace Gaffoor, but were forced to the conclusion that he went down with the Tilawa and was dead. They had even tried as far as Burma, Malaya, Singapore and the Far East.

In an interview with a Cape Times reporter Hallim described his experiences while adrift on the sea.

"For three days and nights I drifted semi-conscious on the wooden cabin door, with my legs and arms trailing in the water," he said.

LOST BLOOD

He had lost a lot of blood. His sense of feeling had gone.

In periods of consciousness he became aware that the small flying fish which abound in the Indian Ocean were nibbling his fingers, chin, chest, legs and toes.

He had hazy recollections of looking down through the water and seeing the little fish circling his legs and arms, darting in to sink their teeth in his flesh.

STRUGGLED

When he struggled to move his limbs this frightened the fish away.

At first the sea was rough, and the continual immersion in salt water bleached his body to ashen-white.

Later exposure took a hand, and when he was picked up by a warship he was burnt black by the sun and wind, and was more dead than alive.

He was taken to hospital in Bombay.

To-day his right leg is 14 inches shorter than the left as a result of the hip injury, and the same leg bears the scars of the wounds left by the fish.

The other bites on his chin, feet and finger tips have healed almost completely.

WOOL BOARD CHAIRMAN

PRETORIA—Mr. J. H. A.

chairman of the South African Wool Board in Pretoria yesterday.

Mr. W. S. Marais

C. H. Venter were in

the audience.

(Sapa.)