

My miraculous escape
from man-eating sharks...

17 HOURS ADRIFT

When his fishing boat sank, only a plastic seat cushion saved this Floridian—then came vicious hammerhead sharks! An unforgettable personal experience by the man who lived through it

by **Robert Walker** as told to Bob Driscoll

THAT FRIDAY morning started no differently from many others. I had recently purchased a new 16-foot boat, and I planned to go fishing with a friend, James Plouff.

When I kissed my wife Helen and the kids good-bye, I said I probably wouldn't be home until late that evening. If only I had had a premonition of what was in store for me, my good-bye never could have been so casual!

"I won't hold up dinner," Helen said.

"Catch a fish for me, Daddy," Linda Gale asked.

"Sure, honey," I answered, leaving our four-room apartment. "I'll catch *two* big ones for you."

Jim and I took the boat out about three or four miles from

Fort Lauderdale and had been fishing for several hours before he frowned and asked: "Getting a little rough out here, isn't it, Bob?"

Waves were beginning to break over the boat. "It sure is," I agreed. "We'd better start in. I'm glad this is an un-sinkable boat!"

As I steered toward shore, the waves were breaking directly over the stern. I gradually eased the boat off on a diagonal to blunt the force of the waves, wondering why the response to the helm was sort of sluggish. I shrugged away the doubt that had begun to nag me, however. Maybe we'll be home for dinner, I mused.

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ILLUSTRATED BY CARL MUELLER

