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STATINTL

Adventure Writer Is Lost in Sea Crash Mystery Off Morocco

By PHILIP H. DOUGHERTY

Holly Roth, a prolific American writer of intrigue and adventure stories, is missing and presumed dead after a mysterious sea accident off Morocco.

The case involving the New York-born novelist, who also wrote under the name of K. G. Ballard and P. J. Merrill and sold to both television and the movies, had elements that might have made material for one of her works:

A trip from Gibraltar to the Canary Islands aboard a ketch named Visa.

A ship that rammed the 49-foot wooden boat in the night and sailed on.

A reported Central Intelligence Agency dossier.

The accident was reported to the Moroccan authorities by the 48-year-old writer's husband, Joseph Franta, a 36-year-old Czech who travels under a Swiss passport. They were married four years ago.

Mr. Franta said the Visa was about 20 miles north of Safi, Morocco, and he was below

life-jacketed form in the water. He called again; no reply.

The ketch was running under motor and sail and he steered toward the spot and threw out a buoy, he said. The line fouled the propeller. He tied a line to himself, he went on, leaped into the heavy swells, but could not find his wife, whom he supposed to be unconscious. He returned to the ship, tied a longer rope to himself and jumped back in again. Still no success.

Exhausted, he climbed back on the Visa, and fired flares and a gun in a vain attempt to attract fishing boats that he said he had seen.

Next he went to the radio, he said, and finally raised Radio Safi. About noon the Santa Africana, a Spanish fishing trawler, hove to, put two men aboard the Visa and took her in tow to Safi.

Miss Roth's brother, Frank Roth of Springfield, N.J., received a copy of Mr. Franta's statement along with a "Presumptive Report of the Death of an American Citizen" signed by the American vice consul in Casablanca.

Mr. Roth, who operates a rare-coin shop in Jersey City, said he last saw his sister in 1960, just before she married Mr. Franta. She had met him, her brother said, in Geneva, where he was with the International Labor Organization.

The ketch, Mr. Roth said, was built in 1912 in Norway, weighs 25 tons and was bought by Mr. Franta in 1960 for \$8,500. He said it was later put into the name of his sister, who spent \$20,000 in renovating it. Mr. Roth said his sister had been living in Paris and Majorca for several years. During the last year, he said, the couple lived aboard the ketch.

In a letter to her brother dated March 30, 1964, Miss Roth wrote that her husband was having difficulty getting into the United States. She said the C.I.A. was blackballing him and had a lengthy file on him.

The report from Casablanca, signed by Robert G. Adam, the

vice consul, lists the cause of death as "accidental, presumed lost at sea and drowned." It lists the name as Helen Holly Roth-Franta, and her last United States address as 171 West 71st Street.

Mr. Roth said yesterday that that was the address of their mother, Mrs. Benjamin Roth, who now lives in Baldwin Park, a suburb of Los Angeles. Miss Roth had lived at 308 West 75th Street, he said.

One of Miss Roth's most recent books, "Too Many Doctors," published by Random House under her maiden name, concerned violence at sea. She also wrote "The Van Dreisen Affair," "Shadow of a Lady" and "The Crimson in the Purple."

As K. G. Ballard she wrote "Bar Sinister" and "The Coast of Fear." "The Slender Thread" was under the name P. J. Merrill.

On television her work has appeared on the Kraft Mystery Theater and on Moment of Fear. Two of her works have been bought for motion pictures, but neither has been produced.



The New York Times Nov. 24, 1964
Cross shows where writer vanished from sailboat.

making coffee while his wife was standing watch. It was about 4 A.M. He felt a strong shock that knocked him against a wall, he said. He went topside and saw a grayish ship about 145 feet long moving away. He called his wife, he said, but got no reply. He thought he saw a