

ACTIVITY: Diving

CASE: GSAF 1929.01.05

DATE: Saturday January 5, 1929

LOCATION: The incident took place in Suva Harbor, Suva, Viti Levu Island, Fiji. 18°09'S, 178°25'W

NAME: Unknown

DESCRIPTION: He is described as a Fijian male.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Third Quarter, January 3, 1929

NARRATIVE: As the S.S. *Moeraki*, a Pacific liner pulled away from the wharf, passengers threw pennies into the sea. One of the Fijian boys was diving for the coins "when a shark attacked one, tearing at his arm," writes Jim Oetzel. "A Fijian policeman jumped to his assistance. Then the shark attacked again, seizing the boy's other arm. This officer fought him off by kicking."

INJURY: According to Oetzel, both arms were bitten but the man survived. He writes, "I saw this Fijian in Suva last June.

According to Copleson, one of the boy's hands was severed, both legs were severely bitten and nearly severed and the boy died of his injuries.

TREATMENT: Both arms were surgically amputated in the hospital, one below the elbow and one above the elbow.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified.

SOURCES: The Argus (Melbourne), Tuesday January 8, 1929, page 7; Cairns Post, January 11, 1929, page 7; Jim Oetzel, Skin Diver Magazine, March 1956; Victor M. Copleson (1962), page 253

SHARK KILLS FIJIAN.

FIGHT BELOW SURFACE.

Island Belief Dispelled.

SYDNEY, Monday.—Details of the attack by a large shark upon a Fijian at Suva last week were given by passengers on the *Moeraki*, which reached Sydney to-night. On the day before the steamer sailed a Fijian in a canoe invited passengers to throw a coin on top of a shark which was basking on the surface. One of the passengers obliged, and the native jumped on the shark and reclaimed the coin. The startled shark swam away. An hour before the *Moeraki* left the wharf next day the tables were turned on the same Fijian, in the presence of more than 100 passengers who lined the rails of the steamer. Soon after the native had dived for another coin there was a commotion many feet below the surface. The water took on a reddish tinge, and it became evident that the Fijian had been attacked by a shark. He fought gallantly for his life, but on coming to the surface it was seen that both of his arms and one leg had been shockingly injured. Several Fijians hastened to the man's assistance, and one of them dropped into the water and assisted him into one of the small craft although the shark was still near. The wounded Fijian displayed great fortitude, and when last seen by the shocked passengers on the *Moeraki* was conscious. According to a report received later he died following an operation.

The incident dispelled the belief among the islanders that a shark will not attack a black man. The tragedy is said to be the first of its kind in the Fijian group for many years.

FIJIAN TRADE. IMPROVED SHIPPING SERVICE.

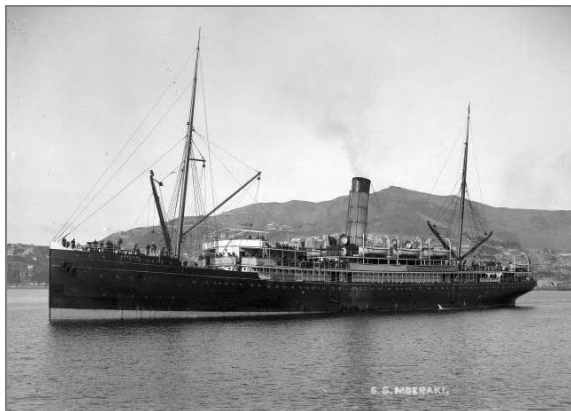
MOERAKI TO REPLACE SUVA.

A decided improvement will be made next month in the passenger and cargo trade between Melbourne, Sydney, and Fiji. Arrangements have been completed for a joint service every three weeks to be maintained by the Union S.S. Co., and the A.U.S.N. Co., Ltd.

For a number of years the A.U.S.N. Co.'s steamer Suva has been in the service, leaving Melbourne and Sydney every four weeks with passengers and cargo for Lautoka, Suva, and Levuka, and, at the same time, a four-weekly cargo service to Fiji has been maintained by the Union Company.

It has now been decided to make the service a joint one. The Suva is to be withdrawn, and her place will be taken by the Union Company's steamer Moeraki. The Suva arrived at Sydney from Melbourne yesterday, and will leave on her last trip to Fiji tomorrow. Negotiations are proceeding for the sale of the vessel, and in all probability she will be disposed of to Eastern buyers on her return to Sydney.

The Moeraki is a well known unit of the Union Co.'s fleet, having traded for many years between Australian and New Zealand ports. For some months past she has been laid up at Dunedin. She will be recommissioned shortly, and will come to Sydney to make her first trip in the Fijian service on July 25. Her passenger accommodation is stated to be about five times larger than that of the Suva. The decision to place an improved passenger vessel in the service, it is understood, is due in a large measure to competition from American mail steamers, which carry many tourists between Sydney and Suva. The Moeraki and Suva have gross tonnages of 4421 and 2229 respectively.



S.S. Moeraki

*The Sydney Morning Herald
Tuesday June 28, 1928, page 12*