

ACTIVITY: Bathing

CASE: GSAF 1936.01.22

DATE: Wednesday January 22, 1936

LOCATION: The incident took place at West Beach, midway between Henley and Glenelg, near Adelaide, South Australia

NAME: Ray Bennett

DESCRIPTION: He was a 13-year-old male.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, January 24, 1936

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 270 metres (or 20 metres, according to his sister).

DEPTH OF WATER: One metre

TIME: 18h00

NARRATIVE: Ray Bennett was a newsboy. After he made his paper sales he went to the beach to cool off in the water.



Ray's 14-year-old sister, Enid, was on the beach when the incident took place and said, "I saw a large shark flash out of the water and then he disappeared. I saw the tail of a large shark sticking out of the water. I ran to the spot but I saw nothing more, only a foam on the surface of the water."

Len Bedford, 18-years-old, was also on the beach when he heard a scream from the water. "I saw a bather struggling," he said. "Then I saw a large shark flash out of the water, its tail sticking up in the air, and the bather disappeared." The beach was deserted, but Bedford noticed a bicycle lying on the sand with a boy's clothing and leather bag on top of it. Just then a sulky came trotting past. Bedford told the driver what had just happened and asked him to call the police. Apparently the driver never did; after waiting for the police for more than an hour, Bedford borrowed the bicycle (which he realized must have belonged to the bather) and peddled to Glenelg to report the incident.

INJURY: Fatal

SPECIES INVOLVED: White shark

SOURCES: The Sydney Morning Herald, Thursday January 23, 1936, page 7; Alan Sharpe, page 120; Sydney Morning Herald, January 23, 1936; Victor M. Coppleson (1958), pages 107 and 240; John West

SHARK ATTACK.

BATHER KILLED

On Beach Near Adelaide.

ADELAIDE, Wednesday.

A shark attacked and killed a young man, believed to be Ray Bennett, newsagent, of North Adelaide, at West Beach, near Adelaide, this evening.

Bennett was only 20 yards from the shore when he was attacked. He screamed, a shark leaped half out of the water, and then Bennett disappeared in a smother of foam.

The body has not been recovered.

Apparently the only witness of the tragedy was Leonard James Bedford, 18, of Mile End. He told the police that he was about to go in for a swim about 6 p.m., when he saw a bather in difficulties about 200 yards away. He heard the bather shriek. He then saw about 2ft of shark's tail appear above the water, and the shark and bather both disappeared.

A bicycle and clothing found opposite the spot where the shark was seen were later identified as having belonged to Bennett.

This is only the third shark tragedy in the history of the State. In 1926, at Brighton, a few miles along the coast from West Beach, a woman was attacked by a shark and lost a leg. At Port Pirie, in 1884, a 16-year-old girl was dragged under water by two sharks.

SHARK FATALITY INQUEST.

TO BE HELD UNDER NEW LAW.

ADELAIDE, Wednesday.

An inquest will be held on Raymond Bennett, 15, of North Adelaide, who is thought to have been seized by a shark at West Beach, near Adelaide, on January 22.

This will be the first inquest held under the provisions of the Coroners Act, 1935, which empowers the coroner to hold an inquest without having viewed the body. The new provision was drafted as a result of the position which arose in Sydney in what was known as the "shark arm" case.

The Sydney Morning Herald, January 30, 1936, page 5

Victim's sister warns of shark attacks in shallows

A woman whose brother was killed by a shark at West Beach in 1936 today issued a warning to young people: "Please be very careful. Killer sharks come right into the shallows." Mrs Enid Redzinski, 67, of Edwardstown said: "The smartie lads think they know everything, but it frightens me when they fool around in the shallows thinking they are safe."

Mrs Redzinski was 14 when her brother, Raymond Bennett, 16, was taken by a white pointer at West Beach in waist-deep water at 6pm in bright January sunlight in 1936. The beach was crowded and Raymond was only 20m from shore.

Mrs Redzinski provided newspaper cuttings and a witness' description of the tragedy, which said: "I saw a large shark flash out of the water and the bather disappeared.

"There was a splash and I then saw the tail of a large shark sticking out of the water.

"I ran to the spot but I saw nothing more, only a foam on the surface of the water." Mrs Redzinski said she feared during the school holidays and with warmer weather a similar attack would take place. "You don't see them (the sharks) coming," she said.

"I never went back into the water, only to my ankles, after Raymond died. "I was terrified even if a lump of seaweed touched me."

Mrs Redzinski said it worried her deeply that people thought sharks attacked only in deep water. "Young people must be warned of the danger," she said. "Raymond was only in 1m of water when he was taken."

SOURCE: The News, Wednesday September 18, 1991, page 6