

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1944.07.22 / SA-079

DATE: Saturday July 22, 1944

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Indian Ocean at Hartenbos, seven kilometres north of Mossel Bay in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. 34°07'S, 22°07,8'E

NAME: Albert Schmidt

DESCRIPTION: The swimmer, a 17-year-old male, had a large sore on his shin which may have been bleeding when he was bitten by the shark.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent with 5% of the Moon's visible disk illuminated. New Moon, July 20, 1944 at 03h42 (Universal Time - 2h).

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was warm and it was high tide.

ENVIRONMENT: The Hartenbos River empties into the sea adjacent to the attack site and has a large estuary which supported numerous bait organisms and fish life. Since the construction of the Hartebeeskuil dam in 1970 the river mouth is often closed.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Reports vary: 25 to 200 metres

TIME: 16h30 or 17h00

NARRATIVE: There were only six people in the water, including Albert Schmidt. One of the swimmers said, "Schmidt laughed and said that a shark was at his leg. He swam two to three metres and then disappeared. A great deal of blood welled to the surface and spread through the water".

Witnesses on the shore said that they saw a shark among the swimmers in the swell. "The shark appeared between Schmidt and the beach and he shouted for help," said one. "We saw him struggling, then he disappeared and the water turned red with blood."

INJURY: A local Crash Boat was summoned to the scene, but the body was never recovered.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The shark was not caught, but for some days afterwards a large shark was seen several times just off the beach. Large numbers of white sharks frequent the waters of Mossel Bay; it is likely that this species was involved in this incident.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine

