

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1946.04.19

DATE: Friday April 19, 1946 (Easter Weekend)

LOCATION: Trinity Beach, 12 miles north of Cairns, Queensland, Australia.

16°44'S, 147°E

NAME: Robert McAuliffe

DESCRIPTION: He was a 17½-year-old male from Cairns and worked for Australian National Airlines. He was wearing dark swim trunks.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a bright, sunny day and the air temperature was 72°F.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, April 16, 1946

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was very calm and clear and the water temperature was 65°F.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 20 feet

DEPTH OF WATER: Three feet

TIME: 08h30

NARRATIVE: There was a weekend camp for about 40 children, ages 12 to 17 years. A number of the children had been in the water for a swim before breakfast, and then re-entered the water about 08h30. There were a number of people in the water, including 20-year-old Roland Thomson, 19-year-old Violet Bounday and Donetta Camp who were five feet from shore in three feet of water. Robert and Donetta were about five yards father out than the rest when someone shouted "Shark!". McAuliffe appeared to be treading water; according to witnesses the water was "churning and splashing all about him". They went to his aid, but on their arrival, they didn't see a shark. McAuliffe was standing upright in blood-stained water, appeared very shocked and did not speak. He was carried ashore.

INJURY: Fatal. He sustained severe incised wounds to both hands and both legs. "He was badly injured and torn down the right side, and the stomach was exposed," said Jack Croucher who witnessed the accident. The boy died before he could be brought ashore.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified

SOURCES: Cairns Post, Saturday April 20, 1946, page 1: Jack Croucher; Gilbert P. Whitley (1951), page 193; Victor M. Coppleson (1958), page 87



Trinity Beach

YOUNG CAIRNS MAN LOSES HIS LIFE WHILE SWIMMING

Attacked by Shark at Trinity Beach

A young Cairns man, Robert McAuliffe, aged 17½ years, was badly mauled by a shark while swimming at Trinity Beach yesterday morning, and died while being taken to hospital. He was one of a party of 16 who intended spending the Easter vacation at the beach.

McAuliffe, who was the son of Mr. and Mrs. D. McAuliffe, of 15 Lumley-street, Cairns, was employed as storeman by Australian National Airways at the Cairns aerodrome.

SHARK KILLS YOUTH

BRISBANE, Sat—A shark killed a youth at Trinity Beach, 20 miles north of Cairns, yesterday.

Suffering from terrible wounds on both legs and both hands, the victim—Robert McAuliffe (17), of Cairns—died in an ambulance on his way to hospital.

McAuliffe was bathing with three companions.

He was in three feet of water, five feet from the edge of the beach, when the shark attacked him.

His companions left the water. Two girls ran for help, and a boy rushed for towels.

When the boy returned, he found that McAuliffe had reached the beach.

He was helped up the steep shore and wrapped in towels to await the arrival of the ambulance.

*Daily News (Perth)
April 20, 1946, page 13*