

ACTIVITY: Body surfing / swimming

CASE: GSAF 1950.12.16

DATE: Saturday December 16, 1950

LOCATION: The attack took place at Palm Beach North (five miles south of Burleigh Heads where Leo Ryan had been bitten by a shark three weeks earlier), Queensland, Australia.

28°07'S, 153°E

NAME: Desmond Quinlan

DESCRIPTION: He was a 20-year-old lifesaver.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a bright sunny day.

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, December 16, 1950

SEA CONDITIONS: Moderate surf and the water was cloudy.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 yards

DEPTH OF WATER: Eight feet

TIME: 16h15

NARRATIVE: Desmond Quinlan was swimming and "catching shoots" with about 14 other lifesavers. A rolling wave approached and all the lifesavers rode the wave to shore except Bill Wilson and Quinlan. Wilson caught the next wave, leaving Quinlan alone. Wilson was almost on the beach when he looked around to see if Quinlan was with him. Then he heard Quinlan call, "Quick! Shark!" and saw him struggling in the water. He swam to Quinlan who was barely conscious. Frank Griffin joined Wilson and together they brought Quinlan to shore.

INJURY: Fatal. The lifesaver's lower abdomen was severely bitten and his left leg was severed at the thigh.

FIRST AID: He was treated by two Brisbane doctors at the scene: Dr. Geaney and Dr. James Matthews. "It was impossible for him to survive his injuries," writes Coppleson. "He died shortly after they laid him down in the club-house."

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified. Next day three 10-foot sharks were seen cruising about 30 yards seawards of the spot where Quinlan was bitten.

SOURCES: Sydney Morning Herald, December 16, 1950, page 15; R.A. Smith; Gilbert P. Whitley (1951), page 194, cites Herald (Sydney) December 17, 1950; Victor M. Coppleson (1958), pages 94 and 239





DESMOND QUINLAN

Young Lifesaver In Q'land Killed By Shark

BRISBANE, Saturday.—A lifesaver was fatally mauled by a shark less than 50 yards out from the shore at Palm Beach, on the Queensland south coast, at 4.15 this afternoon.

He was Desmond Quinlan, 19, of Browning Street, West End, Brisbane, a member of Pacific Surf Club.

He died in his own surf clubhouse a quarter of an hour later in spite of a doctor's efforts to save him.

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Mate Hears Cry

Three weeks ago almost to the same hour, another lifesaver, Leo Vincent Ryan, 21, was badly mauled by a shark at Burleigh Heads Beach, five miles south.

Quinlan was swimming with a dozen other lifesavers.

Just before the shark attack most of the lifesavers caught a wave to the shore.

Quinlan and one of his club mates, Bill Wilson, 19, of Blacklore Street, Windsor, missed the wave.

"SHARK" CALL

Wilson caught the next wave and was almost ashore when he looked around for Quinlan.

Wilson said later: "I thought he had caught the same wave but just as I looked around to speak to him, I heard him yell out, 'shark' a couple of times and then call out, 'Bill, Bill.'"

Wilson said he could see

Quinlan struggling in the water.

"Some of the boys on shore thought at first that Quinlan had been caught in seaweed," he said.

BROUGHT ASHORE

Wilson was the first to reach Quinlan, who by that time had collapsed.

A few yards behind him another club member and a friend of Quinlan's, Frank Griffin, 21, of The Grange, Brisbane, also entered the water to swim out.

Although the shark might still have been there, Wilson and Griffin picked up Quinlan and brought him ashore unconscious.

Other lifesavers, who had swum out by this time, helped them.

The shark apparently attacked from in front and beneath Quinlan.

Quinlan was shockingly injured.

An ambulance was rushed from Coolangatta, but Quinlan died at about 4.30 p.m.

OTHER VICTIM

Leo Ryan, victim of the attack at Burleigh three weeks ago, is still in hospital.

He had another operation this week—a skin graft. Skin was taken from his back and grafted on to his buttocks where the shark bit a piece out of him.

Ryan's body is encased in plaster to stop him from moving and upsetting the graft.

Ryan has lost one hand and fingers off the other hand.