

**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** **GSF 1952.12.07**

**DATE:** Sunday December 7, 1952

**LOCATION:** The attack took place in the Pacific Ocean off Point Aulone (Lovers Point) at Pacific Grove, Monterey County, California, USA.  
36°37.6'N; 121°54.8'W

**NAME:** Barry Wilson

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 16-year-old male.

### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** The sky was cloudy.

**SEA CONDITIONS:** Underwater visibility was poor, no more than one to two metres, due to runoff from an overnight rainstorm and a heavy plankton bloom. Four hours after the attack, the sea temperature at the bathing beach at the base of Point Aulone was measured at 12.7°C.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Point Aulone is a rocky promontory adjacent to a small concrete breakwater pier. The sea floor falls off sharply from Point Aulone.

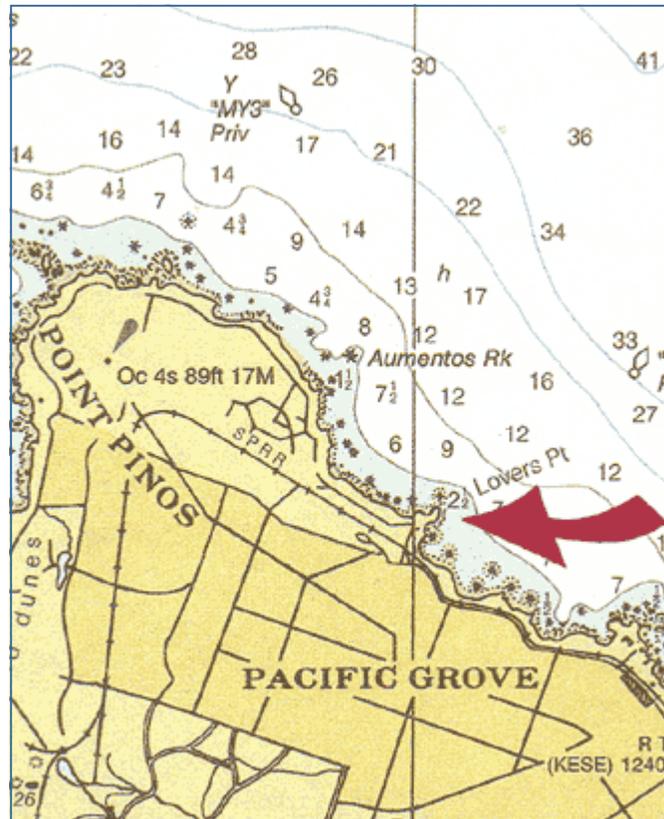
**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 25 metres

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Five fathoms

**TIME:** 14h00

**NARRATIVE:** Barry Wilson was swimming with his friend, 15-year-old Brookner Brady Jr. Brookner was about 15 metres away when the shark struck and started for his friend. As Brookner approached, he took his knife which had been sheathed at his waist, and began stabbing the shark's head in an attempt to drive it away. After the knife was knocked from Brookner's hand in the turbulent water and sank to the seabed, he beat the shark with his hands. The shark finally released Wilson and swam away.

John C. Bassford, standing on the shore in an elevated position on rocks about 30 metres away, had seen Wilson suddenly jerk in the water and recounted: "The youth appeared to be startled and was looking quickly around in all direction." Within seconds, he saw the shark approaching Wilson on the surface, then strike him head-on, raising him above the water surface to the level of his thighs. The boy put both hands on the shark's head and attempted to push it away. The shark rolled to one side, pulling the boy beneath the surface. Then blood welled to the surface, spreading until it was two metres in diameter. The boy suddenly appeared in the blood pool screaming for help, striking wildly at the surface, as the shark's tail briefly slapped the surface of the water in the blood pool.



Bassford shouted to four members of the Sea Otter Dive Club, hoping they could rescue Brady and Wilson. The divers [Sgt. Early Stanley of the 63rd Military Police Platoon at Fort Ord; Robert Shaw of the 313th Criminal Investigation Detachment, Ford Ord; Frank Ambrosio, and officer with the California Highway Patrol in Monterey; and John Poskus, a mathematics and physics teacher at Monterey High School, were 100 to 150 metres from the two boys. They swam to Wilson and placed him in their rubber inner tube in order to support him during the swim to the beach.

As the rescuers were placing Wilson in the inner tube, he suddenly lunged forward, giving Shaw the impression something pushed the boy from behind. Shaw looked down and saw the tail of a large shark disappearing from view. Due to the high surf it took rescuers 15 to 20 minutes to reach the beach. During that time the shark returned at least two more times to Wilson. On one pass the shark grabbed the boy's leg and jerked him around in the inner tube.

From his perch, Bassford saw the shark swim parallel to the swimmer and rescuers, remaining only metres away during the entire swim to the beach. Many times the divers felt turbulence as the shark swam between their legs. The rescuers saw the shark several times and described its movements as deliberate and leisurely.

**INJURY:** Fatal. Upon reaching shore, Wilson was examined by a local physician, R. L. Hane, and pronounced dead. The Monterey County coroner attributed cause of death due to "exsanguination from severance of femoral artery and vein of the right leg." The majority of injuries sustained by Wilson were slashing, razor-like cuts to his legs, consistent with an open-mouthed raking by the shark's upper anterior and lateral teeth. The fatal injury was to the dorsal right thigh where a substantial amount of tissue was removed by the shark. A singular triangular tooth impression was seen on the dorsal surface of the inner right thigh above the knee.

**SPECIES:** The injuries were compatible to the jaw dimensions of a white shark, four metres in length.

**SOURCE:** Rolf L. Bolin (1954) Report on a fatal attack by a shark. *Pacific Science* 8 (1): 105-108

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Ralph Collier