

ACTIVITY: Being towed by another swimmer

CASE: [GSF 1957.04.28](#)

DATE: Sunday April 28, 1957

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean about three kilometres north of Morro Rock at 35th Street, Atascadero Beach, San Luis Obispo County, California, USA.
35°24.2'N; 120°52.5'W

NAME: Peter Savino

DESCRIPTION: He was a 25-year-old male from Brooklyn, New York.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, April 29, 1957

WEATHER: It was described by one of Savino's companion as "a very warm, sunny day."

TIME: 13h30

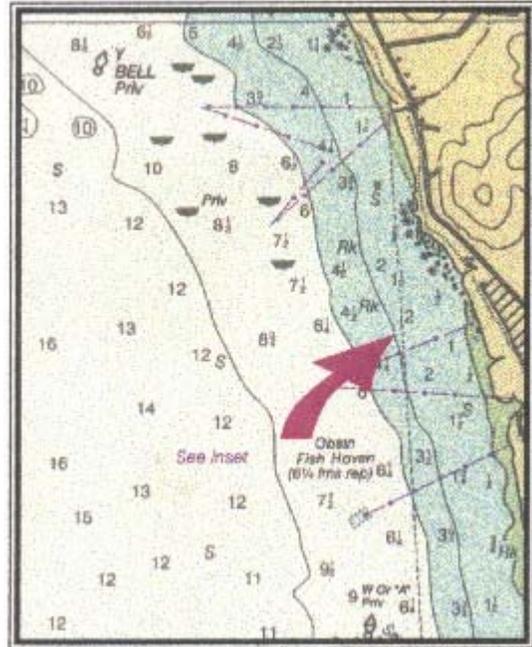
NARRATIVE: Peter Savino was swimming with fellow California Polytechnic Institute student 22-year-old Daniel Hogan. Savino and Hogan were accompanied by 10 to 12 other student acquaintances for an early-afternoon ocean swim.

The two swimmers encountered a very strongly ebbing tide that carried them 300 to 400 meters out to sea from their original location, which had been about 50 metres from the beach. They decided it would be best to head back to shore before they were swept out to sea any farther. Shortly after beginning their swim back toward shore, Savino had become exhausted from fighting the current and was being towed by his friend. Hogan recounted the events of the attack to Deputy Sheriffs Don C. Miller and Henry Karagard as follows:

"Pete had gotten tired and was hanging onto my shoulder when there was a sudden swirl of water and he disappeared over the top of a big wave. I heard him yell, 'Something really big hit me,' and I saw him raise an arm out of the water that was all bloody. I saw the shark hit him. I said, 'Come on, let's get out of here,' because I knew the blood would bring the shark back. I saw the shark, it boiled the water around us and then it all got confused, but I saw the shark. It carried Pete over a big wave. I started swimming toward shore and Pete was right behind me. The next time I glanced back he was gone."

Realizing nothing could be done, Hogan continued to the beach and informed classmate Jerald Frank of the tragedy. Frank called a local mortuary, which then notified the sheriff's office and the U. S. Coast Guard station in Morro Bay.

The USCG dispatched the cutter *Alert*, which, upon arriving on the scene, lowered a 6.5-meter launch under the command of Executive Officer James C. Knight. Within mere minutes of beginning their search for the missing swimmer, Knight reported, "We located a shark as long as our launch. After making a quick trip back to the *Alert* for firearms we returned to the area where we had last seen the shark, but it was gone." Knight was positive



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that the shark observed was not a basking shark, *Cetorhinus maximus*, as was reported in several newspaper accounts of the attack. Knight also reported sighting several smaller blue sharks in the search area. The search resumed the following day, but was unsuccessful.

INJURY: Fatal. Savino's body was never recovered.

SPECIES: It is not possible to unequivocally determine the species of shark responsible for this incident. The shark's length, about six metres, probably precluded most untrained observers in the 1950s from considering any species of shark except a basking Shark. However, Executive Officer Knight was familiar with basking sharks and was positive that the shark he observed was not this species. There are some striking similarities between this case and Robert Pamperin's fatal white shark attack in 1959. A large white shark is highly suspect in Peter Savino's fatal attack.

SOURCE: Shark Research Committee, http://www.sharkresearchcommittee.com/unprovoked_swimmer.htm

INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier