



ACTIVITY: Skin diving

CASE: GSAF 1957.12.26 / SA-120

DATE: Thursday December 26, 1957

LOCATION: The accident occurred at Port Edward, in front of Splash Rock. Port Edward is 160 kilometres south-west of Durban on the KwaZulu-Natal coast of South Africa.

$31^{\circ}02,9'S, 30^{\circ}13,9'E$

NAME: Donald Webster

DESCRIPTION: The diver was a 20-year old male.

BOAT: Aluminum ski-boat *Wildboar* skippered by Mr. Stouffel Fourie.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, December 29, 1957

ENVIRONMENT: The incident occurred in an area of deep water close to shore where a large marlin had recently been landed. The press reported that a group of about 20 sharks were seen off nearby Scottburgh by shark patrol aircraft.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Two kilometres

DEPTH: Nine metres

TIME: 10h30

NARRATIVE: Little is known about the circumstances of this incident. According to press reports Donald



Webster was on the boat when he saw a large fish in the water. Minutes after he entered the water a shark, possibly the large fish he had seen, bit his head. The shark released him and surfaced next to the boat.

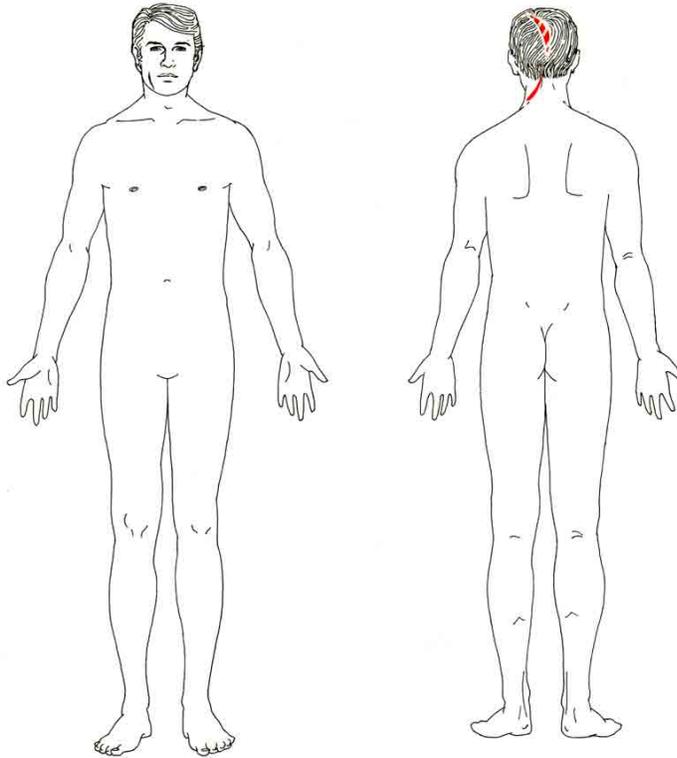
INJURY: The diver sustained a 12,7-centimetre gash on his head and his neck was lacerated.

FIRST AID: Fourie managed to get the diver back on board the boat and went to shore, but it is not known what first aid was administered. The diver was rushed to Port Shepstone Hospital, 56 kilometres away, in a private car.

TREATMENT: Fifty stitches were required to close Webster's wounds and he remained in the hospital for a week.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified

SOURCES: Owen Ellis; Mrs. Fourie; Cape Argus, December 26, 1957; Natal Mercury, December 27, 1957.



Sharks Barracouta

27 DEC 1957
Attacks

Skin-Diver

MR. DONALD WEBSTER, a Johannesburg skin-diver, was attacked and bitten on the head and neck by a barracouta while he was swimming underwater off the Port Edward shore yesterday morning.

He is alive to tell the tale today only because of his face mask and breathing apparatus which took much of the force of the fish's razor-like teeth.

Nevertheless, he was left with a five-inch gash on the back of his head. He was rushed to Port Shepstone Hospital, where the wound was stitched.

Mr. Webster was on holiday from Johannesburg. His exact address is not yet known.

WAS FISHING

"The Natal Mercury" was told yesterday that he had been fishing from a ski-boat with Mr. J. D. Fourie, the owner of the boat, who has a holiday cottage at Port Edward.

They were sailing in about 30ft. of water when Mr. Fourie saw Mr. Webster slip over the side of the ski—presumably to investigate some fish which had just passed under the vessel.

He was no sooner in the water than a fish—believed to be a barracouta—struck at his head. Fortunately Mr. Webster was wearing his skin-diver's breathing apparatus and the metal-work protected him to some degree.

HAULED BACK

His companion, Mr. Fourie, hauled him back on the ski-boat and took him ashore. From there he was rushed to Port Shepstone Hospital, about 35 miles away. He had about 50 stitches put in the wound.

His condition yesterday evening was described by the hospital authorities as "satisfactory" and "as well as can be expected." It is understood he may be all up within a week.

50 STITCHES AFTER SEA ATTACK

26 DEC 1957

The Argus Correspondent

DURBAN, Thursday.—A 20-year-old Johannesburg skin-diver, a Mr. Webster, had nearly 50 stitches put into wounds on the back of his head and neck at the Port Shepstone hospital to-day.

He had been bitten in the sea at Port Edward by what is believed to have been a small-mouthed fish—probably barracouta.

Meanwhile bathers are cautiously entering the sea all along the Natal South Coast after three shark attacks last week.

TURNED ON HIM

Mr. Webster was attacked when he dived into the sea after seeing a large fish in the water below his boat. The fish is thought to have turned on him in fright and savaged him.

He was helped from the water by a friend who was also skin-diving and was taken to the Port Shepstone hospital.

SHARK-SPOTTING RUNS

One private aircraft made shark-spotting runs up and down the coast early to-day and this afternoon.

There will be two aircraft on the coast to-morrow, making circular runs between St. Michael's-on-Sea and Southbroom.

To-day a big group of about 20 sharks were seen in the sea just south of Scottburgh.