

**ACTIVITY:** Splashing in the surf

**CASE:** [GSAF 1963.12.20.a](#) / SA-170

**DATE:** Friday December 20, 1963

**LOCATION:** The incident took place on an isolated beach 275 metres north of the Umvoti River mouth. The river enters the sea 61 kilometres northeast of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

*29°23,5'S, 31°19,9'E*

**NAME:** Matanguza Mzize

**DESCRIPTION:** The swimmer, a 15-year-old black male, was 1,49 metres tall and weighed 58,9 kilograms. He was naked when he was attacked by the shark. Mzize was a herdboyc employed on a nearby farm.



## BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** The day was cloudy, humid and very hot. The temperature was 30,5°C, winds varied from light to moderate south-easterly to northeasterly and the barometric pressure was 29,42 inches. That night the area from Eshowe to Durban experienced severe storms, and next morning at 04h20 a cyclone cut a 152-metre swath through Durban.

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, December 23, 1963

**SEA CONDITIONS:** Although several rivers in KwaZulu-Natal were reported to be in flood, apparently the Umvoti River was not; the sea was said to be "clear". Water temperature was 26°C, and low tide was at 12h10.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Anglers reported skates and sand sharks were moving inshore near Stanger and next day thousands of bluebottles were driven close to shore at Durban; by noon 500 people had been treated for stings and several were taken to Addington Hospital.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** Three metres

**DEPTH:** 0,6 to one metre

**TIME:** 12h40

**NARRATIVE:** Matanguza Mzize was splashing in the surf with four companions: 16-year-old Gcwesa and three others. "We were standing in a line when we saw the shark's fin," said Gcwesa, "It passed three of us, bit [Mzize] on the right calf and came clear of the water." Mzize screamed and his companions ran to the beach. They saw the shark turn and make a second strike on Mzize who had fallen in the water; the shark bit his right arm, severing it below the elbow. The shark made a frenzied attack: it bit the boy at least two more times, mauling the right section of his abdomen and then his chest. "It seized him and shook him like a dog," said Gcwesa.

"A short while later the waves washed Mzize ashore, but when we got to him he was dead." One of the boys ran 1,6 kilometres to the house of Mr R. Laatz, Section Manager of the Gledhow Sugar Mills who confirmed, when he reached the beach, that the young boy was dead.

**INJURY:** Mzize's right calf was removed by the shark during the initial strike. When he bent down and attempted to beat the shark away with his right hand the shark seized his right arm above the elbow joint, avulsing the joint by hyper-extending it and removing the forearm and hand. The swimmer collapsed into the surf, and the shark appeared to feed upon the right axilla and the wall of the right chest and abdomen. The wounds were clean-cut with areas of coarse serration caused by flat triangular teeth. Lesions on the skin of the abdomen were caused by individual teeth and were flattened and triangular in shape. No tooth fragments were recovered.

The post-mortem examination was conducted at the Provincial Hospital Mortuary in Stanger by Dr G. Boyes. The following report was made by G.D. Campbell:

1. **RIGHT LEG -**

a. Skin lesions: It was apparent from the skin edges that this had been a determined and serious onslaught. In no other incident have we seen such cleanly-cut skin edges, especially on the fibular side. For 25 centimetres of the leg, the only skin that was left was that overlying the subcutaneous border of the tibia; in other words, the shark could hardly have taken more skin, short of removing part of the tibia itself. There were three skin lesions on the posterior of the thigh about half-way between the hip and knee joints, but it is difficult to determine if these were caused when the shark bit the leg, or when the shark took the boy's arm.

b. Muscle injury: The bulk of the calf muscle had been removed. The edges of the muscle were retracted, but they had been cleanly cut as if with a knife. The tibial artery had been severed.

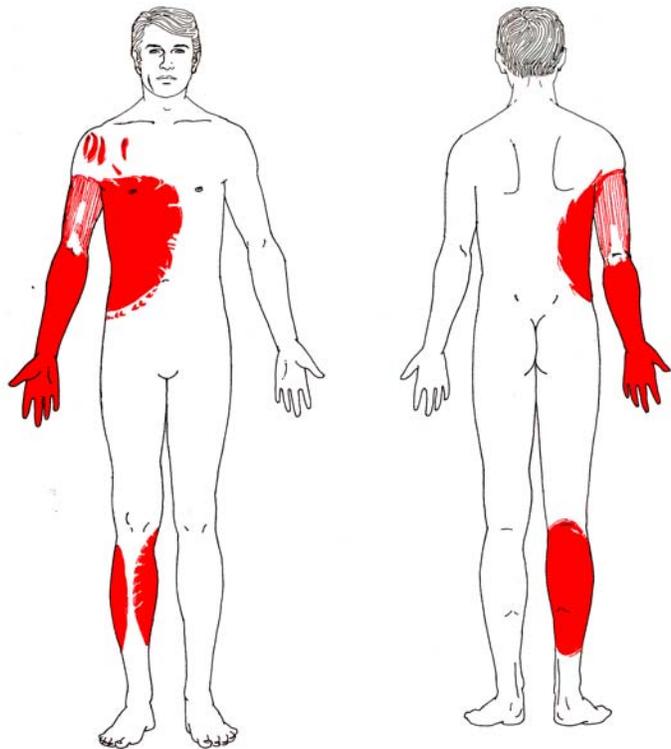
c. Bony injury: 4/5ths of the fibula was removed from a point just distal to the head of the fibula. The fibula had been cleanly severed; no tooth fragments were found, nor were there any scratches on the bone which may have been caused by the teeth of the shark.

2. **RIGHT ARM -**

a. Skin lesions: The arm was avulsed at the elbow joint. It appears that the shark initially gripped the arm half-way between the shoulder and the elbow joint, and as the swimmer quickly and forcefully pulled his arm away the teeth of the shark created longitudinal tears about eight centimetres in length in the swimmer's skin and muscles. The close proximity of these lesions indicates that the shark had a transverse grip on the arm with its lateral teeth.

b. Muscle Injuries: Virtually all of the biceps and about half of the triceps on the radial side had been torn off. This was not a clean-cut, and it is in keeping with the tearing nature of this injury postulated in the preceding paragraphs.

c. Bony Injuries: The elbow joint had been avulsed with very great force; the whole



olecranon remained in situ, which strongly suggested that the joint was avulsed by hyperextension. There were extensive score and groove marks on the shaft of the humerus, and most of the more prominent articular cartilage had been shorn off the lower end of the humerus. Both epicondyles had been removed.

### 3. *RIGHT AXILLA, RIGHT ABDOMINAL WALL and RIGHT CHEST WALL* -

a. Skin Injuries: There was no evidence of a "bump" type injury as described by Coppleson. The skin had been removed from a large area in the form of an ellipsoid which stretched from the following points: - the tip of the right shoulder, the supra-sternal notch (there was a lesion overlying the supra-scapular area where the skin had been ripped for about five centimetres, completely distinct from the large skin defect itself), the left nipple, the rib margin at about the ninth costal cartilage, then it swept across and slightly down the abdominal wall to a point in the right mid-axillary line, half-way between the lower border of the ribs and the iliac crest. The wound extended to the posterior axillary fold on the right side to the posterior part of the shoulder joint, and to the tip of the right shoulder. This skin defect had remarkable clean-cut edges especially in the right upper abdominal region.

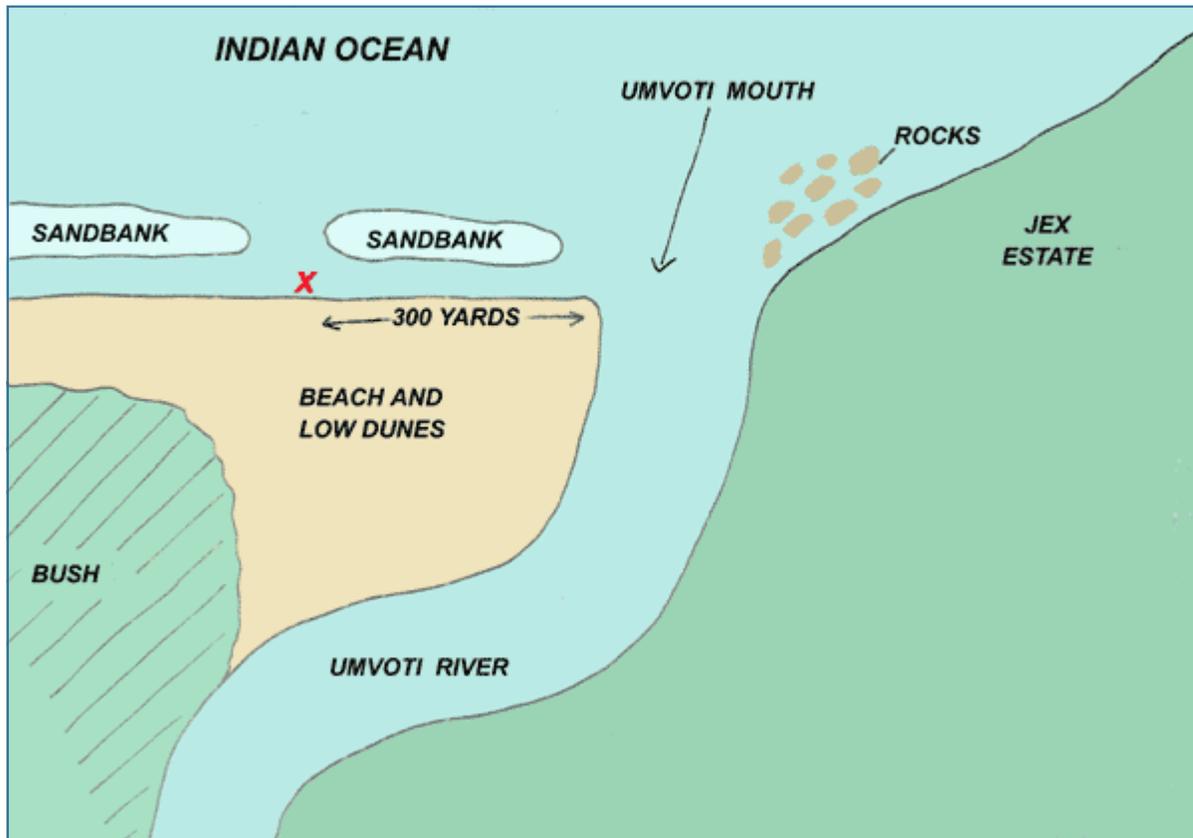
b. Muscle and Abdominal wall Injuries: The entire stomach (which was perforated), about half of the transverse meso-colon, and a large amount of small gut, was extruded through a large defect in the right upper abdominal wall. Most of the ribs of the right side of the chest, and almost all the sternum apart from a small part of the xiphisternum, and the sternal ends of about four ribs on the left of the chest had been cleanly removed. The heart and pericardium were visible, and both right and left lungs had collapsed, but neither pericardium nor lungs had been lacerated by the shark. The defect in the flank did not really extend more posteriorly than the mid-axillary line. This is a very large wound and gives ample support to the eyewitness accounts that the shark held and shook the swimmer for some time.

4. *X-RAY EVIDENCE* - Although the wounds were heavily contaminated with sand the body was X-rayed before it was hosed down in the hope that some tooth fragments might be identified and recovered. The sand, which was composed of lead and calcium salts, somewhat obscured the tissues. However, sharks' teeth are radio-opaque and no teeth or fragments were visible on any of the X-rays of the right leg, the right chest and abdomen, or in the remains of the right arm.

**CONCLUSION** - If the only wounds sustained by Mzize were those on the right leg, he might have survived with prompt first aid, but his companions were terrified and confused young boys and, under the circumstances, he could well have succumbed. The opening of the thoracic cage and removal of the arm, however, combined with the injuries to the right leg, resulted in a mortal injury; he would not have survived even if prompt medical care had been available on site.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Witnesses saw the shark clearly; they described it as grey-coloured with a large head and large dorsal fin. They estimated its total length to be 1,8 to 2 metres. Dr David Davies established that the shark had a jaw width of 35,5 centimetres and believed it was a 136- to 181-kilogram Zambesi shark.

**CASE INVESTIGATORS:** Dr. G. D. Campbell; Dr. David Davies; Marie Levine



### **SHARK KILLS YOUTH**

**DURBAN, South Africa (UPI)**  
—A 15-year-old African youth died Friday of wounds after being attacked by a shark at the mouth of the Uvoti River, 50 miles north of Durban, it was reported today.

*Great Bend Tribune, December 23, 1963, page*

# Boy (15) Dies In North Coast Shark Attack

21 DEC 1963 "Mercury" Reporter 21 DEC 1963

**A 15-YEAR-OLD Pondo herdboys died yesterday afternoon after he had been mauled by a shark while bathing in knee-deep water on an isolated beach 46 miles north of Durban.**

The youth, Manganquza, was attacked while he was frolicking with three companions 300 yards from the Umvoti River mouth, near Stanger.

As the 6ft. shark bit him on the right leg it lifted him clear of the water. In a second attack

it inflicted abdominal and chest wounds.

The beach is not normally used by holidaymakers — thousands of whom are now cramming Natal's resorts — and has no nets.

Dr. David Davies, Director of the Oceanographic Research Institute, Durban, said last night that from information he had received the shark was possibly of the Zambesi River type — a shark already known to have attacked several bathers in Natal waters.

The full story of the fatal attack was told yesterday by 16-year-old Gcwesa, one of Manganquza's companions.

## SAW THE FIN

"About 12.30 p.m." he said, "four of us decided to go for a swim while we allowed the mules to graze. We were all naked. We kept jumping over the waves in the knee-deep water.

"We were standing in a line when we saw the big shark's fin sticking out of the water.

"It passed three of us and bit Manganquza on the right calf. The shark came clear of the water—its head was large.

"Manganquza fell over. The water turned red. As he rolled over in the waves he shouted 'Oh Ma, Oh Ma.'

"We all ran out of the water and when I turned round I saw the shark come back again. It seized him and shook him like a dog.

"A short while later the waves washed him ashore. When we got to him he was dead."

## RAN A MILE

One of the herdboys ran a mile to the house of Mr. R. Laatz, a section manager of the Gledhow sugar mills, who confirmed, when he reached the beach, that the youth was dead.

Manganquza was employed by Mr. Ewart O'Connor, section manager of a neighbouring farm.

Mr. Ivan Logan, who has lived in the Stanger area since 1900, said yesterday that it was the first attack he had heard of in that area.

The last shark attack on the Natal coast was on April 17 this year, when 15-year-old Errol



**GCWESA**, a 16-year-old herdboys who saw the shark attack, said: "The shark seized him and shook him like a dog."

Fourie, of Johannesburg, was bitten on the buttocks while swimming at Inyoni Rocks. His injuries were not serious.

There was a shark attack too in Cape waters yesterday. Mr. C. G. Coetzee, of Discovery, on the Rand, was taken to the Mosse Bay hospital after he had been bitten on the foot while skin diving at Hartenbos. His condition is not serious.