ACTIVITY: Swimming
CASE: GSAF 1965.02.14 / SA-187
DATE: Sunday February 14, 1965
LOCATION: The attack took place in the Indian Ocean, 1.6 kilometres north of the Amatikulu River mouth, directly in front of “The Casuarinas”. Amatikulu is 104 kilometres northeast of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. 29°06.4’S, 31°37.3’E

NAME: Geoffrey Walter Black
DESCRIPTION: The swimmer, a 25-year-old male, was 1.83 metres tall and weighed 75 kilograms. He was fair-haired, tanned, and clad in brown swimming trunks. He wore no jewelry and had no injuries before the incident.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The day was hot and sunny, and there was a southerly breeze.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, February 16, 1965

SEA CONDITIONS: A slight north-to-south current was running, but the sea was relatively calm. The water was slightly discoloured and turbid, the tide was outgoing, and a channel was present.

ENVIRONMENT: The Amatigulu and Nyoni Rivers empty into a common estuary which is usually open. Two large skates had been caught by anglers on the morning of the incident.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 30 to 40 metres
DEPTH: Two metres
TIME: 15h00 - 15h45

NARRATIVE: Geoffrey Black had been in the water for an hour. He was just beyond the breaker zone and was 20 metres from another bather, R. Suhr. Black was in the backwash of a wave that had just broken and was floating, paddling with his hands, facing seaward. The shark approached from his left, bit into his right thigh and dragged him beneath the surface of the water. He opened his eyes underwater, saw the shark and attempted to free himself. The shark shook its head and, as Black forced his right arm down the shark's mouth, the shark's teeth lacerated his arm and severed several tendons. Black shot to the surface and shouted for help. Suhr was very shortsighted but saw Black pulled underwater and swam to him. When Suhr reached him he grabbed him under the right arm and saw the white belly of the shark. Suhr attempted to pull Black towards the beach but thought the shark was still holding him because he couldn't be moved. Apparently during the rescue, the shark made a second strike on Black, lacerating his abdomen and right buttock.

Then the shark released Black, and Suhr was able to move Black towards shore. He swam with Black on his back, retaining his grip on his right arm, swimming with his legs and left

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arm, and caught two swells to the beach. Suhr commented on Black's courage and said that he did not cling to him or hamper him in any way as he brought him ashore.

**INJURY:** Black's arms, abdomen, right buttock, right thigh and left hand were mauled. He had lost muscle and tissue from his right thigh. His left hand was severely lacerated and all tendons were severed.

**FIRST AID:** Reports are conflicting: one states that Black was not stabilized on the beach but another says that he rested on the beach for 30 minutes. Black was carried by his friends to the back of a Landrover where a tourniquet was applied to his arm. He traveled in the vehicle for nine to 13 kilometres until met on the road by Dr Fourie who administered plasma and medications. At 17h30 he was transferred to an ambulance. When Black reached Eshowe Hospital at 18h15 his blood pressure was 80/35.

**TREATMENT:** At the hospital, surgical repair of the patient's injuries was performed by Drs T. McHugh and I. Gregory. The patient spent 13 weeks in Eshowe Hospital.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Black saw the head and eyes of the shark; he estimated that the shark was 1.8 metres in length and weighed about 136 kilograms. The wounds indicated that the shark had serrated teeth.

**COMMENT:** Black made a full recovery and in February 1968 he came second in the Natal Pro-Am Golf Tournament.

**CASE INVESTIGATORS:** T. McHugh; A. Heydorn; Jeanette. D'Aubrey and P.H. Jacques; Tim Wallett; Marie Levine

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