

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** GSAF 1988.01.27

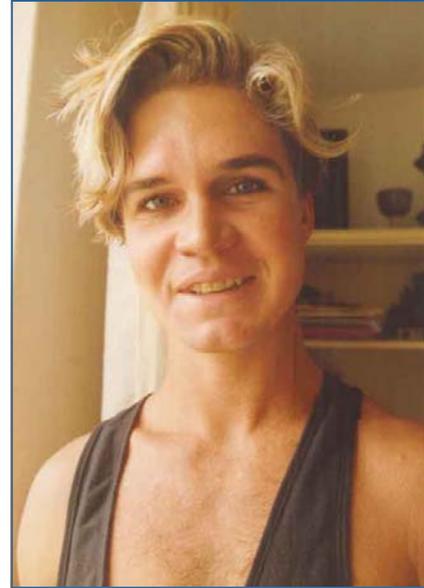
**DATE:** Wednesday January 27, 1988

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at The Wedge, a popular surfing spot near the old West Street Pier in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The Wedge is located about two kilometers [1.2 miles] north of the harbour entrance.

**NAME:** Charles Beresford Everitt

**DESCRIPTION:** The surfer, a 22-year-old male, is 1.77 metres [5'7"] tall and weighs 71 kilograms [156 lbs]. He was clad in a five millimeter [1/2"] ankle-length grey and blue wetsuit, and wore a luminous green leash around his right ankle. The surfer had no injuries before entering the water.

**SURFBOARD:** The surfboard, a 1.9-metre [6'2"] white tri-fin manufactured by Safari, had a rainbow-coloured green, blue and yellow upper-surface, a white under-surface, and three purple fins.



*Charles Beresford Everitt*

## **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** The sky was sunny, and there was no wind.

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, January 25, 1988

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea was glassy with two-metre visibility, sea temperature was about 24°C [75.2°F], and the tide was incoming.

**CONDITION OF THE SHARK NETS:** The shark nets were in good order and no sharks were caught on the morning of the incident.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** The incident took place 80 metres from the beach and 30 metres north of the pier.

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Three metres

**TIME:** 06h30

**NARRATIVE:** When Charles Everitt and two friends entered the water at 05h30, two other surfers warned them that a shark had been seen in the area, and about ten minutes before the incident fish were seen jumping at the backline of breakers. Everitt was shorewards of the shark nets and had just reached backline when the incident occurred. He was facing seawards and straddling his board; he was in a sitting position, paddling with his hands and moving his legs slightly to maintain his position. Suddenly something struck his right calf and toppled him into the water. "I saw blood in the water then put my finger right into the wound through the hole in my wetsuit," said Everitt, "it was a strange numb feeling." He remounted his board, shouted a warning to his friends, and paddled, then caught a swell to shore.

**INJURY:** The teeth of the upper jaw resulted in a 10 x 5 cm wound which penetrated to the bone. No photographs were taken prior to surgery and all but three small triangular toothmarks made by the teeth of the lower jaw were obliterated by the sutures.

**DAMAGE TO SURFBOARD:** No damage.

**FIRST AID:** Shortly after the surfers reached the beach they took Everitt to Addington Hospital in their car.

**TREATMENT:** The surfer was treated by Dr. Morris in casualty and his wound was sutured by Dr. Hahn. He remained in the hospital for several days. Recovery was complete.

**SPECIES:** Not identified. The surfer did not see a shark and the wound was not photographed before repair. The three small tooth impressions on the surfer's calf were caused by a marine animal, possibly a small shark or a gamefish. The curvature of the wound indicates the incident did not involve a barracuda.

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Marie Levine

**‘Shark’ victim**  
1.2.88  
**Mercury Reporter**

MR ‘Berry’ Everitt, attacked by what he thought was a shark while surfing near the old West Street pier last week, has been discharged from Addington Hospital.

Mr Everitt, 22, was knocked off his surfboard and his left calf was cut to the bone though his wetsuit.

The Sharks Board is still investigating.



# Attack on surfer puzzles shark experts

*Natal Mercury - 30.1.88.*

By Wendy Knowler

SHARKS Board scientists are still not certain it was a shark which knocked Durban surfer 'Berry' Everitt off his board and caused a deep gash in his leg at the Wedge this week.

A spokesman told the Mercury he was 'none the wiser' after having inspected a photograph taken of the 10 cm by 5 cm bone-deep wound shortly after 22-year-old Mr Everitt was admitted on Wednesday.

'All we do know is whatever caused it was very sharp, but whether it was a shark is debatable,' he said.

He said there were 'puncture marks' in the surfer's wetsuit but he was not sure they were teeth marks.

Beach office staff had reported a lot of debris, including pylons, where the incident occurred, he said, and two Sharks Board divers were sent to see if that could have had something to do

with the injury, but poor conditions prevented the dive from taking place.

Mr Everitt's surfboard would be examined next week, said the spokesman, although he believed there were no marks on it.

Speaking from Addington Hospital, Mr Everitt said although he could not be sure he was bitten by a shark, he was certain debris wasn't responsible.

'I was sitting still on my board and it was dead calm — how could a piece of corrugated iron or something fly up, knock me off my board and stab me in the leg?

'Visibility was about 2 m and there was no debris at all. No, it was definitely something alive.'

Mr Everitt, an administrative assistant and part-time student, said his leg was still painful as he was trying to stretch the muscle, but hospital staff felt he wasn't quite ready to go home yet.

# Surfer believes he was bitten by shark

*Natal Mercury - 29 1 88.*

A DURBAN man has been attacked by what he believes was a shark about 20 m from the end of the old West Street pier inside the shark nets.

Mr 'Berry' Everitt, 22, of Botanic Gardens Road, is recovering in Durban's Addington Hospital after he was knocked off his surfboard and



Wendy Knowler

his left calf was bitten to the bone through his wetsuit while surfing early on Wednesday.

Speaking from his hospital bed last night he said that soon after he and two friends had paddled out to the surfing spot known as The Wedge about 5.30 a.m., two other surfers — whom they had previously seen looking out to sea from the pier — told them they had seen a shark but it had gone.

'About 40 minutes later they said it was back but I saw

nothing and actually joked about it, pointing to the water and saying to my friends "what's that — it's coming to get you".'

'A short while later I had paddled back out to the backline and was sitting on my board when I was knocked off into the water and felt something grab my leg. I saw blood in the water then put my finger right into the wound through the hole in my wetsuit — it was a strange numb feeling,' he said.

Having got back on to his surfboard with his legs well out of the water, he paddled furiously to shore, shouting to his friends. Back on the beach, they got him into a car and drove him to nearby Addington Hospital.

A Sharks Board employee visited Mr Everitt yesterday but was unable to look at the 10 cm by 5 cm wound going down to the bone, as it was already stitched up and bandaged.

He did take the surfer's wetsuit, with clearly visible teethmarks, for analysis.

A Sharks Board spokesman told the Mercury he could not say for certain a shark had been responsible for the 'injury' but would be able to do so 'in a few days' time.

The spokesman added he was 'racking his brains' to work out what could have caused the injury because 'a deep narrow gash like that is atypical of any shark encounter I've ever investigated'.

Mr Everitt said he was not prepared to 'put his head on a block' and say he was bitten by a shark because he did not see a shark at any stage. A swell between him and his friends also prevented them from seeing the actual attack.

'But logically I would say it was a shark,' he said.

The incident has by no means put him off surfing: 'As soon as I'm better and my leg is flexible again, I'll be back in the water — hopefully within three weeks'.

'This type of thing happens so seldom — people shouldn't start panicking about shark attacks now.'

● There have not been any shark attacks inside the nets off Durban's beaches since the installation of the nets.

# Mystery over what bit surfer off Durban

2.2.88

## Mercury Reporter

A MYSTERY marine animal which was not a shark was responsible for the attack on surfer 'Berry' Everitt, who was bitten while surfing off Durban last week.

A spokesman for the Natal Sharks Board said yesterday a 'marine animal' was responsible, but the teeth marks were not consistent with those of a shark. However, they intend analysing Mr Everitt's surfboard for further clues.

Mr Everitt is back at work after being discharged from hospital on Saturday and said he hopes to be surfing by next week.

Meanwhile, bathing was banned or restricted at 11 Natal beaches yesterday after shark nets were tangled by rough seas in the wake of Cyclone Doaza.

The chief shark control officer of the Natal Sharks Board, Mr Jeff McKay, said rough sea had prevented their boats from staying out long enough to repair nets yesterday, 'but, weather permitting, nets will be cleared today and beaches opened by this afternoon'.

Beaches affected are Richards Bay, Tinley Manor, Umhlanga, Karridene, Scottburgh, Umtentweni and all Durban's northern beaches from Battery Beach to the mouth of the Umgeni River.

A spokesman for the Weather Bureau said Doaza was moving rapidly south-east and would have no further effect on Durban's weather. The 2 m swell at the beachfront was expected to drop by today, he said.