

Tenth Island



ACTIVITY: Scuba diving

CASE: GSAF 1993.06.05

DATE: Saturday June 5, 1993

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Bass Strait at 'Barrenjoey' seal colony, Tenth Island, Tasmania, Australia.
 $40^{\circ}56'39.61''S$, $146^{\circ}59'06.35''E$

NAME: Therese (Terry) Cartwright

DESCRIPTION: She was a 35-year-old female from Exeter and an experienced diver. She was wearing a 7 mm thick neoprene two-piece wetsuit (longjohns and hooded jacket), yellow swim fins and a yellow air cylinder. Although she hadn't been in the water for more than a year, she was physically active. She was the mother of six-year-old quadruplets (Sarah, Thomas, James and Luke) and an 11-month son (Paul), all of whom were on the boat.

BOAT: The support boat was the Australian Maritime College vessel *Riveresco*, skippered by her husband, Ian Cartwright who was the Director of Fisheries and Environment at the college.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a fine, sunny winter morning — "ideal weather".

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, June 4, 1993

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was dead calm. The water was cold, but clear and the underwater visibility was good.

ENVIRONMENT: Tenth Island is a bleak 500-metre-wide rocky outcrop with a large colony of Australian fur seals located about 15 nautical miles of the coast of George Town.

DEPTH: Eight metres

TIME: 10h55



NARRATIVE: The boat anchored in a 15-metre-deep channel about 150 metres from shore on the southern side of the island. On board the boat were the boat's crew and a group of divers including Stephen Eayrs, a fisheries lecturer at the college, Josephine Osborne and Terry Cartwright. Terry was the second diver to enter the water. She had problems adjusting her equipment and was lagging behind the others as they snorkeled 20 metres on the surface toward the island. The others on the boat instructed her to keep up with the group. The water was alive with seals and seals were swimming below the divers as they began their descent.

Terry was having problems equalizing her ears and was halfway to the bottom when a white shark grabbed her, hitting her with tremendous force and clamping her torso in its mouth. The seals vanished. The divers went a few metres deeper and hid out in some rocks. The shark released the body, then returned and took it to deeper water. After a time, the divers made their way to the island, surfaced and hailed the *Riveresco*. Aware only that there was some emergency, Ian Cartwright and crewman Ian Rinkin rowed a 3.3-metre dinghy to the island. Terry's husband, although completely distraught when told the news, took charge, searched the area for a half-hour and radioed Bell Bay for help. A sea and air search was initiated, but police divers were not deployed because a pod of at least five orcas, *Orcinus orca*, were spotted a nautical mile northwest of Tenth Island. During the afternoon pieces of a wetsuit and a human leg still wearing a yellow fin were recovered about a kilometre from the incident site. Nothing else was ever found.

INJURY: Fatal

SPECIES INVOLVED: White shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, about 15 feet in length. There were no attempts to catch the shark. "You can spend a lot of time and money trying to catch the shark and not know if it was the one," said Inspector Alan Gall of George Town police. "It's his environment, and it's us who are trespassing."

COMMENT: Seals are a major component of the diet of white sharks over three metres in length. Australian seal pups on Tenth Island take to the sea on their own during June and July and white sharks take advantage of the pups inexperience in the water. Terry Cartwright, briefly alone and suspended in midwater, appeared as prey and the shark responded accordingly. In this light, a shark 'attack' can be seen for what it actually is, an accident with cause and effect, but devoid of premeditation or malice.

SOURCES: Orlando Sentinel, June 12, 1993, page A13
Chris Black (2010) *White Pointer South*, pages 167-169

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Chris Black



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