

**ACTIVITY:** Spearfishing

**CASE:** GSAF 1994.04.02

**DATE:** Saturday April 2, 1994

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Indian Ocean on Skipskop Reef, about two nautical miles off Arniston, Western Cape Province, South Africa. Arniston is located 35 kilometres [21.7 miles] northeast of Cape Agulhas, the southernmost tip of the African continent.  
34°37.6'S, 20°21'E

**NAME:** Gabriel Francois de Wet Ries

**DESCRIPTION:** The diver was a 29-year-old male. He was wearing a black wetsuit and hood, and carried a speargun.

**BOAT:** The divers' support boat, *Georgie*, was skippered by Tommy Kruger, Bonita Dive Club, Strand, False Bay, South Africa.



*Damage to the diver's hood*

**BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Third Quarter, April 3, 1994

**SEA CONDITIONS:** Diving conditions were “good” and a “thermo-cloud existed to an approximate depth of three metres”.

**ENVIRONMENT:** The diver was hunting yellowtail, *Seriola lalandi*.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** Two nautical miles

**DEPTH:** 18 metres

**TIME:** Between 15h00 and 16h10

**NARRATIVE:** De Wet Ries was spearfishing when he suddenly disappeared. A search of the area resulted in the recovery of only his speargun's handgrip and barrel.

Initially it was thought that the diver suffered a shallow water blackout and drowned, but pieces of the hood, shoulder and breast of a wetsuit similar to that worn by the missing diver were subsequently recovered and handed over to the police.

**INJURY:** Forensic examination indicated the cuts to the spearfisherman's hood were made by a white shark, but it could not be determined if the spearfisherman was alive or dead when his hood was bitten. However, based upon the bite pattern, it appeared that someone (presumably the spearfisherman) was wearing the hood when it was bitten by the shark. If the diver was alive when the shark bit the wetsuit hood, the resulting injuries would have been fatal.

**SPECIES:** White shark

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Dr. Leonard J.V. Compagno, Shark Research Center

Cape Times  
Wed  
13/4/94

# Remains

# of diving suit found

Staff Reporter

THE tattered remains of a diving suit, possibly belonging to missing Somerset West scuba diver Mr De Wet Ries, have been found near Arniston (Waenhuiskrans).

The remnants of the suit consisted of a diver's hood and part of the shoulder and were covered in bite marks.

Detective Sergeant George Smal of the Bre-

dadorp police station said the marks looked like those caused by a shark. He said the hood was found at Skipskop near the small southern Cape coastal resort by a fisherman on Monday morning. A small anchor with a piece of rope attached was found nearby.

Mr Ries went missing on April 2 while diving with friends in the vicinity of Skipskop. Soon after he dived, his speargun with the spear missing and the forepart broken off was recovered by his diving companions.

Friends claimed they had to fight off the aggressive crew of a fishing vessel

## Hood, shoulder 'covered in bite marks'



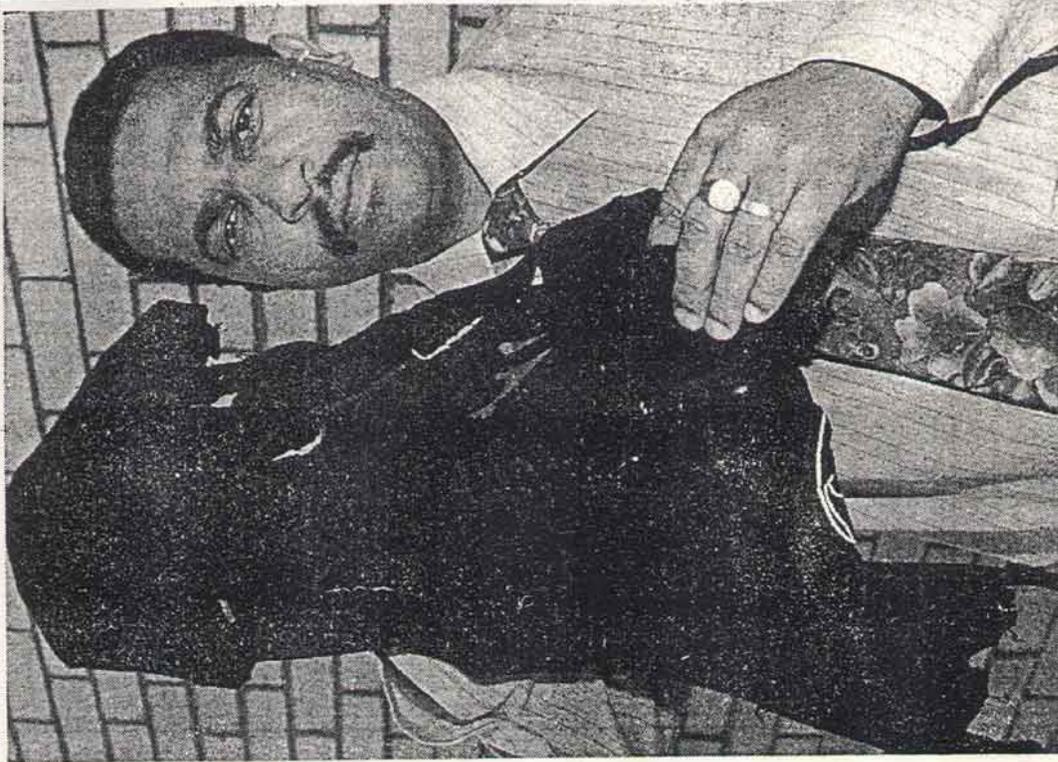
MISSING DIVER ...  
Mr De Wet Ries

while they searched for his body.

Mr Tommy Kruger of the Bonito Diving Club claimed that the crew of the vessel cut adrift the buoy the divers had used to mark where Mr Ries had last been seen. A formal complaint was later lodged with the police.

Sergeant Smal said police were now investigating two charges, one under the Seafaring Act for ignoring divers' flags and one of malicious damage to property.

He said the diving hood and anchor would be taken to friends of Mr Ries for positive identification before the investigation continued.



SHARK ATTACK? ... Detective Sergeant George Smal holds the tattered remains of a diving suit found near Arniston. The suit could have belonged to missing Somerset West scuba diver Mr De Wet Ries.

Picture: ANNE LAING

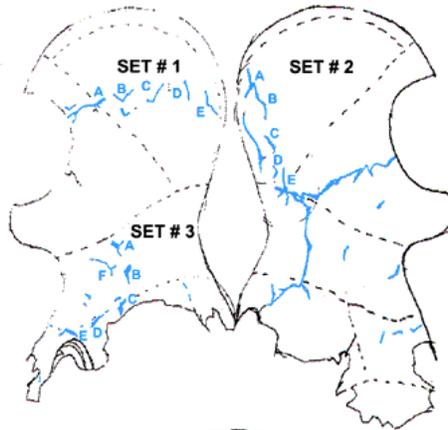
**LEFT**

**SET #1**

- A - B 4.1 cm
- B - C 5.6 cm
- C - D 3.8 cm
- D - E 3.8 cm

**SET #3**

- A - B 3.7 cm
- B - C 4.5 cm
- C - D 5.4 cm
- D - E 5.6 cm
- A - F 4.1 cm
- F - B 1.1 cm



**RIGHT**

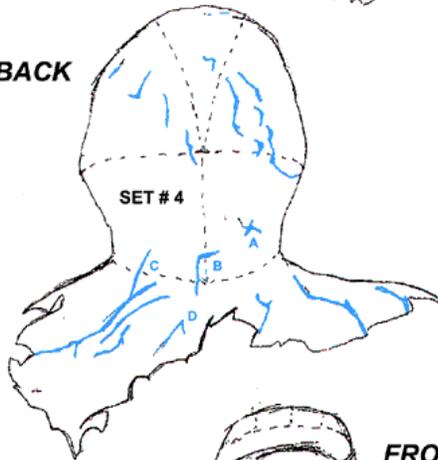
**SET #2**

- A - B 1.7 cm
- B - C 2.8 cm
- C - D 2.5 cm
- D - E 2.4 cm

**SET #4**

- A - B 5.6 cm
- B - C 5.4 cm
- B - D 6.7 cm

**BACK**



**FRONT**

