ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE GSAF 1994.07.09.a / SA-410

DATE: Saturday July 9, 1994

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Indian Ocean at Nahoon Reef, five kilometres northeast of the entrance to East London Harbour, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. 32°59.4'S, 27°57.1'E

NAME: Andrew Carter

DESCRIPTION: The surfer, a 31-year-old male, is 5'9" [175 cm] tall and weighs 68 kilograms. He was wearing a three-millimetre black, long-sleeved and long-legged Frontline wetsuit and had a black leash attached to his ankle. He wore no jewelry, and had no injuries before entering the sea.

SURFBOARD: The surfboard is a white 7'3" [220 cm] trifin, with white fins.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a clear sunny day. The air temperature was 23ºC to 25ºC and there was a light 10- to 15-knot breeze.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 0% of the Moon was illuminated. New Moon, July 8, 1994.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was green blue with three to four-metre underwater visibility. Sea temperature was 17.5ºC, and there were one to two-metre west-to-east swells. The surfers were over the seaward slope of Nahoon Reef when the shark approached.

ENVIRONMENT: Nahoon lies on the west bank of the Nahoon River, five kilometres north of the entrance to East London Harbour. The most popular beach in East London, Nahoon is renowned throughout the South African surfing community for producing some spectacular waves and is the venue of many national surfing competitions.

"Plenty of whales were within a six-kilometre radius, apparently calving," reported Carter. Large numbers of Cape salmon had been caught close to shore during the week and seals had been seen at Nahoon the day before the attack.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 metres off dry reef

DEPTH: Eight to 12 feet, over submerged reef, with drops to four metres

TIME: 13h25 or 14h00

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**NARRATIVE:** Andrew Carter entered the water about 12h45. He was one of eight surfers seaward of another group of surfers closer to the dry reef. Carter was paddling seawards when the shark approached from his left (from the east). Witnesses saw the shark's fin seconds before the attack. "[There was a] tremendous bump with no warning," said Carter.

"The shark clamped its jaws over my upper leg and backside, sandwiching my board at the same time. [The shark] was not shaking me; but it seemed to exert increasing pressure as if it was struggling to bite through the board. It then released [me], its jaw dropped back, and then it lunged forward again. I had bailed out or fallen off the other side of my board. This second time it took the piece of board and swam into the depths and disappeared from my sight. I grabbed my board and seconds later a wave broke behind me; I managed to catch it on my board and rode it toward the rocks. I recall the shark surfacing at incredible speed as I caught the wave. I thought it was turning back for me, but on that I cannot be certain.

"Anyway, within the next ten seconds it attacked Bruce [Corby]. At that stage I was halfway up the rocks so did not witness any of [the attack on Corby].

"Friends of mine helped me to the carpark by carrying me on my surfboard."

**INJURY:** The bite measured 50 centimetres and extended from the buttock to left thigh, ending above the knee. Edges of the wound were clean-cut.

**DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT:** A large portion of the surfboard was removed by the shark.

**FIRST AID:** Shaun Ridgard assisted Carter to the Reef Car Park where first aid was administered by Amatola Ambulance paramedics. He was transported to the hospital by ambulance.

**TREATMENT:** Carter arrived at Frere Hospital, East London, about 20-25 minutes after the attack. His wounds were surgically repaired by Dr. Schultz.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** No tooth fragments were recovered from Carter's wound or surfboard. The bite pattern on the surfboard reveals that the teeth of the shark's upper jaw were widely-spaced, as do the scars on his buttocck and upper thigh. This evidence, together with descriptions provided by the victim and eyewitnesses, suggests that a 3.5 to 4-metre white shark was involved.

**CASE INVESTIGATORS:** Marie Levine and Andrew Gifford, Shark Research Institute