

ACTIVITY: Standing

CASE: [GSAF 1996.07.04.b](#)

DATE: Thursday July 4, 1996

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico on the southern end of Siesta Key Public Beach, Sarasota, Florida, USA.



NAME: Carol Diliberto

DESCRIPTION: She is a 63-year-old female.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: At 13h50, the sky was mostly cloudy, visibility was 15 miles [24.2 km]. The air temperature was 87.8°F [31°C], dew point 78.8°F [26°C], humidity 75%, sea level pressure was 29.97 inches [1014.8 hPa] and wind direction was WSW at 15 mph [23.1 km/h]. There was a brief shower about an hour prior to the incident.

MOON PHASE: Waning Gibbous, 83% of the moon was illuminated.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 15 yards

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: Three feet

TIME: 14h00

NARRATIVE: An estimated 18,000 people were on the beach, but it is not known how many people were in the water when the incident took place. Reverend Rebecca Sharp, who was at the beach with her family, said Diliberto told her that she felt something on her foot and bent over to knock it away. “She pulled her foot away from it but it wouldn’t let go, so she took her hand and lifted its mouth away.”

“People came running out of the water, and there was a little chaos going on with people yelling, ‘There’s a shark bite. Get out of the water’”, said Sharp. “It was totally crowded and there were people all around. We had to move the crowds to get her into the ambulance.”

INJURY: Diliberto was bitten on her left foot. The wound was about five inches long and an inch deep, and extended to both sides of the foot. “It was around her big toe and into the arch of her foot on top and bottom,” said Sharp.

TREATMENT: Diliberto was scheduled to undergo surgical repair of the wound later the same day at Sarasota Memorial Hospital.

SPECIES INVOLVED: According to lifeguard Stephen Fortmuller, the lifeguards didn’t order the swimmers out of the water or issue a shark warning, “We didn’t know if it was a stingray hit or if she stepped on a sharp object. “We didn’t want a panic situation like in ‘Jaws’. A blue flag, indicating dangerous marine life may be present, was later flown from the lifeguard tower. However, according to a Mote Marine Laboratory researcher, Diliberto was probably bitten by a small shark.

SOURCES: Gail Nansen; Sarasota Herald-Tribune (FL), July 5, 1996