

ACTIVITY: Spearfishing

CASE: GSAF 1997.12.28.b / SA-0421

DATE: Sunday December 28, 1997

LOCATION: The attack took place in Pringle Bay, Western Cape Province, South Africa.

NAME: Ian James Hill

DESCRIPTION: Hill, a 39-year-old male, was an electrician from Durban and on holiday in Cape Town with his family. He was an experienced diver, and was carrying a speargun and towing a yellow or orange float. The location of the incident suggests that he was wearing a wetsuit.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, December 29, 1997

SEA CONDITIONS: "Unusually warm" and "dirty". The sea surface temperature was 6°C higher than it was the same time previous year.

ENVIRONMENT: Pringle Bay is a sheltered bay 44 miles southeast of Cape Town. It is famous for its rocky shores and the cave, "Drostersgat", which was used by prisoners and runaway slaves as a hide-away in the 18th century. Pringle Bay is part of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, the first biosphere in South Africa proclaimed by United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Divers had reported a definite increase in the number of sharks along the Western Cape coast in the previous 18 months.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 350 to 400 metres

DEPTH OF WATER AT SITE: 10 metres

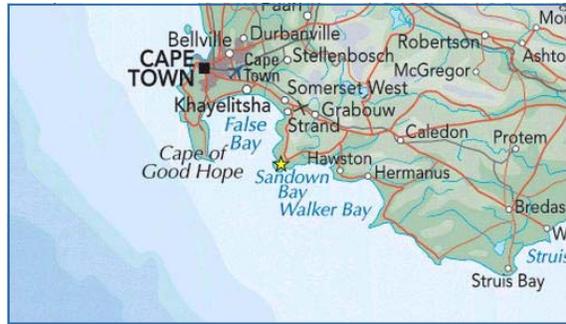
TIME: 14h00

NARRATIVE: According to eyewitnesses, Ian James Hill was spearfishing. when the attack took place. A large fin was seen in close proximity to where he was diving, followed by turbulence in the water and "a cloud of blood". "It was pretty violent," said Rudi Sonntag. "The last thing I saw was a leg and flipper sticking out of the water."

Sea Fisheries inspector Justin Enslin, driving on the coastal road near the beach, also saw Hill's orange buoy bouncing in the water, vigorous splashing around it and a shark fin. The water around the buoy turned red and the fin disappeared under the surface.

INJURY: Presumed fatal; the diver's body was not recovered despite an intensive search of the sea and coastline. It was not known if Hill had shot any fish prior to the attack.

DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT: Searchers recovered a diving mask and a swim fin with teeth marks. The diver's speargun and float were recovered by police divers. The search was called off next day due to heavy seas.



SPECIES INVOLVED: Eyewitnesses report seeing a dorsal fin approximately 50 cm [20 inches] in height, which would appear to be a gross exaggeration even for a very large white shark. Until such time as the diver's body is recovered and a post-mortem conducted, the size and species of the shark cannot be positively determined.

SOURCE: Daily Dispatch (East London), December 30, 1997

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Andrew Gifford, Shark Research Institute-South Africa

Police divers spot 6m shark

CAPE TOWN -- Police divers searching for the body of a Durban diver attacked by a great white shark on Sunday spotted a shark "of at least six metres" in Pringle Bay, about 100km from Cape Town, yesterday.

Mr Ian James Hill, 39, was attacked in Pringle Bay while his wife Sandra and nine-year-old daughter Charlene were on the beach.

Police spokesman Captain Colin Hopley yesterday said the divers saw a great white 300 metres off-shore and about 500 metres from the spot where Mr Hill was attacked.

The size of the shark was first estimated at between four and five metres, but when the divers brought their diving boat of 4,5 m next to the shark, "he had an advantage of about 1,5 metres on the boat," Mr Hopley said.

After firing a grenade to scare off the shark, the divers searched the area, but nothing more was found. Since Sunday a speargun, a flipper and diving mask have been recovered.

"The water was much calmer today with better visibility. The divers have covered the area they set out to search and there are no immediate plans to dive in the area again," Mr Hopley said.

Police would consider signs warning bathers and divers of the danger of sharks. Police will patrol the coast from Rooi Els to Kleinmond should anything wash ashore.

SOURCE: Daily Dispatch, *Wednesday, December 31, 1997*, <http://www.dispatch.co.za/1997/12/31/page2.HTM>



Pringle Bay