



Kei River mouth

ACTIVITY: Splashing in the surf
CASE: **GSAF 1998.12.18**
DATE: Friday December 18, 1998
LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at the Kei River mouth near East London in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.
32°40'S, 28°22'E



NAME: Douw van der Merwe
DESCRIPTION: He is a 14-year old male from Pretoria.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was partly cloudy and there was a fresh southwesterly breeze.

MOON PHASE: New moon, December 19, 1998

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was warm and extremely turbid.

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: Waist-deep

NARRATIVE: Since 1973, Jan and Ingrid van der Merwe had spent the Christmas holiday at the coast. They were in the surf in front of the Beach Hotel with their son, Douw, and his sister, 11-year-old Este-Marie. The children were splashing in the surf in front of the Beach Hotel when Douw felt something brush against his leg.



Douw van der Merwe

"I thought it was a rock, but then it began moving. Suddenly it bit me and I punched the water until my hands got cut. I have never been so scared - I couldn't see anything because the water was so dirty. I ran out of the water screaming to my mom for help. My sister and her friend were swimming next to me and they got a terrible fright."

INJURY: Douw was bitten on the right thigh and calf. His father said the bite marks were "fairly deep", but were mostly flesh wounds. His hand was cut by the shark's teeth when he slapped it.

FIRST AID: He was treated by paramedics at Kei Mouth and then carried to his parents' car on a surfboard so they could take him to hospital. At first, his parents drove to a local clinic but it was closed. Then they went to a nurse's house, but she was not there. Jan van der Merwe said local paramedics had stopped the bleeding so he decided to drive the injured teenager about 60km to a hospital in East London.

TREATMENT: A spokesman for Medicross Hospital, Cathy Brandt, said the patient was in shock and "very quiet" when he arrived. "The wounds were not serious. They looked worse than they were," she said. After being stabilized, the patient was transferred to St Dominic's Hospital in East London.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Douw's father believed that his son was bitten by a ragged tooth shark.

REPORTED BY: Andre Jurgens & Patrick Burnett, Sunday Times
<http://www.suntimes.co.za/1998/12/20/news/news02.htm>