

ACTIVITY: Standing

CASE: [GSAF 2000.08.12](#)

DATE: Saturday August 12, 2000

LOCATION: The incident took place directly in front of 3575 Coastal Highway (A1A) in St. Augustine, Florida, USA.

NAME: Margaret White

DESCRIPTION: She is a 44-year-old female, 5'4" and weighs 135 lbs. She was clad in a turquoise one-piece bathing suit. She was not wearing any jewelry, did not have her menstrual period, and had no injuries before entering the sea. She is an experienced ocean swimmer and has been swimming in the same area for 22 years.



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The incident occurred a day after the moon was in its first quarter. The sky was clear and it was a hot day (temperature in the 90°s).

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, August 15, 2000

SEA CONDITIONS: There was good surf with five- to six-foot waves. The water temperature was 28°C and it was "very clear".

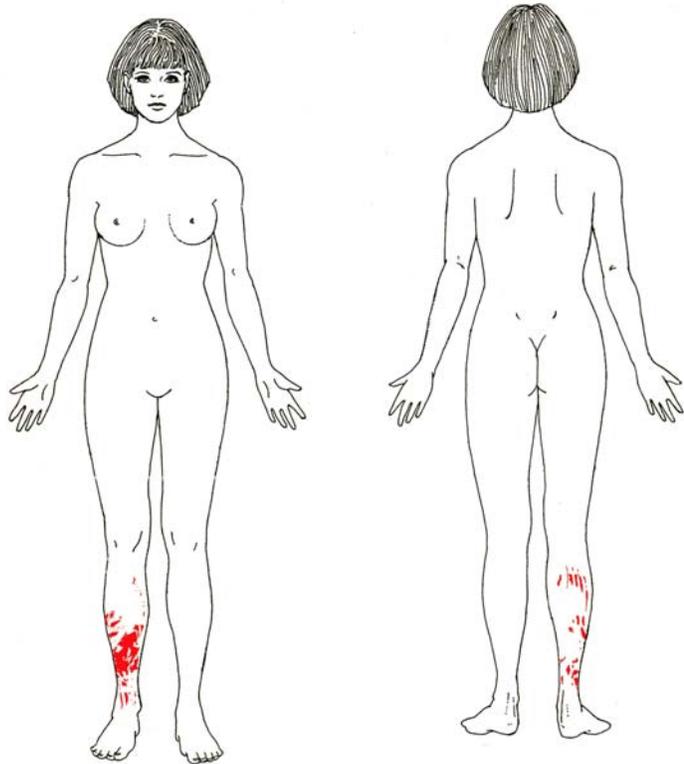
ENVIRONMENT: The incident took place on a sand shelf that drops off about 20 feet from the shore. The St. John's River spills into the sea 3.5 miles south of the incident site, and the intercoastal waterway parallels the beach. No one was fishing in the vicinity, and no dolphins or baitfish were observed.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Ten feet

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: Four and a half feet

TIME: 16h45 [4:45 pm]

NARRATIVE: Maggie entered the water and exercised briefly, doing some leg lifts. She had been standing in the water about five minutes was facing seaward when the shark came from behind, engulfing her lower right leg in its mouth, pulling her up and backwards. "I stomped down, raised my arms over my head in one movement, and came up in a divers position; I jumped as if to dive," said Maggie. She swung into a wave and body-surfed three to four feet, then stood up and shouted "Shark!". Her neighbors, Chuck Butler and his wife, witnessed the entire incident and said that there were three sharks present (including the one that bit Maggie). Aware that she was bleeding badly, Maggie didn't panic or thrash the water as she went ashore.



INJURY: Maggie's lower right leg was severely bitten. The bite extended from 1.5 inches below the knee to her ankle.

FIRST AID: Christopher, a surfer who was about 30 feet away from Maggie when she was bitten, provided first aid. He wrapped her leg in a towel and called 911. While awaiting medical help she began to go into shock and remembers little until she woke up in the hospital after the initial four-hour surgical repair of her injury.

TREATMENT: She spent four days in Flagler Hospital and was treated by Dr. Sadowski, and later by Dr. Syed W. Ali, M.D.

SPECIES INVOLVED: It was initially believed this incident involved a bull shark, *Carcharhinus leucas*, eight to ten feet in length. Upon examination of her medical records and the photographs of her injuries, it was concluded that it was more likely that a large blacktip shark, *C. limbatus*, was involved.

CASE INVESTIGATORS: Erich Ritter, Ph.D. and Marie Levine, GSAF