

ACTIVITY: Walking to shore

CASE: GSAF 2000.11.06.b

DATE: Monday November 6, 2000

LOCATION: The attacks took place in the Indian Ocean at Cottesloe Beach, Perth, Western Australia. 31.9°S, 115.9°E



The reef known as The Ledge at North Cottesloe beach. Ken Crew and Dirk Avery were heading for shore, when they were attacked by the shark.

NAMES: Dirk Avery

DESCRIPTION: Dirk Avery is a 52-year-old male, a lawyer from Freemantle. Both Ken Crew and Dirk Avery were members of an informal swimming club for middle-aged, well-to-do local residents known as The Pod which met at Cottesloe Beach every morning at 06h00. Members of the Pod said that Crew and Avery were the strongest swimmers of their group, "which is why they were ahead of the rest of the group when attacked."

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was mostly cloudy. At 06h00, the air temperature was 55.4°F [13°C], dew point was 53.6°F [12°C], humidity 94%, sea level pressure was 29.80 inches [1009 hPa], visibility was 6.2 miles [10 km], and wind direction was NNE at 4.6 mph [7.4 km/h]. By 07h30, the wind direction was North at 3.5 mph [5.6 km/h] and the humidity had dropped to 88%.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 68% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. First Quarter, November 4, 2000; Full Moon, November 12, 2000.

ENVIRONMENT: Local officials said that sharks were often seen in the area in late spring and early summer chasing migrating fish and whales.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 10 metres

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: "Waist-deep"

TIME: 06h30

NARRATIVE: Ken Crew was directly in front of the Cottesloe Surf Lifesaving Club, returning from his daily swim. He and more than a dozen Pod members were going ashore when suddenly someone yelled 'Shark! Get out of the water!' The swimmers fled towards shore. "From the balcony I could see this huge shark - it was really huge", said Kim Gamble, a witness. "When we saw the fin and the tail, people thought it was two sharks, it was so big." The shark rolled and pushed Crew through the water before releasing him and approaching Dirk Avery, who was slightly closer to shore.

The shark snapped at Avery's legs. "He tried to push off the shark, walking backwards towards shore quite slowly, pushing at the shark, and he made it to the shore's edge," said Gamble. Avery said that he was kicking at the shark in shallow water when his foot went into its open mouth. He managed to pull his foot out and the other foot was ripped in the process.

INJURY: Avery's legs and feet were severely lacerated.

TREATMENT: Avery was taken to hospital where he underwent surgery. Ambulance

officers later treated the lifesaver for shock along with an elderly woman who suffered a minor heart attack during the attacks.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The attack involved 4,9-metre white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*. Several hours after the dawn attack, a small fleet of boats were circling the huge shark in an attempt to herd it out to sea. In the months following this attack, regular shark-spotting flights began along the Perth coast for the first time. Surf contest organizers, who feared for the safety of their contestants, employed divers and kayakers to survey the area for sharks while events were underway.

Increased vigilance and awareness meant that sightings of sharks by lifeguards, pilots and boat skippers closed Perth beaches on a number of occasions throughout the summer. People were instructed to swim only at beaches patrolled by lifesavers and advised to avoid swimming at dawn and dusk (prime shark-feeding times) and when the sky was overcast.

NOTE: Crew's funeral was held on Saturday. Despite his own injuries and in a wheelchair, Avery wrote and read a eulogy at the service.

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