

**ACTIVITY:** Wading

**CASE:** **GSAF 2005.07.13**

**DATE:** Wednesday July 13, 2005

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico off Magnolia Lane at Crystal Beach, Port Bolivar, Galveston County, Texas, USA. 29.4°N, 94.8°W



KHOU-TV

*Lydia Paulk*

**NAME:** Lydia Paulk

**DESCRIPTION:** She is a 14-year-old female from North Carolina.

She is 5'5" and weighs less than 100 pounds and was wearing a two-piece bathing suit. She was not menstruating and had no injuries prior to the incident, but was wearing bright pink toenail polish with glitter.

### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** The sky was partly sunny, there was an 11 mph southerly breeze, and the air temperature was 91.4°F [33°C].

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, July 14, 2005

**SEA CONDITIONS:** Meteorologists reported that the water in the Gulf of Mexico is warmer than normal and could be causing the sharks to come closer to shore. The sea temperature was 80° to 85°F, and very murky; in waist-deep water Lydia could not see her feet.

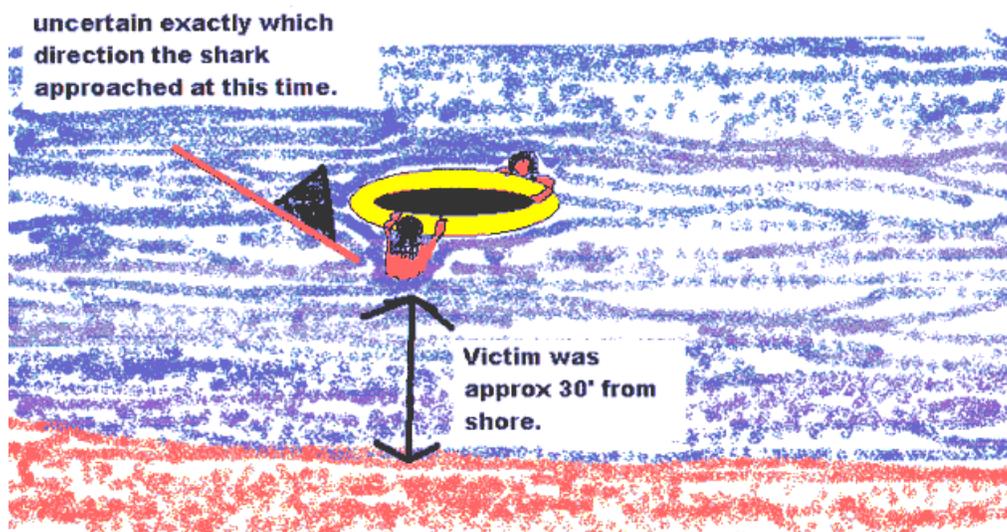
**ENVIRONMENT:** The incident took place off a sandy stretch of beach with no pier, dunes or sand spit in the immediate area, and no channel was present in the sea. Between 07h00 and 09h00 on the morning of the incident a school of stingrays in the immediate area by Lydia's father, Larry Paulk, and there was a large amount of seaweed in the ocean at the time of the incident. The news also report a large number of cru station species close to shore.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 30 feet

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Waist-deep (approximately 30 inches)

**TIME:** 13h00

**07/13/05 Between  
1:00 pm and 1:30pm**



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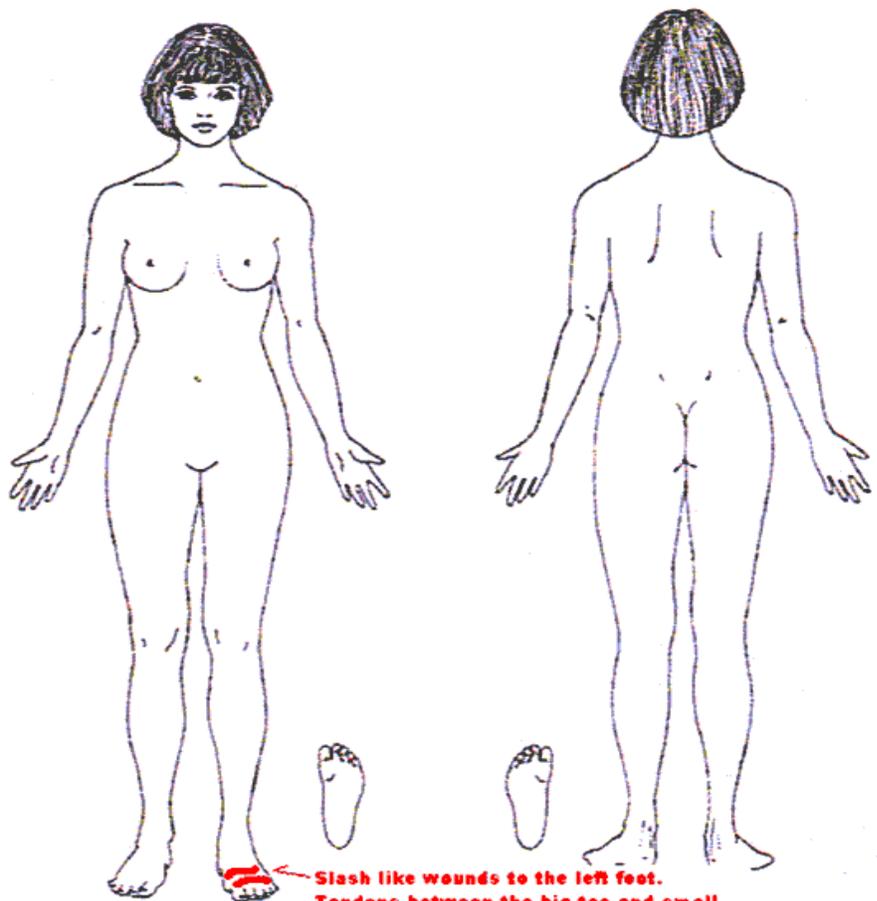
**NARRATIVE:** The Paulk family were on Texas coast for an annual reunion that brought together 18 family members from around the country. Lydia's father is interim pastor at Blackburn Baptist Church in Newton. Her mother, Laura, is a social worker at South Point High School in Belmont.

Four people were on the beach and the Paulks were the only people in the water, although there may have been some surf fishermen about a half mile away. Kit Marshall, the girl's aunt and an Aledo city councilwoman, said they noticed beer bottles left over from someone's all-night party on the ocean floor and began picking up the debris. They'd carried one load to shore and went back in the water. Lydia and her aunt B.J. Goins were collecting discarded beer bottles from the water. Immediately before the incident, Lydia was holding on to the end of an inflatable boat in which her six-year-old cousin was Audrey Goins was sitting. Lydia was closest to shore and facing seawards and her aunt was facing the shore when Lydia felt a bump on her leg. Then she felt the shark grab her foot and her aunt saw the tail of the shark thrashing in the water. As Lydia pulled herself into the boat, BJ and the two girls screamed and BJ started slapping the water. BJ kept slapping the water with one hand while she pulled the boat back to shore with the other.

**INJURY:** The shark made a single strike, inflicting multiple lacerations on the dorsum of the left foot. Five tendons were severed and torn, three of her middle tendons were missing and several teeth of the shark were embedded in the tissue.

**FIRST AID:** On shore, towels were used to wrap Lydia's foot, and she was transported by ambulance to the hospital (University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) Galveston), arriving there about 60 minutes after she was bitten. Lydia reports that she felt pain for the first time in the ambulance when water was poured on her wounds. Before that, her foot felt numb.

**TREATMENT:** At UTMB, orthopedic surgeon Kelly Carmichael led efforts to clean the jagged wound. The bite was so severe that



Slash like wounds to the left foot. Tendons between the big toe and small toe were severed. Three middle tendons were missing. No wounds were inflicted to the bottom of the foot.

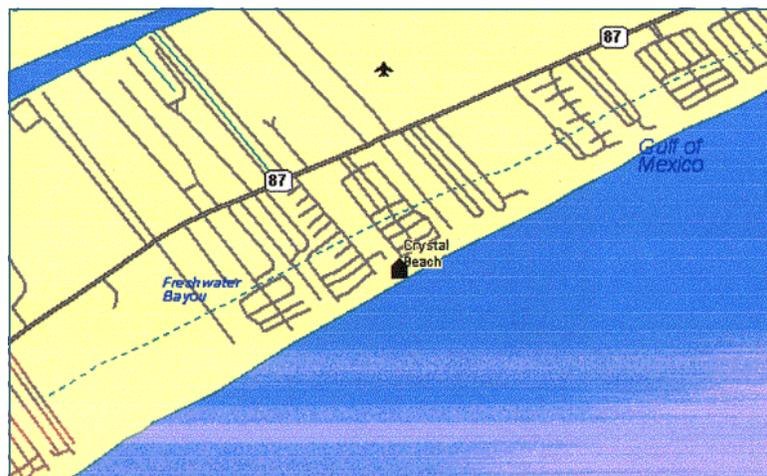
doctors had to remove some of the shark's teeth from the girl's bones. Dr. Carmichael, who is also Assistant Professor - Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation, said the high school soccer player should be able to return to the sport with six weeks to three months. He also said plastic surgery may be needed to repair or replace skin damaged in the attack.

**SPECIES:** The shark was said to be between four and five feet in length. Lydia's aunt saw the dorsal fin of the shark as it swam off. and described the fin as black in color. Tooth fragments were recovered from Lydia's wound which were sent to the Pathology Lab at the University of Texas Medical Branch. The fragments were then sent from the Pathology Lab to Mr. George Burgess of the International Shark Attack File, and then disappeared.

**SOURCES:** San Antonio WOAI.com,  
[http://woai.com/news/local/story.aspx?content\\_id=C6B0F6C2-A31D-4494-B517-ACC4215608F9](http://woai.com/news/local/story.aspx?content_id=C6B0F6C2-A31D-4494-B517-ACC4215608F9);  
[http://www.khou.com/news/local/stories/khou050715\\_mh\\_sharkbite.ac502eaa.html](http://www.khou.com/news/local/stories/khou050715_mh_sharkbite.ac502eaa.html)  
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[http://www.woai.com/news/national/story.aspx?content\\_id=C83912DE-C578-417C-8E08-03A64661737A](http://www.woai.com/news/national/story.aspx?content_id=C83912DE-C578-417C-8E08-03A64661737A)

**NOTE:** Galveston County Sheriff's Maj. Ray Tuttoilmondo said in a statement that officials believe the shark was feeding at the time. Sharks are believed to be feeding closer to shore because of the large number of smaller fish in the water that are part of their diet. Sharks are on the move during summer months and frequently mine the shallow Gulf of Mexico waters for fish. Galveston County officials are calling it an isolated incident and say the girl was not "attacked" by the shark. "The circumstances of this event indicate the shark was feeding at the time," Maj. Ray Tuttoilmondo, said in a press release. "As there is reportedly an abundance of smaller fish that are typically part of their diet, sharks are believed to be feeding closer to the shore in the clearer waters."

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Clay Creswell, GSAF



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