

**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** [GSAF 2008.04.25](#)

**DATE:** Friday, 25 April 2008

**LOCATION:** The attack took place in the Pacific Ocean at the foot of Plaza Street in Fletcher Cove Solana Beach (or Tide Beach), 14 miles north of San Diego, California, USA.  
33.0°N, 117.3°W



**NAME:** Dave Martin

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 66-year-old male, a retired veterinarian who had lived in the area since 1970.

### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** The sky was cloudless and the sun was rising. At 06h53, Carlsbad recorded clear skies with seven mile [11.3 km] visibility. The air temperature was 52°F [11.1°C], dew point 46.9°F [8.3°C], humidity 83%, sea level pressure 30.04 inches [1017.2 hPa], and there was no wind.

**MOON PHASE:** Waning Gibbous, 76% of the Moon is Illuminated.

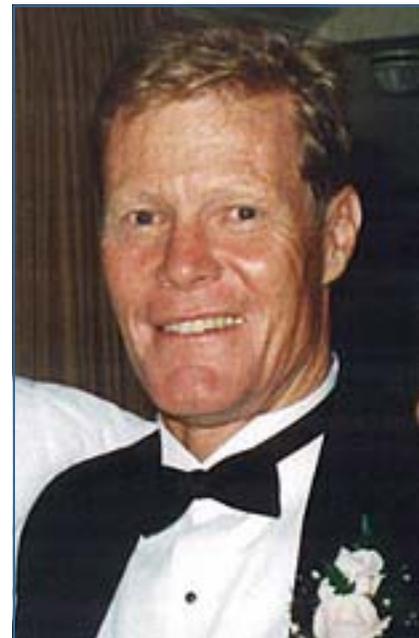
**SEA CONDITIONS:** The water was calm and the surface temperature had warmed to above 60°F.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Mr. Hill, a member of the Triathlon Club of San Diego, said he saw a seal or sea lion on the beach earlier in the week and thought the shark may have confused the wet-suited swimmers with his prey. Solana Beach Lifeguard Craig Miller said a seal pup was found on the beach Friday morning before the accident and was taken to a marine animal rescue center.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 150 yards (137m)

**DEPTH:** 20 to 30 feet of water.

**TIME:** 07h00



*Dave Martin*

**NARRATIVE:** Dave Martin was training with a group of eight local triathletes in the ocean. Several swimmers wearing wetsuits were in a group when the shark rammed Martin from below, thrusting him out of the water and then pulling him beneath the surface. One of the swimmers was eight feet from Dr. Martin and was the only one to see the shark. The shark was in between the two of them, it lifted Dr. Martin up a little and took him under for a few seconds. When he resurfaced he was yelling "help me! shark!" She was stunned for a moment, then went to him calling "shark!" to the rest of the group. She held him while the rest of the group came over. Two of the swimmers raced to shore to get help while the others carried the injured man to the beach.

Mr. Hill said he was running on the beach while about nine other members were in the

water when the attack took place. "They saw him come up out of the water, scream 'shark,' flail his arms and go back under," Hill said. "Martin may have bled to death before he left the water."

**INJURY:** Fatal. The swimmer sustained severe injuries to both thighs. There were deep jagged lacerations from his upper thighs to the lower shin. It appeared the shark had a bite radius of about 22 inches.

**FIRST AID:** He was carried ashore and taken to the Fletcher Cove Park lifeguard station, but was pronounced dead at the scene. An air ambulance was summoned to the beach but the man had died before he could be taken to a hospital, said Deputy Fire Chief Dismas Abelman. Officials cleared all beaches within a 17-mile radius of the beach. The shark is still in the area and beaches will be closed for 72 hours, said authorities.

**SPECIES:** Richard H. Rosenblatt, a professor emeritus of marine biology at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, said he believed the shark involved in the attack was a white shark, between 12– to 17-feet-long. He said he made his determination based on the victim's wounds and the description of the incident from witnesses. "I was told the victim was pushed up and out of the water in a violent attack. That is just typical of the white shark feeding behavior," Rosenblatt said. "They normally feed on seals and attack from

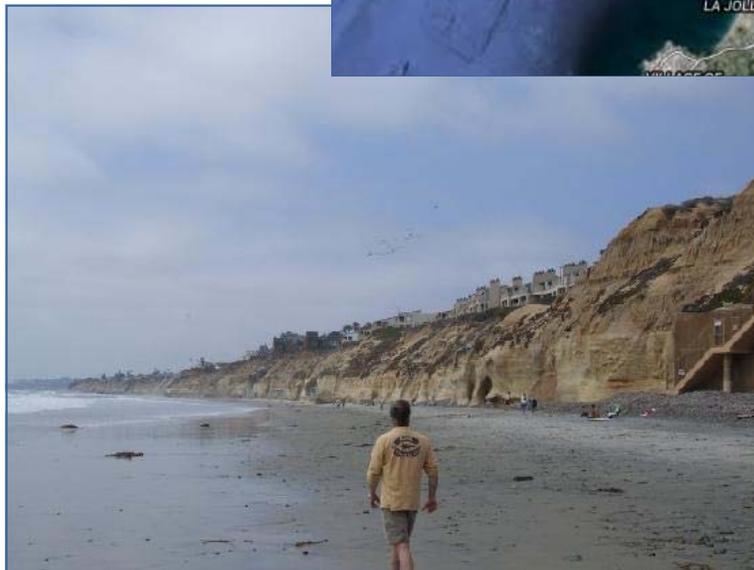
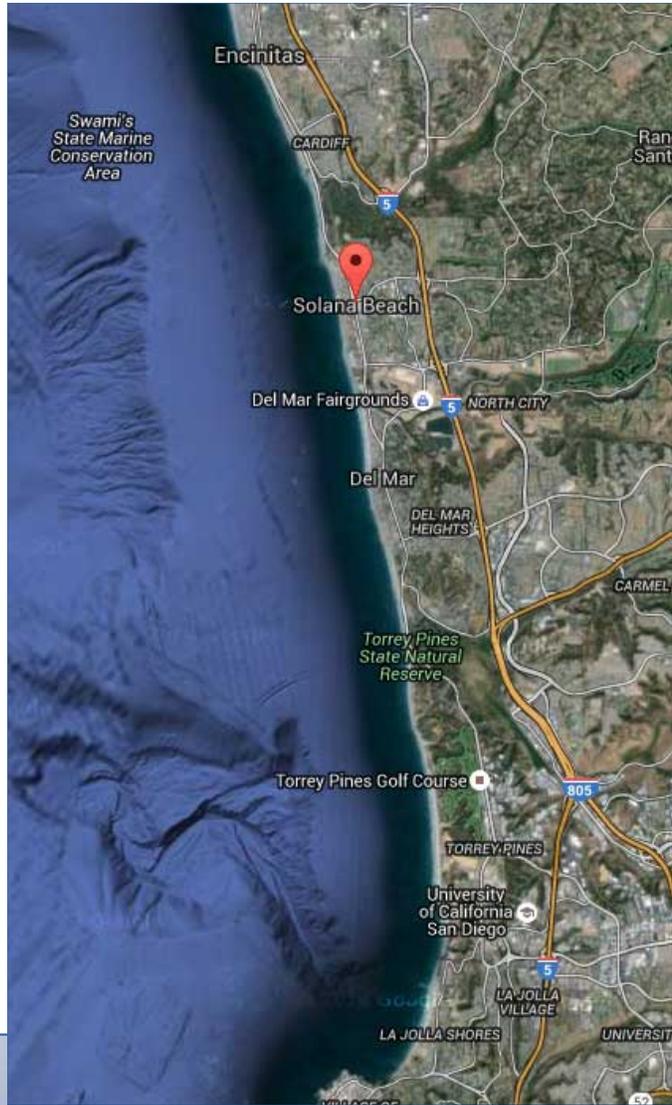


below and make a very powerful bite, then pull away and wait for the seal or other marine mammal to bleed to death." Rosenblatt said white shark attacks are very rare. He said there isn't a resident population of white sharks in the area, but female sharks come to the area from the north to give birth. They also swim great distances and have been known to be tagged in Monterey and then turn up in Hawaii. "The chances of finding this particular shark are very slim," Rosenblatt said.

A Coast Guard helicopter HH-60 was dispatched to support lifeguards and other emergency crews.

**SPECIES:** The autopsy confirmed that the incident involved a white shark, estimated to be 12 to 17 feet in length.

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Ralph Collier, GSAF



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