

Port Royal looking towards Kingston



Photo by Andrew Stehlik

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 2013.06.31](#)

DATE: Thursday June 27, 2013

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Caribbean Sea at Port Royal, East Kingston, Jamaica.

NAME: Kevin

DESCRIPTION: He was a 20-year-old male.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was partly cloudy and the air temperature was in the mid-80s.

MOON PHASE: Waning Gibbous, 76% of the Moon was illuminated.

NARRATIVE: Kevin and several young girls had been at the beach since early in the morning. They swam, bought and had lunch, before Kevin reportedly left the group to swim at a calmer section of the beach.

Less than an hour later, his female friends went in search of him. But Kevin was nowhere in sight and the worried minors were too afraid to report the matter to the police. So they left, leaving his belongings on the beach, said a witness, Ralston McFarlane.

The next morning Kevin's father arrived with police officers. McFarlane showed him his son's bag and the father picked it up and found money and his son's cell phone in a pocket. Then he left in the company of Beris Brown, another fisherman. The two combed the beach for the young man and found his torso washed up on a section of the beach.

INJURY: It is probable that the young man drowned and the shark were post-mortem.

REPORTED BY: Al Brenneka, Shark Attack Survivors

Mystery shrouds death of youngster in Port Royal ***Killed by shark or man***

THERE is a raging debate among residents of Port Royal, East Kingston, over how a young man met his demise more than a week ago.

Some of them insist that the youth, said to be aged around 20, drowned off the coast of the community and a shark or sharks bit off the lower section of his body and his head.

Others, including at least one family member, insist that he was murdered.

And amidst all this, fisherfolk in the area want the authorities to erect signs warning of shark attacks in the historic community.

The call was made on Friday, a week after the mysterious death of the male swimmer whose body was found in a section of the community called 'Up Town' beach, headless and severed from its waist down. Up to late Friday afternoon, police could not officially confirm the identity of the man.

"I woulda love for them (authorities) to come and put up back the sign dem fi warn people. We want them fi know seh dem fi beware of the shark dem around here suh," said Ralston McFarlane, a 55-year-old fisherman.

"A sign was there already and it mash up. It use to say 'beware of sharks around here, you are bathing at your own risk'. I come here and see that sign, but nuff of dem weh come from town don't know it. Dem hear when we talk to them, but dem still go swim," he said.

McFarlane had been fishing in Annotto Bay, St Mary and in the Portland area, and had several encounters with sharks before he moved his livelihood to Port Royal 13 years ago. He now operates from a small beach shack, metres from where the dead man, referred to only as 'Kevin', and a group of girls from a popular Kingston school had gone last Thursday to relax.

According to McFarlane, the dead man and the girls had been at the beach since early in the morning. They swam, bought and had lunch, before Kevin left the group to swim at a calmer section of the beach.

Less than an hour later, his female friends went in search of him. But Kevin was nowhere in sight and the worried minors were too afraid to report the matter to the police. So they left, leaving his belongings on the beach, said McFarlane.

The next morning the dead man's father arrived with police officers. McFarlane showed him his son's bag and the father picked it up and left in the company of Beris Brown, another fisherman. The two combed the beach for the young man.

"Him (father) push him hand inna the youth pants pocket and him take out some money. Then him push him hand in the other pocket and found his phone and said 'yes, a my bwoy'," said McFarlane, re-enacting the disheartening moment that the father realised his son was in trouble.



All photos by Bryan Cummings

Ralston McFarlane speaks of the size of sharks that swim near a beach in Port Royal

"Him take the bag put pon him shoulder and start walk go up the beach," McFarlane said, adding that it wasn't long before the grieving father and Brown stumbled upon his son's decomposing torso washed up on a section of the beach.

"When them reach him out there suh is that time them see the half-a-body a float. Is the father who come find it, and him hold the hand and draw him out of the water," said McFarlane.

Brown said that the father was beside himself with grief when he found the corpse.

"Him kneel down over him (body) and said: 'Dem kill me one bwoy, dem kill him. Look how far you come dead.'" Brown's eyes captured the father's grief as he spoke of the grim find. The Jamaica Observer was unable to make contact with the young man's father over the weekend.

For the past week, the young man's death has been a topic of heated discussion among residents in Port Royal. Like McFarlane, some persons believe he was indeed killed by sharks. Others, however, believe he may have been murdered.

When the Sunday Observer visited the Port Royal Police Station, an officer at the front desk declined to speak in details regarding the incident.

"All I can tell you is that two autopsies were done on the body and none of the results have come back to us as yet. We are still investigating," he said.

McFarlane, however, needs no autopsy confirmation. "Is drown him drown and then the shark them come eat him. It all look like is two shark eat him too," said the fisherman, adding that the sea floor at 'Up town' beach dips suddenly and, is very deep in places.

"When him father find him me go over there and me show him the shark bite dem print out inna him back. When the body just come out of the water you could see the impression of the teeth pon the black skin," he reasoned.

"I take a stick and show him father the flesh, how the shark teeth parted away the flesh and it gone down into the neck hole, the housing of the neck. You could see the roundness of the shark



Fisherman Beris Brown looks at a downed concrete sign which was once erected at a beach in Port Royal, Kingston to warn swimmers about the danger of sharks in the area.



Ralston McFarlane gesticulates as he speaks of wounds on the torso of a headless body found in Port Royal, Kingston, last Friday

mouth," said McFarlane, admitting that he and a doctor who performed an on-the-spot autopsy got into a brief quarrel over the cause of the young man's death.

"Him drown first because if the shark did come and grab him while him a swim you wouldn't see any of him," McFarlane theorised. "When him (shark) mek dat first ram, the blood woulda fresh and the whole place woulda red wid blood and we woulda see it.

"So when dem mek the first bite the body never palatable, the blood wasn't flush and fresh -- it a sleep. So it wasn't really fresh meat again and so them leave it," he continued. "But by the time the officer them come the body was in the sun for long and so you couldn't really see the bite marks dem so visible," he added, explaining why some persons may think that the man may have been murdered.

McFarlane said it was common for sharks to follow the huge ships which pass Port Royal en route to the Kingston Harbour. On many fishing expeditions he has seen them. They are of all types and sizes, and usually lurk in the water for up to a week before leaving, he said.

Venessa Jones, a shopkeeper who sold Kevin and his friends their lunch, said that she could not believe when she heard he was dead the next day.

"I don't know what to say. They came here the Thursday and I sold the guy and two of the girls. So I was surprised when I heard that they found him dead," she said.

Meanwhile, a fisherman and a female vendor on the other side of the spit had a noisy discussion over the cause of the young man's death. Looking at a photograph taken by a cellular phone, the woman said she believed he was killed by sharks, while the man said he believed that Kevin was murdered. None of them, however, was prepared to entertain the idea that a gruesome killer was in their midst.

SOURCE: Corey Robinson, robinsonc@jamaicaobserver.com, Jamaica Observer, Sunday, July 7, 2013, http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Killed-by-shark-or-man_14638363