



**ACTIVITY:** Swimming

**CASE:** [GSAF 2014.03.22.b](#)

**DATE:** Saturday March 22, 2014

**LOCATION:** The attack took place at Second Beach, Port St. Johns, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

**NAME:** Friedrich Burgstaller

**DESCRIPTION:** He was a 66-year-old male, a retired Austrian conservative (OeVP) politician from the region of Hofkirchen in Muehlkreis in Upper Austria on the border of Germany. He was together with his wife, Margit, when their 15-member tour group made a stop at Second Beach in Port St John.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** At 14h00, Port Edward recorded an air temperature of 80°F, dew point 71°F, humidity 67%, sea level pressure 29.82 inches and wind direction was NE at 16.1 mph.

**MOON PHASE:** Waning Gibbous, 68% of the Moon was illuminated. Last Quarter, March 24, 2014.

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The water was dirty and brown, and the tide was incoming.

**ENVIRONMENT:** The local council is no longer paying for lifeguards and beach signs had been erected warning people against going into the water. A local woman Catherine Yazbek, who has a guesthouse by the beach and said many people including the Austrian man had ignored the warning signs.



*Friedrich Burgstaller*

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Waist-deep  
**TIME:** Shortly before 15h00

**NARRATIVE:** Described as active and fit despite retiring last year, Friedrich Burgstaller, was keen to get in some swimming once he and his tourism group had arrived at the spot. He was in the water with his wife, and facing shoreward when the shark attacked. Off-duty lifeguard Sizwe Dusubana heard the wife's screams and saw the man being pushed into the air as the shark bit into the lower part of his body. He said the man then tried to run, but fell. "He then turned around to face the shark and tried to hit it on the head, but its jaws were open and his arm fell right between its teeth and the arm was gone," said the lifeguard.

Together with Dusubana, lifeguards Siphosoxolo Njila and William James watched helplessly as the man fought for his life. "He collapsed and the current started dragging him out to sea. His head was bobbing in and out of the water, and you could see that he was still alive and fighting," said Njila. They estimate that the man was alive for about 20 minutes after the attack, trying to swim to shore despite one arm being bitten off.

James said they had telephoned for help, trying to get a boat out to aid the man, but to no avail. "We went out onto the street and stopped cars, asking if people had boats or jet skis." About an hour later, they were told the body was floating back to shore. They climbed onto the sharp rocks and swam about 30 metres to grab the man. "We pulled him out of the water, trying not to hold him where he was bitten," said James.

Neil Clayton and Amanda Weeidenburg, who own a lodge nearby, arrived on site. Clayton covered the man with a sarong as a crowd gathered. The body was taken to Lusikisiki.

**INJURY:** Fatal. According Yazbek, "A large part of his body below the waist had gone. It definitely wasn't a one-off bite."

**SPECIES:** Not identified, but the circumstances suggested that one or more bull sharks was involved in the attack. Jeremy Cliff of the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board examined the body in the Lusikisiki Mortuary and said that he suspected that a single bull shark, about two metres in length, was involved in the attack.

**NOTE:** National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) spokesman Craig Lambinon said its Port St Johns volunteer sea rescue duty crew reported that the body was transferred to the Eastern Cape Forensic Pathology Services. Lambinon said that the police had opened an inquest docket. The Austrian consulate and the Department of International Relations and Co-operation had also been informed.