



**ACTIVITY:** Standing

**CASE:** GSAF 1957.12.30 / SA-121

**DATE:** Monday December 30, 1957

**LOCATION:** The accident took place in the Indian Ocean at Margate, 131 kilometres southwest of Durban on the coast of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The incident occurred at nearly the same spot where Vernon Berry was killed by a shark a week earlier.

*30°51,8'S, 30°22,4'E*

**NAME:** Julia Barbara Painting

**DESCRIPTION:** Julia Painting, a 14-year-old female, was 1,78 metres tall and weighed 50,8 kilograms. Her single-piece cotton bathing suit was white with a floral design in light and dark green, and it had three layers of frills about the hips. She was blonde, tanned, and did not have her menstrual period.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** The Port Shepstone meteorological station, 15 kilometres northeast of Margate, recorded that the temperature ranged from 20° to 27°C and no rain fell on December 29th or 30th, but there was a steady gentle 10-knot northeasterly breeze. The day was partly cloudy, at 08h30 there was 6/8 cloud cover, at 15h00 there was 5/8 cloud cover.

**MOON PHASE:** First Quarter, December 29, 1957

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea was calm and the water was crystal clear except in the breakers where the outgoing tide



*Julia Painting*



*Paul Brokenshaw*

caused a flurry of sand. A channel was present.

**ENVIRONMENT:** No unusual fish or bird activity was noted and no dolphins were observed. Moments before the attack, however, the shark patrol aircraft passed overhead.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 50 metres

**DEPTH:** Knee-deep

**TIME:** 12h40

**NARRATIVE:** Two thousand people were on the beach at Margate. Julia, her 15-year-old cousin, an uncle and 36-year-old Paul Brokenshaw were standing opposite the Palm Grove Hotel amongst hundreds of bathers.

“I was standing and talking to Paul Brokenshaw when I saw a dark shape coming from the rocks on my right,” said Julia, “As it neared, I saw two fins and saw that it was a shark.” Instinctively she walked into its path to push it away, but her left leg was grazed by the shark and she was knocked into the water.

As the shark wheeled around and bit the girl, Brokenshaw grabbed its tail, but the shark threw him off and returned to the girl. Brokenshaw pummeled the shark's mouth with his fists, lacerating his hands, and as he tried to drag Julia from the shark's mouth her swimsuit gave way. The shark had seized her hand and its jaws rapidly worked up her arm — grunting, Julia remembers, like a pig — until it severed her arm above the elbow.

The shark momentarily released the girl and, before it could renew the assault, Brokenshaw picked her up and threw her to her uncle who carried her to the beach.

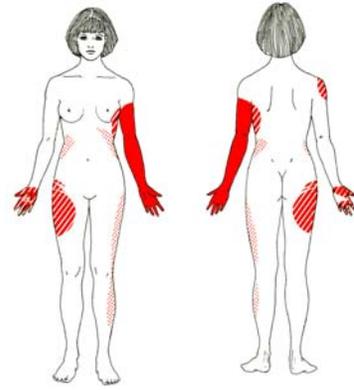
Moments before the accident, Julia's aunt became apprehensive and, when she insisted on leaving the water, her husband accompanied her to shore. In ankle-deep water he playfully grabbed the back of her ankle and as she turned around she saw Brokenshaw fighting the shark. Thinking that Brokenshaw was being attacked by the shark, Julia's uncle raced out to help him.

**INJURIES:** Julia's left arm was severed below the deltoid muscle; Dr Feinberg, who treated

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her on the beach, described it as a clean-cut bite through the bone. Her left breast, left side of her back, right thigh, buttock, right shoulder, right hand and fingers were lacerated and there were abrasions caused by the shark's hide and fins on her waist and left leg.



**FIRST AID:** Prompt action by Life-saver Aubrey Cowan and two doctors who were on the beach kept blood loss to a minimum, and within minutes Dr Feinberg arrived on the scene. This case is significant because it was the first time that the trauma kit, designed by Dr Feinberg to treat shark attack victims, was used. Dr Feinberg gave Julia an injection of morphine and administered saline and plasma intravenously. He did not allow her to be placed in the ambulance for 30 minutes until her condition was stable. Julia remembers that she felt no pain initially and thought she had lost her leg until she felt her heel in the sand. "The injection given by [Dr Feinberg] on the beach caused more pain than the loss of my arm," said Julia, "I had very little pain until just before surgery".

**TREATMENT:** Surgical repair was performed at 15h30 in Port Shepstone Hospital by Drs S.M. Feinberg and Jimmy Lynch, Dr Moore provided anesthesia. Aureomycin, a broad-spectrum antibiotic, was given to prevent infection. Julia was discharged from the hospital on January 15.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Julia believes the accident involved a bull shark. Brokenshaw described the shark as 1,8 metres in length with a conical nose and charcoal-colored back. The species that matches this description and has the dentition needed to cleanly sever a human arm is the white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*.

**COMMENT:** Bathing was banned immediately after the incident and by evening lights had been installed at the Margate sea-swimming pool. The council decided to close the lagoon, deepen it to allow swimming, and erect a netted enclosure in the sea. The Mayor of Margate interviewed the Minister of Justice seeking assistance of the Government with the shark-attack problem. Next day a bounty of 6d per pound for all sharks caught was offered by the Council. During the week a minesweeper, *HMSAS Pretoria* left her base at Simon's Town with depth charges to blast the seas off Margate, and an aircraft laden with hand grenades was dispatched from Voortrekkerhoogte to the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast. Although the *Pretoria* experienced engine difficulties and had to return to port, the charges were dropped by the Naval frigate *Vrystaat*.

For his rescue of Julia Painting, Paul Brokenshaw was awarded the Silver Medallion, the highest award for bravery given by the Surf Life-saving Association of South Africa. He was also awarded the George Medal, the civilian award given for an act of great heroism in circumstances of extreme danger.

**SOURCES:** Interviews with Julia Painting; Natal Mercury, December 31, 1957; Daily News (Durban), December 31, 1957, February 14 & August 8, 1958

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Marie Levine

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# MARGATE SHARK HERO GETS GEORGE MEDAL

*(S) Shark attacks* 3-DEC-1958  
 LONDON, December 2. A SOUTHERN RHODESIA farmer, Mr. Paul Brokensha, who saved 14-year-old Bulawayo schoolgirl, Julia Painting, from a shark by attacking it with his bare hands at Margate, Natal South Coast, last year, has been awarded the George Medal. It is announced in the London Gazette tonight.

**Stop Press**

*(S)* 31 DEC 1957

**SHARK VICTIM STILL CRITICAL**

The condition of 14-year-old Julia Painter, who was mauled by a shark at Margate yesterday afternoon, was described as "still critical" by a Port Shepstone Hospital official at two o'clock this morning.

*(S)* **Shark Victim Still Serious**

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THE condition of 14-year-old Julia Painting, of Bulawayo, who was mauled by a shark at Margate on Monday afternoon was described as still very serious by a Port Shepstone Hospital official last night.

1 JAN 1958

The citation in the London Gazette states that when the shark was sighted all bathers quickly left the water with the exception of Mr. Brokensha and a girl.

"The shark made its first attack and seized the girl, bit her and mauled her side before wheeling around for a second attack.

"As Mr. Brokensha saw the shark return he caught hold of its tail, but it threw him off. He returned to the attack, wrestling with the shark and raining blows on it with his fists.

**ARM SEVERED**

"He tried to drag the girl away from its grip but her swimsuit came off in his hands. The shark severed the girl's left arm and then made off. Mr. Brokensha pulled the girl into shallow water and carried her to the beach.

"His brave action was instrumental in causing the shark to leave its victim, who would have lost her life without his intervention."

The George Cross and the George Medal were instituted by King George VI in World War II, primarily for civilians performing acts of great heroism in circumstances of extreme danger. It is also conferred on members of the fighting services whose gallant actions have occurred on occasions when no military honour can be granted. Next to the George Cross, the George Medal is the highest civilian award for gallantry.

(The first George Medal award for a shark attack rescue was to Larry Nilsen, now a Kingsborough Town Councillor, for his effort in rescuing a lifesaving colleague, George Plowman, at Winkelspruit, on November 29, 1951. The award was made about two years later.)

**ATTACKED LION**

The London Gazette also announces tonight the award of the George Medal to an African tribesman, Lillian Daka, who fought off a fully-grown lion that was trying to snatch a child.

"The child died of her injuries. Daka was severely mauled but recovered.—(Sapa-Reuters.)



PAUL BROKENSCHA



JULIA PAINTING

# NOW JULIA'S PLAYING + TENNIS—With One Arm

"SUNDAY TIMES" CORRESPONDENT

BULAWAYO, Saturday.

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**JULIA PAINTING**, back at school and as vivacious as ever she was before she was savaged by a shark at Margate in December, has learned that she will have to undergo another operation.

She said in dismay: "Oh, not again!" Then she said happily: "But I'll do anything the doctors say is necessary. Everyone has been so kind."

Julia is learning to play the piano one-handed. Her left arm was torn off by the shark.

Now it is found that the middle finger of her right hand has been affected. It will be operated on immediately after the Easter holidays.

She saw the wounds on the left side of her body this week for the first time.

*Feb 23/58*  
**She Jives**

"Would you like to see how your wounds are coming on?" her mother asked when she was applying fresh dressings.

"It's all right, Mom," replied Julia, biting her lip. "I have already had a peep. They're not as bad as I thought."

In spite of the troublesome finger, Julia is learning to play tennis with one arm, and is doing well.

She goes visiting, she attends parties at which she is usually the life and soul. She is especially keen on jiving.

"I won't let anything get me down," she says.

The shark victim fund in Bulawayo has passed £500. The biggest single donation was from Mr. Paul Brokensha, of Fort Victoria, who rescued Julia.

He and his business partner sent the fund a cheque for 100 guineas.

