

ACTIVITY: Wading

CASE: [GSAF 1958.06.26](#)

DATE: Thursday June 26, 1958

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico off Sanibel Island, Florida, USA.

NAME: Eric N. Cockerill

DESCRIPTION: He was a 59-year-old male from Sanibel Island. He was wearing yellow swim trunks.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, June 24, 1958

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was murky.

ENVIRONMENT: The incident took place on one of two sandbars running parallel to the shore.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 30 feet

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: Three feet

TIME: 17h30

NARRATIVE: Cockerill was alone in the water, and reported that he seemed to just step into the shark's mouth with his right foot. The shark was evidently resting on the bottom. Cockerill braced himself on his left leg and raised his right foot out of the water, exposing the head of a large fish with its jaws clamped onto his foot. As the head cleared the water, the jaws relaxed and the fish disappeared. The shark made no further passes at the wader.

INJURY: The shark bit Cockerill across the middle of his right foot. The bottom of the foot has a slightly curved cut; the top of the foot, in line with the bottom cut, was torn or shredded as if by many small teeth set close together.

FIRST AID: Cockerill made his way a considerable distance to his home where he got help from a plastic surgeon who was visiting the Island. The surgeon controlled the bleeding and gave him something for pain. He was then taken to Lee County Memorial Hospital.

TREATMENT: At the hospital, Dr. Wisnant cleaned and sutured the injuries, and they subsequently healed satisfactorily.

On January 22, 1959, the patient was transferred to Dr. Robert N. Greenwood, orthopedic surgeon in Sarasota who is treating him for the following complaints: Cockerill is now unable to walk up the steps of a ladder; he has numbness of the sole and outer border of his foot which interferes with his walking, and he frequently stumbles, his foot aches, especially the large toe whenever he is cold. X-rays showed nothing exceptional except very diffuse osteoporosis from disuse. It was suggested that he change his profession from that of a carpenter to some other skill as, considering his age, no treatment is recommended other than allowing for the passage of time which it is expected will improve his symptoms.

SPECIES INVOLVED: It was thought that the "large fish" described by Cockerill was a nurse shark. He got a good look at the shark's head and noticed that it was brown in color, the snout was not pointed; the mouth was oval and had "real brown thick lips". From the



scars on his foot it is estimated that the width of the mouth was approximately 14 centimetres, indicating the shark was at least 2.1 metres [7'] in length.

NOTE: This is classed as a provoked incident; Cockerill apparently (inadvertently) stepped on the shark.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Eugenie Clark