

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 1981.09.15](#)

DATE: September 15, 1981

LOCATION: The attack took place in Tampa Bay, Manatee County, Florida, USA.

NAME: Mark Meeker

DESCRIPTION: He was a 26-year-old male from New Jersey.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, September 13, 1981

NARRATIVE: Mark Meeker bet friends he could swim three miles across south Tampa Bay. He planned to swim from the Anna Maria City Pier to Egmont Key, a small island near the mouth of the bay. He was last seen alive 250 yards north of the pier. When his friends lost sight of him they called the Coast Guard. Three Coast Guard vessels, a helicopter crew and a fire department rescue searched for him without success.

INJURY: Fatal. The next morning Meeker's body was recovered two miles west of Egmont Key. An autopsy confirmed that he bled to death as result of an eight-inch shark bite to his right calf.

SPECIES: It was speculated the incident involved either a tiger shark or hammerhead shark, but no species identification was made.

SOURCES: S. Pelham, M.D.; New York Times, September 21, 1981, page 18, column.1; Electa Pace, Florida Shark Attack File; Pacific Stars and Stripes (Tokyo, Japan), Tuesday, September 22, 1981

Shark kills Tampa Bay swimmer

TAMPA, Fla. (UPI) — A New Jersey man who tried to swim three miles across south Tampa Bay on a bet was attacked by a shark and bled to death, the Coast Guard said.

An autopsy performed on the body of Mark Meeker, 26, confirmed he bled to death of an eight-inch shark bite in his right calf, said Seaman Marvin Lynch of St. Petersburg's Coast Guard office.

Meeker, whose hometown was unknown, was spending summer vacation in Tampa, the Coast Guard said.

He was the second person this year to die of shark attacks along Florida's coasts.

He bet friends he could swim the three miles from the Anna Maria City Pier to Egmont Key, a small island near the mouth of Tampa Bay.

He dived into the bay and was last seen about 250 yards north of the pier. When friends lost sight of him, they called the Coast Guard.

Three Coast Guard vessels, a helicopter crew and a fire department rescue squad searched for him without success.

The next morning, Bud Protiva, skipper of the pleasure craft Sea Jeep, spotted Meeker's body about two miles west of Egmont Key.

Nineteen-year-old Christy Wapniarski was attacked in August by a shark about two miles off Ormond Beach after a catamaran she and three others were sailing capsized in heavy seas.

Several other Florida swimmers have had brushes with sharks this season.