

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 1982.08.29.a](#) / SA-302

DATE: Sunday August 29, 1982

LOCATION: The incident took place in Langebaan Lagoon, 129 kilometres north-west of Table Bay, South Africa.

33°08'S, 18°04'E

NAME: Verinia Keet

DESCRIPTION: The swimmer, an 18-year-old female, is 1,53 metres tall and weighs 65 kilograms. She was clad in a black swim suit, but wore no jewellery. She had no injuries before the incident and did not have her menstrual period. A student at Bonteheuwel High School, she was visiting the lagoon with her classmates and their teacher, Miss Gill Whenman.



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear and it was a very hot day according to swimmer and witnesses. The meteorological station, however recorded temperatures of 11,2° to 14,3°C and 17,2 millimetres of rain fell. At 08h00 the sky was overcast with 8/8 cloud cover and no wind, at 14h00 it was still completely overcast and there was a fresh 20-knot south-south-easterly breeze.

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, August 26, 1982

SEA CONDITIONS: The water in the lagoon was warm and very clear. There was no current but a strong backwash was present. High tide at Saldanha Bay was at 13h43.

ENVIRONMENT: Langebaan Lagoon - 16 kilometres long and 4,5 kilometres wide - is connected to Saldanha Bay by a narrow channel. Only six metres deep at its maximum and 10°C warmer than the bay, it is a beautiful stretch of sheltered water. A large variety of fish are found in the lagoon and the mudbanks, which are exposed at low tide, are a feeding ground for many species of birds, including flamingoes. Once it held immense beds of oysters, but they were killed by temperature changes; now the bottom of the lagoon is littered with more than thirty million tons of shells, oyster shells are piled to a depth of seven metres in places.

No one was fishing nearby at the time of the incident. A fisherman who was staying in a cottage adjacent to Keet's remarked that there was little plankton at sea and the sharks were moving closer inshore in search of food. He had caught a number of sharks in the nets for some weeks before the incident.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Between 500 and 700 metres

DEPTH: The water was deep, Keet could not stand.

TIME: 12h00

NARRATIVE: Verinia Keet and two friends swam from shore towards a dinghy some distance from the beach. When one of her friends felt something rough brush against his leg he suggested that they turn back, but was evidently dissuaded because the three continued to swim further out. They had been in the water for about 15 minutes when Keet tired. She rested on the surface and told her friends to go on without her; one continued to swim and was two metres ahead of her, the other was alongside on her right when she was bitten by

the shark. She screamed and ripped her leg from the shark's mouth. The trio returned at once to the shore.

INJURY: Keet's left leg was bitten; the bite marks extended along the lateral side of her leg from below the knee towards her ankle with five-millimetre gaps between the wounds. There were deep jagged gashes on the shin of her right leg and a ragged cut under her calf. The medial side of her foot was lacerated and there were lacerations below the heel.

FIRST AID: After they reached the beach Keet was carried to a beach cottage where ice cubes wrapped in a towel were applied to the wound to slow the bleeding. Then, she was driven to Hopetown for treatment.

TREATMENT: The swimmer was treated by the District Surgeon, Dr Nel. Fifty stitches were needed to close the wounds. The lacerations, each about 2/3 centimetre in length, resembled stab wounds.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine