

**ACTIVITY:** Probable drowning and scavenging

**CASE:** [GSAF 1983.12.07](#) / SA-318

**DATE:** December 7, 1983

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at LaMercy, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

**NARRATIVE:** Two human feet and remnants of human abdominal wall were found in the gut of a Zambesi shark, (TAG LM-83014) caught in the shark nets at La Mercy on December 7, 1983. On dissection Natal Sharks Board researcher Robert Wilson found: two feet removed at the ankle joints, 10 portions of human flesh (a combined mass of 710 grams) believed to have originated from the victim's groin, 13 portions of muscle and fatty tissue weighing 1 620 grams, a small section of long bone (possibly fibula) and a patella. Several teeth in the centre of the upper jaw of the shark were damaged.

Forensic examination, conducted by the State Pathologist, Professor Nel, indicated the remains were those of an Asiatic male in his late teens. The fact that the two feet had been cleanly removed at the ankle joints without any damage to the articulating surfaces was a strong indication that they were removed by the shark after the death of the victim during rigor mortis; the presence of lacerations on the feet would have suggested their owner had kicked out in an attempt to ward off an attacker.

It was speculated that the remains might be those of an 18-year-old male who was swept out to sea through a channel in the rocks at an unprotected (lacking shark nets) beach a kilometre north of Christmas Bay (Christmas Bay is 18 kilometres from La Mercy) on December 4, 1983. At the time of his disappearance the youth was clad in denim jeans rolled up over his knees. Another man tried to reach him but the sea was extremely rough and no boats could be launched to search for his body.

**SPECIES:** A 1.74-metre, 116-kilogram Zambesi shark

**CASE INVESTIGATORS:** Robert B. Wilson, Jeremy Cliff, Beulah Davis and Graeme Charter, Natal Sharks Board.