

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1984.01.05 / SA-322

DATE: Thursday January 5, 1984

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Kelly's Beach, Port Alfred, 118 kilometres from East London and 135 kilometres from Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

33°36'S, 26°54'E

NAME: Robert Tennent

DESCRIPTION: He is a 14-year-old male, 1,69 metres tall, weighs 53 kilograms and was clad in a light blue swim suit. He wore no jewelry and had no injuries before the incident.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The air temperature was about 22°C. The sky was sunny and there was a slight south-westerly breeze.

MOON PHASE: New Moon, January 3, 1984

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was green, but clear and cold, estimated sea surface temperature was 16°C. No channel was present, and mean low tide occurred at 11h17.

ENVIRONMENT: The incident took place just south of the open mouth of the Kowie River close to where Manning Samuels was bitten by a shark about 1932. About 75 people were on the beach and about 20 were in the water (all of them were within 20 metres of Tennent and five or six were within three metres of him) when he was injured by the shark. He was not on the edge of the crowd but was isolated from the others by a distance of two to three metres. No one was fishing at the time of the incident, nor were there any obvious shark attractants in the immediate vicinity but dolphins were sighted around the time Tennent was bitten by the shark.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 10 to 15 metres from the beach and about 50 metres from the rocks.

DEPTH: One metre

TIME: 09h30

NARRATIVE: Robert Tennent had been in the water for about 10 minutes and was standing, facing seaward, with his right heel slightly raised as the shark approached from behind. "A wave broke over me and then I felt something clamp on to the back of my right heel. At first I thought it was one of my friends, then a crab - it was painful." The shark made a single bite, shaking Tennent slightly for less than five seconds. Tennent swung around and saw the shark's head as it released its hold. "I saw the rear of the dorsal fin and tail in the water in front of me. It's back was a greenish-olive colour but at no time did I see the entire shark," he said. "I tried to shout a warning, but my voice was paralyzed. Then, when I realized the shark was gone, I calmed down." Tennent walked ashore unaided.



Robert Tennent

INJURY: There was a three-centimetre laceration along the Achilles tendon. Two series of teeth marks, each incision 1,2 to 1,8 centimetres in length, extended from the laceration, under his foot and continued up the outside of his heel.

FIRST AID: Lifesavers did not treat Tennent on the beach. His mother, Mrs H.M. Tennent, washed the wound under a tap and drove with her son to Dr Dempers' surgery which is located about five minutes from the beach.

TREATMENT: No X-rays were taken. Dr Dempers photographed the wound and sutured the laceration located near the Achilles tendon.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Tennent identified the shark as a raggedtooth shark about 0,9 to 1,2 metres in length.

SOURCES: Interviews with Mrs. Tennent; Dr. T. Counihan and Dr. Clement

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine

