



ACTIVITY: Body surfing

CASE: [GSAF 1984.10.21.b](#)

DATE: Sunday October 21, 1984

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean at Wabasso Beach, Indian River County, Florida, USA.

NAME: Larry Peebles

DESCRIPTION: He was a 22-year-old male from Sebastian.

BACKGROUND

ENVIRONMENT: An early influx of migratory sharks along Florida's northeast coast could well translate into a premature arrival of the razor-toothed travelers in South Florida, according to Dr. Sam Gruber of Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Miami. "I would speculate these sharks would show up early, perhaps in January or February, but there are a lot of factors that control those migrations."

TIME: 14h00

NARRATIVE: No details. He disappeared about a mile from where Sandra Fletcher bitten 30 minutes earlier. Authorities spent much of Sunday afternoon searching in vain for his body. Witnesses said the man suddenly went under the water and never reappeared. A lifeguard tried to find him, but failed.

INJURY: Fatal. His body was recovered Tuesday afternoon. Death was due to drowning.

SOURCES: The Philadelphia Inquirer, October 24, 1984, page D9

Candace Turtle, Miami Herald, October 22, 1984, page 18 and Mark Potok, Miami Herald, October 29, 1984, page 17A

The Evening Independent, October 24, 1984, page 14

Woman attacked by shark raises safety questions

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Now that Sandra Fletcher is pretty certain she won't lose the use of her right arm because of a shark attack Sunday afternoon, she has some questions she wants answered.

Why weren't there any signs posted near the water now that six shark attacks — including her own — have been reported in the past month along Florida's Atlantic coast?

Why weren't there any radio alerts when, only hours before, someone else was attacked by a shark in the same general area near Vero Beach?

So far, the Clearwater woman says,

she hasn't gotten any answers. But she's been talking to just about anybody willing to listen in order to get the word out.

"It seems that there's just an awful lot right now that's happened, and they needed to have alerts on the radio because we didn't hear anything about these attacks," said Ma. Fletcher from Indian River Memorial Hospital this morning.

The director of the Indian River County Park and Recreation Department could not be reached this morning for comment.

An Indian River Sheriff's Department spokesman said the water in which Ma. Fletcher was surfing borders a private beach, but there are no laws against public use of the water.

The spokesman said he did not know if any warnings had been posted at the nearby state park.

The Clearwater woman and three friends had gone camping and three surfing this past weekend in waist-deep water. She was attacked about 20 feet offshore three miles south of Sebastian Inlet in northern Indian River County.

The body of another shark victim, Larry Peeples, 22, was found Tuesday afternoon. He disappeared about a mile south of where Miss Fletcher was attacked.

Although the shore area is not state-operated, Ms. Fletcher said it's considered a popular spot for body surfing. The only reason the crowd was smaller last weekend was because it

rained off and on, she said.

Ma. Fletcher, 23, described the attack Sunday afternoon as something straight out of the movies. She recalled she could see blood all around her and she kept thinking that would only attract the shark even more.

But after she went down the first time, came up and "started screaming bloody murder," Ma. Fletcher said, the shark left her alone.

She guessed this morning that the choppy water may have sent the animal off course.

The shark severed nerves and tendons in Ms. Fletcher's right forearm, leaving a nine-inch gash. Ms. Fletcher was operated on Monday and underwent a second operation Tuesday for 3½ hours.

"The doctor told me I wouldn't be here today if it had been a fraction of an inch closer to my main artery," she said.

If all goes well, Ma. Fletcher said, doctors have told her she could regain use of her arm within six months. Ma. Fletcher is a physical education teacher at St. Paul's School in Largo.

Six shark attacks have been reported in the past month between Stuart and Daytona Beach, along Florida's east coast.

One Indian River County lifeguard has said shark sightings are common this time of the year because the sharks follow bait fish migrating south.

Information from the Associated Press was used in this story.

