

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 1988.04.14.b

DATE: Thursday April 14, 1988

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean off Singer Island, Palm Beach County, Florida.

NAME: Kenny Burns

DESCRIPTION: He is a 15-year-old male.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, April 16, 1988



NARRATIVE: Kenny Burns was paddling his board when a shark seized his hand.

INJURY: Multiple lacerations and punctures to his right hand.

TREATMENT: The surfer was treated by Dr. Eileen Engel. It took 40 stitches to repair lacerations to the surfer's hand, but he regained full use his hand.

SPECIES: Not identified.

SOURCES: Palm Beach Post, Saturday April 16, 1988, page 1; Dr. Eileen Engel

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Electa Pace, Florida Shark Attack File

Shark attacks close beach at Riviera

By JOE BROGAN
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

RIVIERA BEACH — A New Jersey man Friday became the third victim attacked in two days along a half-mile stretch of Singer Island teeming with sharks in a bait-fish feeding frenzy.

Robert B. Nicholson III of Oak Ridge was bitten on the left foot and left hand while swimming near the Sheraton Ocean Inn, 3200 N. Ocean Blvd.

Heather Riley, 18, of Boston, who was swimming with Nicholson, said he was about 50 yards offshore when the shark attacked at about 6:45 p.m. "He kicked it and got away and then ran to the hotel," she said. "He lost a lot of blood and had a serious cut on the top of his foot."

Nicholson, 24, was taken to St. Mary's Hospital, where doctors were determining Friday night whether surgery was necessary.

"If we had known there were sharks in the water, we never would have gone in," Riley said.



HILLARY SLOBBY/Staff Photographer

Usually an avid swimmer, Hal Hemmings of Lake Park decided to work on his tan Friday when he heard that Singer Island waters were teeming with sharks.

Please see SHARKS/14A

Lifeguards close beach park after 3 attacks by sharks

SHARKS/from 1A

They were swimming in an unguarded portion of the beach. Much of Singer Island's beachfront is unguarded.

Lifeguards closed guarded portions of the beaches to swimming Friday when spinner sharks up to 6 feet long attacked schools of bait fish in water as shallow as 2 feet.

"The only people out there are the surfers, and they're taking their lives in their hands," said Brian McManus, lifeguard captain at Ocean Reef Park. "Sharks are thrashing in the surf and they're going for everything that moves. They're everywhere."

No other shark problems were reported by lifeguards throughout Palm Beach County and the Treasure Coast Friday.

Trough holds fish for sharks

"There are more shark attacks on Singer Island than anywhere else in the county, and experts have blamed a trough in the sea floor that runs along the beach just offshore. Bait fish tend to congregate there, the experts say, and sharks follow them in.

Even before Nicholson was attacked, Palm Beach County's Ocean Reef Park and the Riviera Beach Municipal Beach were closed Friday because of two shark attacks on Singer Island surfers Thursday.

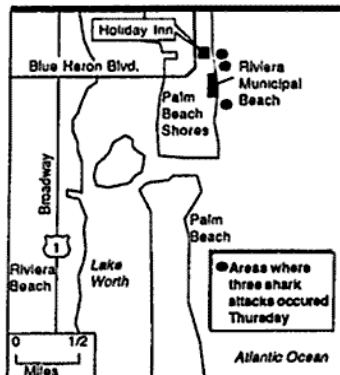
Riviera Beach reopened its beach later Friday.

In one Thursday incident, Joe Costa, 19, of Miami was bitten on the left foot as he lay on his surfboard 150 feet offshore near the Sand Dune Shores Apartments in Palm Beach Shores. The area is just south of the Riviera Beach Municipal Beach.

Costa was in stable condition Friday in St. Mary's Hospital.

Thursday's other victim, Kenneth Burns, 15, of 8832 Lyndall Lane in Lake Park, was paddling for shore on his board off the Holiday Inn at 3700 N. Ocean Blvd. when a shark seized his right hand, he said Friday.

Burns, a freshman at Palm Beach Gardens High School, said he pulled his hand free but it took 40



stitches to repair the cut.

In addition, a Wisconsin woman was bitten by a shark two weeks ago off the Ocean Mall in Singer Island.

About 250 disgruntled beachgoers sat on the sand at Ocean Reef Park Friday morning.

"We're not letting them in the water even to get their feet wet and a lot of people are peeved," McManus said.

Sharks fascinate tourists

He said seasonal visitors were awe-struck by the sharks' acrobatics.

"You can see them jump and thrash back and forth before they hit the water again," he said.

A low pressure area caused unusual 7- to 8-foot waves, he said, and caused more movement of bait fish.

"When fish move around, sharks chase them," he said. "This month has been terrible. We've had the beach closed for about half this month so far on account of sharks."

McManus also said there have been occasional sightings earlier this month of much larger black-tip and hammerhead sharks off the park — some of them more than 8 feet long.

"The waves are breaking 200 yards offshore, so it's a great ride in," he said.

Teenage surfers swarm the area when schools let out for the day, he said, with as many of 150 of them battling each other for the big, rolling waves.