

Manasota Beach



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ACTIVITY: Standing

CASE: [GSAF 1992.07.21](#)

DATE: Tuesday July 21, 1992

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico at Manasota Beach, Sarasota County, Florida, USA.

NAME: Ann Suits

DESCRIPTION: She is a 42-year-old female

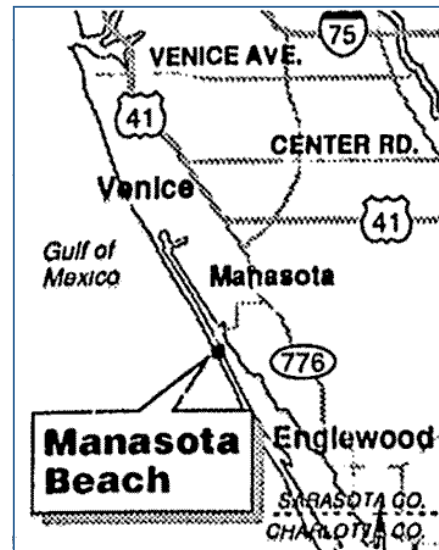
BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Third Quarter, July 22, 1992

ENVIRONMENT: Manasota Beach is located at the west end of Manasota Beach Road, between the Gulf and the Intracoastal Waterway.

DEPTH OF WATER: Knee-deep

TIME: 12h33



NARRATIVE: Ann Suits was standing in the water with her 9-year-old son (who was 10 feet away) when she was bumped, sideswiped and then her foot was grabbed. She was carried from the water by her brother-in-law, Keith Bloomer.

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INJURY: Suits was bitten on her left foot. According to orthopedic surgeon Joseph James Calwell, Suits sustained seven cuts including a deep wound under her big toe. She did not suffer any bone fractures or nerve damage.

FIRST AID: Two nurses who were on the beach wrapped her foot and remained with her until Sarasota County Fire Department paramedics arrived.

TREATMENT: She was admitted to Englewood Hospital where 25 stitches were used to repair the injuries.

SPECIES: Not identified but local experts believed the incident involved a small shark.

SOURCE: Sarasota Herald Tribune, Thursday July 23, 1992, page 1

Swimmer Bitten; Shark Is Suspected

By JAN ANGILELLA
Staff Writer

A vacationing Illinois woman has been bitten while swimming at Manasota Beach, and a marine scientist said Wednesday that her assailant was probably a shark.

Ann Suits, 42, was recovering in Englewood Hospital on Wednesday after receiving 25 stitches in her left foot.

She said she did not see what caused the seven cuts and lacerations on her foot Tuesday at 12:33 p.m. But Robert Hueter, the director of shark research at the Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota, said that the nature of the attack makes it likely to have been a shark.

"It's yucky," Suits said. "He took out some chunks."

Dr. Joseph James Caldwell, an orthopedic surgeon, said Suits suffered seven cuts including a deep wound under the big toe, but no

bone fractures or nerve damage. He said that he planned to take the bandages off Friday for another look at the wound under the toe, but that he expected a full recovery.

What caused the wounds?

"I don't think we'll know for sure," Caldwell said. "We have her on antibiotics to prevent infection because we don't know what bit her."

He ruled out a barracuda because of the jagged wound on the bottom of her foot. A barracuda would have caused smaller and probably deeper wounds because their teeth are sharper and smaller, he said.

"These are big cuts," he said. "She's very lucky."

But Hueter said that this is the time of year when sharks enter shallow water because it's so warm. And judging by Suits' description of the attack, he said, it sounds like a shark attack to him.

"She was bumped and side-swiped, then it grabbed her foot," Hueter said. "She either walked across the shark or it came up to her."

Suits had arrived from Illinois on Monday for a three-week vacation. She went snorkeling at the beach Tuesday with her family.

She and her 9-year-old son, Darren, were standing in knee-deep water when she felt "this horren-

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Small Shark Is Likely Culprit In Attack at Manasota Beach

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dous, strong push against me," she said in a telephone interview from her hospital room. "I thought, 'I'll move my feet,' and I did, and then there was a numbing pressure."

She raised her foot out of the water and saw her injuries. Her first thought was her son, standing 10 feet away.

"I yelled, 'Get him out of the water!'" she said.

She was carried out of the water by her brother-in-law, Keith Bloomer, and a crowd of others. Two nurses, who had been sunbathing at the beach, wrapped her foot and stayed with her until Sarasota County Fire Department paramedics arrived a few minutes later.

Sarasota County paramedic Jack Conrad said the wounds were long and deep, like shark bites.

"It looked like its full mouth made contact with her foot," he said. "I've been a diver for years. I don't know of anything else in the water that does that, that close to the shore."

If Suits was attacked by a shark, the creature was probably no longer than three feet, and probably wasn't looking to her for dinner, said Mote Marine's Hueter.

And he added that the attack shouldn't alarm beachgoers in Southwest Florida.

"This kind of thing happens 10 to 12 times a year in the state," he said. "We do have minor attacks

like this in the area once in a while. From all indications, if this was a shark, it was a small one."

He said it was probably a young shark that wasn't familiar with the waters.

"The important thing here is there was no attempt to eat the person," Hueter said. "It either decided she wasn't suitable prey or wanted to make a statement and leave."

Other shark attacks have been suspected in the Tampa Bay area over the years, including:

■ A 31-year-old Largo man was attacked in June 1991 as he was swimming alongside a sailboat in Tampa Bay. The man suffered injuries to his leg and abdomen.

■ A man died in 1981 after a suspected shark attack. The man was bitten on the leg as he tried to swim from Anna Maria Island to Passage Key, and tied a swimming suit around his leg to stop the bleeding. Authorities said at the time that they didn't know whether he drowned or bled to death.

■ The leg of a 7-year-old Fort Lauderdale girl was mangled in 1986 when she accidentally stepped on a lemon shark in shallow water off Sanibel Island, in Lee County.

Darren Suits said Wednesday that he'd looked up when his mother yelled. He said he "saw her foot, and I ran out" of the water. He added that for the rest of his vacation, he'll do his swimming in his uncle's pool.