

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 2004.07.27.b](#)

DATE: Tuesday July 27, 2004

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean opposite the Ocean Boulevard beach access point at Carolina Beach, New Hanover County, North Carolina, USA. 34.0°N, 77.9°W



NAME: Alexis Huesgen

DESCRIPTION: The swimmer is a 13-year-old female from Severn, Maryland, on vacation with her family. She is 5'4¾" and weighs 113 pounds. She was wearing a two-piece bathing suit: light blue with white and green flowers. She wore no jewelry, was not menstruating and had no injuries prior to the incident.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear, air temperature was 83°F and the wind was from the south at nine knots.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, July 31, 2004

SEA CONDITIONS: There were swells and the water was warm (81°F), green and murky. Underwater visibility was three to four feet and a south-to-north current was flowing. High tide was at 16h16.

ENVIRONMENT: Carolina Beach, just 30 minutes from downtown Wilmington by car, is on a narrow slip of land between the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean. Separated from the mainland by the Intracoastal Waterway (Snow's Cut), the island is called Pleasure Island. The incident took place two miles north of a pier and 100 yards south of some pier pilings. There is a sandbar opposite the site; it is 50 yards from shore at low tide, 75 yards from shore at high tide.

According to the police, "there was a lot of marine activity in the water." Jim Broderick and Jonathan Moss said they saw large fish three to four feet in length jumping offshore beyond the pier pilings to the north of the incident site. Lisa Thomas told WECT-TV in Wilmington, N.C., that she saw a shark. "You could see the shark. It was going up along the shore here, surfacing. Everybody was just following it down the beach."

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 40 to 50 feet

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: Three and half feet

TIME: 17h00 [5 p.m.]

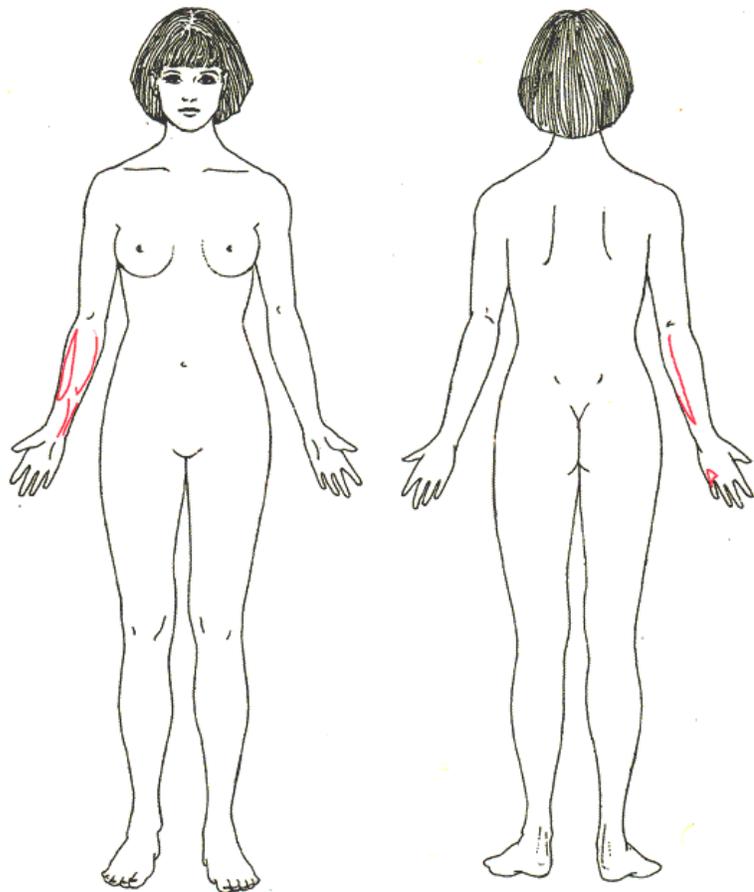
NARRATIVE: More than a hundred people were on the beach and 15 to 20 people were in the water, four of whom were within 10 feet of Alexis. She had been swimming and body-surfing for 45 minutes and was facing shoreward when the shark approached from behind and grabbed her arm. The shark apparently made two strikes, shook the girl's arm, then released her. The swimmers nearby (her family) took her to shore at once.

INJURY: Surgeon Dennis Nicks, M.D. measured the space between individual tooth impressions and said they were approximately three to four centimeters apart. The exterior and flexor tendons were lacerated. The median nerve was lying inside of the wound but it was not damaged. There were several tearing/raking lacerations to the anterior forearm

running somewhat parallel to the arm, while the back of her forearm had more puncture-like wounds. The wounds were distinct with smaller wounds interfaced.

Dr. Nicks reported that the girl's most serious injuries were to her right forearm and wrist. Eleven torn tendons were transected and repaired. He wrote: "There were bite wounds on both her index and long finger on the volar aspect of approximately the proximal and middle phalanx. There was a large laceration at the level of the volar wrist. The flexor carpi radialis had approximately a 5% laceration to it as did the flexor carpi ulnaris. The four superficialis tendons were completely divided. One of the profundus tendons had approximately a 15% laceration to it. The profundus tendon was also lacerated. On the radial volar aspect of the arm, there was another large laceration with two of the radial flexor muscle bellies divided. Turning the arm over, there was a large laceration just proximal to the wrist, the six extensor tendons going into the fingers had been divided. In addition, there were a total of 10 cm of lacerated wounds on the arm that were debrided and repaired. She also sustained puncture wounds to both sides of her wrist and lacerations on her fingers.

Dr. Nicks measured the space between individual tooth impressions and reported that they were approximately three to four centimeters apart. The exterior and flexor tendons were lacerated. The front of her arm had several tearing/raking wounds running somewhat parallel to the arm, while the back surface of her arm had more puncture-like wounds. The wounds were distinct with smaller wounds interlaced.



FIRST AID: EMS rendered first aid in the parking lot of a nearby convenience store and transported the girl to the hospital by ambulance. Thirty minutes elapsed from the incident until the girl arrived at the hospital.

TREATMENT: She was treated at New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington where she was initially treated by Dr. Ed San Miguel in the Emergency Room. Surgery was required and Dr. Dennis Nicks performed a three-hour surgical repair. No tooth fragments were recovered from her wounds. The girl was released from the hospital on Friday morning.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Some witnesses saw a shark (see images below), about four to six feet in length, swimming 20 feet off the beach. Aquarium officials thought the shark on the videotape was either a sandbar or dusky shark.

Another witness, Jim Borderick, also noticed a large fish swimming offshore and believed it was three to four-feet in length.

SOURCES: Timothy, Stephanie and Chris Huesgen; Jim Boderick, Carrie Perkins; New Hanover Regional Medial Center.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Clay Creswell, Global Shark Accident File



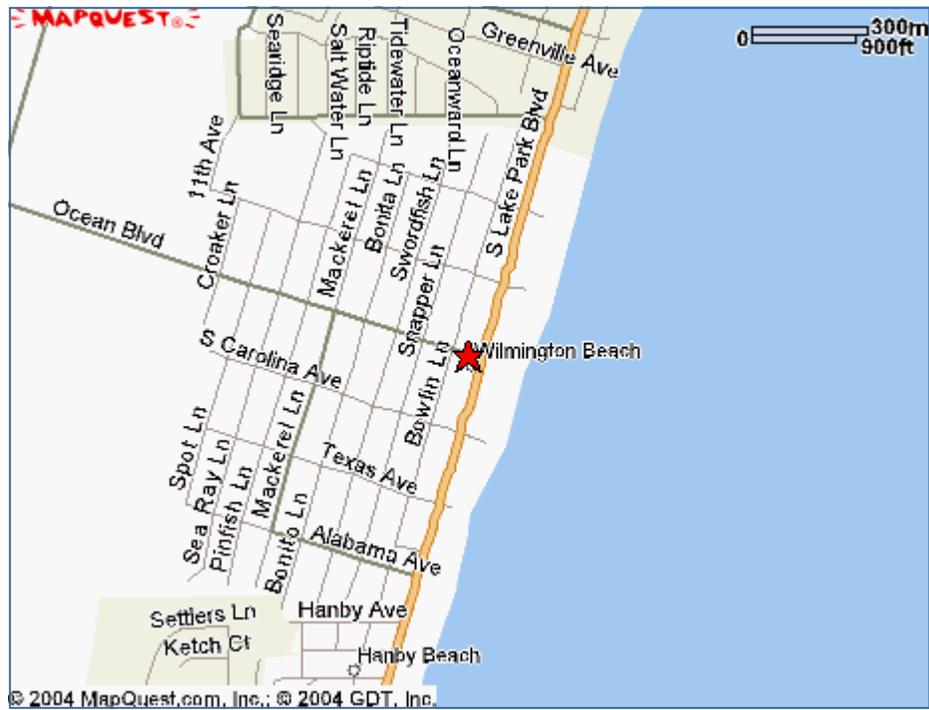
A six- to eight-foot shark was observed swimming off the beach at the time of the incident.

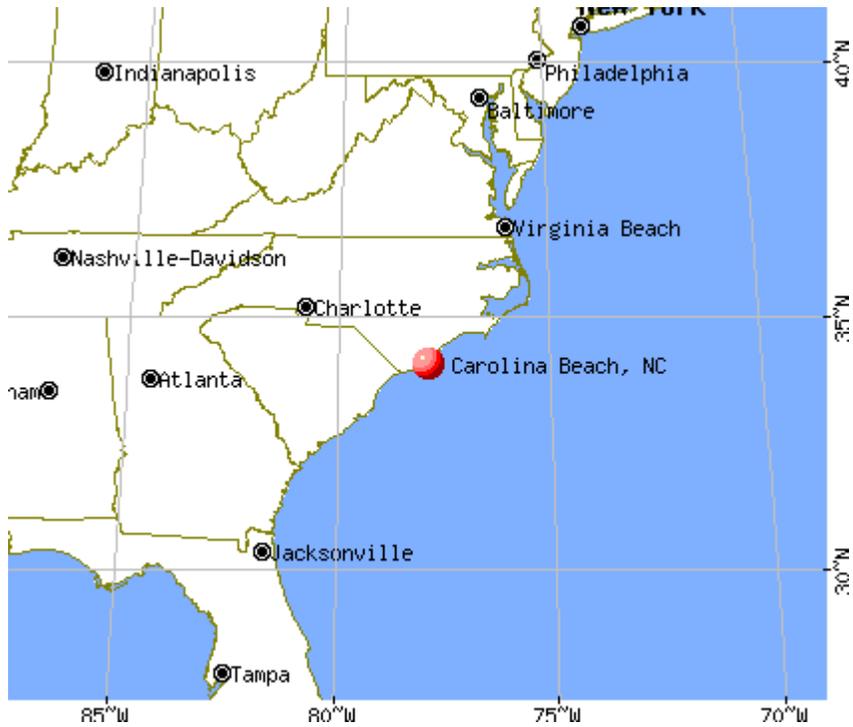
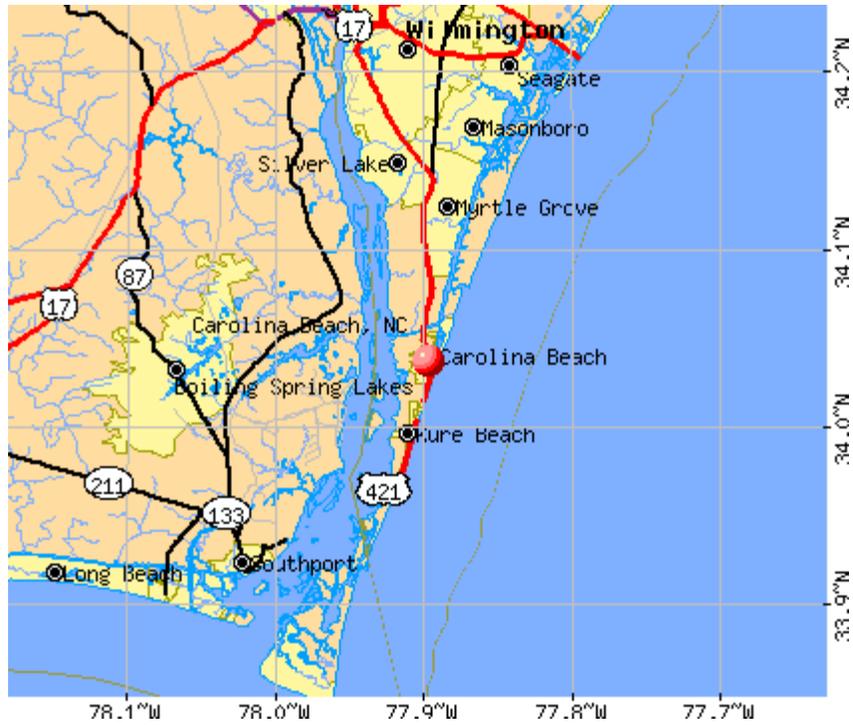
According to Major William Steel of the Carolina Beach Police Department this is the approximate incident site -- "In front of the lifeguard stand".

Pilings from Stubbs Fishing Pier approximately 100 yards from incident site (Pilings are closer than they appear in this image)

According to lifeguards and Major William Steel, there is a sandbar approximately 50 yards from shore at low tide, and 75 yards from shore at high tide

Fishing pier approximately two miles from incident site. "Pier is closer than it appears in this image."





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