ACTIVITY: Wading
CASE: GSAF 1957.01.05 / SA-116
DATE: Monday January 5, 1957
LOCATION: The incident took place near rocks on the southern bank of the Umgeni River mouth, seven kilometres north of Durban Harbour, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
29°48’S, 31°02,5’E

NAME: Sydney Victor Williams
DESCRIPTION: The was a 12-year-old coloured male.

BACKGROUND
WEATHER: Durban beaches were crowded and the entire province was experiencing a hot spell; in Durban the noontime temperature was 30,7°C. The sky was clear and cloudless; 15 people were treated for sunburn at Addington Hospital.
SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was calm, but the water in the river mouth was turbid and dirty.
ENVIRONMENT: Small hammerhead sharks were being caught off the South Pier in Durban. Although migratory fish were keeping to deeper water, fishing was particularly good off the Umgeni River mouth and anglers were catching large number of barracouta Thyrsites atun.
DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Unknown
DEPTH: One metre
TIME: Unknown

NARRATIVE: Sydney Victor Williams and his 15-year-old brother, Christy, had been swimming in the Umgeni River mouth when they were called from the water by their mother. They were walking towards her through the shallows, close to the rocks on the southern bank of the river, when Sydney suddenly threw his hands into the air and vanished beneath the surface.

INJURY: Fatal, next day his body was recovered at Vetch’s Pier, six kilometres south of the Umgeni River mouth.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Unknown

COMMENT: In a newspaper account of the tragedy Sydney’s sister was said to have seen his body carried out to sea by the current. However, at the inquest, Detective Sergeant Carl Maritz, S.A.P., who investigated the case, testified that wounds on the body indicated the boy had been taken by a shark.

SOURCES: Personal interview with Carl Maritz and newspaper articles.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine

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A 12-year-old Coloured boy who was drowned at the Umgeni River mouth on January 5, could have been taken by a shark, according to evidence contained in inquest papers which were filed in Durban yesterday.

The boy, Sydney Victor Williams, of 8 Westgate Street, Observatory, Cape Town, was on holiday in Durban when the tragedy occurred. The inquest magistrate, Mr. C. B. Reynecke, recorded a verdict of misadventure, death due to drowning. The boy’s body was recovered at Vetch’s Pier some time later.

**DETECTIVE’S EVIDENCE**

Detective Sergeant Carl Maritz, S.A.P., who investigated the case, stated that from marks on the body it appeared to have been taken by a shark. “When the river is in flood sharks abound in the dirty water off the Umgeni River mouth and I have personally seen sharks enter the river mouth. It is possible that the deceased was taken by a shark when he vanished in the water,” said Detective-Sergeant Maritz.

Sydney’s 15-year-old brother, Christy Williams, stated that they were both swimming near the Umgeni River mouth on January 5.

Their mother called to them and while they were crossing the river in water which was waist deep, Sydney suddenly vanished under the water, throwing his hands in the air.