

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 1959.05.07

DATE: Thursday May 7, 1959

LOCATION: The attack took place at Baker Beach, San Francisco, California, USA.



NAME: Albert Kogler, Jr.

DESCRIPTION: He was an 18-year-old male, a student at San Francisco State College. He was wearing black and white swimming trunks and had no injuries prior to the attack.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a warm and sunny day.

MOON PHASE: New Moon, May 7, 1959

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was warm and clear, visibility was three to four metres. The water was cold; sea surface temperature, recorded 2.5 km north of the incident site was 13.9°C.

ENVIRONMENT: The bottom drops off rapidly from the beach.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 yards from shore and 30 feet west of a metal structure (masthead) that protruded from the water.

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 35 feet

TIME: 17h30

NARRATIVE: Kogler and a friend and classmate, 18-year-old Shirley O'Neill, arrived at the beach at 17h00, put down a blanket on the sand and entered the water 15 minutes later. They had been in the water about 15 minutes and were two metres apart and treading water. Kogler was facing the ocean (south), O'Neill was facing shorewards (north) when she heard him scream:



ALBERT KOGLER
Victim Of Shark

"Out of the corner of my eye I saw a fish surface between us. I never saw the head, fin or tail of the fish, but only a part of the middle of the body, which rose about six inches above the surface. It was gray. I did not see any other color on it. I then saw blood in the water. Al yelled, 'It's a shark'. He continued to scream, and the fish kept thrashing around for at least three minutes. I swam about 10 or 15 feet away. Then I saw Al's head above the water and called to him, 'Is the shark still there?' He did not answer the question, but called 'Help me.' I swam back to him and began pulling him toward shore. I saw no indication of the shark after that. It took me about 20 minutes to pull Al in to shore. I brought him ashore slightly toward the bridge from the metal structure that protrudes from the water."

As O'Neill neared the beach, spectators threw a fishing line to her so she and Kogler could be pulled ashore.

INJURY: Fatal. Captain Sterling B. Mutz of the Medical Corps Orthopedic Service described Kogler's wounds: "The most obvious ... was a deep jagged laceration across the posterior shoulder running along the medial inferior border of the scapula down to the rib

cage. This laceration avulsed the scapula and posterior shoulder girdle from the rib cage. The left anterior humerus also had a large avulsed flap of skin approximately 13 x 8 centimeters in area and roughly oval in shape. The margins of this were also sharp and jagged. The forearm on the left had multiple one- to three-centimeter-wide punctuate wounds. There were jagged lacerations over the flexor surface of the right forearm. The most notable of these was a jagged laceration consisting of three triangular deep wounds going down through the skin, subcutaneous tissue, muscles and tendons almost to the bone. The tendons were sharply transected and the skin distal to this point had been avulsed distally along with the underlying fat and soft tissues. The points of these three triangular wounds were approximately 3.5 to 4 centimeters separated and appeared to be inflicted by large teeth with sharp points. There were excoriations running in a longitudinal axis along the dorsum of the right hand and arm. There were also superficial excoriations over the anterior and superior chest.”

A coroner’s inquest determined cause of death to be “Exsanguination, the result of an accidental shark bite.” Description of the injuries in the coroner’s report is as follows:

“There are numerous deep lacerations of the skin, subcutaneous tissue, and muscles, particularly about the left shoulder joint with partial amputation of the left arm. Other multiple lacerations are seen on the left chest anteriorly, about the right wrist, and the dorsum of the right hand. Many of the deep lacerations have sharp edges and many of the other punctuate wounds appear like deep lacerated tooth marks. In the more clearer areas the distance from center to center of the tooth marks is 4.0 cm.”

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Kogler was moved up the beach and covered with a blanket. A devout Roman Catholic, O’Neill sprinkled seawater on Kogler’s forehead and baptized him. As the pair began the Catholic Act of Contrition, Kogler lapsed into unconsciousness.

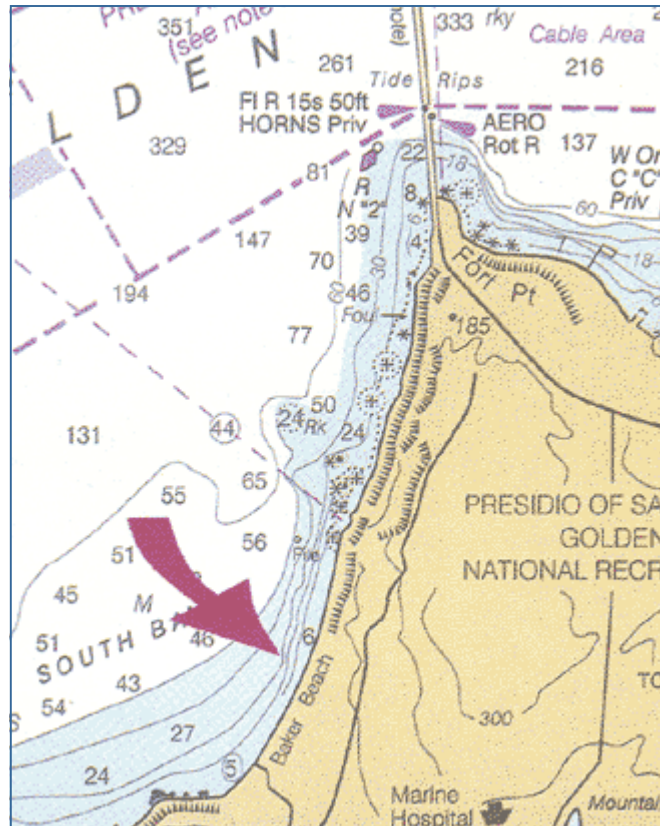
The attack had been witnessed by M. Sgt. Day from the Presidio cliffs. He arrived on the beach before Kogler was brought ashore and just as a USCG patrol boat came into view offshore. Due to the rough terrain, it took a USCG vehicle 30 to 40 minutes to reach Kogler. Finally, he was transported to Letterman Army Hospital at the Presidio. Efforts to resuscitate the young man were unsuccessful and he died at 20h15.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Measurements of the wound and dentition pattern were comparable to that produced by a white shark five metres in length.

NOTE: Shirley O’Neill received national attention for her bravery. In July 1959, California Governor Edmund C. Brown nominated her for the Young American Medal for Bravery and it was presented to her by President John F. Kennedy on March 23, 1961 at the White House. She was awarded the Carnegie Heroism Medal in 1960.

SOURCES: Ralph Collier (2003) pages 18-21
Inquest Report, dated June 11, 1959

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier.



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