

OUR REGION

SATURDAY
May 3, 2008



THE SAN DIEGO
UNION-TRIBUNE

SOLANA BEACH

'Step in the healing process'

Fellow triathletes return for their weekly swim to the area where David Martin was fatally bitten by a great white shark a week ago. **B3**



SAN DIEGO

Fleet Week kicks off

The annual salute to the region's military gets under way today with the Air & Sea Parade and the Red Bull Air Race. **B3**

EL CAJON

Family gets helping hand

An outpouring of support continues for the widow and daughters of a man killed by a big rig that crashed into his yard as he cleaned his pool. **B4**

DEATHS

Obituaries for residents of the county. **B4-B5**

OPINION

Editorials, commentary, letters and cartoons. **B6-B7**

SOLANA BEACH

Swimmers return to ocean to honor shark attack victim

By Don Norcross
STAFF WRITER

Exactly a week after a great white shark attacked David Martin, 16 swimmers returned yesterday to the waters where he was killed.

One of them was his son Jeff Martin.

The swimmers, most of them triathletes like the 66-year-old Martin, arrived at Fletcher Cove in Solana Beach shortly before 7 a.m. They held a moment of silence in thigh-deep water, and then Jeff Martin said a prayer.

"He said we were thankful for being out there," said Rick Laird of Bonsall, one of the swimmers. "And he asked for safety."

Supported by a lifeguard paddling a surfboard, the group

swam a half-mile north, turned around and returned to Fletcher Cove.

The swim is a weekly workout by members of the Triathlon Club of San Diego.

"It was a step in the healing process, both in the grieving over losing Dave, but also getting past some anxiety, the fears of swimming out there," said Rob Hill of Carmel Valley, another one of the swimmers.

Eight triathletes had joined Martin for last week's fateful swim. Hill said that only one of them participated in yesterday's workout, and that three of the people from the April 25 workout showed up yesterday but chose not to swim.

David Martin would have wanted his friends to continue, the Friday morning routine, said Hill, who organizes the

swims. "He wouldn't want us to change a thing."

Dealing with tragedy is not uncommon for triathletes, whose competitions involve swimming, cycling and running. But serious injuries, even fatalities, almost always occur when cycling.

"We all get back on our bikes and do memorial rides," Laird said. "This is a similar-type thing. It's sport. It's good to be back in the environment we all love."

After yesterday's workout, the group continued another tradition — heading across the street to the Naked Cafe for breakfast.

Chris Giles, a manager at the restaurant, watched the swimmers leave Fletcher Cove and tracked their movement across the ocean for a while.

"They did real well for it being the first swim since the attack," Giles said. "There are some things they have to go through mentally. I think this was more of a celebration of getting back to their routine."

Hill said more than 20 of David Martin's friends and acquaintances headed to the Naked Cafe for breakfast.

"There was no depression. Everyone was happy to be there," Hill said. "It was a nice break."

"Once in a while, you could see (the emotion) on individuals' faces," Giles said. "They were just being strong."

Jeff Martin could not be reached for comment.

"He seemed good and strong," Laird said. "He seemed positive."

Hill said Jeff Martin, a surfer

DETAILS

Memorial service for David Martin

Who: Service open to the public

When: 1 p.m. today

Where: Horizon Christian Fellowship, 6365 El Apajo Road in Rancho Santa Fe

Dress: Casual attire

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and triathlete like his father, swam with the front of the pack yesterday.

"(Jeff) said he looks forward to coming to those workouts, being part of the group and following his father's footsteps," Hill said.

Yesterday was the fourth time Hill has ventured into the ocean since his friend's death. He participated in a memorial paddle on Tuesday, when participants tossed flowers and leis

into the ocean.

"(Swimming) is something that I do routinely," Hill said. "I wasn't going to stop doing what I enjoy and I love for a fear of a very freak, abnormal, low-probability occurrence happening again."

The only other fatal shark attack in San Diego County occurred on April 14, 1959, when Robert Pamperin was killed off La Jolla, according to the International Shark Attack File in Gainesville, Fla.

Of yesterday's swim and the time spent with Martin's son and friends during breakfast, Hill said: "It was one of the very few moments in my life that I won't forget. I'm very honored to have been a part of it."

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