



A makeshift memorial honored shark-attack victim David Martin. Eduardo Contreras / Union-Tribune



Swimmers were urged not to enter the water along an eight-mile stretch around the attack site in Solana Beach. John Gastaldo / Union-Tribune



Distressed family members of shark-attack victim David Martin left the Solana Beach Lifeguard headquarters at Fletcher Cove yesterday. Eduardo Contreras / Union-Tribune

► SHARK ATTACK

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Victim's friends, family gather to remember him

Tide Beach Park. The shark — likely a great white — bit into both of Martin's legs as he swam about 150 yards offshore in water 20 to 30 feet deep.

Diana Noble of San Marcos was swimming 10 to 20 feet behind Martin when she heard someone yell, "Shark!"

"I thought that was a dumb thing to say," Noble said. "My brain couldn't register that it was real."

Swimmer Ken Flagg of Solana Beach heard the commotion and saw Martin being lifted in the air a few feet.

"He was waving his arms wildly back and forth. Then he went down," Flagg said.

With assistance from another female swimmer, Noble helped hold Martin up for about a minute before men in the group arrived to tow him to shore.

"Where the injuries were, it was just a massive pool of blood," Noble said.

Noble, who has competed at the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii the past two years, said the trauma will deter her from returning to the ocean anytime soon.

"It's such a freak accident," she said. "It seems surreal."

Dave Reveley, who was surfing at Fletcher Cove at the time of the attack, went to see if he could assist after the swimmers brought Martin ashore.

"He was as white as a sheet," Reveley said. "He was probably dead by the time they got him out of the water." Lifeguards and paramedics responded to the emergency "with lightning speed," he added.

Harry Romero, part of a construction crew repairing a sea wall, heard screams and ran to where Martin's body lay on the sand. Romero said he pumped Martin's chest while a lifeguard administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Martin appeared to already be dead.

"There was hardly any blood coming out by the time he was on the beach," Romero said.

Authorities said Martin's wounds were confined to his legs, neither of which was severed.

"His left leg from the knee down was just shredded," Romero said, adding that the right leg had a laceration that was open to the bone.

The shark probably was a great white between 12 and 17 feet long, said Richard Rosenblatt, a professor emeritus of marine biology at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla.

Reports from witnesses that Martin "was thrust vertically up out of the water" matches the method that white sharks typically use to ambush their prey from below, Rosenblatt said.

Nearly all white shark attacks on humans are "cases of mistaken identity," Rosenblatt said, noting that white sharks prefer the blubbery flesh of marine mammals. Martin was wearing a full, black wet suit.

He had deep, jagged lacerations from his upper thighs to the lower shins, with a bite radius of about 22 inches.

"Those are the kind of slicing wounds that you would expect from a white shark," said Rosenblatt, who examined Martin's body at the request of the county medical examiner.

After delivering a single, devastating bite, white sharks typically back away and wait for their prey to become unconscious before returning to feed.

Many people have survived attacks by white sharks. Some drive off the sharks by hitting them or poking their eyes. Others have withstood the initial attack and been able to return to shore.

Recent shark attacks worldwide

Attacks on humans by sharks of any species from 1990-2007:

Worldwide total

1,023 (99 fatal)

United States

621 (12 fatal)

California total

44

California fatal:

2

THE GREAT WHITE SHARK

Species: Carcharodon carcharias.

Features: Also called great white shark. Named for its white underbelly.

Rank: Largest predatory fish on Earth.

Size: Can grow to more than 20 feet long.

Weight: 5,000 pounds or more.

Diet: Eats fish, other sharks, marine mammals and carcasses of large animals.

Lifespan: No consensus, ranges from 30 to 100 years.

Speed: Powerful tail helps it travel up to 43 miles per hour.

Each year, female great white sharks migrate to the waters off Southern California to give birth, usually in May and June, said Jeffrey Graham, a marine biologist and shark expert at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

The shark that attacked yesterday could have been a female that had given birth and was on her way back north, Graham said.

Yesterday, helicopters from the Coast Guard and county Sheriff's Department flew along the shoreline to see if the shark was still in the area. No sharks were sighted.

"It's probably moving at one to two miles an hour, so the search area would have to expand accordingly," Graham said. "Plus, there's no way to know whether the shark went north along the coast or toward deeper water."

He offered this advice for swimmers: Don't go in waters occupied by large numbers of marine mammals, such as sea lions.

"Wherever there are marine mammals, such as in a rookery, these sharks are going to be nearby because that's what

they're built to eat," he said.

The only fatal shark attack in San Diego County listed by the International Shark Attack File in Gainesville, Fla., is the June 14, 1959, death of Robert Pamperin at Alligator Head in La Jolla.

The International Shark Attack File does not list the 1994 death of Ocean Beach resident Michelle Von Emster. Her body was found off Point Loma missing its right leg. The medical examiner at the time ruled that Von Emster had been attacked by a shark, but forensic evidence suggested that she died from falling off the cliffs.

In 2003, a series of white shark sightings at San Onofre State Beach prompted lifeguards to post warnings and advise surfers to stay out of the water.

That same protocol is being followed this weekend along the eight-mile stretch of beaches. Some cities, including San Diego, said it wasn't necessary to close their beaches.

There is no scientific basis for keeping people out of the water after a shark attack, and each agency has its own procedures, said B. Chris Brewster of San Diego, president of the U.S. Lifesaving Association.

However, Brewster said, such quarantines are understandable because public safety officials tend to "err on the side of caution" and want to appear proactive.

Yesterday evening, Martin's friends and family members huddled at B & L Bike And Sports in Solana Beach to share stories and remember him.

Bob Babbitt, publisher of *Competitor Magazine*, said he had known Martin for several years through triathlons. He described Martin as an "OK" runner, but a good cyclist and swimmer. Those three sports make up a triathlon.

People in the triathlon community are "in shock," Babbitt said.

"It's not just a hobby, it's a lifestyle," he said. "It's who we are."

Coastal North County has long been a haven for triathletes. The sport has attracted businesses to the area, such as high-end bike shops.

No county sends more amateur triathletes to Ironman Hawaii, the sport's most prestigious event.

After about an hour of the impromptu memorial at the bike shop, Martin's loved ones walked to Fletcher Cove Beach Park. They took turns carving letters in the sand: "Goodnight David."

Staff writers Debbi Farr Baker, Greg Gross, Karen Kucher, Scott LaFee, Don Norcross and Susan Schroder contributed to this report.

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Rip currents, not sharks, most common beach risk

By Tony Manolatos
STAFF WRITER

While yesterday's deadly shark attack in Solana Beach was rare and horrific, it serves as a reminder that beaches have their risks. In this county, where residents and tourists flock to the sandy shores year-round, rip currents and stingrays are common threats.

Roughly 40 million visits are logged at beaches in San Diego County each year, 24 million of them in the city of San Diego.

"Rip currents cause about 90 percent of the rescues and the majority of drownings," said Lt. Nick Lerma of the San Diego Lifeguard Service. "It's the greatest threat."

Lerma has responded to the past three shark attacks in the county, including yesterday's, and each time he hoped the public would remember that sharks aren't nearly as dangerous as some believe.

"You're much more likely to be injured or killed in a car wreck on your way to the beach," he said. "You have a greater chance at getting struck by lightning . . . But it is hard to stay calm with something this graphic."

In Solana Beach, lifeguards spend most of their days responding to people caught in rip currents, those needing medical aid and those taking unnecessary risks.

"Because we're a cliff-lined beach, we have a lot more, exposed reef and rock, so we see a lot of lacerations," said Grant Fletcher, a supervisor with the Solana Beach Department of Marine Safety. "We spend a lot of time keeping people out of sea caves and off of bluffs."

WHAT ARE THE ODDS?

The odds of being killed during a 78-year life span by:

Heart disease: 1 in 5

Cancer: 1 in 7

Stroke: 1 in 24

Hospital infection: 1 in 38

Flu: 1 in 63

Car accident: 1 in 84

Fall: 1 in 218

Drowning: 1 in 1,134

Lightning: 1 in 79,746

Train crash: 1 in 156,169

Fireworks: 1 in 340,733

Shark attack: 1 in 3,748,067

Source: Florida Museum of Natural History

In 2006, San Diego lifeguards rescued about 6,000 people from the water. They gave nearly 3,000 others minor medical aid for cuts, abrasions and encounters with stingrays and jellyfish. About 200 people were rushed to a hospital because of a heart attack, broken bones, head injuries and other serious conditions.

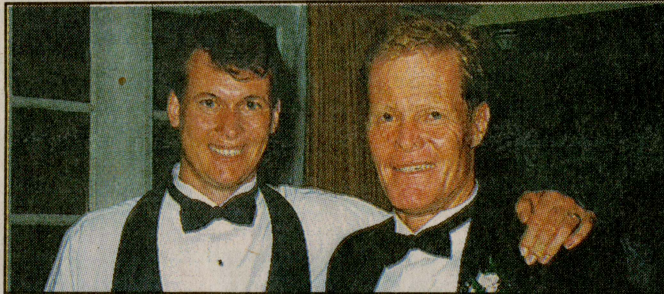
Swimmers knocked down by a wave and pulled into the ocean by a rip current should swim parallel to the shoreline.

Swimmers should shuffle their feet to avoid stingrays.

"Unless I'm having to run into the water to rescue someone, I always shuffle my feet to keep the stingrays away," Lerma said.

His best piece of advice is simple: Always swim near a lifeguard, and check with the lifeguard to find the safest areas.

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David Martin and his son Andy posed for a picture taken about five years ago. Martin family photo

Friends remember triathlete's kind smile

UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF

In the triathlon community that made up a large part of his social circle, David Martin was known as Big Dave because of his rangy build.

A retired veterinarian, Martin was known among pet owners as the man with the easy smile and big heart.

Martin, 66, who had lived in Solana Beach since 1970, was attacked by a shark and killed shortly after 7 a.m. yesterday while swimming with eight other members of the Triathlon Club of San Diego near Tide Beach Park. He was training for a triathlon, in his first ocean swim of the year.

Rob Hill, a spokesman for the club and for Martin's family, said relatives, friends and former clients were devastated.

"A lot of people can't even grasp it," Hill said. "He was loved by his clients and everyone who knew him."

Martin had four children ranging from teens to middle age. The family lives down the street from Tide Beach Park.

He had been a veterinarian in California since 1966, opening a practice on South Coast Highway 101 in a building that he still owned.

In 1986, he opened All Creatures Animal Hospital on Via de la Valle east of Del Mar with veterinarian Michael Mulvany. He sold his part of the practice in 1997 to retire but still filled in occasionally at veterinary hospitals around North County.

Mulvany said yesterday that he was in shock.

"He was a nice guy, a good vet, everybody liked him," Mulvany said. "He was a throwback to the older veterinarians. Everybody has their own bedside manner."

He was just nice and calm and relaxed."

Martin competed in triathlons for more than two decades. At more than 6 feet tall and weighing about 200 pounds, he was big as triathletes go. And he was competitive, winning his age group at the 2006 Imperial Beach Triathlon and the 2007 Solana Beach Triathlon.

"He was fabulous, in incredible shape," said Ken Flagg, who was swimming with the group when Martin was attacked. "He always had a smile on his face."

Diana Noble, who also was swimming with Martin and cradled him in the water as he slipped into unconsciousness, recalled the good days swimming with him at the San Dieguito Boys & Girls Club. At workouts that would attract top-level talent, they would take the outside lane.

"We would laugh, saying we had our own private lane because we were so slow," she said.

At an evening memorial for Martin, Patty Wimer said she knew him from the Boys & Girls Club pool, where he taught his grandchildren to swim.

"He was very kind, always polite, always said hello to you," she said. "He was always swimming."

Brian Long, president of the Triathlon Club of San Diego, said many of the club's 1,800 members are stunned.

"It will take a while for us to get over this tragedy," he said.

Staff writers Angela Lau, Terry Rodgers, Michael Burge, Don Norcross and Matthew Rodriguez and Karen Kucher of the Union-Tribune Breaking News Team contributed to this report.