

BATHERS NEED HAVE NO FEAR OF SHARKS

**Fish Expert Declares One That
Killed Swimmer May Have
Sought to Attack Dog.**

"Despite the death of Charles Epting Vansant at Beach Haven Saturday and the report that two sharks have been caught in that vicinity recently, I do not believe there is any reason why people should hesitate to go in swimming at the beaches for fear of 'man-eaters,'" said Fish Commissioner James M. Meehan, of Philadelphia.

"In the first place the information in regard to the sharks is indefinite, and from what I have read I should hardly believe that young Vansant was attacked by a 'man-eater.' Except for a few harmless species, most sharks are pelagic, that is, they belong far out to sea. They are wanderers who seldom approach the shore, and when one is found in shallow water we may know that it is astray. Occasionally the young sharks come inshore, but these again are not dangerous. The shark known as the 'man-eater' is the 'blue shark,' which in tropical waters grows to a length of 36 feet. Those which drift inshore are caught sometimes in nets by fishermen along the coast, altho they are rare in north Atlantic waters. G. Brown Goods, United States Fish Commissioner in 1881, states in one of his early reports that only three of these fish had been seen on this coast in 40 years, and that their average length is nine feet. The only other shark known here is the 'basking shark,' which grows to a length of 40 feet, but is perfectly harmless and has not the terrible triangular teeth of the 'man-eater.' It frequents the north Atlantic from New England to the Arctic ocean.

"There are, to my mind, two possibilities as to the way in which Vansant was attacked at Beach Haven. At the time the young man was in the surf playing with a dog, and it may be that a small shark had drifted in at high water and was marooned by the tide. Being unable to move quickly and without food, he had come in to attack the dog and snapped at the man in passing. There is a shelving shore at Beach Haven, unlike the flat beaches at Atlantic City and Cape May and this fact makes such a hypothesis more probable.

"The strangest part of the matter, however, is that the shark should attack a man at all. Ninety-five per cent. of the 'man-eater' stories one hears are pure romance, for with the exception of the 'shovel-nose' the shark is naturally a timid animal, living far out at sea and never attacking man except when forced to. It may be that the shark had been caught in shallow water, turned over on his side by the tide and bumped against the man without seeing him until he touched him. In the past 100 years there have not been half a dozen cases of attacks reported in the north Atlantic ocean.

"I do not think that the shark was a hammer-head, as has been reported, for this shark is not naturally ferocious and unless helpless would never have allowed himself to approach the man. It is of course possible that another such case may occur, but I do not believe that it is probable."