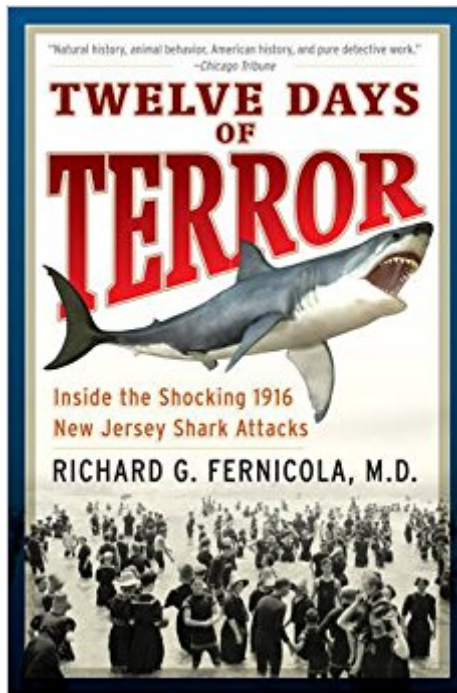


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# Twelve Days Of Terror: A Definitive Investigation Of The 1916 New Jersey Shark Attacks



## Synopsis

In July 1916, with the nation entangled in World War I and New York City in the throes of a deadly polio epidemic, the tri-state population thronged the Jersey Shore in search of respite from the stifling mid-summer heat. The Atlantic's refreshing waters proved to be utterly inhospitable, however. In a shockingly brief span of just twelve days, four swimmers were violently and fatally mauled by a marauding shark (or school of sharks), and a fifth was seriously injured, escaping within inches of his life. By the third week in July, national newspapers were headlining reports of Battles Against Man-Eating Sharks above the battles of war across the ocean. In this thoroughly researched, first-ever full account, Dr. Richard Fernicola, considered to be the leading expert on the attacks, presents a riveting portrait of these twelve days of terror as they occurred against the historical backdrop of America in 1916. With the perspicacity of a private eye, he immerses himself in the specifics of the events as he carefully examines clues and reconstructs evidence in an effort to resolve what scientists have been arguing over for decades. Was a rogue shark or a school of sharks responsible? Was it a bull shark or a great white shark? Was the shark's motivation hunger or fear? Through primary sources and face-to-face interviews with witnesses, Fernicola pieces together a conclusive, if controversial, theory regarding the character and the cause of these mysterious attacks. Part fascinating social history, part spellbinding detective story, *Twelve Days of Terror* is one of those rare books that proves truth can be stranger, more dramatic, and more terrifying than fiction.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was always interested in the story of a Great White Shark attack along the Jersey Shore. It is mentioned in all the shark books, referenced in Jaws, and shown on the Discovery channel. It is a story I have always been interested but could never find any whole books about. And what did I see in the book store??? Not one but TWO books on the subject. So now the the question was which one to buy. I read parts of both and quickly discovered that Dr. Fernicola clearly seemed to know more about sharks and the subject. Not to knock the other book, but Fernicola's book shows a deeper knowledge of sharks and the incident of 1916. Needless to say, it only took 3 days to read this entire book. It is so interesting. He does a great job describing the times and historical background. He does a great job telling about the attacks. He does a great job discussing sharks and theories about sharks. The book is well written. It has great information on the 1916 attacks and the times they took place in. It is also a great lesson on sharks in general. I have family on the Jersey shore and it amazes me that this could take place there. Plus in a creek miles from the ocean...YIKES! This was a book I read cover to cover and immediately passed on to friends. Anyone who likes sharks, shark week on TV, or JAWS will love this book.

During the summer of 1916 five people were attacked by a shark (or sharks) along the coast of New Jersey's Monmouth and Ocean Counties. Four of those five, including a 12-year old boy, were killed. The fifth victim narrowly escaped the jaws of death, suffering severe wounds to his leg. These freak attacks occurred within 12 days of each other during a time in American history when the foremost experts believed that sharks did not possess the necessary strength to break a human bone...Panic and near hysteria followed...Sixty-five years after the attacks, a young college student heard about the attacks during a train ride home for the holidays. The incident of the attacks and the controversy between the leading shark experts piqued his interest. Curiosity developed into passion and that passion for the answer resulted in twenty years of investigating and a book that is one of the most thoroughly researched accountings I have ever read. Twelve Days of Terror is a novel, a diary, a medical journal, a detective story, and most assuredly the definitive investigation of the New Jersey shark attacks of 1916. The author utilized his medical school training in evaluating the evidence and spent countless hours interviewing eye-witnesses to the tragic events. Unfortunately, those eye-witnesses are now all gone, but for the field notes of the author, their story was doomed never to be told. This book is a MUST for every beach-goer this summer. It will not only intimately acquaint the reader with everything they wanted to know about shark attacks, but it will also provide a rare glimpse into the behind-the-scene politics and social aspects of the early 20th century.

The shark attacks off the New Jersey shore were doomed to fade into almost urban mythology. Richard Fernicola has painstakingly researched the twelve days of horror that held a nation in its grip. The first strike, July 1 was on an unsuspecting Charles Vansant, in which eyewitnesses report the aggressor shark actually held on, and or followed its prey into the shallows. Fernicola has gathered all the available accounts (since eyewitnesses were dead, he turned to family members, newspaper archives and books) and has pieced together an account of the mounting terror until July 12, the deadliest day (two killed and one maimed) and last reported killings. This is an engrossing look into a time when not much was known about sharks and when newspapers were depended upon to deliver the news. It also gives a detailed look into sharks and their history as man eaters. The most interesting portion of the book, after the actual accounting of the people involved and the attacks themselves, is the medical renderings of each victim's wounds and an accounting of the actual cause of death. This is an engrossing book, and it is well researched. It is a time capsule of sorts, reopening the time when there was belief that a mackerel had inflicted the wounds, that the Germans were attracting the sharks with some new secret gadget, when a day at the beach was a simple day at the beach.

First off, due praise must be given to the author. This book is extensively and painstakingly researched. That is readily apparent throughout the book. The author has scoured old newspapers and photographs, and conducted his own interviews with witnesses and family of witnesses/victims. The first hundred pages or so is a wonderfully written, detailed description of the events of those twelve days in 1916. The author's attention to detail and extensive research give a robust picture of not only the victims' last days and the events of the attacks, but also a very interesting description of what the New Jersey shore was like in the day. My only complaint with the book is that I expected it all to be that way. Unfortunately, the next two hundred pages delivery a scientific analysis of different shark species, their attack styles, an analysis of the wounds, a comparison/contrast with other shark attacks around the world, etc. for the purpose of determining what species of shark(s) most likely attacked the victims, and why the attacks occurred at all. Again, all this was extensively researched, but not what I expected. Perhaps the fault, then, is my own. Nonetheless, the prospective reader should be aware of what this book is about.

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