ACTIVITY: SCUBA diving
CASE: GSAF 1964.01.11
DATE: Saturday January 11, 1964
LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean off Southeast Farallon Island, California, USA. 37º41.8'N, 123º01.1'W.

NAME: Jack Rochette
DESCRIPTION: A 21-year-old male. He was wearing a black neoprene wetsuit with yellow striping, black mask, yellow swim fins and twin scuba tanks painted yellow.

BOAT: Salmon Queen

BACKGROUND
WEATHER: A north-by-northeast wind was gusting at 10 to 20 knots.
SEA CONDITIONS: The water temperature [measured] was 13ºC, and underwater visibility was about 13 metres. There was a strong surge and numerous whitecaps were present.
ENVIRONMENT: The ocean floor was flat with numerous rocks and caves but lacking any dominant kelps.
DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 0.4 kilometres from the western shore of the island.
DISTANCE FROM BOAT: DEPTH OF WATER: Eight to 10 fathoms
TIME: 12h00

NARRATIVE: Rochette was one of 15 divers from the Southern Pacific Diving Club who had chartered the boat for a one-day dive excursion. Shortly before Rochette speared a rockcod, *Sebastes sp*, which was swimming near a rock outcrop on the bottom, he switched to his reserve air supply. He cornered the fish and was jabbing it with his speargun when his air ran out. The moment Rochette surfaced, the shark bit him. Initially, the diver thought one of his dive buddies had grabbed his legs, but when he looked over his back he saw that a large shark had both his legs, from the thighs to the middle of his calves. Rochette had been lying prone on the surface and the shark’s upper jaw extended across the backs of his legs, its lower jaw across the front. The shark’s body vibrated for about five seconds until Rochette struck its head with his speargun. The shark released the diver and swam off.

Rochette removed the fish from his spear, hoping the shark would follow the fish as it sank to the bottom. The shark approached the diver until it was about a metre away from him. When the diver struck the shark on the snout with his speargun, it retreated for a moment and then returned to receive another blow on the head. This routine was repeated numerous times for the next 10 minutes. Each time the shark circled clockwise and advanced until it was about a metre from the diver who was laying vertically on the surface, paddling in a continuous circle while moving gradually toward the dive boat.

Jack Bolger, another diver on the boat, did not think Rochette would be able to gain the
INJURIES: Rochette was bitten only once, but sustained multiple lacerations to both legs and his lower abdomen. The most severe wound was a 25-centimetre laceration to the dorsal surface of his right thigh. The shark’s teeth penetrated the tensor fascia lata muscle down to the femur. A laceration on the dorsal surface of his right calf penetrated the gastrocnemius muscle, severing a nerve.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Rochette was brought aboard the dive boat and the U.S. Coast Guard was called. At 12h35, a helicopter transported the diver to the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in San Francisco. First Aid treatment consisted of controlling blood loss and the diver was alert on arrival at the hospital. Surgery lasted for more than four hours and required the services of seven surgeons. During surgery a white shark tooth fragment 17.2 mm in length was retrieved from the wound in the diver’s right thigh.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The size of the tooth fragment (see right) supported the diver’s and witnesses statement that the incident involved a white shark about seven to eight metres in length.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier