

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSF 1980.10.17](#)

DATE: Friday October 17, 1980

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean near the mouth of the Little River at Moonstone Beach, near Trinidad, Humboldt County, California, USA.

41°01.7'N, 124°06.8'W

NAME: Curt Vikan

DESCRIPTION: He was a 19-year-old male. He was wearing a blue wetsuit (no hood or boots) and a yellow ankle leash.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a clear, sunny, windless day. The air temperature was 10°C.

MOON PHASE: First Quarter, 54% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. Full Moon, October 23, 1980.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was glassy smooth with undulating one- to two-metre ground swells. The water was warmer than the air, possibly 12°C, and underwater visibility was two to three metres.

ENVIRONMENT: The incident took place over a sandy bottom devoid of vegetation.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100 metres

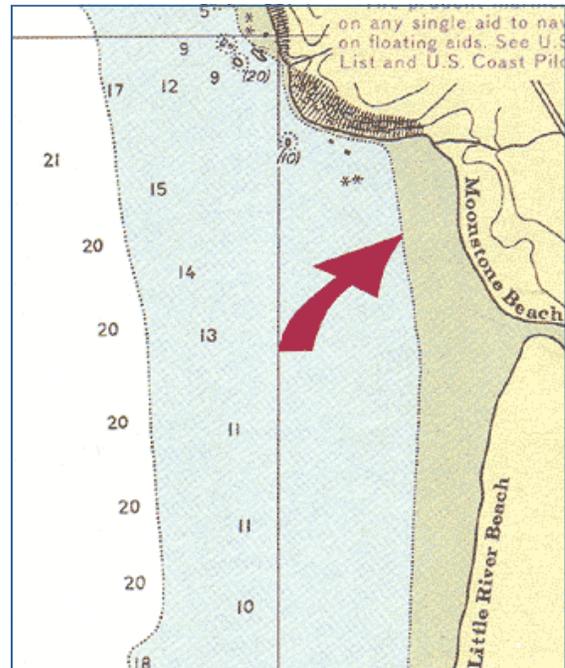
DEPTH OF WATER: One to two fathoms

TIME: 09h30

NARRATIVE: Curt Vikan had been surfing for 20 minutes with two companions and had ridden only one wave. He recounted, "I saw a nice [wave] peeling down the beach and told my buddies that I was paddling down that way toward the river mouth. I was lying prone on my board with my feet pointing up at a 90-degree angle. The water was cold and I wasn't wearing any boots. The rhythm of my paddling was suddenly broken by a horrendous force that ripped my surfboard out from under me. Turning around in the water, I saw my board being swung effortlessly by an extremely large shark. I yelled to my friends, 'Shark: it's a Great White.' The shark held my board by the tail, swinging it about, as it started swimming away. I was attached to the board by a leash and shark started to drag me. I was struck by the tail several times as it pulled me through the water. Then it spit out my board and submerged. I grabbed my surfboard and paddled like never before"

INJURY: The surfer was not injured.

SPECIES: A tooth fragment of the shark was retrieved the surfboard. John DeMartini of Humboldt State University subsequently identified it as having come from a white shark. Vikan and his companions estimated the shark size to be four to five metres in length with a dorsal fin height of 60 cm. The three surfers agreed that the shark was about a metre wide just behind the head. This size estimate compares well with the measurements of the



damaged surfboard.

NOTE: This recurring location had been the site of the William Kennedy incident four years earlier.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier



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