

**ACTIVITY:** Scuba diving  
**CASE:** GSAF 1985.09.08.a  
**DATE:** Sunday September 8, 1985  
**LOCATION:** The accident took place in the Atlantic Ocean off Palm Beach, Florida, USA.

**NAME:** Morris M. Vorenberg  
**DESCRIPTION:** He was clad in a black wetsuit (full), fins, mask, and scuba gear.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** It was a bright sunny day. The air temperature was 92°F.

**MOON PHASE:** Third Quarter, September 7, 1985

**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea surface temperature was 84°F and the water was clear. Seas were three to four feet.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Bait fish were in the water

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** Approximately 2.5 miles

**DEPTH OF WATER:** 70 feet

**TIME:** 15h00

**NARRATIVE:** Morris Vorenberg was photographing sharks using bait and/or lures. Four others were three to eight feet from him: Electa Pace, Virginia Skocik, Franklin March and Barry Balden, all from the Rosensteil School of Marine Sciences in Miami.

“At approximately 40 feet from the water’s surface in about 70 feet (total depth) of water, four associates and myself, all in full scuba gear, were photographing a moderate-sized school consisting of 20 to 25 silky sharks, *Carcharhinus falciformis*, ranging in length from about six to seven feet using powerful high-intensity hand-held lights, still and video cameras. The sharks were not in a feeding frenzy nor did they appear to be aggressive or excited. The water was clear with excellent visibility, little or no current or agitation, surface conditions 3' to 4' seas, bright sunlight. I was on the fringe of the main group holding one light. Eight to nine feet separated each individual diver. A shark cage with a supply of ‘bait’ consisting of assorted dead fish packed in a mesh bags was about 20 feet above us and about 10 feet away horizontally. Although I had been handling the bait I did not have any with me at the time of the incident and I would think that the water had ‘washed’ any remnants away. I carried a 6-foot bangstick tethered to my right wrist.

“I was trying to adjust my light from a narrow angle flood to a concentrated spotlight in order to better illuminate a single individual in the school when I noticed a lone shark approach from my left rear about four or five feet away from my ankle (left). I was not in position to utilize the bang stick in an effort to fend off the shark.



**Morris Vorenberg of Riviera Has Written Articles on Sharks**

“When the shark got too close to my ankle I reached down to push it away with my left hand. Altho unclear, the injury suggests that I pushed at the shark’s snout just as it opened its mouth. Realizing what had happened I quickly pulled my hand back. The shark then swam away. (I did not watch to see to see where it went.)

“Apparently the shark did not close its mouth as evidenced by the complete lack of injury to the dorsal surface of the hand and only 4 small (incidental) puncture wounds associated with the palmar laceration.

“I immediately motioned to my companions and we all made our way to the water’s surface as quickly as possible. Altho there was moderate bleeding from the injury the sharks did not exhibit any behavioral change and none followed me/us to the surface.”

**INJURY:** Laceration and four small puncture wounds to the hand.

**FIRST AID / TREATMENT:** “Pressure bandages were applied to the laceration and I was transported directly to the hospital by boat, pulling up to the seawall in front of the hospital and walking across the street to the Emergency Room where I received immediate first aid treatment. Surgical repair was accomplished the following day—postponement was due to excessive swelling. Extract of medical record is attached hereto.”

**SPECIES:** The incident involved a 1.8 m [6'] silky shark, *C. falciformis*

**COMMENT:** “I feel this should be considered an incident (with personal injury incidental) rather than attack. I just put my hand in the wrong place at the wrong time. There was no evidence of aggressive behavior and the shark made no attempt to bite or follow through with any further action. (It was probably as surprised as I was at what happened. I do not think I would even classify it as a provoked incident but would prefer to call it a stupid mistake (on my part).”

“Classification: Doubtful incident resulting in personal injury — shark involvement: yes.”

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Morris M. Vorenberg

Co-operative Shark Research Center  
4500 North Dixie Highway D-12  
West Palm Beach, Florida 33407 U.S.A.

Phone (305) 835-6632

Victim's name and address: MORRIS M VORENBERG Age      Sex M Race White  
4500 NORTH DIXIE HWY D-12 Date of attack: 9/8/85 ( Physical contact be-  
West Palm Beach Fla 33407 tween shark and victim. ( No physical contact.  
Victim diving: ( no ( yes ( SCUBA ( other  
Locality of attack: 1/2 - 2 1/2 miles East Palm Beach Fla  
Temperature: water 84.7 air 92.7 Time of day 1500 ( Bright sun ( Cloudy  
Water depth 70' Distance from shore 2 1/2 mi Water: ( clear ( murky; seas 3-4'  
Depth at which attack actually occurred: ( surface ( submerged, approx 40 f'  
Distance from deep water:      ft to ( channel, ( trough or ( deep water.  
Notable presences near victim: ( porpoise ( seal ( fish in unusual numbers  
or abnormal conditions such as     , ( dog or other animal,  
( surfboard, air mattress, etc., ( boat, ( other Scuba divers - shark cage.  
Attractant materials in area: ( victim's blood, ( other human blood, ( garbage  
or refuse, ( wounded fish, ( fish juices or blood, ( other Bait fish.  
Other persons in water near victim: ( no ( yes: how many 4 distance 3-8 ft.  
Victim's wearing apparel (be specific): Block Wet suit (full), fins, mask, scuba gear.  
Color, pattern of clothing: Black - solid, Color of exposed skin: light.  
Activity of victim at time of attack: Photographing sharks - using bait or lure.  
General activity of others near victim: SAME.  
Fishing activity by victim: ( spearfishing, ( other - o -.  
Fishing activity by others in area: - o -.  
General outcome of attack: ( non-fatal ( fatal ( body or gear not recovered.  
Fate of rescuers: N/A Others: N/A.  
Provocative acts: ( none known ( yes (specify) Pushed shark (away).  
Shark sighted: ( yes ( no; ( before attack ( during attack ( after  
attack; by ( victim ( other (specify) ALL.  
Primary wounds: ( not wounded ( bites ( lacerations ( abrasions  
( other (specify) (4) Puncture wounds Significant loss of flesh: ( yes ( no.  
Limb lost to shark: ( no ( yes (specify): N/A.  
Number of sharks involved: 1 Length: 4-6' Species: C. falciformis.  
Identified by All in water Basis: Knowledge of I.D. features.  
Tooth fragments recovered: ( yes ( no. Photographs: ( yes ( no  
Photographer's name and address: N/A  
Hospital, name and address: Good Samaritan 125th & N. Flagler Dr W. Palm Bch Fla.  
Physician, name and address: Robt. Rosenberg 1500 N. Dixie Hwy W.P.B Fla (305) 832-3455

Names and addresses of witnesses:  
Elocta Pace Franklin Marsh } Rosesteel School of Marine Sciences  
Regina Skocik Barry Balden } University of Miami 4600 Rickenbacker Csw.  
MIAMI Florida 33149  
(over)

Shark Research Center  
4500 N. Dixie Hwy. Orla, FL 33407  
W. Palm Beach, FL

Medication

Emerg - Vistaril/Damoral I/M  
Pre Surgery  
Plicam ORAL  
Atropin - I/M  
Zylocaine - Int  
Pentathal - I/M  
Intra Surgery  
Glucose/Normal NaCl - I/V  
Post Surgery  
T.A.T. - I/M  
Kefzol - I/M  
on usance  
Keflex oral 1 q 6 hr  
percocod 1 q 3h PRN

1st

Extract Medical Record

Palmar Surface

(L)

COPY of ER RECORD  
Abridged &  
(Notes)



Impressive  
shark bite -  
for victim a  
direct observation  
of injury.

Diagnosis

Severe laceration(s) palmar  
surface (L) hand.

Some minor palmar muscle  
damage, one nerve slightly  
"nicked" tendon scarred  
longitudinally but otherwise  
intact. Other processes unharmed.  
Injury is predominately  
superficial but "serious".  
Moderate possibility of  
infection by uncrown  
pathogens

Note: - Palmar skin  
great in area of the  
laceration, or the 1 5/8"  
laceration, may be  
several months  
old.

Inj:

Zigzag pattern of 4  
lacerations in contact on  
① palm extending longitudinally  
from about point opposite base  
of thumb almost to base of  
ring finger  
② small puncture wound  
③ mod' punct' wound

Lacerations ranged in length fr  
4- 3/8" to 1 5/8" longest about 1/2"  
wide & 3/16" deep.

9525
1905
20638
41275
3175
<b>TOTAL LENGTH</b>
12.2236 cm = 4.1825"

t/- .65cm, 1/2" wide x .4763cm 3/16"

TREATMENT

These 15m Betadine soaks. Very minor debris removed. (not necessary the "debr  
lacerations) particularly of the 1 5/8" laceration. Complete deep irrigation  
Normal NaCl Sol. All lacerations deeply probed for teeth or fragments  
inward measurements were taken prior to placement of 1/4 catgut absorbable  
subcutaneous and/or dermal sutures

Prog: - Assuming normal course of healing and absence of infection there  
should be no residual disability. The possibility exists that a certain  
degree of loss of sensation &/or mobility of ring and small finger (L)  
may persist for several months but this condition should resolve itself  
without further treatment of traumatic palmar skin