



ACTIVITY: Body Boarding

CASE: GSAF 1985.10.18

DATE: October 18, 1985

LOCATION: The incident took place at Little Glass Shacks, Princeville, Kaua'i, Hawaii, USA.

NAME: Joe Thomson

DESCRIPTION: He was a 33-year-old male.

BOARD: The board had a yellow undersurface.

BACKGROUND

SEA CONDITIONS: The ocean was glassy with four to six foot waves, but the underwater visibility was poor due to runoff from recent heavy rains.

ENVIRONMENT: Large schools of tuna were swimming along the north shore of Kaua'i, and Thomson reported three green sea turtles swimming nearby shortly before he was bitten.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Several hundred yards

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 15 to 25 feet

NARRATIVE: Thomson was alone in the water and waiting for a wave. His hands were resting over the nose of his board, when the shark shot up from below and bit the front of his board, severing his right hand above the wrist and removing a section of the board. As the shark continued to bite the board, Thomson slipped his leash over the stump of his arm and swam on his back towards a shallow coral reef, using his swim fins for propulsion. Thomson climbed out on the reef and began walking to shore, holding the pressure point in his right arm

INJURY: Thomson's right hand and part of his forearm was severed by the shark and his left hand was lacerated,

DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT: The right anterior side of board removed by shark.

FIRST AID: Mike Henry, a local resident, heard Thomson's cries for help and wrapped his wounds with towels. Paramedics arrived within minutes, stabilized Thomson and transported him to the hospital

TREATMENT: In a three-hour surgical procedure, Dr. Joseph Conrad Clifford repaired damage to the severed right forearm and torn tendons of the left hand. He sent out word that he could attach Thomson's severed hand if it could be recovered in a short time. Many volunteers searched the beach by foot and the water by boat, finding only a portion of Thomson's board.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a tiger shark, *Galeocerdo cuvier*, about 12 feet in length.

COMMENT: Thomson believes that the shark mistook his yellow-bottomed board for the yellow belly of a green sea turtle, and his hands dangling over the side of the board may have looked like a turtle's flippers. Afterwards, the shark showed no interest in Thomson but continued to bite the board. The incident took place in the area Hawaiians believe is the ancestral Kaua'i home of Mano, the shark god. He was also surfing near the biggest channel in the biggest reef in the Hawaiian Islands. "Was I looking for trouble, or what?" he said later. "[The shark] was looking for dinner, and I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Why be mad at this big dumb fish, especially when I've eaten so much fish myself!"

SOURCES: Orlando Sentinel, October 20, 1985, page A22; Pacific Stars and Stripes (Tokyo, Japan), San Jose Mercury News, October 21, 1985, page 6D; Tuesday, October 22, 1985; Greg Ambrose, pages 1 to 10; Orlando Sentinel, October 20, 1985, page A22; San Jose Mercury News, October 21, 1985, Page 6D

■ *Hawaii*

Twelve-foot shark attacks surfer

LIHUE, Hawaii (UPI) — A 12-foot shark bit off the hand of a surfer off the island of Kauai in the second shark attack in Hawaii in less than a week.

The man was attacked by a lone shark 100 yards from shore in 25 feet of water on the island's north shore, Kauai police said.

Hanalei fire officials identified the victim as Joe Douglas Thomson, 33, of Princeville. He was riding a small styrofoam surfboard known as a boogie board, witnesses said.

Sealodge resident Linda Tiemann, a resident of the area, said she saw the shark through binoculars from her balcony, estimating its size as about 12 feet in length.

Tiemann said her neighbor heard screams for help. Through binoculars, they saw the victim standing on the reef.

"He was up on the reef, coming backward, and facing out to sea, and he had hold of his arm," said Tiemann. "He seemed to be pointing at something.

"Then I saw this big shark come up out of the water."

The victim's right hand was amputated and he had severe cuts on his left hand, fire officials said. He was in stable condition at Wilcox Memorial Hospital.