



**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** [GSAF 1989.06.05 / SA-371](#)

**DATE:** Monday June 5, 1989

**LOCATION:** The incident took place at Supertubes in Jeffreys Bay, 92 kilometres (57 miles) west-southwest of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

*34°03'S, 24°56'E*

**NAME:** Roniel Jacobs

**DESCRIPTION:** The surfer, a 16-year-old male, is 1.73 metres [5'8"] tall and weighs 63 kilograms [138.6 lbs]. He was wearing a two-millimetre full wetsuit (green and black and edged with white at the ankles and arms) and he had a green leash attached to his right ankle.

**SURFBOARD:** The 1,9-metre trifin board was white with white fins.

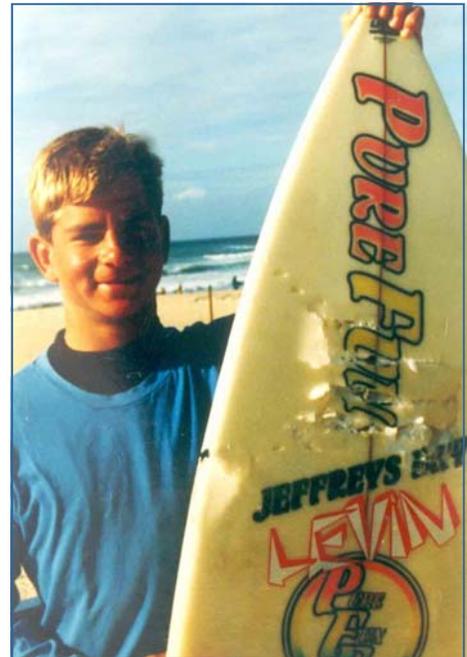
#### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** The sky was partly cloudy and there was no wind. The estimated temperature was 22°C [71.6°F].

**MOON PHASE:** New Moon, June 3, 1989

**SEA CONDITIONS:** Three to 2,4-metre southwesterly

waves were breaking on top of a shallow reef (Super Tubes, responsible for Jeffreys Bay's



*Roniel Jacobs & his surfboard*

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excellent surf), but in the vicinity of the surfer the water was glassy. The sea was brown and visibility was less than a metre. The incident occurred at high tide, two days after spring tide. The sea surface temperature was about 19°C [66.2°F]

**ENVIRONMENT:** Commercial fishermen had been fishing close inshore during the preceding two weeks. Surfers claimed that the fishermen had been gutting fish on board and throwing the waste in the sea, thus attracting sharks. Since the increased fishing activity there had been several sightings of sharks. Shortly before the incident the surfer noticed two dolphins in the bay.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 25 metres

**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:** Ten metres

**TIME:** 16h15

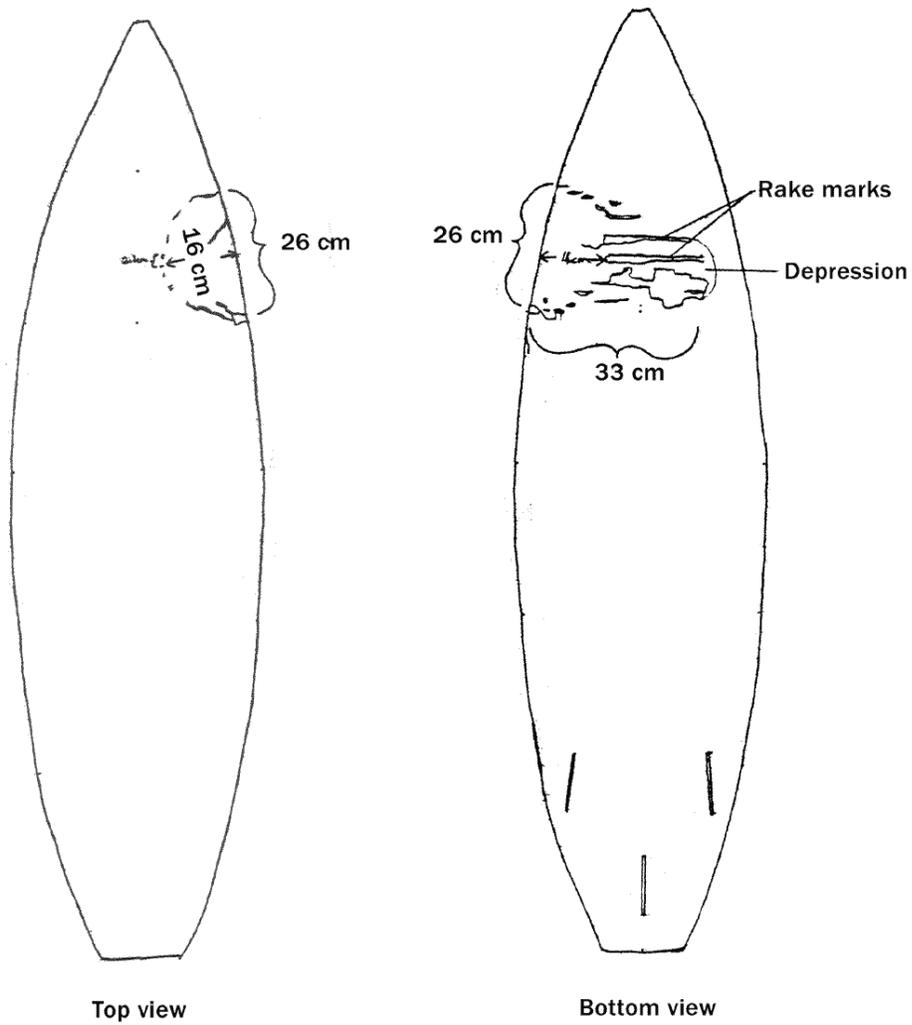
**NARRATIVE:** Roniel Jacobs was isolated from the other surfers. He was paddling out to the line-up (where the waves were breaking) when his board was hit with such force that he was flung into the water, the board smashing his chin so violently that he was stunned. "As I looked up I saw this huge shark sticking at least half-a-metre out of the water, no more than two metres away – I was still attached to my board by the surfboard leash," said Jacobs. "My surfboard was stuck in its mouth, but it shook its head wildly a few times and the board came free. Then it dived under the water and disappeared. As it dived, I grabbed my board and paddled to shore for all I was worth. I was so terrified I paddled straight over the rocks."

**INJURY:** No injury, the shark ignored the surfer.

**DAMAGE TO SURFBOARD:** The surfboard was bitten midway between the middle and nose on the right side. Tooth impressions were visible on both upper-surface and under-surface of the board.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Examination of the surfboard indicated that the shark had widely spaced triangular teeth – a characteristic of a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*. Tooth impressions in the surfboard indicated that the shark's jaw was 26 centimetres wide, and the distance between apices of the teeth in the front of the lower jaw was three to four centimetres. Based on these measurements, it appears that the shark was between 2,5 and 3,5 metres total length and weighed between 140 and 370 kilograms.

**CASE INVESTIGATORS:** Ray Joseph, *Our Times*; Marie Levine



*Damage to Roniel Jacobs' board.  
Photographs of the board are in GSAF 1989.07.20*