

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 1991.02.24

DATE: Sunday February 24, 1991

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at Neskowin, Tillamook County, in northwestern Oregon, USA.

45°06.6'N, 123°59.3'W

NAME: Tony Franciscone

DESCRIPTION: He is a 38-year-old male.

SURFBOARD: The surfer was using a white board.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear and there was a light offshore east wind.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 78% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. Full Moon on February 28, 1991.

SEA CONDITIONS: The water temperature was about 13°C, and ground swells were one to 1.3 metres in height, with an occasional set of two metres.

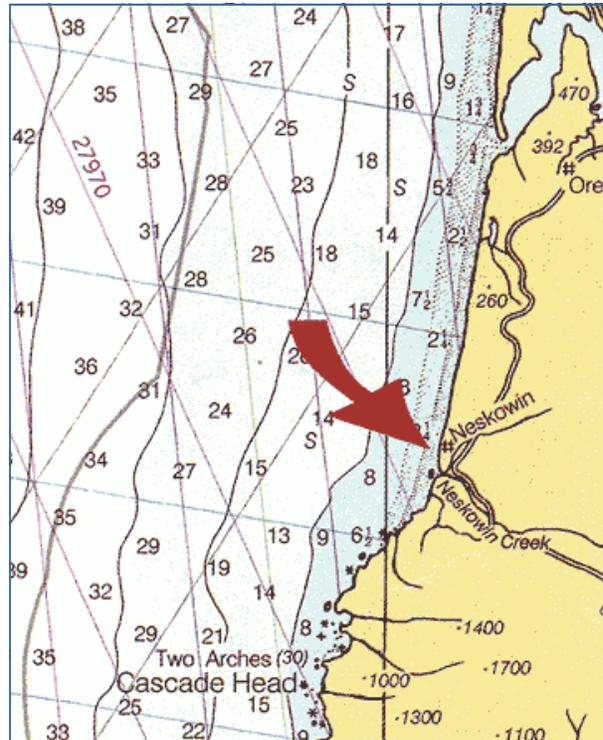
ENVIRONMENT: The Nestucca River mouth is 1.8 km north of the incident location. The incident took place above a sandy ocean floor that dropped off quickly into deeper water just beyond the breakers.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100 metres, just beyond the forming waves.

TIME: 09h30

NARRATIVE: While waiting for a two-metre set, Tony Franciscone's attention was drawn to a pinniped 10 metres from his surfboard. He said, "The seal was thrashing the surface of the water, like it was hunting. This occurred five minutes prior to the incident."

"I had started paddling for a wave," said Franciscone. "When the next thing I knew I was being thrown off my board and pulled underwater." He saw the shark at close range during this initial strike. He thought the white shark measured four metres from the gills to the tail, or about five metres overall. "Its girth was huge, maybe four to five feet [roughly 1.5 m] across the back." The shark was dark gray or black on top, with a dorsal fin 45 to 60 cm tall. It was so large that, upon first glance, Franciscone thought an orca had grabbed his surfboard. The surfer's leg leash (which tethers the board to the surfer's ankle) had been cut by the shark. Fortunately, when Franciscone surfaced his surfboard was one to two metres away, so he righted it, climbed on, and caught a wave back to the beach. When he



reached the shallow flats, "I started paddling for my life."

INJURY: Franciscone sustained a single laceration to his left calf.

DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT: The surfer's wetsuit was shredded around the wound site, and his surfboard was bitten by the shark.

SPECIES: Measurements taken are comparable to those of a 5.5-metre white shark.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier

