



ACTIVITY: Snorkeling

CASE: GSAF 1991.07.27

DATE: Saturday July 27, 1991

LOCATION: The incident took place in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, Key Largo, Monroe County, Florida, USA.

NAME: Jim "Byrd" Yarber

DESCRIPTION: He is a 39-year-old male, and a Jacksonville Beach charter boat captain.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon

NARRATIVE: Jim Yarber was snorkeling with three buddies during their fifth straight lobster sport mini-season. "I was messing with this hogfish," he said. "I chased it under a rock about 20 minutes before, then I was messing with it some more. I touched the hogfish. I got the smell of the hogfish on my hands; that's my theory for what attracted the shark."

Yarber didn't see the shark until it grabbed his right hand. "He bit around it. He bit all the way down to the bone and crunched some of the bone up. I was watching the whole thing from a foot and a half away. I saw the [nictitating] membrane that goes over the eyes..." The shark shook Yarber's hand and arm. "I wondered how long my hand would stand up against this kind of thing before it comes off," he recalled. "It looked like somebody got on it with a chainsaw."

The shark let go after a few seconds and swam off. Yarber called for help. His buddies called a dive boat, which summoned park rangers. Yarber was helped by Secret Service agents from Miami who he met earlier in the day.

INJURY: The diver sustained punctures and lacerations to his hand.

TREATMENT: Mariner's Hospital room in Key Largo Surgeon Robert Casola worked on Yarber's hand for 5 1/2 hours Saturday re-attaching tendons and ligaments, as well as skin, bone and muscles.

SPECIES: The incident involved a seven-foot, 140-pound 'reef' shark.

NOTE: Yarber said he expects to leave the hospital Thursday August 1, and go back to work on his boat, *The Byrd's Nest*.

SOURCE: Miami Herald, July 31, 1991, page 4B