

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 1993.07.30 / SA-405

DATE: Saturday July 30, 1993

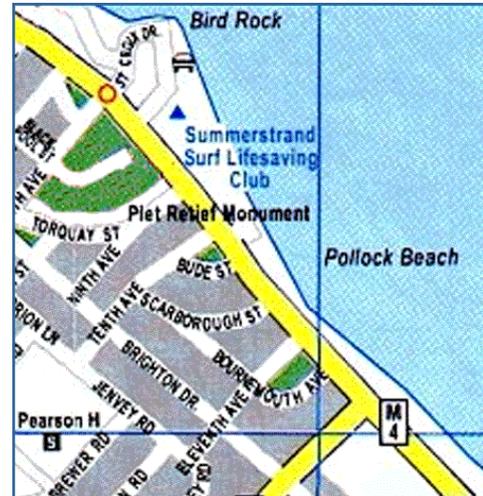
LOCATION: The incident took place in the Indian Ocean at Pollock Beach, Summerstrand in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

33°48'S, 25°41'E

NAME: Ralph Michael LeRoux

DESCRIPTION: The surfer, a 28-year-old male, is 1,78 metres tall [5'10"] and weighs 81 kilograms [178 lbs]. He was clad in a three-millimetre black wetsuit with an orange collar, and had a white leash attached to his right ankle. He wore no jewelry and had no injuries prior to the incident.

SURFBOARD: The board, a 1,98-metre [6'6"] trifin manufactured by Gary Maisch, was lime green and yellow (both sides) with two black fins.



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear, air temperature was about 25°C [77°F], and there was a light southwesterly breeze.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Gibbous, 90% of the Moon was illuminated. Full Moon, August 2, 1993.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was murky, estimated visibility was no more than 1.5 metres. Sea temperature was 16°C [61°F] and there was an east-to-west current. Surf was "average" and the incident took place inshore of a 3- to 4-metre-deep channel. High tide was at 14h50 and it was two days before spring tides.

ENVIRONMENT: No unusual fish or bird activity as noted around the time of the incident, but there was a seal on the rocks nearby. Surfers report that they saw an "underwater shadow" just before the incident.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 metres

DISTANCE FROM ROCKS: Five metres

DEPTH OF WATER AT SITE: Two metres

TIME: 15h00

NARRATIVE: About 15 people were on the beach, and five surfers were in the water, including Ralph LeRoux. The four other surfers were seaward of LeRoux and reported that they saw "a shadow" swim beneath them and towards LeRoux immediately before the incident.

LeRoux had been in the water for ten minutes. He was lying on his board, paddling into position for a wave and facing somewhat seaward when he was attacked. "With the force of the attack, I was bumped off my board," said the surfer. "On surfacing, I had one look at the shark ravaging my board, and swam directly for the closest rocks, with board in tow, attached to my leash." The surfer believes that initially the shark was after the seal and he was attacked when he got in the shark's way. "In swimming away, the movement of my board still attached to my ankle [by the leash] may have caused [the shark] to attack the board repeatedly. The shark must have let go at some time, and I scrambled onto the rocks."

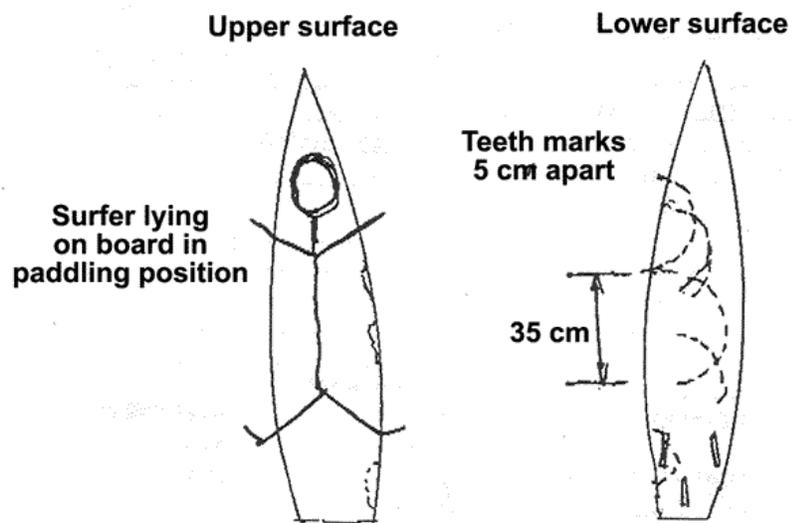
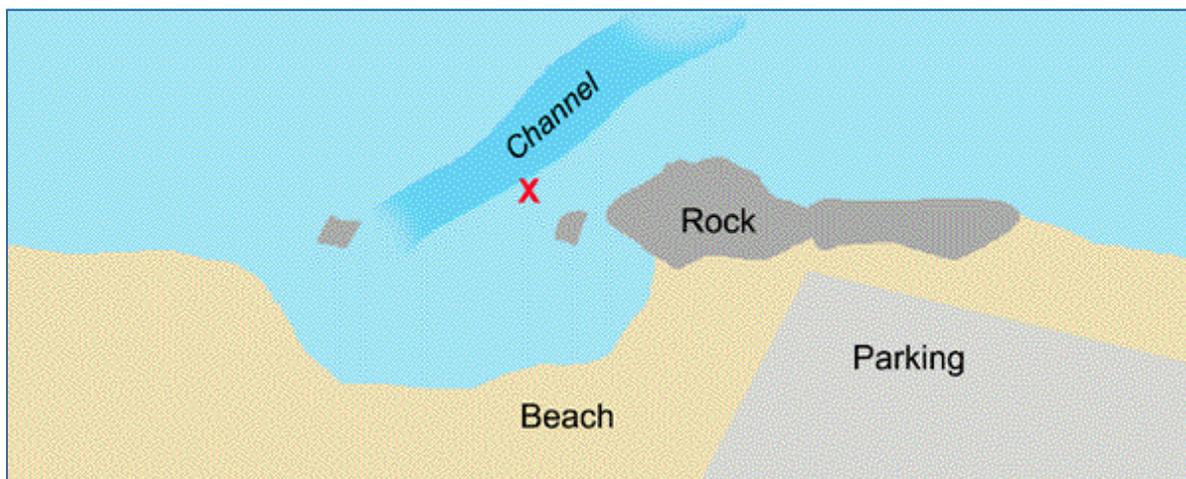
INJURY: The surfer sustained two puncture wounds below his right nipple and this thumb was lacerated and broken.

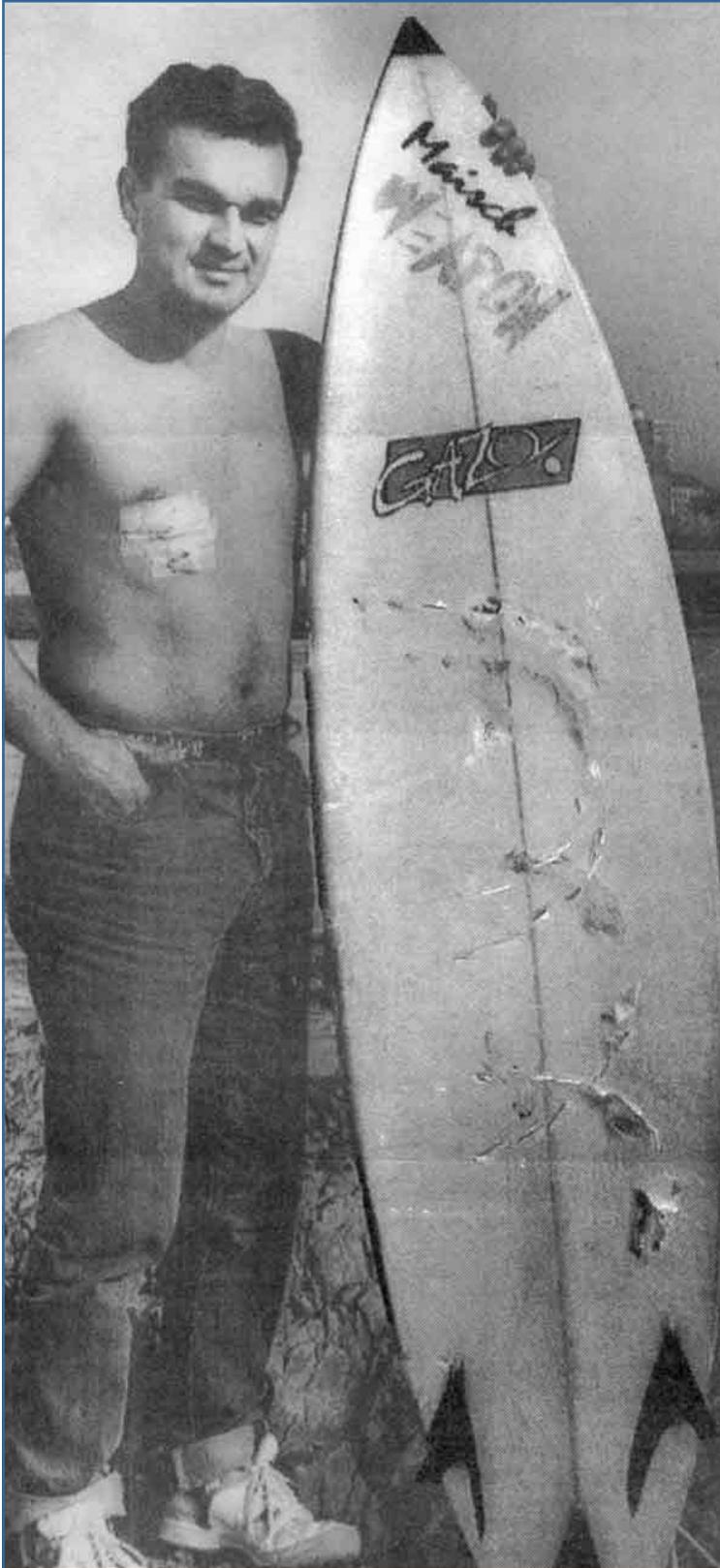
DAMAGE TO SURFBOARD: The shark bit the surfboard six times.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: LeRoux was taken by private car to Dr. Carolyn's surgery. From there he was taken to the Provincial Hospital on Westbourne Road, arriving there 20 minutes after the incident.

SPECIES INVOLVED: A 3,8- to 4,2-metre [12' to 14'] white shark.

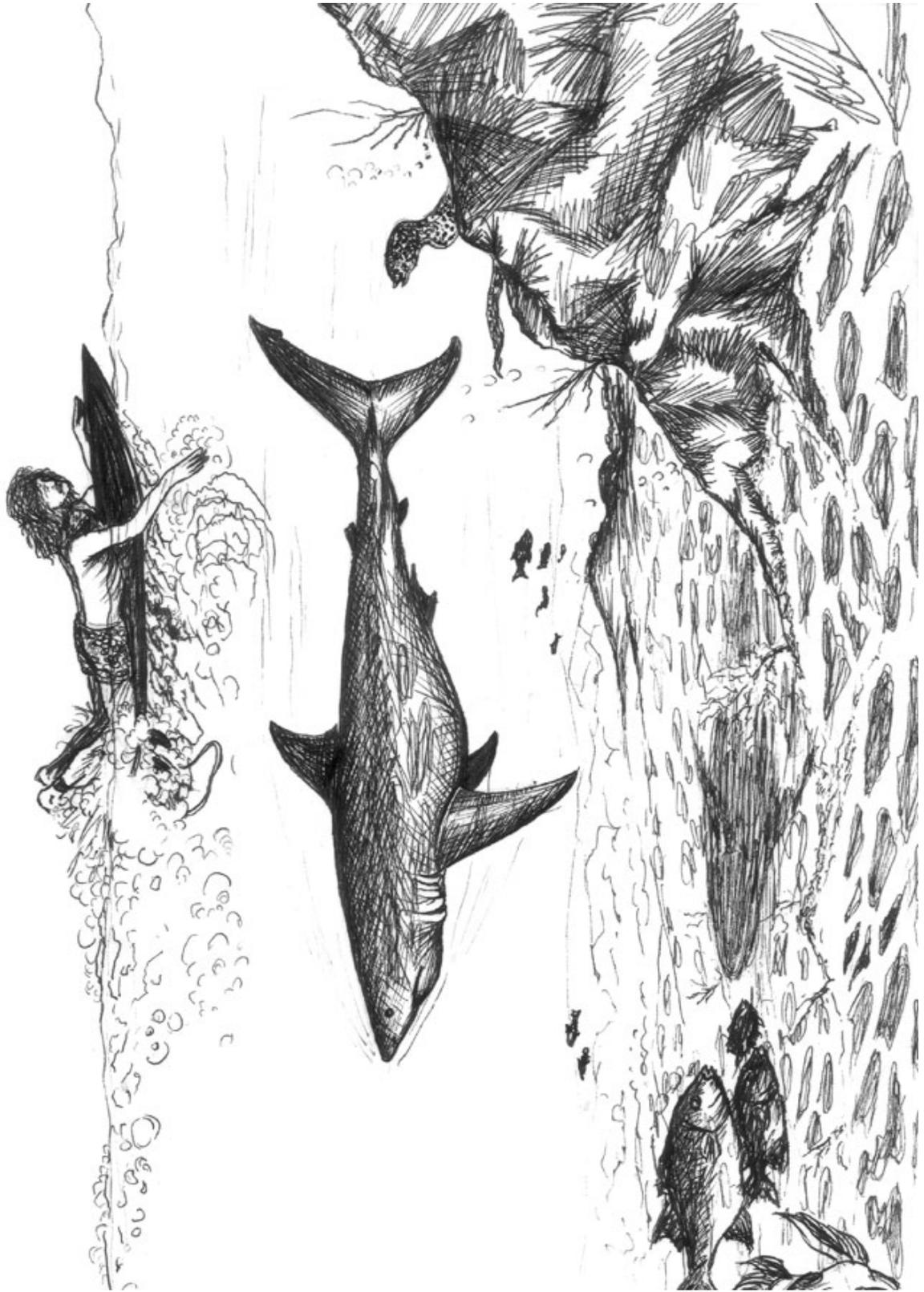
CASE INVESTIGATOR: Andrew Gifford, Shark Research Institute-South Africa





Ralph Le Roux and his surfboard.

Note the wide spaces between tooth impressions on the surfboard, a characteristic of the bite of a white shark.



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