

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: GSAF 1994.09.21

DATE: Wednesday September 21, 1994

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at at Short Sand Beach, located in Oswald West State Park between Arch Cape and Manzanita, near Seaside in far northwestern Oregon, USA.
45°45.5'N; 123°58.4'W.

NAME: Rob MacKenzie

DESCRIPTION: He was a 43-year-old male from Portland. He was dressed in a black wetsuit with boots and without a hood

SURFBOARD: A two-metre yellow surfboard.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was sunny and cloudless, with a light breeze and a temperature of 18°C.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, 97% of the Moon was illuminated.

SEA CONDITIONS: The ocean was glassy calm with gently rolling one-metre groundswells and a temperature of about 14°C. The water was not very clear, with visibility of about two metres.

ENVIRONMENT: The ocean floor was primarily sandy with a rocky reef at the base of the Basalt Headlands. No pinnipeds were seen at this location, but a gray whale, *Eschrichtius robustus*, was seaward of the surfers..

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 70 metres

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: Two fathoms

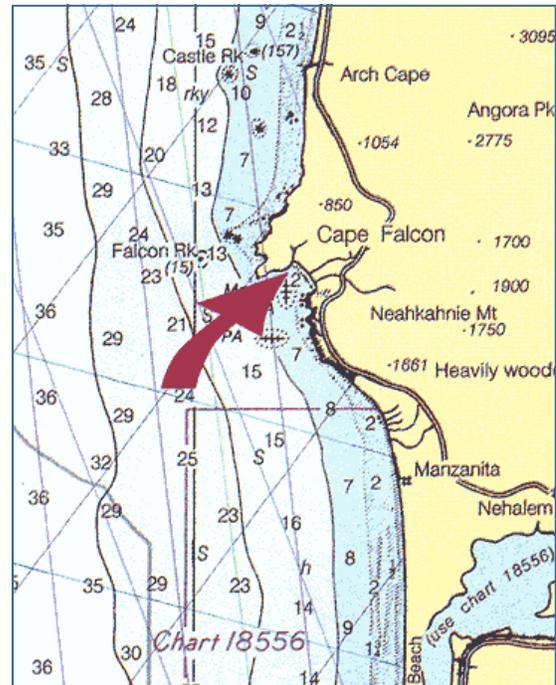
TIME: 16h30

NARRATIVE: Rob MacKenzie and companion Greg Movsesyan had been surfing for about 75 minutes when they stopped to watch a gray whale breaching about 1.6 kilometers offshore. The two men were sitting on their boards and about a dozen other surfers were spread out along the 1.6 kilometer-long beach within the sheltered cove.

Movsesyan reported, "I noticed a gray form passing diagonally under my board which, because I had surfed often with dolphins in California, didn't alarm me. The form approached Rob [MacKenzie] less than 15 feet [5 meters] away and, before I could say anything, it surfaced and bumped the side of Rob's board about three-quarters of the way forward. Rob went flying into the air, still attached to his board by a two-metre [seven-foot] leash, and came down in the water just in front of the shark."

"The board had become impaled sideways on the shark's lower jaw and, to dislodge it, the shark raised its back half out of the water and slammed its head on the surface until the board floated free."

"Then the shark dived, getting its tail caught on the leash and pulling Rob and his board



under as it swam for deeper water. Under the strain, the leash broke, shooting the board high in the air and allowing Rob to surface and retrieve it. We headed for shore, paddling until we reached waist-deep water. . . We were both in a state of utter calm, while the beach-goers and the other surfers were reacting in a great frenzy.”

INJURY: Rob MacKenzie was not injured, but opposite his right hamstring, his wetsuit had a graze mark, presumably from a shark tooth.

DAMAGE TO SURFBOARD: In a letter dated May 8, 2000, Movsesyan described the damage to MacKenzie's board. According to Movsesyan, an arc of lower-tooth impressions, measuring 35 centimetres across at their widest, punctured the bottom of his companion's board. The mid-line of the arc, corresponding to the center of the shark's jaw, was located near the front of the board, about a third of the distance along its overall length.

SPECIES: According to Movsesyan's description, the incident involved a white shark about five metres in length.

SOURCE: Shark Research Committee, http://www.sharkresearchcommittee.com/unprovoked_surfer.htm

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier

