

**ACTIVITY:** Sitting on surfboard

**CASE:** [GSAF 2000.09.29](#)

**DATE:** Friday September 29, 2000

**LOCATION:** The incident took place at Mavericks in Half Moon Bay, San Mateo County, California, USA. 37.5°N, 122.3°W

**NAME:** Peck Euwer

**DESCRIPTION:** The surfer is a 34-year-old documentary filmmaker from Santa Barbara.

**SURFBOARD:** Peck noted that Mavericks calls for 9' to 11' 'guns'. However, he was using a recently re-glassed white trifin short board that was 6'11", and Mike Kasic was using a small Hawaiian-made gun that was 7'10".

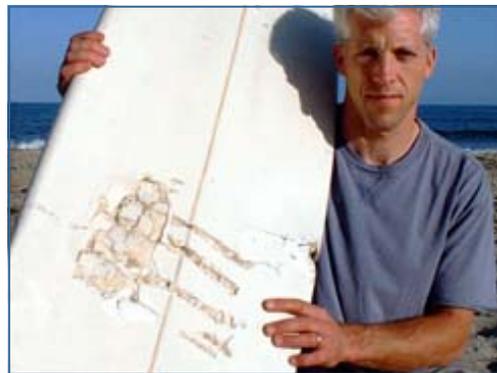


Photo by Michael Hanrahan

## BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** At 08h45, San Carlos recorded clear skies and visibility of seven miles. The air temperature was 60.8°F [16°C], dew point 53.6°F [12°C], humidity 77%, sea level pressure 29.99 inches [1015.5 hPa], and wind direction was variable at 3.5 mph [5.6 km/h].

The sky was low and overcast, and temperature was in the 60s.

**MOON PHASE:** Waxing Crescent, 3% of the moon's visible disk was illuminated. New Moon, September 27, 2000.

**SEA CONDITIONS:** Harbormaster Temko said the first good swell of the winter season was at Maverick's on Friday.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Maverick's, just outside the harbor, has some of the largest waves in the world and draws extreme surfers from around the globe. Peck noticed that there were a large number of harbor seals (12 to 15 animals) in the shallows watching them enter the water and thought that was odd. Mavericks is within the shark-rich area known as the Red Triangle, which stretches from southern Monterey to Bodega Bay out to the Farallon Islands.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 50 yards northwest of 'Mushroom Rock' off of Pillar Point.

**TIME:** 09h00

**NARRATIVE:** "Mike Kasic and I had met with Mark Sponsler, a surf forecaster/surfer from the bay area, and a Mavericks 'local', at Rockaway, Pacifica at 6:45AM to find a spot to paddle out for a surf before we were to have a breakfast meeting about a film project. Rockaway was closing out, so we traveled south to have a look at Mavericks. A few of Mark's Maverick's buddies were in the parking lot. We all went to the cliff to surf check.

"Since only the inside, known as 'Phlegm Balls' was actually breaking, Mark's cronies decided to go north to Ocean Beach. We went around to the cliff above the 'lagoon' for another angle. 'Phlegm Balls' beckoned, so we decided we should paddle out. On the way back to the parking lot we ran into the others, who had changed their minds and were suited up, boards in hand, headed out. We suited up and walked back to the lagoon...We entered the lagoon to start the 1/4- to 1/3-mile paddle out.

"The paddle was long and after a mostly surfless summer, I was way out of paddling shape and began to lag behind. Being on the smallest board that rode the lowest in the water

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didn't help either. When we had paddled just past 'Mushroom Rock', which marks the edge of the exposed reef, we reconvened and told Mark to keep going and we would see him out there. I sat up to stretch my lower back and shoulders, and then Mike and I continued to paddle.

"The next instant, I was hit with unbelievable violence from below. My first thought was a wave had sucked out and I had somehow dropped onto dry reef. When I saw a huge gray head and sharp conical snout rise up at my elbow, I knew differently. I don't have a clear vision of the rest of the encounter, I vaguely remember seeing its teeth and an eye. In an instant it released my board and must have pumped its tail hard underneath me, since the water swirled heavily beneath me and I had to hold on tight. Miraculously, I never fell off the board. Mike said that for a moment the dorsal fin headed towards him, before disappearing.

"I looked at Mike and his face was drained of color. I was terrified to put my arms in the water, but the desire to get out over rode. I was sure that the shark would hit again. My first instinct was to catch whitewater up onto dry reef that was inside of us and bristling with mussels, but Mike wisely talked me down. We decided to shoot a small gap in the reef on the inside of 'Mushroom Rock'. After catching some white water through a gap, I was pushed farther into the lagoon than I wanted to be and ended up having to do a few sloppy duck dives to head northeast towards the shallows. Finally we made it to waist-deep water and got off our boards, and looked at mine. The magnitude of the damage caused an endless chorus of expletives. I have never experienced the surge of adrenaline I felt that day and I likely never will again." ... *Peck Euwer*

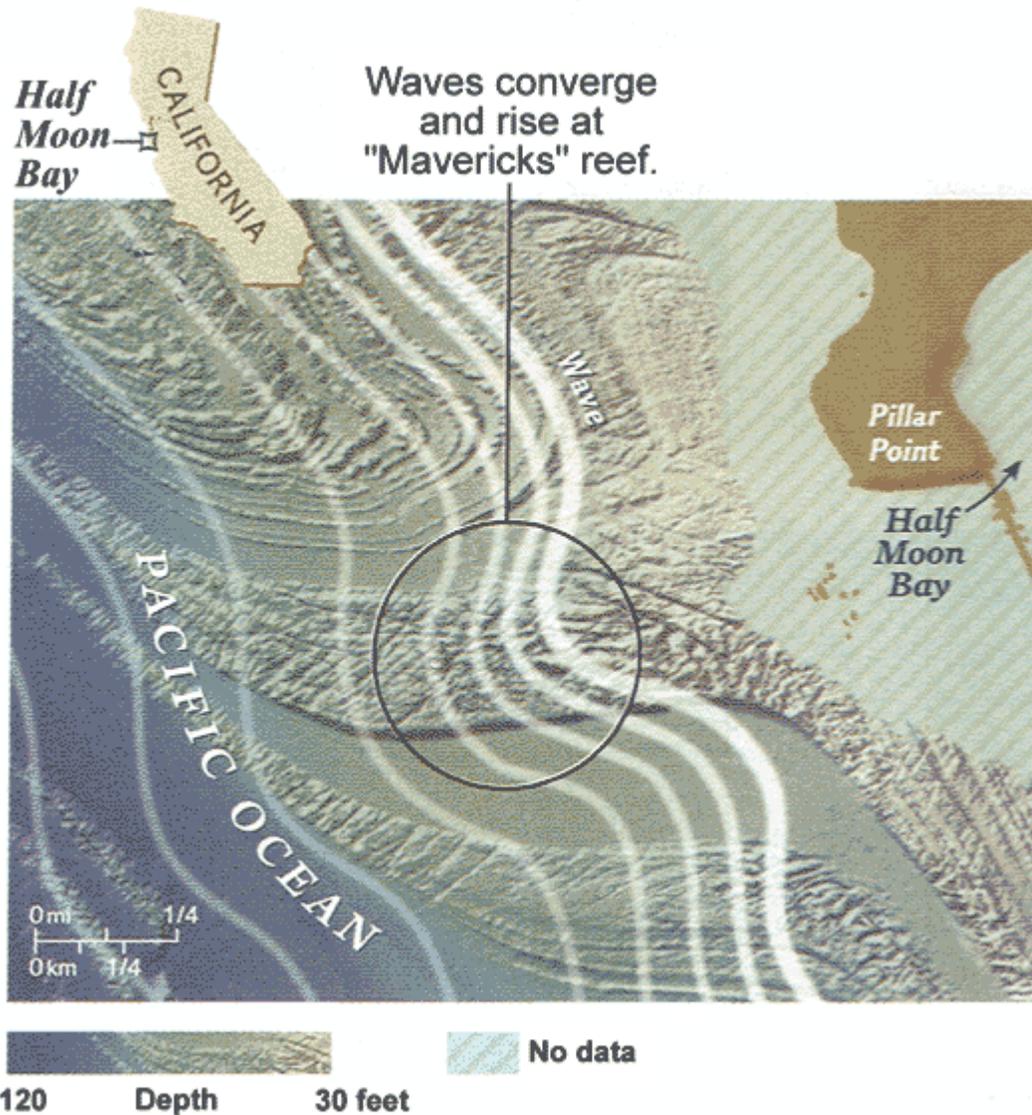
**INJURY:** "I had two slashes through the leg of my wetsuit, but not a single scratch." said Peck.

**DAMAGE TO SURFBOARD:** According to Peck, the shark's lower jaw hit the underside of his board first, making a large dent off to the left of the stringer; then the upper jaw clamped down on the board from above. Fortunately, Peck was still in the air from the initial impact when the jaws met.



**SPECIES INVOLVED:** The incident involved a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*. From the bite radius on the surfboard, it was determined that the shark was nearly 14 feet in length.

**SOURCES:** Peck Euwer, Ocean.com; D.W. Cole & M. DesJardins, Santa Cruz Sentinel; Los Angeles Times, <http://www.ocean.com/Library/SeaStories/Peck's%20Attack/>



"Some of the largest waves to hit the mainland USA are at "Mavericks", the rocky reef near California's Half Moon Bay. . .Funded by the California Ocean Protection Council, researchers used sonar to map the seafloor under the surf break — part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. It turns out a tongue of bedrock juts into the Pacific just below the surf zone. Intricate folds of eroded sandstones from the Tertiary period form stair-like ledges between the deeper canyons. Waves race through those deepwater slots, then are bent by the reef, creating peaks 40 feet or higher during big swells. . ."Those [underwater] hills looks like mushroom heads, undercut with cracks and caves," says surfer Matt Ambrose."

...National Geographic, January 2008