

ACTIVITY: Kayaking

CASE: GSAF 2001.01.24.R

DATE: Reported January 24, 2001

LOCATION: The incident took place off South West Rocks on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, Australia.

NAME: Mark Elkinton

DESCRIPTION: He is a 35-year-old male. He was on a trip to raise money for cancer research. The kayakathon is due to finish in Darling Harbour, Sydney on February 4, 2001.

NARRATIVE: Elkinton was paddling when the shark rammed his kayak, whipping him up into the air. The force of the impact, which he likened to a car crashing into him at more than 70km/h only more violent, flung the paddle out of his hands, forcing him to unclip himself from the kayak while upside down underwater. It took him a few seconds to realize what had happened. "I had to get my frame of mind back and get all my limbs back in the boat in case it was looking at me. I decided not to open my eyes in case it was," he said.

He shouted for help from his *Kayaking for Kemo Kids* team, and the group of four braced the sea kayaks together in a bid to frighten off the shark.

"I've spent 30 years sailing and on the water but I really didn't imagine a shark attack could come from anywhere. I always thought I would see it first," he said. "I wasn't nervous at the time; I was more anxious on the beach an hour later, thinking, gee, how lucky am I?"

INJURY: The kayaker had to have extensive massage to ease a painful back but otherwise the incident left him relatively unscathed.

DAMAGE TO KAYAK: Although made from material 10 times stronger than that used on surfboards, the kayak had three large stress fractures and teeth marks across its full 60 cm width.

SPECIES: According to Elkinton, the shark was about five metres in length. The incident was thought to involve a white shark.

SOURCE: The Daily Telegraph, January 24, 2001, page 19

