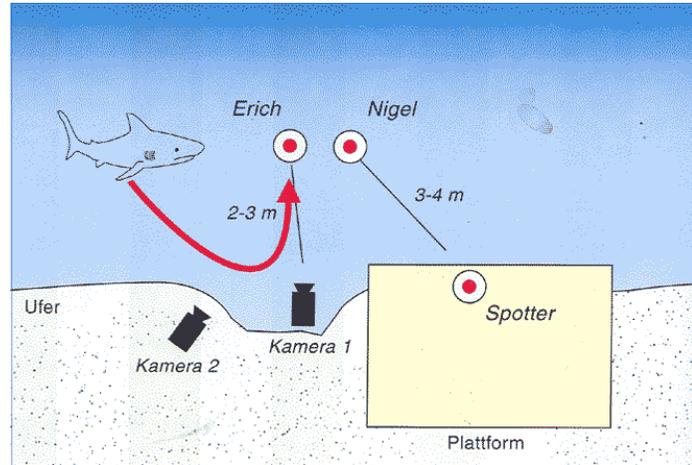


ACTIVITY: Standing in shallow water, not moving
CASE: GSAF 2002.04.09
DATE: Tuesday, April 9, 2002
LOCATION: Walker's Cay, Bahamas

NAME: Erich K. Ritter, Ph.D.
DESCRIPTION: He is a 43-year-old male, 5'11" tall, 205 lbs, wearing beige trunks and black booties. He is a shark behaviorist.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: Sunny, no wind
MOON PHASE: Waning Crescent, 9% of the Moon was illuminated. New Moon, April 12, 2002
SEA CONDITIONS: No waves, high tide
ENVIRONMENT: At the shore – rock bottom (Shark Beach, Walker's Cay)
DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Two to three metres
DEPTH OF WATER: Hip deep, approximately 1.2 metres)
TIME: Around 11h00



NARRATIVE: "I was standing in hip-deep water for an interview with Discovery Channel for the opening show of "Shark Week 2002". With me was Nigel Marvin. He was about one metre away and facing me. We were very close to the shore. A cameraman (Pete Zuccherini, Camera 1) was about two to three metres from us and submerged, closer to the shore. Gary Adkinson, who was standing on a platform above us, controlled the situation. Gary's job was to 1) throw bait "strategically" so that the sharks (bull sharks, lemon sharks and blacktip sharks) would stay in our vicinity and in visual range of the cameras (positioned in water and above), 2) to control the situation, and call out if sharks approached either me or Marvin from behind so that we could react if necessary. Overall, between 15 and 20 sharks were around us. We were in the water for about 45 minutes to an hour prior to the incident.

"The set up has been created by Gary and me many times during research experiments to understand / evaluate approach behavior of bull sharks when humans are in the water.

Accident description: "I felt a bump from a shark on my left calf and realized that one shark had sneaked up on me (in this split second I wondered why Gary did not call out). I did not move in order not to provoke a 'reflex bite' by the animal. At that point I had no idea how big the animal was. I then felt a first bite and still tried not to move in order not to further 'provoke' the animal. Then I felt a quick release, and then an immediate second, much more intense, bite. At this point the situation seemed to slow down. It took me about two seconds until I fully realized what the animal was up to – to either bite through my leg or drag me into deeper water. At this point my conscious thinking kicked in, and I reacted. Due to the power of this animal and the easiness with which it pulled / pushed me around, I realized that I was not going to be able to fend it off. The only helpful reaction against the shark's path /

intention seemed to get his head to the surface and so work against its intention. I can't say how long it took, but the animal let go as soon as I had my leg at the surface. I then lifted my leg completely above the water level, and saw that my calf was gone, and that there was extensive bleeding. I tried to make it to shore when James York (topside camera) jumped in the water and helped me – together with Nigel Marvin – to get out.”

INJURY: “The entire calf muscle was removed. The fibula was split, and the posterior tibial artery was severed for a length of about 2 cm. Until admission to St. Mary’s ER in West Palm Beach I lost close to 50% of my blood volume”.

FIRST AID: Gary Adkinson placed a tourniquet above my knee and covered the wound with towels. Clark (a pilot on the island) took off – together with Gary and me – within 34 minutes of the accident for West Palm Beach. Clark filed an emergency flight plan and 45 miles off WPB he got clearance with the tower. When we touched down, Trauma-Hawk (Air Rescue) was standing by with running rotors. I was immediately airlifted to St. Mary’s and reached the ER within two hours of my accident. I was in surgery at 1:30 pm (13h30).”

SPECIES INVOLVED: Bull shark (*Carcharhinus leucas*), 2.5 metres in length.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Erich Ritter

