

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 2004.05.04](#)

DATE: Tuesday May 4, 2004

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico, in the channel between South Padre Island and Padre Island National Seashore, Texas, two miles north of Port Mansfield and 35 miles south of South Padre Island.

NAMES: Gene and Rachel

DESCRIPTION: The Gores are surfing instructors. Gene is 38-years-old and Rachel is 28-years old. On May 1, 2004, they began a 375-mile trek from the Rio Grande to the Sabine River (the entire length of the Texas coast) to raise public awareness on coastal issues and raise funds for the three Texas Chapters of the Surfrider Foundation (www.surfrider.org/texas).

SURFBOARD: The board is a red, white and blue custom-made, two-person (tandem) 12-ft board. The underside is white, and the single fin is grey and shaped like the fin of a tuna.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a mild sunny day and there was light five- to 10-knot north wind.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, May 4, 2004

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was murky with less than a foot visibility. In their daily log, the Gores recorded water temperature of 71°F on the afternoon of the incident. Gene reports that the sea surface temperature in the area of the incident had warmed dramatically (five to seven degrees) and was in the mid-70s. The surf was about three feet, there was a one- to two-foot northeast swell, and the tide was outgoing (i.e., flushing fish out of the shallows).

ENVIRONMENT: Manuel Gallardo, 50, of Corpus Christi, was surf fishing for sharks about 20 miles north of the channel and caught three black-tipped sharks ranging from 3-feet-9-inches long to 5-feet-4-inches long. Gallardo, who is part of a five-member team that competes in a shark fishing tournament, said other fishermen have caught tiger sharks, hammerheads and other species of sharks off the shore in the southern section of Padre Island National Seashore. Gene Gore reported that during the previous two days as they paddled along remote areas of the Texas coast, they saw five to six sharks per hour. "Immediately before the incident, we saw bull sharks between five and six feet in length



*Photo by Ken & Patsy Nolte who were escorting the Gores
www.spadre.com/surfcam.htm*

feeding on schools of Jack Crevalle, and numerous blacktip sharks up to three feet in length feeding aggressively feeding on mullet," he said. "The water was frothing with the activity." He also said they received reports from fishermen that mako sharks were coming in closer to shore in search of tuna, and sent the photo on the previous page of a mako shark biting a fishing boat at Port Mansfield shortly before the incident

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100 yards from a rock jetty.

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 10 feet

TIME: 16h30 [4: 30 p.m.]

NARRATIVE: Gene had just paddled 1/2 mile around jetties, and as he came in to beach Rachel took over. She was paddling when the shark made a single strike on the surfboard, approaching from behind, lifting the surfboard into the air and turning it sideways. Rachel immediately returned to shore.

INJURY: No injury

DAMAGE TO BOARD: The shark made a deep dent in the underside of the surfboard. Teeth of the shark's lower jaw cut through fibreglass and its snout penetrated five inches into the board.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident involved a shortfin mako shark, *Isurus oxyrinchus*, about six feet in length.

SOURCES: Gene Gore and M. Sturdevant

