

ACTIVITY: Diving for abalone

CASE: **GSF 2004.08.15**

DATE: Sunday August 15, 2004

LOCATION: The attack took place in the Pacific Ocean in a sheltered cove at Kibesillah Rock, about eight miles north of Fort Bragg, Mendocino County, California, USA.
39°34.698'N, 123°46.652'W

NAME: Randall Glenn Fry

DESCRIPTION: He was a 50-year-old male from Auburn. He was 5'11" tall and weighed 180 pounds. Fry was one of the recreational fishing community's most articulate crusaders. He was a tireless advocate of behalf recreational fishing, a man who spent much of his time on the road attending meetings, conferences and legislative sessions. On the day of the attack, he was wearing a Picasso-brand hooded black and olive green camouflage two-piece wetsuit, long black swim fins, and a yellow weight belt with black weights, black boots and black gloves.

SUPPORT BOAT: The divers were using the *Dolphin*, a 28-foot Uniflite boat owned by Cliff Zimmerman of Fort Bragg. Red Bartley, from Modesto, was onboard and angling for rockfish when the attack took place.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: Air temperatures ranged from 88°F 52°F.

MOON PHASE: New Moon, August 15, 2004

SEA CONDITIONS: Average visibility in the cove is 10 to 15 feet.

ENVIRONMENT: The cove is sheltered by sheer, steep cliffs that make it accessible only by boat, and it is well-protected by a series of offshore rocks and a submerged reef. The inshore area is very shallow (less than 10 feet) but deepens about 100 feet from shore. The bottom is covered with algae: featherboa and numerous species of short-stalked algae. Locals claim that some very large abalone are at the south end of the beach in only five to seven feet of water, but the kelp is thick and diving in it is tiring. Abalone diving and fishing are better at the north and south points of the beach in 20 to 30 feet of water, and it is a good area to hunt for larger-than-average lingcod. In the center of the cove is a shallow, rocky area that breaks when the surf is up. The 15- to 20-foot-deep water around this area has sizable population of large abalone, and 8½" abalone are commonplace.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100 yards

DISTANCE FROM BOAT: 150 feet



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DEPTH OF WATER: Water depth at the site is 15 feet.

TIME: 16h30

NARRATIVE: On Saturday, Randy Fry arrived in Fort Bragg for a fund-raising dinner along with about 130 other fishing enthusiasts in Noyo Harbor.

Next day, Randy Fry and Cliff Zimmerman were hunting abalone at the incident site. The two men were longtime friends and had dived together at the site in search of abalone for 30 years. The men knew it was shark territory, but like many divers they believed the chances of an encounter were minimal. They had been in the water for about 15 minutes. They chatted while hanging on to their diving tubes and then prepared to dive.

Zimmerman was on the surface, looking down in the water and about to follow Fry who had just started to descend, when the shark swam between the two men. Fry was descending head-first with his hand close to his face mask and equalizing his ears when he was grasped by the shark.

"It was over in five seconds," said Red Bartley who witnessed the encounter from the boat. "When I saw the pool of blood spread across the surface of the water, I knew Randy was gone." Zimmerman dropped his weight belt and swam back to the fishing boat. Bartley helped him on board, and radioed the U.S. Coast Guard immediately.

A widespread air and sea search began for Fry involving three helicopters, two Coast Guard vessels and other responders. The search was called off at nightfall and resumed again the following morning. Personnel from the Westport Fire Department, California Department of Forestry and CalStar assisted sheriff's deputies, volunteers and Coast Guard crews in the search-and-rescue effort. The diver's body was recovered Monday morning.

INJURY: Fatal. The diver's injury was not survivable. Tooth marks on his body indicated the shark's jaw was approximately 38 centimetres wide. The shark did not consume any part of the body.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The attack involved a white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, estimated to be 16 to 18 feet in length.

CASE INVESTIGATORS: Ken W. Falconer, M.D.; Lewis J. Levine, M.D.; Ralph Collier