

**ACTIVITY:** Hunting sea shells  
**CASE:** **GSF 1900.07.14**  
**DATE:** Saturday July 14, 1900  
**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at Makapuu Point, O'ahu, Hawaiian Islands, USA.



**NAMES:** Emil Uhlbrecht and an unidentified person

## **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Full Moon, July 12, 1900

**NARRATIVE:** It was thought Uhlbrecht drowned and his body carried out to sea. A thorough search was made for the body for several days. On the night of August 17, 1900, John Kinipeki hooked an 11'9" shark off Kakaako, Honolulu, that contained human remains. Mrs. Uhlbrecht identified a foot with skin and flesh intact "in a fair state of preservation" as that of her husband, based on an ingrown toe nail. Also recovered were a human pelvis and femur, blackened and denuded of flesh. It was thought that the bones were those of a different individual, possibly one of several Chinese fishermen lost in the harbor in previous months.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** A 3.6 metre [11'9"] tiger shark, *Galeocerdo cuvier*.

**NOTE:** It was not possible to determine if Uhlbrecht or the other individual was alive when the shark found them. It is likely that both were drowning victims whose bodies were scavenged by the shark.

**SOURCES:** The Hawaiian Star (Honolulu, Oahu), July 19, 1900; Chicago Tribune, July 27, 1900; Los Angeles Times, July 28, 1900; Jim Borg, page 69, from data compiled by George H. Balazs, Honolulu Laboratories, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA.

### FOUND IN A SHARK.

#### Grotesque Discovery of a Missing Man by a South Sea Islander. From the Hawaiian Star.

Part of the remains of a human being were found this morning in the stomach of a huge shark which was caught at midnight by a South Sea Islander, John Poal, who was fishing near the mouth of the channel. There were the hip bones, a right thigh and a right foot, the latter in a good state of preservation. The hip and thigh bones had no flesh on them at all. The police were notified of the ghastly discovery early this morning, and Capt. Parker visited the scene and left an officer in charge. Later High Sheriff Brown went to where the opened body of the sea monster was lying, on the shore at Kakaako, and had the human remains brought to the city, where Mrs. Uhlbrecht, whose husband was drowned last Sunday, was given an opportunity to identify them. It was at once surmised that the remains were those of the unfortunate young man.

The fisherman was preparing the shark for the market when he made his grotesque discovery. He cut off the tail and cut the fish in half. Then he found the bones and yelled to companions. There is quite a colony of South Sea Island fishermen at Kakaako, and soon John was surrounded by an excited crowd of them. He laid the bones and foot aside, and the police were sent for. The foot is remarkably preserved. There are a few scratches upon it, but the flesh and skin are all there. In view of the bare condition of the other bones, this is something of a puzzle to all who have seen the remains.

Careful search was made for some shreds of clothing, but none were found. The condition of the remains indicates that the shark must have had several companions when it secured its meal. The only theory to account for the separation of the pieces is that several of the monsters attacked the body at once and fought over it, tearing it limb from limb. The shark is large enough to have eaten a man whole. Its length is about fourteen feet. Its mouth measures over a foot and a half from end to end, and rows of sharp teeth show how fearful was its rasp. It had a great square head, shaped like that of a catfish, and in the lower jaw John's large hook had caught with a grip that not even the giant's struggles could loosen.

The South Sea Islander who hooked the shark goes by the name of John. He started out early last night for a night's fishing, and at half-past 11 one of his lines was seized by a huge shark. The latter weighs about 500 pounds, and it started away with John and his lines, boat and all, as if it were a whale towing a lifeboat. John had plenty of line, however, and he comes of a race that knows no fear of any sort of fish. He prepared for a long battle. The shark swam furiously about in the depths, taking the little boat now one way and now another, while John played with it, knowing that once hooked the great fish would fight for freedom until it became exhausted. For an hour the fish had its own way. Then its strength began to give out and John's turn came. As the monster grew weaker he drew it in closer, and after a fight of an hour and a half he landed it ashore at Kakaako, near the old rifle range. John was delighted with his catch, which he thought would net a good sum of money, little

dreaming of the discovery that was to be made in the morning. Instead of being sold for food, the shark lies on the rocks and sand, as it lay when John's work of cutting it up was interrupted by the grotesque discovery he made. The big fish is only an object of horror to the natives and South Sea Islanders now.

The foot was positively identified at the police station by Mrs. Uhlbrecht as that of her husband. She called at the station at about 11 o'clock and asked to be allowed to see the remains. Friends tried to dissuade her from going to look at them, as it was easy to identify the foot by her description of an ingrowing toe nail, but she desired to make sure for herself. On looking at the foot she stated that it was in fact one of the feet of Emil Uhlbrecht.

The absence of any shoe led many people to doubt that it was one of Uhlbrecht's feet, as the latter had shoes on when he was drowned. The fact that no shoe was on when the foot was found this morning is taken as proof that the body had been in the water for some time before the sharks got at it. In many cases of drowning the clothes, shoes and all come off in the water, and this is probably what happened in the case of Uhlbrecht. This theory disposes of the idea that the young man was attacked by sharks before he met death in the water. They evidently came upon his body some time after life was extinct. The condition of the foot also bears out this supposition, as it had evidently not been very long in the shark's body.

The shark caught this morning is about the record size for these waters. There have been catches of sharks fifteen feet long and a little over, but they are rare. The monster which attacked Uhlbrecht's body is an ordinary "fish shark," as it is called, not one of the kind specially known as man-eaters.

When news of the discovery at Kakaako was circulated about town there was a rush of sightseers to the scene where the shark lay. Among them were many cameras. The remains were very quickly removed, so that most of the people saw only the mutilated body of the shark.

Capt. Parker caught sight of some more of the floating stomach in the water where the fisherman had thrown it, and he had it brought ashore for examination, but nothing was found in it.

Natives from the water front flocked to the scene of the tragic discovery in large numbers, and fish stories were the order of the day. Every native fisherman has had lots of experience with sharks, which are abundant all round the islands. Large ones, however, are seldom caught as near in shore as was the one caught this morning. The natives of old days used to have a "treaty" with the king of sharks, by the terms of which certain parts of the sea were to be free from warfare between the sharks and the fishermen. From Pearl Harbor to Waikiki was the neutral territory. Between those two limits it was agreed that the natives should catch no sharks, and in exchange for this immunity the sharks, by their monarch, agreed never to molest the native fishermen and bathers within the same limit. A huge rock which rises out of the water at Pearl Harbor is the witness of the "king" who made the treaty, under which the natives for years felt safe from the monsters of the deep.

Emil Uhlbrecht was drowned last Sunday morning off Makapuu Point, where he was hunting for shells with two companions. He ventured too far out on the rocks and a breaker carried him away. Other waves carried him farther and farther from his companions till they saw him sink.

# EMIL UHLBRECHT'S REMAINS ARE FOUND IN THE BODY OF A SHARK

HORRIBLE FATE OF THE UNFORTUNATE YOUNG MAN MADE CERTAIN BY A GRUESOME DISCOVERY THIS MORNING.

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The Hawaiian Star  
July 19, 1900