

“The water was approximately 55 feet deep to the bottom of the coral head, which was possibly 25 to 30 feet from the top. My buddy had a depth gauge that has a tattletale on it (the deepest depth you go, it stays, you have to reset it, it has a little red hand like a wrist watch). His gauge showed 54 feet, he said, and he was down to the bottom with me.

“When I hit the surface he moved in close with me and I was bleeding and I hollered for a pickup from the life raft, which came right away, and I was probably out of the water within less than 10 seconds. The raft wasn’t more than 20 yards away, and he just cracked the engine once, and come over for a pickup, and I rolled in. The shark wasn’t visible at that time, and my buddy said ‘I’ll swim down and get your speargun.’ I told him to let it go, and he saw the shark again, and decided to get out of the water also . . . That was Lee Gore.”

INJURY: “The wound inflicted by the shark ran across the top of my right shoulder, and six inches lower can be counted seven tooth puncture marks. On the top where he bit me, the teeth all run together and you cannot count the number of punctures from it. It measured six inches from upper scar to lower scar.”

TREATMENT: “Dr. John Medved cleaned the wound and sewed it up, taking approximately 100 stitches on top and bottom wounds. I don’t believe that the wound at the deepest point was more than 3/4” deep along the top of the shoulder, and not straight down, but running at an angle. I had the stitches taken out within about a week or two, and I was out diving three weeks later. The wound healed better than any wound I’ve ever had, there was no infection, no soreness. I spent one day in the hospital and after I went to work, the doctor worried about my moving my arm, but I still moved it freely. I was up on my tetanus shots but I really don’t think it makes much difference.”

SPECIES INVOLVED: “I estimate that the shark was six feet long. The biologist brought out a book with pictures of sharks, and I picked one out (the Latin names didn’t mean anything to me), and Lee Gore who was in the water with me, picked the same shark out. They tell me the shark was a mako shark. I estimated the shark to be six feet long, and he had a rather pointed nose. I am familiar with blacktip sharks and whitetip sharks, and this one was heavier of body and his stomach hung down more than theirs, he nose was more pointed than the common variety of blacktip and whitetip sharks. (Based on the shark’s behavior, Dr. Leonard Schultz believed the shark was a carcharinid shark, not a mako shark.)

COMMENTS BY WALTER HUGES: “I thought at the time the shark bit me, he must have gone over my shoulder, flipping his tail straight up in the air and bit me, because the scar was deeper on the top of the shoulder than on the bottom, but since thinking it over, and the scars on the bottom stagger, and those on the top seem to be more in a straight line, I think he possibly turned around and bit me after he had passed on the third pass.

“Previous to the attack we had speared no fish whatsoever, either I or my friends who were in the water, and the shark did not make a pass at me until I was on my way up, and in retreat from him. But I had no Aqua-lung, so consequently, you’re limited on your time down.

“Personnel have been skin diving, spearfishing, shell hunting and just swimming in the area

of Eniwetok and between the Atoll since 1949, and to my knowledge there was one other attack. The individual jumped out of the DUKW, something hit his hand and left a pretty good bite — I don't know whether it was a barracuda or a shark. The barracudas are much more scarce than sharks in general; the usual variety of shark is the whitetip and the blacktip. The barracudas are caught up to 60 pounds, and in excess of five feet long. The Great Reef barracuda, I guess you'd call them. But as an experienced skin diver, I would only see maybe two per year. I have only speared one in approximately three years of steady diving. This is all skin-diving most of the time."

SOURCES: Walter L. Huges; Victor M. Coppleson (1962), page 248