



**ACTIVITY:** Spearfishing

**CASE:** [GSAF 1958.02.01](#)

**DATE:** Saturday February 1, 1958

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Caribbean Sea off Water Island, United States Virgin Islands.

**NAME:** Ronald Gerringer

**DESCRIPTION:** He was an 18-year-old male, 6' tall and weighing 190 pounds. He was in the U.S. Navy and undergoing Underwater Demolition Team training. He was using scuba and carrying a conventional double-rubber speargun.

**BOAT:** US. Navy bow ramp landing craft (LCDR-type)

#### **BACKGROUND**

**ENVIRONMENT:** Water Island, the smallest (491.5 acres) of the U.S. Virgin Islands, is located a half-mile off the southern side of St. Thomas. The incident took place over a coral bottom.

**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:** 30 feet

**NARRATIVE:** Ronald Gerringer speared the shark when he was about 50 yards from the boat. He was swimming to the boat, towing the shark behind him. Two men onboard the boat took the gun and pulled the shark to the surface but were unable to hoist it onto the ramp. In an attempt to facilitate the operation, Gerringer, still in the water, grabbed the shark while the men in the boat hauled on the tail. The shark bit Gerringer's chest.

**INJURY:** The shark bit the diver the shoulder in the pectoral muscle region on the left side of the chest. Although Gerringer was not incapacitated, the injury prevented him from swimming for the next three to four weeks.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** The incident involved a nurse shark, about five in length and weighing 60 to 70 pounds.

**NOTE:** This is a provoked incident; the shark had been speared three times before it bit the diver.

**REPORTED BY:** John E. Randall

