



ACTIVITY: Collecting aquarium specimens

CASE: **GSAF 1961.01.15**

DATE: Sunday January 15, 1961

LOCATION: The incident took place onboard a powered water ski at Cook Island, off Fingal, New South Wales, Australia.

28°10'S, 153°30'E.

NAME: Robert Webb

DESCRIPTION: He was a 27-year-old male from Brisbane.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, January 17, 1961

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: Two miles

TIME: Morning

NARRATIVE: Webb and Ron Cox were catching sharks for display at Tweed Heads Aquarium. They had caught three sharks by lassoing them around their tails and the sharks were tied down on the deck of the ski. As Webb was moving up the narrow deck to haul the anchor, one of the sharks grabbed his leg.

Cox and Webb used spears to prise open the shark's mouth. It took 15 minutes to free Webb's leg. He tied two socks around the wound and they headed back to Tweed Heads.

INJURY: His right calf was bitten by the shark.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Webb tied two old socks around the injury to stop blood loss. Webb was treated by Tweed Heads ambulance and later saw a doctor. It does not appear that any stitches were needed.

SPECIES: According to the diver, the incident involved a 1.5-metre [five-foot] wobbegong shark.

NOTE: This was a provoked incident; it involved a captive shark.

SOURCES: Mackay Daily Mercury (Queensland), January 16, 1961; H. David Baldrige, page 134.

Shark attack beaten

TWEED HEADS, Sun. — A spear fisherman had a grim 15 minute struggle today to prise open the jaws of a 5ft. wobbegong shark which mauled his leg.

He is Brisbane Spearfishing Club president Bob Webb (27).

Webb, of Brisbane, and another spear fisherman, Ron Cox, of Tweed Heads, went to Cook Island, off Fingal, this morning to catch some sharks for a Tweed Heads aquarium owned by professional fisherman Jack Evans.

Both men are former Australian underwater spear fishing champions.

Caught three

They caught three sharks — two 7ft. leopard sharks and the wobbegong (carpet) shark — by lassoing their tails.

The catch was tied down on the deck of a powered water ski.

Webb said tonight the wobbegong attacked him as he was moving up the narrow deck to haul up anchor.

"I felt a searing pain in the calf of my right leg and realised the shark had clamped its jaws on me," said Webb.

"I called to Ron who was still in the water and the two of us tried to get its jaws open but the harder we tried the more it held on."

Webb said they used spears in an attempt to force the shark's mouth open but it was 15 minutes before it loosened its grip.

Webb said he tied two old socks around the bleeding wound and they made the two mile trip back to Tweed Heads on the ski.

Lost blood

He lost a good deal of blood. He was treated by Tweed Heads ambulance and later saw a doctor. However, no stitches were needed.

The adventure ended badly for the wobbegong — it died shortly after arriving at Tweed Heads.

Queensland Government Ichthyologist (Mr. T. C. Marshall) said tonight wobbegong sharks were not man-eaters but were capable of giving a very nasty bite if disturbed.

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