

ACTIVITY: Swimming or Walking
CASE: GSAF 1961.05.15
DATE: Monday May 15, 1961
LOCATION: The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico at Laguna Beach, Bay County, Florida, USA.
30°15'N, 85°50'W.

NAME: G.L. Morris
DESCRIPTION: He was a 52-year-old male from Birmingham, Alabama. He was wearing beige swim trunks. Morris was the Commercial Lighting Director for the Alabama Power Company.

BACKGROUND:

WEATHER: It was a bright, sunny day and the air temperature was 80°F.

MOON PHASE: New Moon, May 14, 1961

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was clear and the water temperature was about 60°F.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 40 feet

DEPTH OF WATER: "Chest-deep"

TIME: 11h30

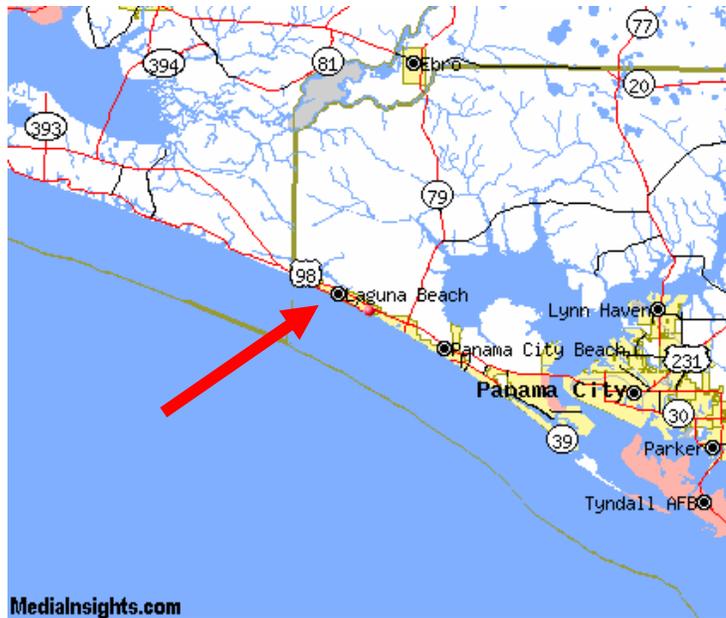
NARRATIVE: "I had just walked into the water when I felt this thud on my chest and looked down to see something black swish by. I had been swimming with Mrs. D. C. Cannon, wife of the owner of the tourist court where my wife and I were staying. She was about 10 feet away and closer inshore, and I initially thought she had thrown back the black rubber inner tube she had been using. But about the time I realized that it was no rubber tube, the thing lunged at me. I side-stepped and stiff-armed it with my left hand and it grabbed my middle finger," said Morris. He immediately headed for shore, yelling "Shark!"

"The second time the shark made a pass at me was in waist-deep water," said Morris. "I sidestepped again and grabbed hold of the shark's fins with both hands and put my left foot on its back, sending it to the sand. Thinking I could make it to shore while the shark was still on the bottom, I leapt off."

"I was in knee-deep water when the shark charged me again and somehow I had the shark's head between my body and my right arm, with the shark's teeth embedded in my right forearm. I was totally exhausted by this time."

Then Mr. Greathouse and Mr. Cooper (owner of the motel next door) reached Morris. When Greathouse lifted Morris out of the water, the shark released him and swam away.

INJURY: The middle finger of his left hand was lacerated and there were six deep gashes on his right forearm.



FIRST AID: Morris was taken by ambulance to the Lisenby Hospital in Panama City, 16 miles away.

TREATMENT: Morris was treated by Dr. T. M. Smith at Lisenby Hospital. "Dr. Smith sewed my finger and arm, gave me a tetanus shot, and sulfa tablets to take twice daily," said Morris. He was not admitted to the hospital but returned to Dr. Smith's office the next day for dressing of the wounds.

Morris returned home to Alabama and his family physician, Dr. J. Mason, III (Birmingham, Alabama) removed the stitches the following Saturday and provided follow-up treatment..

SPECIES INVOLVED: According to Morris, the incident involved a 500-lb hammerhead shark.

SOURCES: G.L. Morris; Post Herald (Birmingham, Alabama) May 18, 1961; The Miami News, Tuesday May 16, 1961; Victor M. Coppleson (1962), page 249.

Bitten By A Shark

PANAMA CITY — A shark inflicted minor injuries on vacationing G. L. Morris, 52, of Birmingham. Morris was in the surf up to his armpits at Laguna Beach when the shark struck him an apparent glancing blow. He suffered superficial lacerations of the right hand, wrist and forearm, and a gash on the middle finger of his left hand.