

**ACTIVITY:** Body surfing  
**CASE:** GSAF 1980.04.00  
**DATE:** April 1980

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Mexico.  
23°13'N, 106°25'W

**NAME:** Kim Sprague (nee Giambalvo)  
**DESCRIPTION:** She was a 13-year-old female. She was 4'9", weighed 85 pounds, and she was wearing a bikini.

#### **BACKGROUND**

**WEATHER:** The air temperature was in the mid-90s (estimated).

**ENVIRONMENT:** Kim was not aware of any sharks in her immediate vicinity before she was bitten.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 30 yards

**DEPTH OF WATER:** Five feet

**TIME:** Early afternoon



**NARRATIVE:** Kim Giambalvo had been in the water for at least an hour and was waiting for a wave: “I had no board, and I remember that I was out a bit over my head, so I was slightly bouncing, treading water, waiting for the next set of waves.”

“There was another swimmer, a teen boy that I had met, in the water at that time. He was approximately 10 yards away, and we were talking as we waited for the next wave. I remember that the water, at that time, was relatively calm. Then I felt a razor sharp slice up my right calf.”

“I live near the beach in California, and was active in Junior Lifeguards, and immediately feared a shark, as I had heard there were sharks in the warm waters of Mexico (although it didn’t keep me from body surfing all day, every day of our vacation).”

“As soon as I felt the pain, I went into a floating position. I tried to lay still, thinking any movement would attract the animal.”

“I was in shock, so I don’t remember time well, but after what seemed like a few seconds, I tried to hurry out of the water. I had screamed when the bite occurred and now I was telling the other swimmer that I had been bit. He didn’t believe me, and thought I was kidding.”

“I went to lift up my leg to show him, but at that time, he couldn’t see any blood from his distance.” Kim quickly left the water.

**INJURY:** “My right calf was approached from my right side, the outside of my leg. The right/outer part of my calf had several 4-6 ‘hash’ marks. Not very deep, about 1– to 1½ inch in length, and they were very close together.”

“The inside of my right calf had a giant slice. It was almost the shape of the letter C or bass

clef. It began close to my shin, went out to the inside of my calf, and then down, curving back in towards my shin. The top/mid portion of the curve was the deepest. It appeared to be one, continuous slice, and was cut at an angle, rather than straight down into the skin.”

“It has been nearly 30 years, and the only scar remaining is the portion of the curve that had been the deepest (and was butterflyed). If you look closely, you can see about 2” or 3” of the scar.”

**FIRST AID / TREATMENT:** “As I went across the sand to our hotel, my leg began to bleed more. By the time I reached the hotel lobby (I had been swimming in front of the hotel) my right calf (and below it) were covered in blood.”

“We were due to leave for the airport in just an hour or so, our bags already packed in the lobby. I remember a man from the hotel, surrounded by other hotel employees looked at my leg. They cleaned it up, put butterfly bandages on some of the wound, and wrapped it all in thick gauze and tape.”

“Once back in California, we went to the Emergency Room. They re-cleaned the wound and kept the butterfly bandages in place.”

**SPECIES:** “I remember they (the hotel employees in Mazatlán) told me it was a tiger shark, and that from the size of the bite it was approx. 6 feet. long. They did not seem surprised that I had been bitten. I have always assumed that my bite was from a young, tiger shark, as told, but with the recent shark report in the paper, I have wondered about the accuracy of what bit me.” The description of the wound and the habitat suggest a tiger shark as the causal species.

**SOURCE:** Questionnaire completed by Kim Giambalvo Sprague

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Ralph Collier

