



Kerrin Jeromin

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 1981.02.02](#)

DATE: Monday February 2, 1981

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean at Juno Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, USA.

26°53', 80°3'

NAME: Michael A. Reist

DESCRIPTION: The surfer, a 15-year-old male, is 5'9" tall and weighs 172 lbs. He was clad in light blue shorts that had a navy-blue waistband. He is lightly tanned, had no injuries prior to the incident and wore no jewelry.

SURFBOARD: The surfer was using a blue and white tri-fin surfboard.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It was a stormy day, and the air temperature was about 72°F.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was turbid and rough. Water temperature was 62°F. High tide was at 07h42, low tide at 12h52.

ENVIRONMENT: The area of the incident conforms, generally, to that of the geomorphology described for cases GSAF 1968.04.20 (Samples), GSAF 1966.08.00 (Carpenter), GSAF 1967.10.17 (White); GSAF 79.03.24 (Stewart) among others. The bottom is of shell about three feet from shore with a very gentle grade. There is a drop-off to a four- to six-foot channel, sandy bottom, approximately 20 feet wide rising to a sandbar before another drop-off. The bottom is sandy with some rocks and broken pieces of reef. There is no vegetation. Reist was facing east at the time of the incident and since the shark bit his calf it may be assumed that the approach was from the west or the northwest. Sharks use the channel, referred to as a swimway, entering and/or exiting through troughs on its east side.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 50 feet, and 20 feet from a channel.

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 8 to 10 feet

TIME: 13h15

NARRATIVE: Michael Reist was on the surface, straddling his surfboard with both feet and legs in the water. He was isolated (20 feet from other bathers). He was preparing to leave the water because darkening clouds signaled the approach of a squall. He suddenly felt (what he described as a huge blue crab) grab hold of his left calf and said that it began pulling him into the water. He was either pulled off or slid off his board, and when he looked down he saw a shark. Reist hit the shark “in the nose” with his hand and watch. The shark loosened its grip and the surfer pushed his leg farther into the shark’s mouth, then pulled it back as the shark released its hold. Reist got back onto his surfboard, called to his companion that he’d been attacked by a shark, and caught the first wave to shore. He reached shore unaided. Upon reaching the beach he looked at his leg and saw his wounds. There was no noticeable pain, minimal bleeding and he did not suffer any symptoms of shock. He made his way to the roadway (after climbing a fence), flagged a passing motorist who drove him a short distance to the Juno Beach Police Station.

INJURY: Multiple minor lacerations and puncture wounds to left calf. Reist did not see the shark before it bit him, and he did not see it again after it released him. He believes that the teeth of the lower jaw inflicted the injury, and as there was only a single line of lacerations / punctures, it suggests single jaw involvement.

FIRST AID: First aid was administered by a police officer and the Fire Rescue Squad. An ambulance was called and Reist was taken to Palm Beach Gardens Hospital where he was treated and released.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The surfer estimated the shark was “six to eight feet” in length and recognized it as a hammerhead, but could not identify the species.

COMMENT: Although hammerhead sharks are not particularly common in this area at this time of year, they do occur. The injury sustained appears to have been inflicted by a shark with rather small, pointed teeth consistent with those of most hammerhead sharks. It doesn’t appear that this is a “feeding effort” inasmuch as only a single jaw was used. However, since the teeth of the lower jaw are holding teeth, a closed mouth bite may have followed if the surfer had not succeeded in driving the shark away by hitting it on the snout.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Morris Vorenberg, GSAF