

ACTIVITY: Free diving, collecting abalone

CASE: [GSF 1982.09.19](#)

DATE: Sunday September 19, 1982

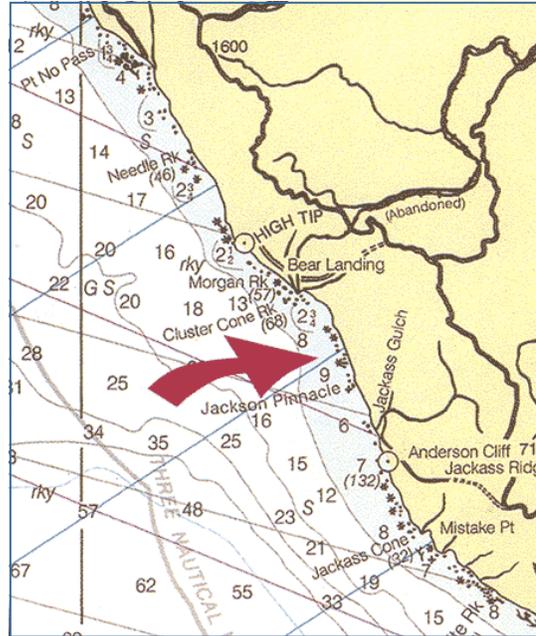
LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at Duffey's Reef, 0.5 km south of Bear Harbor, north of Fort Bragg, Mendocino County, California, USA.

39°56'N, 123°56'W

NAME: Mike Herder

DESCRIPTION: He is a 28-year-old male, a California Fish & Game marine biologist. He was dressed in a full black neoprene wetsuit with hood, gloves and boots. His mask, swim fins and weight were also black. The knees and arms of the wetsuit were blue and his snorkel was orange.

SUPPORT BOAT: A four-metre Zodiac (inflatable boat).



BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear and sunny, although fog was reported about eight kilometres west of their location.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 5% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. New Moon, September 17, 1982.

SEA CONDITIONS: The water temperature was 10°C, swells were running two to three metres, and underwater visibility was three to four metres.

ENVIRONMENT: The sea floor was rock with short kelp plants on some of the rocks. Herder recalled, "I had seen a California sea lion and about 30 harbor seals 100 metres inshore from the rocks," said Herder. A lingcod and red rockfish, caught earlier that day, were hung in the water on a stringer.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 200 metres

DEPTH OF WATER: Two fathoms

NARRATIVE: Mike Herder and Leo Millan remained in the inflatable boat while Scott Sterner entered the water, swimming 75 to 80 metres inshore, before commencing his dive. "Ocean conditions prevented anchoring any closer to our dive site," Herder recalled. Sterner made several dives over a 10- to 15-minute period, when Herder decided to make one more dive for the day. He dressed and made a forward roll entry out of the boat, creating a small splash. He hyperventilated for 15 to 20 seconds before diving vertically toward the bottom.

About a metre from the seafloor, Herder felt a tug along his left side. Thinking he was caught in kelp, he reached down with his left hand to free himself. "I realized there wasn't any kelp in the area about the time a white shark grabbed my left side, pushing me several feet through the water. There was some pain from the teeth in my left buttocks and thigh, but the immense force that hit and held me startled me so much that I was only vaguely aware of the pain."

Herder was shaken violently three or four times, with the snout of the shark across his waist, so that the sharking was vertical rather than horizontal, indicating the shark had turned on its side. Herder was released after five to 10 seconds in the shark's jaws.

The diver headed for the surface as the shark swam off to the north. Herder yelled to his companions that he had been bitten by a white shark and needed help. Herder recalled, "Millan started the boat, picked me up, and we headed toward Scott about 70 metres away."

INJURY: Herder sustained four large lacerations to his left buttock. These measured: six cm in length and two cm deep, eight cm in length and 2.5 cm deep, four cm in length and four cm deep, and three cm in length and one cm deep.

FIRST AID: Millan talked to Herder, trying to keep his mind off what had just occurred. It was during this time, heading toward Bear Harbor, that Millan recalled seeing a large shadow come up behind Herder as he made his dive. After reaching the beach, Herder was placed in their vehicle for the drive to South Humboldt Community Hospital in Garberville. Following a flat tire and time spent persuading a young couple to assist Herder by driving him to the hospital, it was almost 90 minutes before he received medical attention.

TREATMENT: More than 100 sutures were required to close Herder's wounds. Emergency room physician Michelle Petrofes prescribed tetanus toxoid and diphtheria immunizations. The diver was expected to make a full recovery. Less than five months after this incident, Herder competed in a 13-km [8.2-mile] run.

SPECIES: Interspace measurements of the tooth punctures, when compared to similar measurements from white shark jaws, agreed with Herder's estimate that the white shark was five to six metres in length.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier