

ACTIVITY: Kayaking

CASE: GSAF 1990.09.05

DATE: Wednesday September 5, 1990

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean near Trinidad Head, north of Eureka in far northwestern California, USA.

41°03.6'N, 124°09.1'W

NAME: Matt Hinton

DESCRIPTION: He is a 44-year-old male. He was wearing a black wetsuit.

KAYAK: A 2.7-metre blue kayak

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The sky was clear, the air temperature was 20°C and there was a mild five- to seven-knot northwest breeze.

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, 100% of the moon's visible disk was illuminated.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was calm and exceptionally flat, with a small westerly swell.

ENVIRONMENT: The sea floor was sandy and no dominant kelps were noted in the area. Pinnipeds were seen earlier in the day in Trinidad Harbor, but none were near the incident location. However, there is a harbor seal haul-out site about 300 metres offshore at an exposed reef.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 metres, and 20 to 30 metres seawards of a craggy exposed rock.

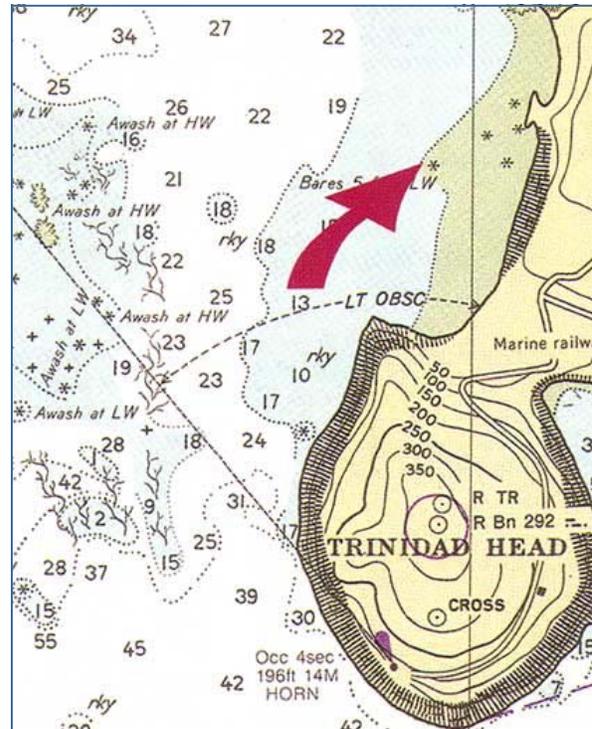
DEPTH OF WATER: One to two fathoms

TIME: 17h00

NARRATIVE: The sun began to slip beneath the western horizon, and Matt Hinton had been kayaking for 15 minutes. As a large rolling wave approached the kayak, Hinton turned slightly toward shore and began paddling slowly. The wave carried him inshore for several metres before he made a gentle turn to parallel the beach, heading north. Within moments of changing course, the kayak was violently struck from below and behind the rider's cockpit. The kayak was lifted almost a metre above the surface before tipping over to starboard (right side)

Hinton recalled:

"I had a pretty good idea of what was happening. I'd heard about Rodney's [Swan's] attack ten days previous at the same beach, and was not all that surprised. When I was underwater, I looked to my left and saw the shark. It looked to me as though the shark had turned off to my left after hitting the boat and was now in a slow turn back to the right. As the shark's body curved away to its right, I was looking at the left profile only four or five feet away. The top of the shark was very dark, almost black, and the dark and light was very sharp and wavy. I estimated its size [length] to be eight to 10 feet [approximately 2.5 to 3 m]. I still had my paddles in my hands, and aimed a two-handed cross-body thrust at the shark's head. The next thing I knew, I was on the surface about 20 feet [6 m] from my boat."



The kayaker began the long swim to the beach, glancing back in fear that the shark might return. He held his paddle during the entire swim, which he estimated to be about five minutes. Hinton had to wait on shore about 20 minutes before his kayak washed up into water shallow enough for him to wade out and retrieve it. He drained the kayak of water and spent about 10 minutes looking over the sea surface for evidence of the shark.

INJURY: No injury

DAMAGE TO KAYAK: In a letter to Ralph Collier dated October 23, 1999, Matt Hinton wrote: *“Following the attack I spent about 10 minutes looking over the boat from stem to stern, hoping to find a tooth or two embedded in the hull. There were no teeth to be found; in fact, I couldn’t even tell if there were any new scratches or gouges among all the old ones already present.”*

SPECIES: According to the kayaker, the incident involved a white shark eight to 10 feet in length.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier