

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** GSAF 1992.08.18

**DATE:** Tuesday August 18, 1992

**LOCATION:** The incident took place the Pacific Ocean at the north end of the mouth of the Klamath River, about 18 kilometres south of Crescent City in far northwestern Oregon, USA.

41°33.9'N, 124°05.3'W

**NAME:** Keith Caruso

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 23-year-old male. He was wearing a black wetsuit with hood and booties.

**SURBOARD:** A 2.3-metre "tri-skag" surfboard.

### BACKGROUND

**WEATHER:** The sky was overcast and the air temperature was 16°C. A cold southeast wind, blowing at 10 to 15 knots made the air seem even colder than it was.

**MOON PHASE:** Waning Gibbous, 78% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. New Moon on 28 August 1992

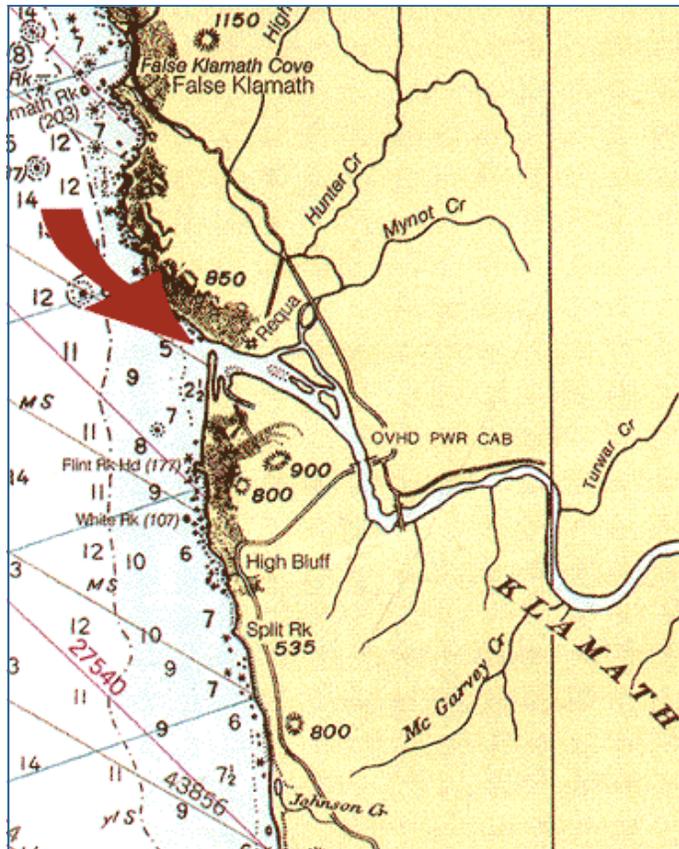
**SEA CONDITIONS:** The sea was calm with one- to two-metre ground swells. The water temperature was 10C to 13C and underwater visibility was two metres.

**ENVIRONMENT:** The sea floor sloped quickly away from the beach and was composed of tiny pea gravel. About 20 adult and juvenile harbor seals were in the water near the surf zone, 20 to 30 metres from the surfer. Several pinnipeds were seen body surfing the wave up onto the beach. According to surfers who frequent the area, this is not an uncommon sight.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 10 to 15 metres

**DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:** One to two fathoms

**TIME:** 20h15



Photograph courtesy of John Griffith

**NARRATIVE:** Keith Caruso was surfing near several large rocks at the north end of the mouth of the Klamath River and had been in the water for 90 minutes. Caruso and his five companions had decided to “call it quits” due to darkness. Caruso used his hands to position his board for the next set of waves.

*“All of a sudden, the left side of my board and left leg came up in the jaws of a white shark. The giant shark kept coming out of the water maybe five or six feet, with its pectoral fins spanning more than the spread of my arms. Its white belly had pink/brown wrinkles and undulations, which showed me it was healthy. It was about now that I remember screaming, ‘Oh, s- -t!’ as I started falling back into the water, because I had been tossed five to six feet up off my board. I landed on top of the shark’s tail as we entered the water with a tremendous splash.”*

The surfer quickly grabbed his board so it could be used as a defensive weapon. The shark was on the surface with its tail curled around toward the left side of its body. It slowly swung its tail back and forth two or three times as it submerged from view.

While watching for the shark to return, Caruso started paddling toward the beach. A surfer on shore had witnessed the incident and called out a warning to others in the water.

**INJURY:** The surfer was not injured.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** The interspace measurements of the tooth impressions in Keith Caruso’s surfboard were comparable to the dentition spacing of a white shark 5.5 to six metres in length.

**NOTE:** This was the second incident from this recurring location.

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Ralph Collier