

ACTIVITY: Surfing

CASE: [GSAF 1997.08.24](#)

DATE: Saturday August 24, 1997

LOCATION: The incident took place the Pacific Ocean off Clam Beach at the mouth of the Little River near Eureka in far northwestern California, USA.

41°01.6'N, 124°07.1'W

NAME: Scott Yerby

DESCRIPTION: He is a 29-year-old male. He was wearing a full black wetsuit.

SURFBOARD: The surfboard has a white bottom.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: "There wasn't a cloud to be seen and the air was warm," said Yerby.

MOON PHASE: Waning Gibbous, 57% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. New Moon on 1 September 1997.

SEA CONDITIONS: The surfer reported that the water was a lot warmer and much clearer than he had remembered from years past. The sea was calm, the water temperature was 17°C. There was an ebb tide of minus 0.75 metres at 12h00, which was noticeably low during the 20 minutes prior to the incident.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 75 metres

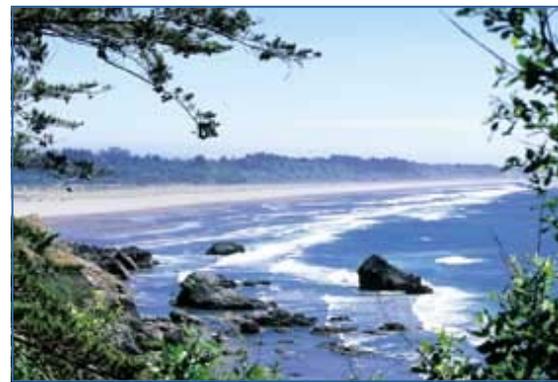
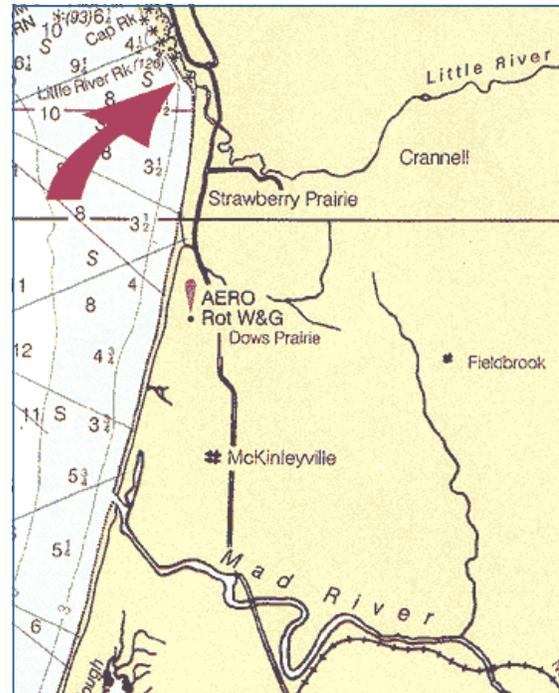
DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE:

TIME:

NARRATIVE: Scott Yerby and Dave Yun had been surfing for 20 minutes. They had paddled out over a channel, with Yun drifting 50 metres south of Yerby, who remained close to the channel. Yerby could see the bottom clearly and decided to check its depth. He slid off into the water, and to his surprise discovered a depth of only one fathom. Yerby climbed back onto his board and positioned it for the next set of waves. While waiting, he watched some people on the beach who engaged in a sandcastle-building contest.

Yerby was sitting upright on his board, legs astride, just beyond the surf line. There was a splashing sound as the shark struck his surfboard, left leg and hand, biting deeply into the leg. The shark came up out of the water, shaking the surfer violently for several seconds. Yerby struck the shark's head with his right hand, whereupon it released its grip and swam off. The shark was not seen again.

INJURY: The surfer sustained several cuts to his left hand and leg. Tooth punctures to the leg formed a large crescent and of the punctures penetrated to the femur and tibia.



Courtesy Humboldt County
Convention and Visitors Bureau

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FIRST AID / TREATMENT: As soon as the shark released him, Yerby yelled to Yun and started paddling toward shore. Yun met Yerby and towed him to the beach. Upon reaching the beach, Yun instructed several onlookers to help lift Yerby onto Yun's surfboard so they could carry the injured surfer up the beach to a waiting vehicle. Yun instructed an onlooker to call 911 and request paramedics. As luck would have it, two emergency medical technicians and a registered nurse were having a picnic on the beach. They instructed onlookers to carry Yerby to a nearby parking lot, placing him next to a Jeep. They began administering first aid while they waited for the paramedic unit. They decided to place the surfer in the Jeep and drive him to the ambulance, which had arrived on the scene but was unable to negotiate the terrain to reach Yerby. He was placed in the ambulance and transported to Mad River Community Hospital in Arcata.

Upon arrival at the hospital, Yerby was alert and not in shock. Although the surfer suffered severe damage to several tendons and muscles of the hand, his surgeons expected a long but successful recovery.

SPECIES INVOLVED: During cleaning of the wounds to Yerby's leg, several tooth fragments were recovered from his tibia. The tooth fragments and wound dimensions are consistent with those of a white shark, five metres in length.

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier