

**ACTIVITY:** Fishing

**CASE:** GSAF 2000.00.00

**DATE:** 2000

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Gulf of Mexico at Boca Grande, Gasparilla Island, Charlotte County, Florida, USA.

**BOAT:** Motorized fishing boat, occupant Terry Winters

**NARRATIVE:** George Melissas, a Clearwater fisherman who has targeted tarpon at Boca Grande for 40 years, quit fishing one day in 2000, after a hammerhead encounter he said was too nerve-wracking.

As George Melissas told the story, he saw a hammerhead attacking a tarpon on another angler's line and ran over to the action with Capt. Terry Winters, who was guiding in his own boat. They intended to try to scare the shark away from the tarpon.

The shark, Melissas said, had the profile of a 55-gallon drum; it swallowed the tarpon tail-first, right up to the gills. He estimated the tarpon would have weighed more than 125 pounds and the shark more than 1,000. "You could hear like little firecrackers going off, when he bit through those thick, tough tarpon scales," he said. "He clipped that tarpon off like it was a french fry," taking the fish tail-first and leaving only the head behind.

Then, Melissas rammed the shark with the lower unit of his outboard motor. "When I hit the shark with the skeg of the engine, he was looking for silver, anything silver. I was scared at that point.

"Then, the shark bit Terry Winters' prop, and you can imagine the power of the bite because he made the stainless steel prop look like a kernel of popcorn. "Terry lifted up his prop and said, 'George, look what you made him do to my prop. You owe me a new one.'

"That shark didn't even care. He was on the surface. He was big and bold and saying these are my fish. He had a bad attitude about being scared. He couldn't be scared," Melissas said. enough today."

**INJURY:** No injury to occupant, but boat propeller was bitten by the shark.

**SPECIES INVOLVED:** Hammerhead shark.

**SOURCE:** George Melissas as reported to Byron Stout, bstout@news-press.com, on July 2, 2005.

