

ACTIVITY: Snorkeling

CASE: GSAF 2000.10.18

DATE: Wednesday October 18, 2000

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at Olowalu in West Maui, Hawaii, USA.
20.814N, 156.625W.

NAME: Henrietta Musselwhite

DESCRIPTION: The snorkeler is a 56-year-old visitor from Geyserville, California. She is the wife of renowned blues performer Charlie Musselwhite.



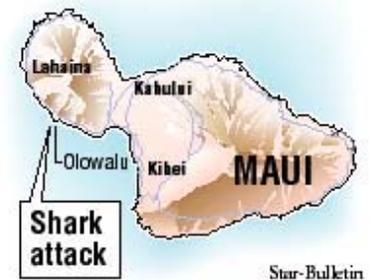
Henrietta Musselwhite

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Last Quarter, October 19, 2000

SEA CONDITIONS: The water was described as clear and sparkling.

ENVIRONMENT: The beach where the incident took place is frequented by snorkelers and commercial dive tours. Randy Awo, branch chief of the Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement of the state Department of Land and Natural Resources, said he wasn't surprised by the incident, which occurred less than a mile from where Martha Morrel was killed by a shark in 1991. "There's a lot of shark activity out there," John Silberstein, beach operations supervisor for the aquatics division of the Maui County Parks and Recreation Department, said, "Olowalu is a notorious shark area. Surfers, snorkelers and divers report seeing sharks in that area all the time."



DISTANCE FROM SHORE: A half-mile

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 30 feet

TIME: 11h20

NARRATIVE: Because the waves were barely rippling at Thousand Peaks, Ron Bass decided to swap his board for his kayak and ended up at the Olowalu wharf where he began doing "Eskimo rolls" — maneuvers where the kayaker intentionally turns the vessel upside down to practice coming out of a capsized. "Then some DLNR guys warned me about tiger sharks in the 'shark hole' (off the pier)," said Bass. "I kept looking over my shoulders." Meanwhile, Musselwhite was alone in the water at the edge of the reef off Camp Pecusa. She was snorkeling at her favorite spot where she had previously enjoyed watching turtles. While she snorkeled, her daughter and Bass were in separate kayaks about 75 yards from her. Bass heard a scream, turned around and saw "this big gray thing, coming up out of the water...I saw it go up three times and come back down with a big thrashing. It was a shark. And the woman was yelling."

Bass and Musselwhite's daughter immediately began paddling to her. Bass was the first to reach her and she pulled herself onto the back of his kayak. "I told her daughter to follow us and if the shark came back, to whomp it on the head or something," said Bass.

INJURY: The snorkeler sustained a bite to the lower back above her right hip and buttock, and a puncture wound from a tooth on the thigh. Bass described the two wounds on

Musselwhite's back as "more like slashes" One was six inches long; the other about four inches.

FIRST AID: Once on shore, Bass began treating Musselwhite's wounds. "She'd lost a lot of blood," said Bass. "She was as breathing hard but remained calm. She maintained her cool," he said. She kept her sense of humor and told him, "I guess I'll have shark tattoos put on the scars." Musselwhite's daughter stayed with her mother while Bass sped off to tell the Camp Pecusa caretaker to call 911. He also retrieved his first-aid kit. "I basically put my whole first-aid kit on her," said Bass. "I ran out of stuff." Within minutes, rescue workers and DLNR officials were on the scene, and took over care of the patient.

TREATMENT: Musselwhite was admitted to Maui Memorial Medical Center where her injuries were surgically repaired. She remained in the hospital two nights.

SPECIES INVOLVED: From descriptions provided by Musselwhite and Bass, officials believed the incident involved a tiger shark, *Galeocerdo cuvier*, between six and eight feet in length.

Soon after Musselwhite was taken to the hospital, DLNR officials closed the beaches in the immediate area. Warning signs were posted along the shore, and state conservation enforcement workers patrolled the beaches.

REPORTED BY: Valerie Monson

SOURCE: Gary Kubota, Star Bulletin



photo by Gary Chiachi - KLON-FM

*Henrietta & Charlie Musselwhite at the
BB King Lifetime Achievement Show
The Palace, Hollywood October 20, 1997*