

ACTIVITY: Snorkeling

CASE: [GSAF 2002.01.01.a](#)

DATE: Monday January 1, 2002

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean at Olowalu, Maui, Hawaii, USA.

NAME: Thomas Holmes

DESCRIPTION: The diver is a 35-year-old male, a recording artist from Los Angeles, California.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, December 30, 2001. Last Quarter, January 5, 2002.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was flat with good underwater visibility.

ENVIRONMENT: The couple recalled seeing about 30 turtles.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 100 yards

DEPTH OF WATER AT INCIDENT SITE: 40 feet, but the incident took place at the surface.

TIME: 13h00

NARRATIVE: Thomas Holmes and his girlfriend, Monica Boggs, had snorkeled on the south side of Olowalu on Sunday and returned Monday to find the water visibility had improved.

They were snorkeling when Boggs saw a shark about 30 to 40 feet away swimming upwards to them and screamed through her mask. "I thought we were going to die," said Boggs. Holmes said he turned and saw the shark and began swimming with Boggs toward shore.

When he turned around again the shark was four feet away and its mouth was open. He tucked his legs in as the shark bit him on the buttocks and the thighs. "I thought, 'This is how I'm going to die. This sucks. I don't want it to end like this. This is like a movie.'" The diver pounded the shark on its snout twice. Then the shark went below the surface and swam away.

Holmes said he did not feel any pain, and was not sure if he had been injured. He was concerned about his girlfriend, and asked her if she was OK. Then she took a look at Holmes. His shorts had been shredded by the shark and he was bleeding.

When the couple was about 50 to 60 yards from shore, they warned other snorkelers about the shark. Boggs swam with Holmes – afraid that he might pass out or need help – but he

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Tommy Holms & Monica Boggs

was able to swim ashore unaided.

INJURY: The diver sustained a two- to three-inch laceration and cuts to his right buttock and both thighs.

FIRST AID: Boggs got a towel for Holmes and waited with him while a bystander used a cell phone to call for help. "I was so happy we made it," said Holmes. "I was so elated. I felt like the luckiest unlucky guy in the world."

TREATMENT: Holmes received more than 35 sutures to repair his injuries. He recuperated at Maui Memorial Medical Center.

SPECIES INVOLVED: The incident was thought to involve a six- to seven-foot [1.8-metre] tiger shark, *Galeocerdo cuvier*. Signs were posted closing the beach soon after the incident, but were taken down after a review of ocean conditions by state officials at Olowalu. Officials found no large sharks or dead animals that could draw sharks to the area. "It doesn't mean it's safe," said Russell Sparks, state aquatics education specialist. "It just means we don't see any substantial risk. The ocean is the ocean. It's not a swimming pool."

SOURCE: Gary T. Kubota, Honolulu Star-Bulletin