

**ACTIVITY:** Surfing

**CASE:** [GSAF 2005.11.02.b](#)

**DATE:** Wednesday November 2, 2005

**LOCATION:** The incident took place at Mavericks, Half Moon Bay, San Mateo County, California, USA.

**NAME:** Tim West

**DESCRIPTION:** He is a 25-year-old male, an avid surfer who lives in El Granada and works as a union fire sprinkler fitter in San Francisco.

**SURFBOARD:** West was using a 10'1" Neptune board. It was a new board and the second time the surfer had it in the water.



## BACKGROUND

**MOON PHASE:** New Moon, November 1, 2005

**SEA CONDITIONS:** It was an empty, gray, inconsistent lineup. The waves were 10 to 15 feet on the faces, not quite big enough for real Maverick's.

**ENVIRONMENT:** A fellow surfer, Chris Loeswick, said: "It's just deep water out there, lots of sea life. It's like a freeway for great whites, whales, dolphins, everything." Harbor Master Dan Temko was alarmed at the report of this incident, but not particularly surprised. Temko noted there has been a lot of shark activity around the harbor lately. In his front office he keeps a stack of snapshots that a boater took in June of a very big shark cruising along the surface about a quarter-mile southwest of Maverick's. In August, he said, a dead otter washed up in the harbor; an autopsy revealed that it had been chomped by an "adolescent" shark. And in the past two weeks at least two local surfers have spotted sharks near Ross's Cove, a lazy deepwater left about a half-mile north of Maverick's. "It seems like there might be one hanging around out there," Temko said. "Maybe more than one."

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 1/8 of a mile

**TIME:** 16h45

**NARRATIVE:** As Half Moon Bay surfers Tim West and Chris Loeswick headed toward the water to surf Maverick's in the late afternoon, they had the same thought: 'shark'. West tried to laugh it off. "Watch out for strangers," he told Loeswick, but the vibe persisted through the long paddle, and kept them nervous even after they'd each ridden a wave. Loeswick sat with his legs up on the deck of his board between sets, and West began to wonder: Had they made a mistake trying to surf Maverick's by themselves on a day when the shark aura was so heavy and the lulls were so long?

So the pair sat far inside, just beyond the gnarled inside double-up known as Phlegm Balls. On the way back out after his first ride, West saw an outside wave break on the main peak, and he paddled past Loeswick toward it, hoping to dial into at least one legitimate Mav's drop before dark. He was on his belly facing seawards and rested for a minute, maybe 20

feet from the primary lineup, when the shark charged upwards from below, slammed into his Neptune gun from beneath and launched him into the air. He estimates that he flew about two feet above the water and five feet to his left.

“At first I thought it was a seal or some seaweed or a boil,” West, shaken but otherwise unscathed, said the next day in an interview at his home about a mile from Maverick’s. “Then I saw this gray thing just thrashing by my board. I swam away, to the end of my leash, and all of the sudden the thing disappeared and everything just stopped. It went dead calm. I reeled in my board and just paddled straight toward the reef. I didn’t even care about waves – I just sprinted for the beach.”

Loeswick, sitting inside, saw the strike. “I glance up and his board gets shot out of the water, and there’s all this splashing,” Loeswick, said. “It was surreal. I just freaked out and started calling his name: ‘Wwwweeeesssttt!’ I was stoked to see that he was OK. We both paddled as hard as we could toward the rocks. He was maybe 100 feet farther out than I was, but he was so pumped on adrenalin that he just blew right by me.”

Back at their car, West immediately called the nearby Pillar Point Harbor Patrol to report the incident.

**INJURY:** No injury

**DAMAGE TO SURFBOARD:** There was a fist-sized pressure ding in the bottom of West’s board and part of a tooth of the shark was embedded in the board.

**SPECIES:** The tooth fragment indicated a white shark 12 to 14 feet in length was involved in this incident.

**NOTE:** On Wednesday, Harbor Master Temko ordered his staff to post warning signs in the Maverick’s parking lot, although he didn’t formally close the spot to surfers or kayakers. He also asked West if he’d be willing to do some TV interviews, explaining that news exposure would be the best way to spread a warning. West agreed, but by Thursday, he was beginning to regret the decision to go public. Some people are cut out for shark-bite stardom; Tim West is not one of them.

“I don’t want to be known as ‘shark attack guy,’” he said. “I just want to surf Maverick’s.” If, however, West can manage to make a little money from the mishap, he’s open to suggestions. “If there’s someone who wants to cough up a bunch of cash for an interview or something, I’m down. I’ve got bills to pay.” He’s also thinking about selling the board, with tooth intact. “I’m thinking eBay. Dude, I might do that. At first I wanted to just fix it and ride it again, but if I could sell for it two grand, I could get like four new boards.”

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Ralph Collier

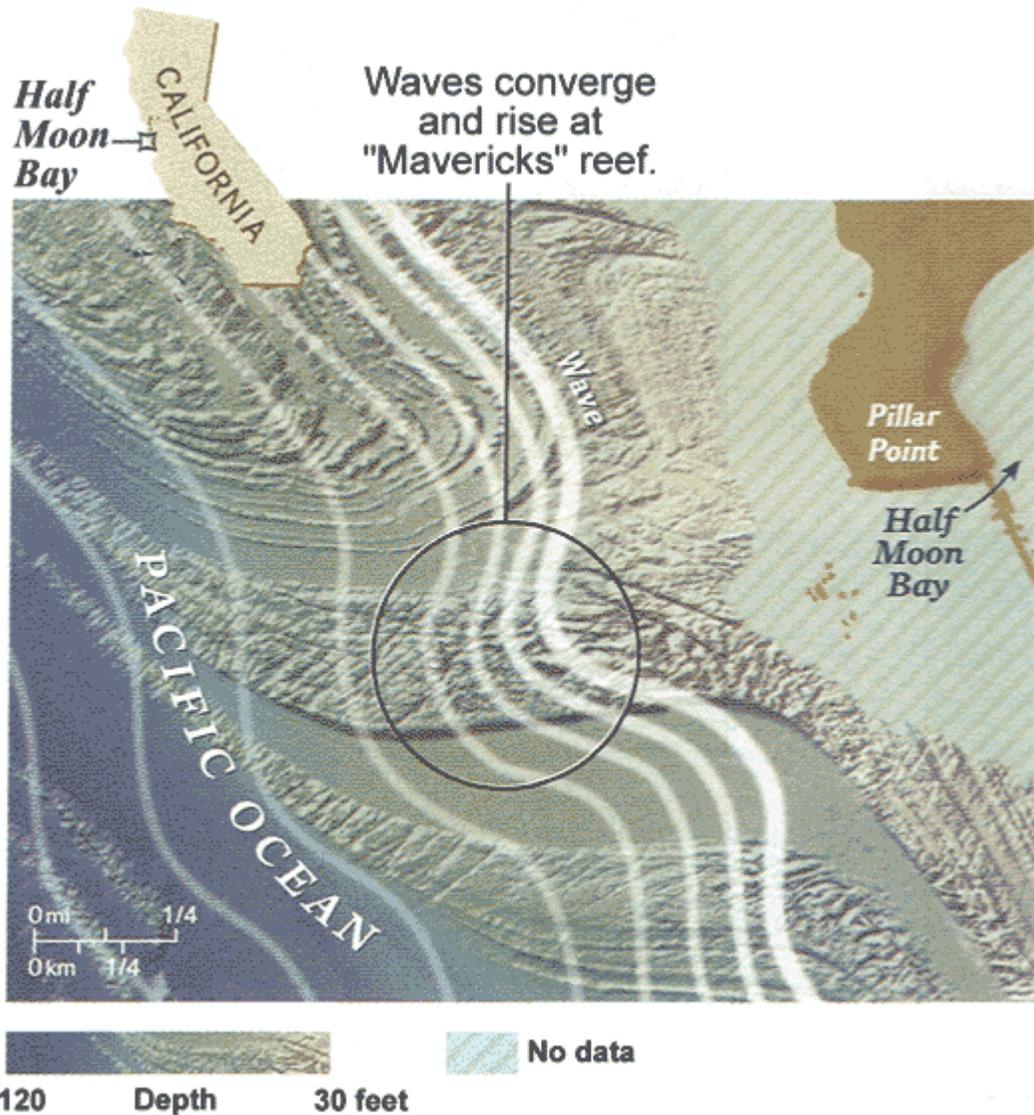


*Tim West and his surfboard*



*Shark's tooth embedded in West's surfboard.*





"Some of the largest waves to hit the mainland USA are at "Mavericks", the rocky reef near California's Half Moon Bay. Funded by the California Ocean Protection Council, researchers used sonar to map the seafloor under the surf break — part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. It turns out a tongue of bedrock juts into the Pacific just below the surf zone. Intricate folds of eroded sandstones from the Tertiary period form stair-like ledges between the deeper canyons. Waves race through those deepwater slots, then are bent by the reef, creating peaks 40 feet or higher during big swells. "Those [underwater] hills looks like mushroom heads, undercut with cracks and caves," says surfer Matt Ambrose."

...*National Geographic, January 2008*