

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: GSAF 2005.12.21

DATE: Wednesday December 21, 2005

LOCATION: The incident took place at Keawakapu Beach on the Wailea Coast, West Maui, Hawaii, USA.

Longitude: -156°26'52" W, Latitude: 20°42'8" N

NAME: Jonathan Genant

DESCRIPTION: He is a 29-year-old male from San Diego, a former triathlete who swims regularly and visits Maui each year with family members including his parents: Harry and Gail Genant, physicians in San Francisco. He arrived on Maui a day before the incident, and his parents were at their Wailea condominium when the incident took place. Jonathan Genant co-founded an Internet marketing firm: Better Deal LLC.



Jonathan Genant

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The air temperature was 81°F, wind was from the north at nine mph, humidity was 65%, barometric pressure was 30.10 inches, dew point was 68°F, and visibility was eight miles.

MOON PHASE: Waning Gibbeous, 71% of the Moon's visible disk was illuminated. Sunset was at 17h49. Last Quarter, December 23, 2005. New Moon, December 31, 2005.

SEA CONDITIONS: The shorebreak was two to three feet in height. Although Fire Battalion Chief Alan Pascua said the water was a little murky following recent rains on Maui, but the water in the vicinity of the incident was calm and clear.

ENVIRONMENT: Shore zone consists of coarse unconsolidated sediment.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 200 yards

DEPTH OF WATER: 30 feet

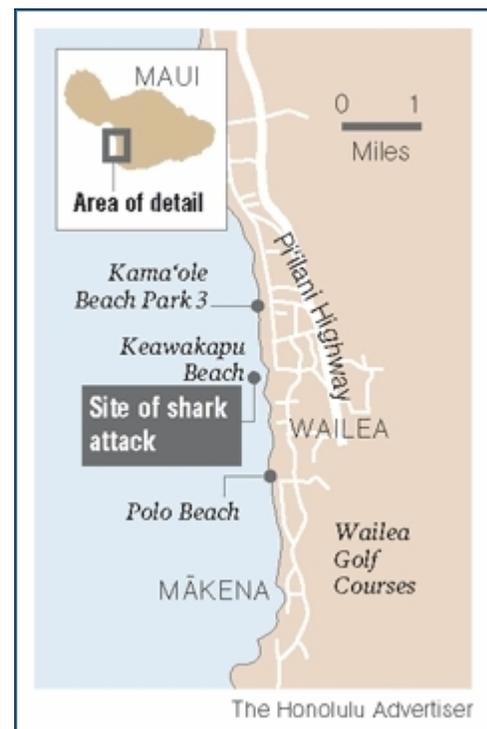
TIME: 11h30

NARRATIVE: Jonathan Genant was swimming alone when he saw the shark come up from under him, said his father. "It was huge and its jaws were wide open." Genant put out his hands to push the shark away when it closed its jaws on his left hand. "It was a really quick, powerful motion," he said. "I heard the bones snap. From that point, I knew I was in trouble," he said.

Genant used his right hand to clamp down on the wound and control bleeding, and started kicking toward shore on his back. "I yelled a couple of times to the people on the beach. You know, yelled out, 'Help, help!' And I didn't know if they could hear me," he said. When he was within about 100 yards of shore, beachgoers heard



Keawakapu Beach



© Global Shark Accident File, 2005. All rights reserved. This report may not be abridged or reproduced in any form without written permission of the Global Shark Accident File.

Genant's cries for help. Construction worker Alex Stiller swam out to help him. Brock Smeaton, a bystander, said about eight or nine people entered the ocean to assist Genant and he was brought to shore on a body board.

INJURY: Genant's little finger and part of the ring finger of his left hand were sheared off by the shark. Photographs taken of Genant's injury before his hand was cleaned up and stitched up at Maui Memorial Medical Center clearly show that five to six inches along the side of the palm and the top half of the ring finger were sheared off. The cut along the side of the hand is not straight across, but serrated – as might be expected of a bite by a shark.



It was later rumored Genant's injury was caused by a sea turtle, but both George Balazs of the Marine Turtle Research Program at the National Marine Fisheries Service in Honolulu and Dr. Peter Galpin, a physician with experience treating shark bites in Hawaii, strongly disagree. According to Balazs, "a Hawaii green turtle or hawksbill turtle could bite a human or anything else that molested it. They do not go out seeking people or other things to bite unless the 'other things' are their natural food sources (seaweed in the case of green turtles and sponges in the case of hawksbill turtles). If bothered, turtles either swim away or hide under a rock ledge. If restrained, they can bite, but the bites do not shear through bone," reported Balazs. "They may take some flesh but far more often they bruise or pinch or make cuts/abrasions; they crush." Both Galpin and Balazs report that Genant's injury is not the result of a bite from a sea turtle.

FIRST AID / TREATMENT: Firefighters from the Wailea Fire Station provided first aid. Then Genant was taken to Maui Memorial Medical Center for treatment.

SPECIES: As Genant was being transported to the hospital, fire crews put up a helicopter and spotted a 12-foot tiger shark. Lifeguards on jet skis chased the animal into deeper water. Shark warnings quickly went up at beaches all over Maui's south shore. Throughout much of the afternoon, two DLNR watercraft patrolled the nearshore waters, assisted by a county water safety officer on a rescue craft. A Maui Fire Department helicopter scanned the ocean from above, looking for predators. On shore, DLNR enforcement officers walked up and down the beach to keep people out of the water.

This was the first shark incident in Hawaii resulting in injury since Oct. 9, 2004, when Davy Sanada was bitten while spearfishing off Molokai. Sanada suffered injuries to his face and left shoulder from what he described as an eight-foot tiger shark. On April 7, 2004, surfer Willis McInnis was killed by a tiger shark in murky water off Kahana on Maui. According to the state Shark Task Force, there were four confirmed reports (including three off Maui) this year of sharks biting surfboards and a kayak, but no one was injured.

SOURCES: San Francisco Gate, Wednesday December 21, 2005,
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2005/12/21/state/n160537S99.DTL>
Honolulu Advertiser
Harry Eagar, The Maui News, March 5, 2006



© Global Shark Accident File, 2005. All rights reserved. This report may not be abridged or reproduced in any form without written permission of the Global Shark Accident File.