

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE: [GSAF 2006.02.01.b](#)

DATE: Wednesday February 1, 2006

LOCATION: The attack took place off Tu'anuku near the entrance to the harbor of Neiafu in the Vava'u Island group, Kingdom of Tonga.

15.6°S, 175.6°W

NAME: Tessa Marie Horan

DESCRIPTION: She was a 24-year-old female from Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, a Peace Corp volunteer. She had joined the Peace Corps a few weeks earlier and arrived in Vava'u on January 18th. She was billeted at Tu'anuku village where she was working on a community project, helping with English, computer and vocational studies.

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: It had rained shortly before the incident.

MOON PHASE: Waxing Crescent, 8% of the moon was visible.

ENVIRONMENT: Pesalili Kailahi, the Neiafu Police Commander, said that the inter-island ferry the *MV Pulumaki* had just motored past on its way to Tongatapu.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: +100 metres

TIME: 18h00

NARRATIVE: Pesalili reported that Tessa joined the village youth in games of netball and soccer every afternoon, which always ended with a swim off the village jetty. He said that Tessa had taken a liking to swimming out into the deep waterway at the entrance of the Neiafu harbour. After a game of soccer they were all muddy because it had been raining in Vava'u and so they went down to the jetty to cool off. Tessa and two Tongan boys swam out into the deep water. When they stopped for a breath, Tessa was suddenly pulled beneath the surface. The boy that was swimming behind her saw the shark's fin as it submerged and realized immediately that Tessa was being bitten by a shark.



Tu'anuku



Tessa Marie Horan

Moments later, when she surfaced, he swam to her. Tessa told him that she was injured and they swam back to the beach, screaming for help.

INJURY: Fatal. According to Pesalili, her right leg was severed “from the thigh down” and she died from blood loss soon after reaching shore.

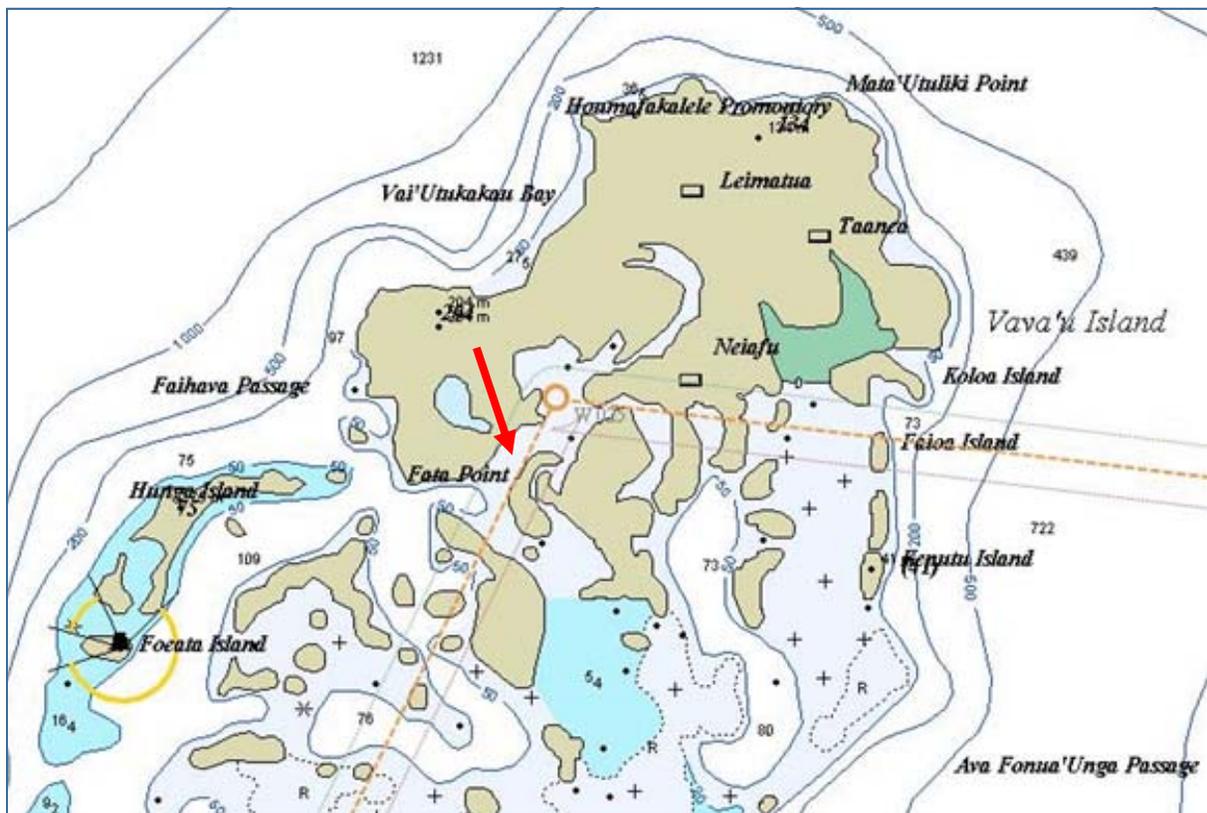
SPECIES: Not identified, but large tiger sharks are seasonal visitors to Tongan waters. The description of the shark by the Tongan youth swimming behind her – “spotted black colour” – fits the of a tiger shark.

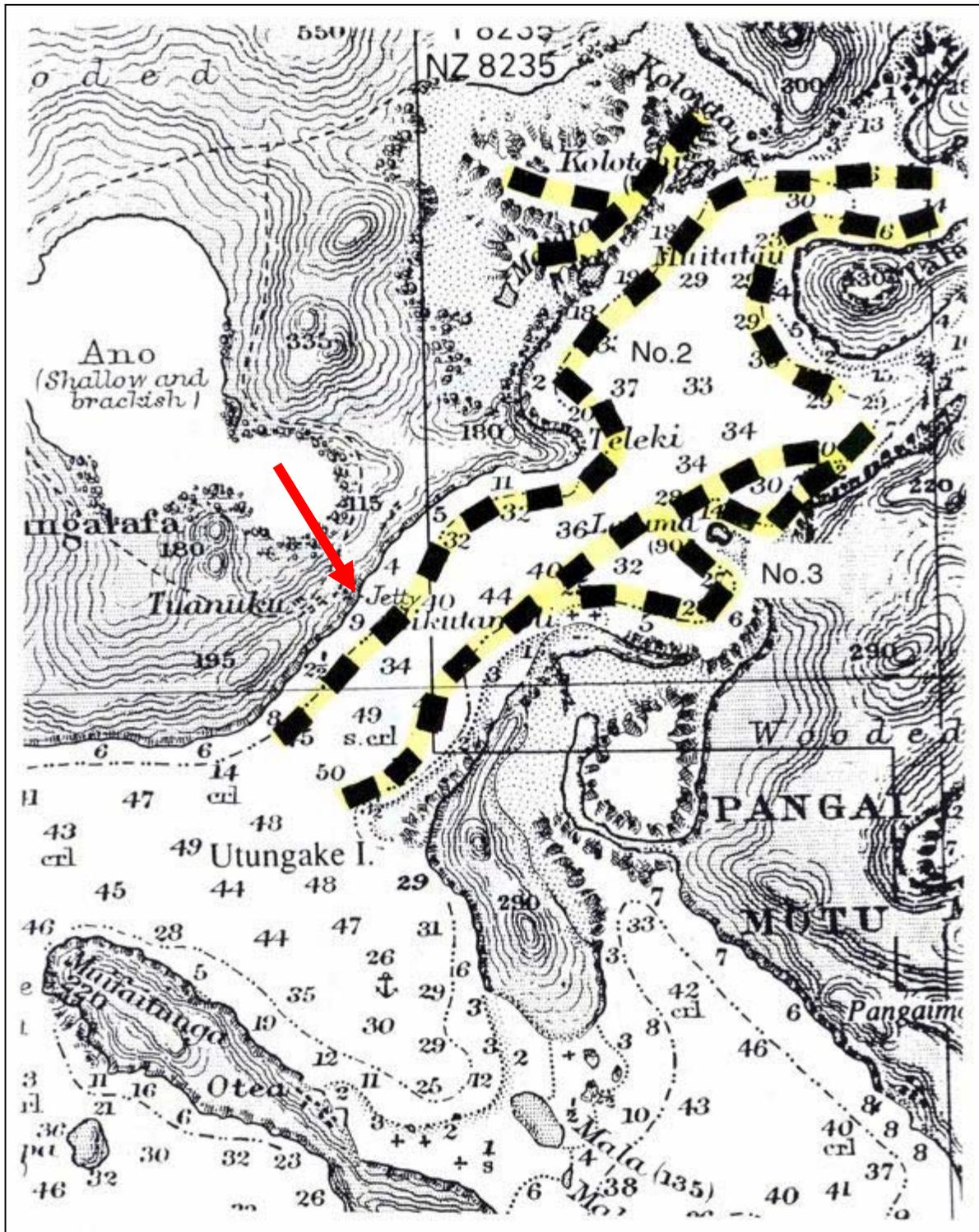
SOURCES: Matangi Tonga, February 1, 2006; Pacific Magazine, February 1, 2006; Agence France Presse, February 3, 2006; Santa Fe New Mexican, February 3, 2006; <http://www.freewmexican.com/news/38933.html>; www.tessahoran.com



Tessa Marie Horan

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Dan Clem





Map showing Tu'anuku village and the jetty from which Horan and the kids swam out into the channel. The yellow and black dashed line mark proposed sites for pearl farms.