

**ACTIVITY:** Boogie boarding

**CASE:** GSAF 2006.07.29.b

**DATE:** Saturday July 29, 2006

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Pacific Ocean off the Broad Beach section of Malibu, California, USA.

**NAME:** Bruce Lurie

**DESCRIPTION:** He is an adult male from Studio City, California, a lawyer.

### BACKGROUND

**MOON PHASE:** New Moon, July 24, 2006; First Quarter, August 2, 2006.

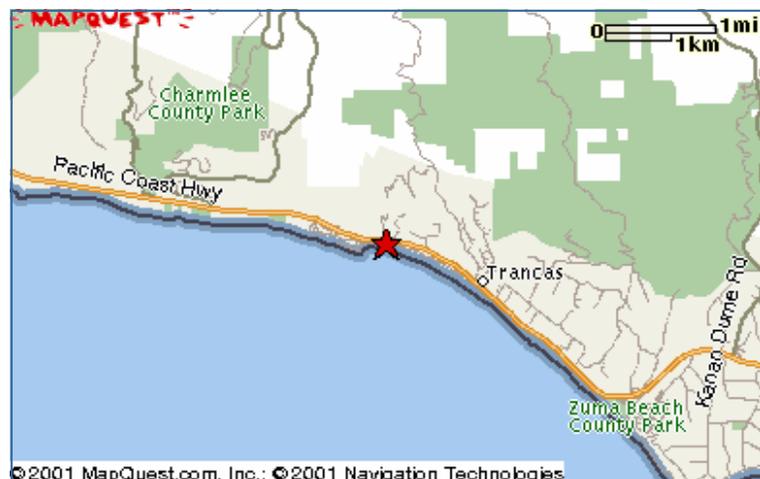
**ENVIRONMENT:** "The section of beach we were at had very few people, although it is officially part of the 'public' beach," said Lurie. The area is about two miles west of Zuma Beach, a large public beach area.

**TIME:** Afternoon

**NARRATIVE:** Bruce Lurie and his family had rented a beach house for the month of July and were nearing the end of their vacation. Lurie and his son, wearing full-body wetsuits, typically went boogie boarding every afternoon for a couple of hours. The sequence of events is best told in Bruce's own words:

"There had been a large sea lion perched above the water, apparently on a rock, near the area we were boogie boarding for several days. The sea lion was about 30 feet away from the breaker line where we typically would try to catch a wave. The sea lion never bothered us, and we never bothered the sea lion."

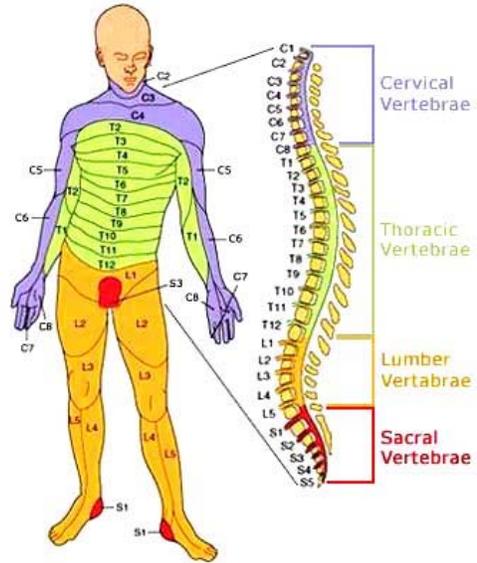
"After we had been boogie boarding for a couple of hours, I was suddenly struck powerfully by something very large and moving very fast. I was instantly rendered paralyzed, lying face



down in the water, unable to turn my head to even take a breath. My son, who was a few feet away, came over and picked my head up and said, 'Dad, what's wrong?' I was able to say, 'Daddy is really in trouble. You have to save me.' That's the last thing I remember. At that point, I must have passed out. What follows is what I've learned from others as to what happened to me thereafter."

**INJURY:** Lurie sustained a laceration to his head, bruises and a spinal cord injury. His neck was broken at C5/C6

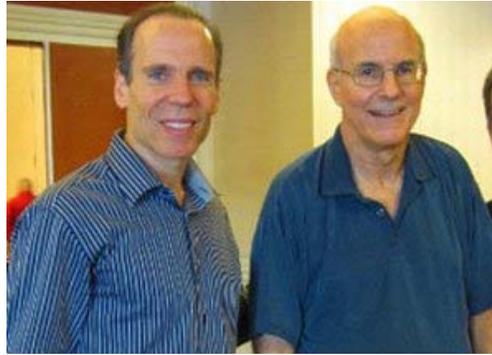
**FIRST AID:** "My son pulled me from the water all by himself, fighting his way through perhaps 100 feet of surf and through the undertow to get me to shore. As he got to shore, he began to scream for help. Fortunately, as it turned out, there were four people on the beach who knew CPR. For several minutes, they were unable to get a breath, and I was told that I had no pulse, that my eyes were fixed in an open position staring upward and that my skin was a bluish gray. Then, one of my rescuers knew enough to turn me on my side and let the water and sand drain out of my lungs. They were finally able to get me to start breathing and get a pulse and were able to continue with CPR successfully until the paramedics came. I was taken to Zuma Beach where a helicopter took me directly to the UCLA Medical Center."



**TREATMENT:** "[At UCLA Medical Center], I received acute care for a spinal cord injury. I won't get into all the details of my medical history but suffice it to say I was in really bad shape when they brought me in to the emergency room. They gave me massive steroids to reduce the swelling in my spinal cord and performed surgery to give my spinal cord room to swell. Apparently it was touch and go for the first few days and they were dubious as to whether I would survive. I was in an induced coma for several days. I woke up in the intensive care unit at UCLA, on a respirator, and was heavily under the influence of the anesthetic and other medication and had difficulty remembering much about what happened for the first few days. But fortunately, despite the long time I was unable to breathe while on the beach, I suffered no brain damage. There was a laceration on my head and other bruises on my body which healed within the first couple of weeks, but the doctors were much more focused on my spinal cord injury and treating the many infections I had developed from inhaling the Pacific Ocean water. When I woke up, I was completely paralyzed below the neck. I was on a ventilator. The doctors were very dubious about whether I would ever breathe on my own or walk again or otherwise regain function below my neck."

**SPECIES:** "After several days in intensive care, my head began to clear and I began to remember what happened more clearly. I remembered being at the beach with my son and I remembered boogie boarding with him. I remembered the sea lion — everyone who was at the beach remembered that sea lion. Shortly after that, I had a memory return to me of a large mako shark coming at me at high speed just as I was ducking under a wave. At first, I could not believe my own memory because I thought (rightly or wrongly) that mako sharks

were very rare in California waters. I also learned that shark attacks are extremely rare, which also caused me to doubt myself. Then I had some books showing pictures of sharks that my son and I used to look at brought to me at the hospital, and I was able to spot the shark that I saw: it was a mako shark. Then I learned that the same day that I was attacked, another surfer was attacked by a shark in a different section of Malibu. I also learned that several days later, a 756 pound mako shark was caught by some fishermen off of Santa Monica. Fortunately, there was no evidence that I was actually bitten by the shark, other than the lacerations and bruises mentioned above.”



*Bruce Lurie, at right*

“My son was also ducking under the wave at the time of the attack and did not see the shark himself, but he later told me he saw a huge wake moving away from us at high speed as he swam over to me. None of my rescuers on the beach saw the shark, but then no one even realized that anything had happened to me until my son got me to shore and started screaming for people to come over and help me.”

“This past year has been extremely difficult for me. After a month in the Intensive Care Unit, I was flown to Craig Hospital in Denver, Colorado. Craig Hospital specializes in spinal cord injury. There, the seriousness of my injuries were explained to me. I broke my neck at C5/C6 and was considered a functional C2, meaning I had little function in the nerves that emanate below that level in my neck. However, after considerable effort, I was able to get off the ventilator – although my breathing remains seriously impaired. I was also finally cured of my many infections and of the fluid in my lungs. At Craig, they made it possible for me to start speaking again, although my voice is still far from perfect, and they taught me how to swallow again. They also gave me a lot of physical therapy and spent a lot of time helping me to prepare to go home in a wheelchair. I spent 3 1/2 months at Craig Hospital and then came home to the Los Angeles area. Since I returned home in December, it has taken a great deal of time to arrange the caretakers, medical care, equipment and therapy that I need, but I am now moving forward as aggressively as possible with my medical treatment and therapy. The good news is that a lot of my muscles are now functioning again, although they are very, very weak, and it is going to require an enormous amount of therapy over a long period of time for me to regain more of my function back. I have high hopes of being able to walk again although it is going to take a lot more work to get to that point. But even now, I am able to walk in the therapy pool and I have been standing in the therapy gym.”

“This is really the first time I have had any opportunity to report to anyone in a professional capacity about the shark attack. My main focus has had to be, and continues to be, on my rehabilitation. But I thought it was appropriate to let you know what happened to me.”

“There are a few friends of mine who have speculated that it was the sea lion, and not a shark that attacked me. That is not the way that I remember it, nor did anyone see the sea

lion attack me, although we know there was a sea lion present. I am basing this report of a shark attack on my memory and the other evidence that a mako shark was active in the area.”

**SOURCES:** Bruce Lurie

John Scott Lewinski, February 8, 2010, <http://www.asylum.com/2010/02/08/bruce-lurie-shark-attack-victim-walks-again/>

**CASE INVESTIGATOR:** Ralph Collier