

**ACTIVITY:** Spearfishing / Free Diving

**CASE:** [GSAF 2016.07.23.a](#)

**DATE:** Saturday July 23, 2016

**LOCATION:** The incident took place in the Bahamas off Green Turtle Cay, one of the Abaco Out Islands.

**NAME:** Dr. Steve T. Cutbirth, DDS

**DESCRIPTION:** A male from Waco, Texas, who has been free diving in the same spot in the Bahamas for 25 years. He is a well-known restorative dentist in Central Texas, who also has a teaching center in Dallas. He has been free diving in the same spot in the Bahamas for 25 years.

### **BACKGROUND**

**MOON PHASE:** Waning Gibbous, 84% of the Moon was illuminated. Full Moon, July 19, 2016.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Green Turtle Cay is one of the barrier islands off mainland Great Abaco. The island, named after the once abundant green turtles that inhabited the area, is 3 miles long and a half-mile. Cutbirth spotted numerous sharks during the past 25 years of spear fishing, none of which had displayed any aggression.

**DISTANCE FROM SHORE:** 20 minutes

**NARRATIVE:** It was the first day of Dr. Steve Cutbirth's family vacation. He was free diving and spearfishing with his son-in-law Will Powers, an avid ocean free diver and editor of Spearing Magazine. Cutbirth was using a Hawaiian sling and had just speared and fought a 10-pound hog fish. He was ascending with the fish on his spear when the incident took place. "Out of nowhere, I felt like I was hit by a freight train in the head," Cutbirth said. As he turned around, he saw the white underside of the shark's mouth.

"He kept hitting me, so I started knocking him off with my arm," Cutbirth said. The shark knocked off Cutbirth's mask, before biting him in the face and right leg. "He finally took off with the fish."

**FIRST AID / TREATMENT:** Cutbirth didn't realize the severity of his injury until he was climbing into the boat and saw that he was bleeding. Powers, a certified first responder for ocean emergencies, helped Cutbirth out of the water, kept him calm and supervised the boat ride back to the island. The boat captain, Lincoln Jones, who was also a guide and a friend, radioed his wife, Ruthie, to contact the island nurse and have her meet the boat at the island's clinic. At the clinic, the nurse, Shekera, stitched the injuries. Due to the limited medical care on the remote island, the nurse



Facebook



*Shekera and Dr. Cutbirth*

recommended a medflight to Florida, however, Cutbirth decided to remain on the island with his family (wife Sharron, daughters Caroline, Catherine, granddaughter Caroline and son-in-law Will) for the duration of his vacation, although his injury kept him out of the water.

**SPECIES:** The incident involved a bull shark, six feet in length. “I am certain [the shark] was going after the fish and I was in the way,” Cutbirth said.

**SOURCES:** KWTX, July 23, 2016

<http://www.kwtx.com/content/news/Local-dentist--388031732.html>

Facebook posts and video interview with Dr. Cutbirth



*The cuts and tears on Dr. Cutbirth's mask and snorkel reveal that they offered some protection. Without them, his injuries would have been far more serious.*