

# Paddler, 74, injured in battle with shark

*The Big isle resident is given 14 stitches to his right calf*

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A 74-year-old Waikoloa Village man was injured Tuesday morning by what he described as an aggressive tiger shark after the animal bumped his single outrigger canoe and then took a bite from the hull before circling back to knock over the boat.

Mike Bernstone was treated at the North Hawaii Community Hospital emergency room and given 14 stitches to his bloodied right calf.

"It could have been a lot worse," said Bernstone, a



COURTESY RANDY RING



Damage is shown from an incident Tuesday when a shark latched onto a one-man canoe.

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veteran paddler, diving instructor and member of the Waikoloa Canoe Club.

The Hawaii County Fire

Department conducted a helicopter flyover of the isolated area between Anaehoomalu Bay and Keawaiki, but no sharks were spotted, officials said.

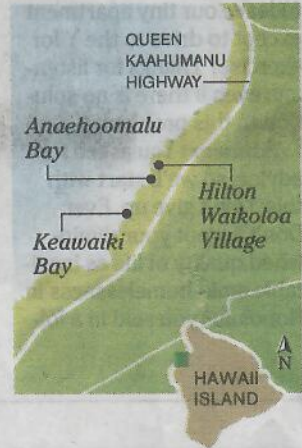
No warning signs were

posted due to the remoteness of the area; reaching the area's rugged coastline requires a 2-mile hike. Another flyover was scheduled for this morning to ensure sharks have not moved into more heavily used areas, officials said.

Bernstone, a retired businessman and 22-year resident of Hawaii island, was paddling with a handful of canoe club mates, starting out at Anaehoomalu Bay and heading south about a half-mile offshore. Others in his group had paddled ahead, leaving him alone about 2.5 miles from the bay.

At about 9 a.m. Bernstone felt the wind picking up, so he turned around his canoe. That's when he felt the bump.

"I was out too far for it to be sand or rocks," he recalled. "When I turned around I saw a fin in the water, and it was coming back



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**Possible shark bite between Anaehoomalu Bay and Keawaiki in the Waikoloa area of northern Hawaii island.**

around." This time the shark took a bite from the back end of the

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## SHARK

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canoe, and it wasn't letting go — even after Bernstone took a whack at it with his paddle.

Finally, the shark did let go, but then it circled back, this time knocking over the 12-foot canoe and spilling Bernstone into the water.

Bernstone said he scrambled to get himself out of the water and on top of the hull. By that time the shark had left the area.

After a while he got back into the water and turned the boat right side up. He did not notice he was bleeding until after he got back into the canoe and saw the blood on the floor of the small craft.

Bernstone began paddling

back to shore, but the shark's bite into the canoe had jammed the vessel's rudder.

A few minutes later one of Bernstone's canoe club mates, Randy Ring, approached Bernstone and observed him waving his paddle for help.

Ring said he was able to dislodge the jammed rudder, and together they maneuvered their canoes closer to shore while slowly making the half-hour paddle back to Anaehoomalu Bay.

"He was amazing," Ring said of Bernstone. "He was calm, cool and collected. He didn't panic at all. He was great."

Back on shore, Bernstone met a friend, a retired doctor, who helped him wrap the wound with a towel and then drove him to the hospital.

Bernstone said he's not sure whether he was actually bitten by the shark. He said the laceration had the appearance of a knife wound and may have come from the shark's rough skin.

Bernstone said he couldn't say how big the shark was, although it might have been as large as his 12-foot canoe.

"I'm just not sure," he said.

He said he's seen plenty of sharks on his dives and occasionally while paddling over the years.

"There was nothing to panic about," he said. "I just had to deal with the situation."

Bernstone vowed to get his canoe repaired and take enough time off from paddling to recover.

"I'll be back in the water as soon as it heals."