

Lost fisherman also was a victim of shark attack

By TIMOTHY HURLEY
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WAILUKU — Seven days before Martha Joy Morrell was attacked and killed by a shark in waters off Olowalu, a Wailuku man met a similar fate after he was swept out to sea while fishing at Maliko Point.

But authorities don't know whether 48-year-old Suk Kyu Park drowned before he was attacked Nov. 19 or whether he was killed as he was treading water and waiting for rescue.

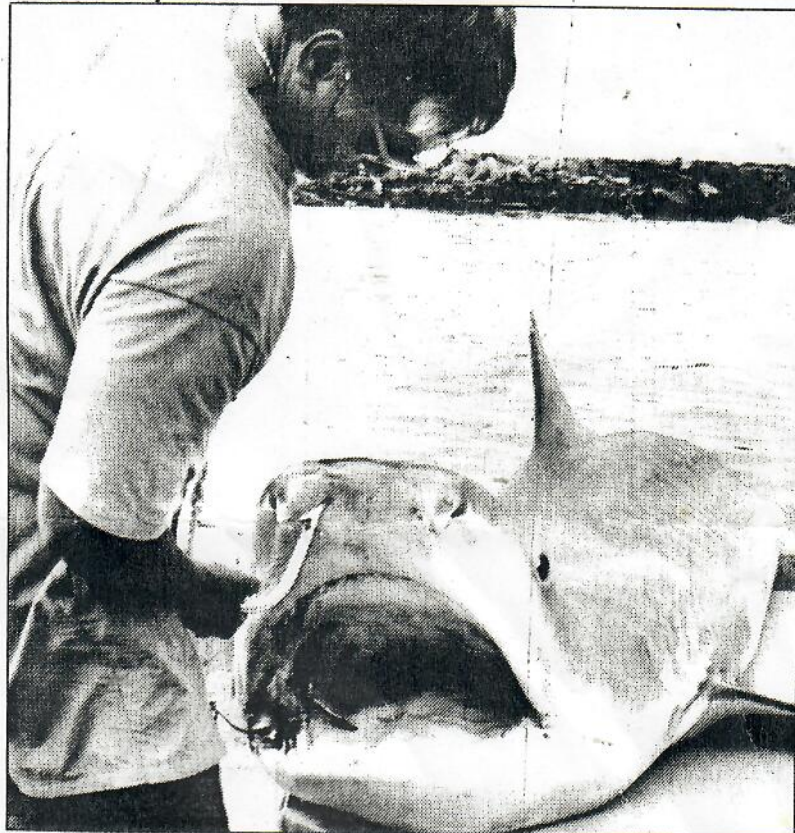
National Marine Fisheries Service scientists confirmed the shark attack during an examination of Park's teeth-shredded clothes, recovered from the ocean floor near Maliko.

Fisheries biologist John Naughton said Friday he is 95 percent sure the animal that tore into Park is the same species that attacked Morrell on the west side: a tiger shark. But he doubts the same individual shark was involved in both attacks.

"I think it's fairly remote the territory of an individual shark would stretch all the way around the island," Naughton said.

Rescue divers recovered a shoe, a sheet

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The Maui News / MATTHEW THAYER photo

This 13-foot tiger shark was caught off Olowalu last week

Missing fisherman also was shark victim

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the victim used for shade, a pair of briefs and a shirt. The ripped remnants of the briefs and shirt told the story.

"You could tell it was a shark," said Maui Police Capt. Victor Tengan, who sent the clothing on to Naughton's Oahu lab for closer examination.

Naughton said after comparing the tooth marks and jaw widths etched into the clothing with similarly sized shark jaws, it was estimated a 12-foot tiger shark mauled the victim. The man was bitten at least twice and probably lost the entire left side of his body, he said.

While the tiger shark that killed Morrell has been estimated to be as large as 15 feet, the specimen that state-hired fishermen pulled from the waters off Olowalu was 13 feet. Officials aren't ruling out the possibility the latter was involved in the attack.

"But I don't think it's the same shark (that attacked Park)," Naughton said. "It doesn't make sense."

Park was pole fishing at Maliko Point with his son at 4:30 p.m. when a large wave crashed in on them, according to police. While the son, who was visiting from New York, was able to cling to the rocks, his father was knocked into the violent surf and unable to return to shore.

Park, a former member of the South Korean marines who was described by his family as being a strong swimmer in good physical condition, swam out to deeper but calmer waters and signaled for his son to go for help.

The son took off to the Paia Fire Station. When rescue crews arrived 30 minutes later, the fisherman could not be seen.

Authorities searched coastal waters and beaches from Maliko to Waihee for several days, but nothing washed ashore.

Tengan said Park's family, aware that a shark hunt was established off West Maui, inquired about a hunt for the Maliko predator. Tengan said he told them such a hunt is not the purview of the Police Department.

The state official who authorized the West Maui shark hunt said he learned about the Maliko incident only after the Olowalu attack and decided a similar hunt on the north shore was unnecessary.

"My advisers said there was no reason to connect the two," ex-

plained William Paty, state Department of Land and Natural Resources chairman. "The Olowalu one happened in very shallow water and in full view. We didn't know the situation and all of the circumstances (surrounding the Park attack)."

Paty said he opposes a major shark eradication program and will continue to monitor the situation as necessary.

"I think you would hear a great hue and cry if we just went out and hunted down sharks," he said.

Naughton said he didn't examine the clothing remnants until nearly two weeks after the Maliko incident and by then it was probably too late to launch a hunt off Maliko.

Naughton said he doesn't believe it was the same shark that killed Morrell because tagging studies indi-

cate tiger sharks stay within a mile or two along the same shoreline for long periods of time.

He said many more unwitnessed attacks occur than receive widespread news coverage, especially in recent years.

With the last major shark-fishing program ending 15 years ago, sharks are now at maximum population levels in Hawaiian waters, he said.

While he doesn't support a shark eradication program because it upsets the ecological balance, he would like to see the state establish a policy of fishing for one to three sharks right after each attack in the region of the incident. This would remove some of the larger, more-aggressive sharks from an area.

The Park incident would have qualified for a fishing expedition under his proposed policy, but it is too late now, he said.

Naughton advises ocean swimmers not to swim at night, dawn or dusk and not to swim in murky water or shore areas near where streams empty into the ocean.

"If you use common sense, the chances of being attacked become more and more remote," he said.

Naughton noted that his agency is considering embarking on a new study of sharks to monitor their movement using sonic tracking devices. He said federal officials are talking with the state about joining hands in the project.