

boat had sighted four sharks 8 miles off Asbury Park. Another shark had been reported 200 yards off Bridgehampton, Long Island, by Esterbrook Carter, nephew of Charles E. Hughes, the Republican candidate for President. Carter, along with all other Republicans, was relieved to learn that Hughes had spent the day indoors, polishing his speech accepting the nomination.

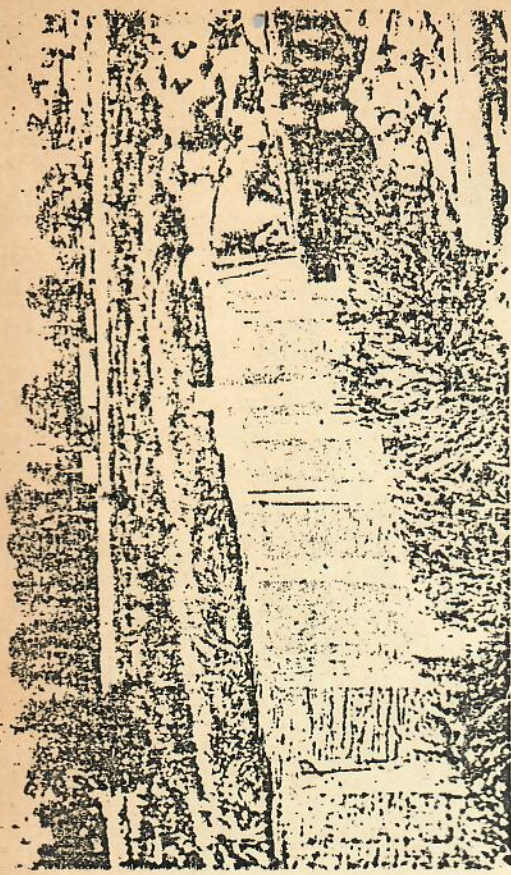
Officials of the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries in Washington tried to dispel the fear of sharks *en masse*. A single shark, they theorized, was probably responsible for both fatal attacks. Because of a scarcity of food fish off the New Jersey shore, they said, this renegade shark may have been driven far inshore and, maddened by hunger, attacked Van Sant. Then having acquired a taste for human flesh, it continued swimming near shore until its appetite was satiated by Bruder. It was a ghastly theory. In an apparent attempt to still renewed apprehension, U.S. Commissioner of Fisheries Hugh M. Smith hastily pointed out on July 9th that "The case is extremely unusual. I don't look for it to happen again. The fact that only two out of millions of bathers have been attacked in many years is evidence of the rarity of such instances." Again, the very best assurance—from an expert.

On a map, Matawan, New Jersey, appears to be an inland town. It is 11 miles west of the Atlantic Ocean and 2 miles south of Raritan Bay, a body of water that blends into the Lower Bay, gateway to the great port of New York. Matawan's only link to salt water is a tenuous one—a meandering tidal creek—barely a stream at high tide—that empties into Raritan Bay.

In the summer of 1916, as in countless summers before, Matawan boys spent every minute they could in Matawan Creek. The most popular swimming hole was at the old Propeller Wyckoff Dock, named after the tug-sized steamer *Wyckoff* which, years before, used to come up the creek with the tide to pick up farmers' produce and carry it to the New York market on the next tide. The dock had deteriorated into a dozen or so pilings that jutted close to one another along the edge of a dilapidated pier. Diving and jumping off the pier and the pilings was not adventurous enough for the boys who swam at Wyckoff Dock, so they usually played tag, hopping from piling to piling in pursuit of one another.

One day in early July, 1916, Rennie (for Rensselaer) Cartan, aged 14, was playing tag on the Wyckoff pilings. To escape an outreaching hand, Rennie dived into the creek. As his head and shoulders entered the murky water, he felt something like a strip of very coarse sandpaper grate along his stomach. He arched his body to the surface and stroked for the pier. His stomach was streaked with blood as he clambered up a piling and

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At this spot in Matawan Creek, in Matawan, New Jersey, Lester Stilwell and Stanley Fisher were attacked by a shark. The pilings in the foreground served as diving platforms for Lester and other boys playing in the creek. The dilapidated wharf at the right was where the mortally wounded Fisher was brought ashore.

From a contemporary news photo

onto the dock. "Don't dive in any more!" he shouted to his companions. "There's a shark or something in there!"

No one paid much attention to Rennie, and, as a matter of fact, he ignored his own warning a few minutes later by diving into the creek. He was in a hurry to get home. It was much quicker to swim across the creek than to walk to the nearest bridge. (More than 40 years later, the scars from the sandpaper-like burn still on his stomach, Rensselaer Cartan would stand by the creek, and, shaking his head, say to one of the authors, "It might have been me. You know, it might have been me.")

On July 11th, in Belford, on Sandy Hook Bay, a few miles east of the mouth of Matawan Creek, Herman Tarnow, a fisherman, caught a 9-foot shark 120 feet out from the low-water mark. No one paid much attention to Herman Tarnow, either.

In the late morning of July 12th, Captain Thomas Cottrell, a retired sailor and part-time local fisherman, was walking along the new trolley drawbridge that crossed Matawan Creek about a mile and a half down creek from Wyckoff Dock. Eleven days had passed since Charles Van Sant had died at Beach Haven, 70 miles as a shark would swim, from Matawan. Six days had passed since Charles Bruder had died at Spring Lake, 25 miles as a shark would swim, from Matawan. Now, as Captain Cottrell walked across the bridge that hot, bright morning, he saw a

Shark in the Sea by H.W. McCormick, T. Allen, & J. Allen with Captain W.E. Young
Chilton Books, Phila. N.Y.
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dark gray shadow sweeping up the creek with the incoming tide. The shadow was moving swiftly. But the captain, a man who trusted his eyes, believed what he had seen. He shouted to two workmen on the bridge. They saw the shadow, too. They ran to a telephone and called John Mulsonn, a barber who was also Matawan's chief of police. Captain Cottrell ran the half mile to Matawan center. He tried to stop groups of boys who were heading for the creek. He toured Matawan's short and busy lower Main Street, shouting his warning to merchants and their customers. Everyone laughed at the idea of a shark in a shallow creek, only 35 feet across at its widest point. Chief Mulsonn did not even leave his barber shop. Captain Cottrell walked back toward the creek.

One of the shops Captain Cottrell struck his head into on his futile trip up Main Street was Stanley Fisher's new dry-cleaning establishment. Stanley, one of Matawan's best-liked young men, had only recently started this business, which had shown no promise of making his fortune. As a sideline he was also taking orders for men's suits. He had made an unusual sale a few days before. A man had come in and bought a suit. Instead of paying cash for it, he had bought Stanley a \$10,000 life insurance policy. Stanley, a blond-haired, 210-pound giant of a man, was taking a ribbing from his friends. He was, after all, only 24 years old, in the prime of life, they told him. What would he need with an insurance policy?

Stanley's father, Watson H. Fisher, had followed the sea most of his life and risen to Commodore of the Savannah Line. Now retired and well off, he was one of Matawan's leading citizens. If he had ever wished that his son might go to sea, he had kept the wish to himself. Some people in Matawan did say, though, that it was a shame a big, strong man like Stanley was running a dry-cleaning store instead of sailing the seas as his father had before him.

July 12th was a scorching, muggy day. The heat was nearly unbearable in Anderson's Saw Mill, where Lester Stilwell worked with his father, William Stilwell. By 2 o'clock, Lester had finished nailing up his last wooden box, a task he was especially good at, and, since he was only 12 years old, he was given the rest of the day off. He waved good-bye to his father, dashed out of the stifying mill, and headed for Wyckoff Dock with his pals—Johnson Cartan, Frank Clowes, Albert O'Hara, and Charles Van Brunt. Soon they were all splashing around in the creek. Most of them, like Lester, were not wearing bathing suits.

Albert O'Hara, aged 11, was near the dock, about to climb out of the water, when Lester yelled: "Watch me float, fellas!" Albert turned to look. Lester was so thin he usually had trouble floating. At that instant, something hard and slippery slammed Albert's right leg. He looked down and saw what looked like the sinuous tail of a huge fish. Charles

Van Brunt, 13, still in the water, saw it too. It was the biggest, blackest fish he had ever seen, and it was streaking for Lester Stilwell. Lester screamed. Charles saw the big black fish strike, its body suddenly twisting as it hit Lester, and Charles saw that the fish was not all black, for as it rolled it exposed a stark white belly and gleaming teeth. And Charles knew, to his everlasting horror, that he had seen a shark. In an instant, it all but closed its jaws about Lester's slim body and dragged him beneath the reddening waters of Matawan Creek. Lester had neither time nor life to scream again.

Lester's pals and other boys who had been swimming nearby scumpered out of the water. Some ran into Fischer's bag factory at the creek and summoned workmen to Wyckoff Dock. Others ran up the steep dirt road from the creek and raced to the center of town. Now, where Captain Cottrell had walked, there was panic, and screaming, and naked boys. Boys who had seen the shark were yelling, "Shark! Shark! A shark got Lester!" Along the shore by the dock, those who knew only that Lester Stilwell had gone under were calling his name: "Lester! Lester!" Out of this tumult somehow came the report that Lester, "a boy who took fits," had been seized by an attack and was drowning. All that the townspeople knew for sure was that a boy was in trouble at the creek, and men, women, and children began running there to help him. Among them was Stanley Fisher, who had ducked into the back of his dry-cleaning shop only long enough to put on a bathing suit.

"Remember what Captain Cottrell said," Mary Anderson, a Matawan teacher, shouted at Fisher as he ran. "It may have been a shark!"

Fisher stopped for a moment. "A shark? Here?" he asked. He looked immense as he stood there, towering above Mary Anderson. "I don't care," he said, as if finally answering some inner doubt. "I'm going after that boy."

Then, turning to his errand boy, 8-year-old Johnny Smith, who was standing nearby, Fisher said, "Take care of the store until I get back." And Fisher sprinted to the creek.

The son of Commodore Fisher took command at Matawan Creek. His quarterdeck was Wyckoff Dock, and his enemy was a shark. Some 200 townspeople, including Lester Stilwell's mother and father, lined the dock and nearer bank. Fisher soon had men in boats, poling for Lester's body. Someone brought a roll of chicken wire to the dock. Fisher ordered a couple of young men to get into a rowboat and string the chicken wire weighed down with stones, along the bottom of the creek, down-creek from the dock, where the channel was about 20 feet wide. Fisher knew there was a deep spot, off the farther bank, directly opposite the dock. There, he believed, the shark was lurking with Lester's body. Fisher's plan was to flush out the shark, driving it into shallower water

down-creek, where it would be trapped by the chicken-wire barrier. But the hastily strung fence only partially blocked the creek.

When this futile fence was completed, Fisher dived into the creek. Several men were in the water, diving to the bottom, feeling in the mud for Lester's body. Fisher swam alone to the deep spot. Arthur Smith, 51, a carpenter by trade and a hunter by avocation, was diving, too. On shore, his daughter was screaming to him: "Come back, Pa! Come back!" The task was for younger men. But Smith kept diving, defying the death that swam by him and, finally, touched him. (A day would come when Arthur Smith, half blind and almost deaf at 95, would sit hunched and feeble in an old house on the bank of Matawan Creek. Suddenly, at shouted mention of that awful day, he would spring forward in his chair and vividly recreate that moment when he felt the shark scrape his leg. At 95, he would still carry the scars and show them to one of the authors.)

Smith saw Fisher make two "overhangs"—powerful overhand strokes—and dive down, down . . .

Arthur S. Van Buskirk, a local deputy of the Monmouth County Detectives' Office, had just arrived at the creek. He was sitting on the forward deck of a small boat when he saw a thrashing in the water at the farther shore. Even as he looked, the water calmed and a rapidly widening red stain spread on the surface. Van Buskirk yelled at the other man in the boat to start the engine and, while it sputtered to life, Van Buskirk sculled toward the red stain, in the midst of which Stanley Fisher had suddenly appeared.

Fisher was facing the farther bank. The silent crowd at Wyckoff Dock could see only his broad back and shoulders. He was drawn up, half crouching in waist-deep water and he seemed to be tottering on one leg. The boat pulled up directly behind Fisher. Van Buskirk could see that Fisher was holding the bloody remnants of his right leg in both hands. Just as Fisher was about to pitch forward face first into the water, Van Buskirk reached out and pulled him into his arms. He could get Fisher only halfway out of the water. The boat backed out of the shoal water and, as it turned to head toward the dock, a gasp rippled through the crowd. Now they could see Fisher, breasting the water like a macabre figurehead on the prow of the boat. Enough of him was out of the water so that his terrible wound could be seen. From groin to kneecap the flesh was gone from his right leg. Several women fainted. Little Alfreda Marz, one of the many children on the dock, tried to look. But her father threw the tail of his suit coat across her eyes and hugged her face to his side. She thought, *A crocodile bit Mr. Fisher.*

A sound like a moan went up as the boat neared the dock, for Fisher almost slipped from Van Buskirk's grasp. Staring down at Fisher's leg—it

was hardly more than a bone and that bore jagged scratches running lengthwise along it—Van Buskirk saw blood pulsating from a torn artery. There was a rope on the deck beneath him, and he thought of tying a tourniquet with one hand. His own weight and that of his burden combined to prevent him from getting the rope, and he almost lost his grip on Fisher as well. Just then, hands reached out from the dock and grabbed Fisher. He was still conscious. Gently, men placed Fisher on a stretcher improvised from planks and bore him to the Matawan railroad, about a quarter of a mile away. Each jolting step up the bank and along the track stabbed him with searing pain. Merciful unconsciousness awaited him, but he seemed to fight it off. There was something he very much wanted to say.

At the station, they placed him on a baggage car and waited for the next train. A doctor had been found. There was little he could do, other than to retard the flow of blood. Nearly three hours went by until the 5:06 train from Long Branch was flagged down. Even on the train, Fisher held on to consciousness. Not until 7:45 that night, as he was wheeled into the operating room at Monmouth Memorial Hospital, did he die. Before he died, he had said what he wanted to say: on the bottom of Matawan Creek, he had reached the body of Lester Stilwell and wrested it from the jaws of the shark.

While Fisher lay on the baggage car waiting for death and the 5:06, several men went to Asher P. Woolley's store and got dynamite to blow up the shark they believed to be still off Wyckoff Dock. The creek was cleared of boats. But, moments before the charge was to be set off, a motor-boat hove into view from down-creek. Jacob R. Lefferts, a Matawan lawyer, was at the wheel. Lying on the bottom of the boat was a boy. His right leg was swathed in bloodied bandages. "A shark got him," Lefferts shouted, as he pulled in to shore. The boy was transferred to a car and speeded to St. Peter's Hospital in New Brunswick.

At first the boy would not give his name. He was afraid his mother would be angry at him. Soon he was identified as Joseph Dunn, aged 14. He had been swimming with his older brother, Michael, and several other boys off the dock of the New Jersey Clay Company brickyards about a half mile down Matawan Creek, near Keyport. Someone had run to the brickyards and told the boys about the shark. They were all in the water when the warning came, and they swam swiftly to the dock. Joseph Dunn, the youngest, was the last one out of the water. As he started up the ladder, something that felt like a big pair of scissors, he said, grabbed his right leg. ("I felt my leg going down the shark's throat," he said later. "I believe it would have swallowed me.")

Joseph screamed, and the older boys sprang to the ladder. Joseph kicked the water with his free leg. Michael Dunn and two others began

a tug of war with the shark, ripping Joseph's flesh to save his life. For a moment or two, the shark hung on. Then, suddenly, Joseph was free. The shark had let go—and vanished. Its third victim in less than an hour had been snatched from death.

In St. Peter's Hospital, hope was high that Joseph Dunn's life would be saved, but saving his torn leg—slashed with tooth marks, a major tendon severed, muscles badly mangled—seemed hopeless. Dr. R. J. Faulkingham, on general surgical service at the hospital, was given the case.

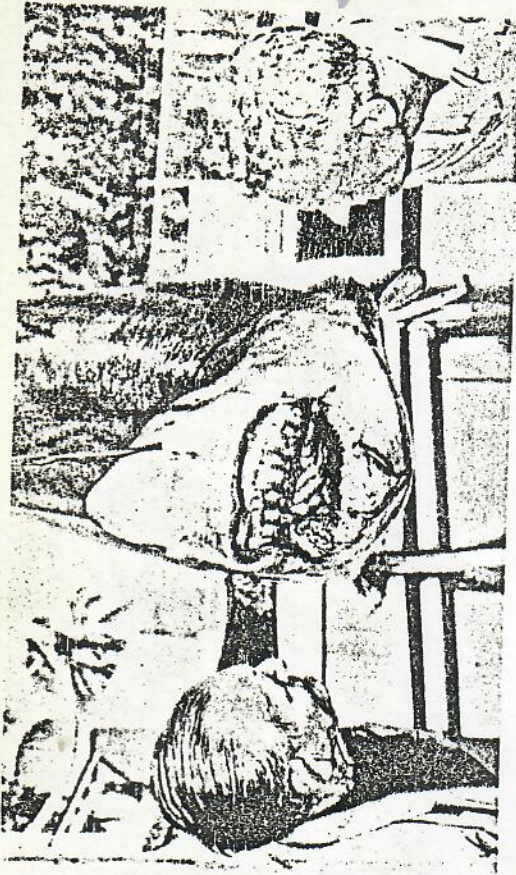
All that night and into the morning, Matawan Creek was the scene of an orgy of vengeance. Blast after blast of dynamite sent geysers of water and fish skyward. Hundreds of men lined both banks, armed with scythes, pitchforks, and old harpoons taken from living-room walls. By lantern light and by the first glimmer of dawn, men fired shotguns and pistols into the creek. At low tide, men waded into the water with knives—and even hammers.

The creek was soon laced with tangles of chicken wire and fishing nets. Newspaper reporters and photographers swarmed into Matawan, and one newspaper proclaimed that it had organized a shark-hunt—a boat loaded to the gunwales with men carrying rifles. Extra-large charges of dynamite were set off for the benefit of newsreel cameras. Stores in Matawan and Keyport ran out of explosives and ammunition. A special order was sent to Perth Amboy, New Jersey, for more.

"We've got a shark!" a man shouted here . . . then there. Reports came in with the tide: one shark, two sharks, three sharks, four sharks were trapped in Matawan Creek. With the outgoing tide went reports that shark after shark had escaped from Matawan Creek.

The only respite from the frenzy at the creek came when Matawan buried its dead. The boys who had been the last to see Lester Stilwell alive bore him to his grave. At the First Methodist Church on Main Street, Stanley Fisher's voice was missing from the choir that mourned him. But his memory would live on in the church. With the money from the new insurance policy he had so strangely acquired, Stanley's parents purchased a stained glass window—a landscape of Bethlehem. In the years to come, the rays of the setting sun would filter through the window as day's end came to the little town of Matawan.

At St. Peter's Hospital, Dr. Faulkingham was quietly, skillfully tending the wounds of Joseph Dunn. Newspapers had already reported that Joseph's leg would undoubtedly have to be amputated. But Dr. Faulkingham didn't have time to read the newspapers. He had sutured Joseph's severed tendon and ripped muscles, and a slow, uncertain recovery began. It would be 59 days before Joseph Dunn would walk out of St. Peter's Hospital, but walk he would, on two strong legs.



The savage triangular teeth of a Great White shark show plainly in this specimen, which is a small *Carcharodon carcharias*. No other shark has teeth like the Great White's. Note that it is not truly a "white" shark. The underbellies of virtually all sharks are white. The upper body of the Great White may vary from an oyster-shell white to deepening shades of gray.

Courtesy, Miami Seaquarium

Six days after the attack, a shark was finally caught in Matawan Creek—by none other than Captain Cottrell. He was coming up the creek in his motorboat *Skud* with his son-in-law, Richard Lee, when, about 400 yards from the bay, not far from the bridge where he had first seen that lethal shadow, he saw a dorsal fin rise out of the water, then disappear. Swiftly, he and Lee let out several yards of gill net, weighted with lead at the bottom and strung with corks on the top. The net bilged out as the outgoing tide carried it down-creek. Both ends of the net were secured in the boat. By deft maneuvering, the Captain trapped the shark between boat and net. The shark struggled furiously but, foot by foot, the two men hauled in the net, which was to be the shark's shroud.

Using the hull of his boat as an anvil, Cottrell smashed the shark on the head again and again with a large mallet. When he was convinced the shark was dead, Cottrell hauled it ashore. It weighed 230 pounds and was almost exactly 7 feet long. He put it on exhibition in his fish shed, and nearly everyone in Matawan and Keyport lined up to see it as it lay on ice. They paid 10 cents each to view the "Terror of Matawan Creek."

In Bridgehampton, Long Island, scene of another shark scare, a fisherman caught a shark, rented a zinc-lined coffin from a local undertaker, and exhibited *his* shark for 5 cents a look.

Actually, the killer of Matawan Creek may have been caught two days after the attack. Michael Schleisser, a New Yorker who was one of the many shark-hunters prowling the local waters on July 14, was dragging a drift net behind his boat in hope of snagging a shark. He was in Raritan Bay, off South Amboy, New Jersey, less than 4 miles northwest of the mouth of Matawan Creek, when a large shark charged the net. Though quickly enmeshed, the 8½-foot shark fought savagely, snapping a jaw in which row upon row of teeth glistened menacingly. Schleisser, unaware that he had caught a shark of the most feared species in the sea, strained to haul the net closer to the boat, and clubbed the shark again and again. Although many other sharks were being hauled in and displayed by fishermen, Schleisser's shark *was* a killer. Had Schleisser slipped and tumbled into the net, he might have become another victim. For, when he finally subdued the shark, towed it into South Amboy, and ripped it open, he found 15 pounds of flesh and bones in its belly. One of the bones, 11 inches long, was identified as the shinbone of a boy. Another fragment appeared to be part of a human rib. There was no doubt that the shark had probably attacked and certainly eaten at least one human being.

Dr. Lucas of the Museum of Natural History, skeptical about local shark attacks only a few days before, personally identified the remains as human.

The shark itself was identified, too. It was a Great White shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), feared as a man-eater in tropical waters but, until the period dealt with here, unreported along beaches as far north as New Jersey. Doctor Nichols, an expert who had joined with Doctors Murphy and Lucas in minimizing the possibility of shark attacks after the first two New Jersey killings, now joined with them in conceding the existence of dangerous sharks in northern Atlantic waters. They granted at least one man-eating shark, for Nichols and Murphy concluded that Schleisser's *Carcharodon carcharias* was probably responsible for all five attacks. Whether or not this conservative estimate was accurate, it is possible that there were many of these dangerous sharks in the waters at the time.

Schleisser, who had had some training as a taxidermist, mounted his shark and placed it on exhibit in a New York newspaper office. Later, "The Jaws of the New Jersey Man-Eater" wound up in the window of a Broadway fish shop.

The capture of the apparent killer did not stop the stories that were sweeping the Eastern seaboard. From Florida to Rhode Island came reports of sharks. Virtually every ship that came into New York carried a cargo of shark stories. Several hundred sharks were reported off Fire Island, Long Island, and posses were formed to track them down.

Theories abounded, too. One was that heavy cannonading in the North Sea had driven sharks across the Atlantic to more tranquil seas. Another theory held that sharks were feeding on swimmers because they had been deprived of their usual diet of refuse from passenger liners, whose sailings were being curtailed by another kind of shark, the U-boat. The European war also spawned the idea that sharks had been feasting so well on war dead floating down rivers into the sea that they had undergone a change of dietary habits. One *New York Times* letter-writer gravely calculated the figures: more than 12,500 war casualties had been gobbled up by sharks, he claimed.

By stoking their imaginations a little more, some of the theorists concluded that the ghoul-sharks of European waters had deserted their bountiful feeding grounds in the war zone for the far less ample larder offered by New Jersey bathing beaches.

Logic and reason fell victims to the shark scare. A neighbor of Teddy Roosevelt's said she saw a shark off the beach in Oyster Bay, Long Island, and called upon him to do something about it. A long-distance swimmer announced that he would brave the terrors of the lower bay of New York Harbor in a round trip from the Battery to Sandy Hook—in a wire basket. In the *New York Times*, America's leading woman swimmer, Annette Kellerman, advised bathers to dive under an onrushing shark. "As he is coming at you upside down," she explained, "you have a chance to get away, if the distance to shore or safety is not too far." A chorus girl rushed into print with the exciting news that she had escaped a shark by frightening it off with an impromptu ballet of splashes and kicks. Human sharks profited from "special swimming courses" to teach bathers how to outwit sharks. Arguments broke out over whether the shark attacks weren't rather the doings of giant turtles! ↙

After losses estimated at \$1,000,000 in canceled reservations, the mayors of 10 New Jersey resort towns met at Beach Haven, where the first shark attack had occurred, and pleaded for an end to the panic. They asked newspapers to refrain from publishing stories that "cause the public to believe the New Jersey seacoast is infested with sharks, whereas there are no more than in any other summer." The resort men thus went on record that there *were* sharks in their waters *every* summer!

The mayors' plea went unheard. Shark stories continued for a few more days to push news of the war and the infantile paralysis epidemic to secondary positions on newspaper front pages.

"Sharks are the undisputed masters of the Atlantic coast," one *New York* newspaper exclaimed. "The federal government yesterday abandoned its proposed campaign of extermination along the New Jersey beaches. The enemy was too numerous for the Coast Guard to tackle, it was said."

There was some truth in the story of the government's so-called surrender. The federal government had indeed declared war on sharks. A Coast Guard cutter had been dispatched to New Jersey to fight them. A congressman, predictably from New Jersey, had risen in Congress and asked for a \$5,000 appropriation to launch a federal crusade against the shark.

And ultimately the strategy of the shark war was discussed at the highest possible level. At a time when Presidential worries included Pancho Villa's raids, a national election campaign, and possible U.S. participation in the World War, the President's Cabinet actually placed the subject of sharks on its agenda. After this Cabinet meeting, Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo announced that the Coast Guard had been ordered to do what it could, which eventually turned out to be nothing. Secretary of Commerce William C. Redfield stated that his Bureau of Fisheries had not yet discovered why the sharks had appeared. Later, the Bureau of Fisheries officially warned bathers to stay in shallow water, because there was no known way to get rid of sharks.

But already, as unexpectedly and as unpredictably as they had appeared, the sharks had disappeared and become, once more, merely shadows in the sea.

Why?

Why was the New Jersey coast the fateful rendezvous for four deaths by shark bite? Why had five shark attacks occurred in 12 days in an area where none had occurred before?

Why? (And why is the New Jersey coast still one of the most shark-ridden coasts in the northern latitudes?)

After the panic-mongers and the tale-spinners had left the stage, taking with them their bizarre theories about shark attacks, the scientific experts stepped forward to explain the 1916 attacks. The experts looked a bit embarrassed.

In April, 1916, three months before the attacks in New Jersey, Doctors Nichols, Murphy and Lucas (the three shark experts) had collaborated on an article on sharks in Long Island waters. Their paper, published in the highly respected *Brooklyn Museum Quarterly*, all but dismissed the possibility of a shark attack on a "living man."

"Probably few swimmers have actually met in him their fate," Nichols and Murphy wrote, "but doubtless many a poor drowned sailor has there found his final resting place." And, in a separate postscript, Lucas added his voice of authority:

"Cases of shark bite do now and then occur," Lucas conceded, "but there is a great difference between being attacked by a shark and being bitten by one, and the cases of shark bite are usually found to have been due to someone incautiously approaching a shark impounded or tangled

in a net, or gasping on the shore. And, under such circumstances, almost any creature will bite."

Recalling the unclaimed \$500 reward Herman Oelrichs had offered for proof of a shark attack north of Cape Hatteras, Lucas concluded: "That this reward was never claimed shows that there is practically no danger of any attack from a shark about our coasts."

In October, 1916, Nichols and Murphy were back in print again. In a cautious understatement, they noted that "the New Jersey accidents of July, 1916," had brought "the whole shark question before us in a new phase." After making the concession that four "living men" had indeed been killed by sharks, they wrote: "It must be admitted that deaths from shark bite within a short radius of New York City would seem to be one of those unaccountable happenings that take place from time to time to the confounding of savants and the justification of the wildest tradition."

After investigating the attacks and searching for clues to explain them, Lucas, Nichols, and Murphy confirmed that an unusual number of sharks had summered in New York-New Jersey waters. "The nearest I can come to accounting for the sudden preying of these fish," Lucas said, "is to say that this is a 'shark year.'" In line with this theory, Nichols and Murphy wrote:

"It is not impossible that this summer sharks really are with us in unprecedented force, and that we are experiencing an extraordinary shark migration, a movement comparable with the sporadic abundance during certain years of army worms, or jellyfishes, or western grasshoppers, or northern lemmings—movements that all have their source in overproduction and other little understood natural agencies."

Further indication that 1916 was a "shark year" comes from the records of a remarkable shark-watcher, Edwin Thorne, a member of the Board of Managers of the New York Zoological Society. Thorne's hobby was not only shark-watching but also shark-catching. Between the years 1911 and 1927, Thorne spent a total of 302 days looking for sharks in Long Island's Great South Bay, then and now a popular bathing and boating area. Great South Bay was also popular with sharks, Thorne discovered. For, in those 17 years, he sighted 1,799 sharks and killed 305 of them.

In 1916, he saw 277 sharks and killed 102. *In no other year did he see or kill as many.*

Nearly all the sharks Thorne killed were female Brown sharks (*Eulamia milberti*, formerly *Carcharinus milberti*), which had entered Great South Bay to spawn their litters of 6 to 13 young. (Like many species of shark, the Brown shark brings forth young alive.) Great South Bay was—and is—a "shark nursery," a sheltered spot where newly