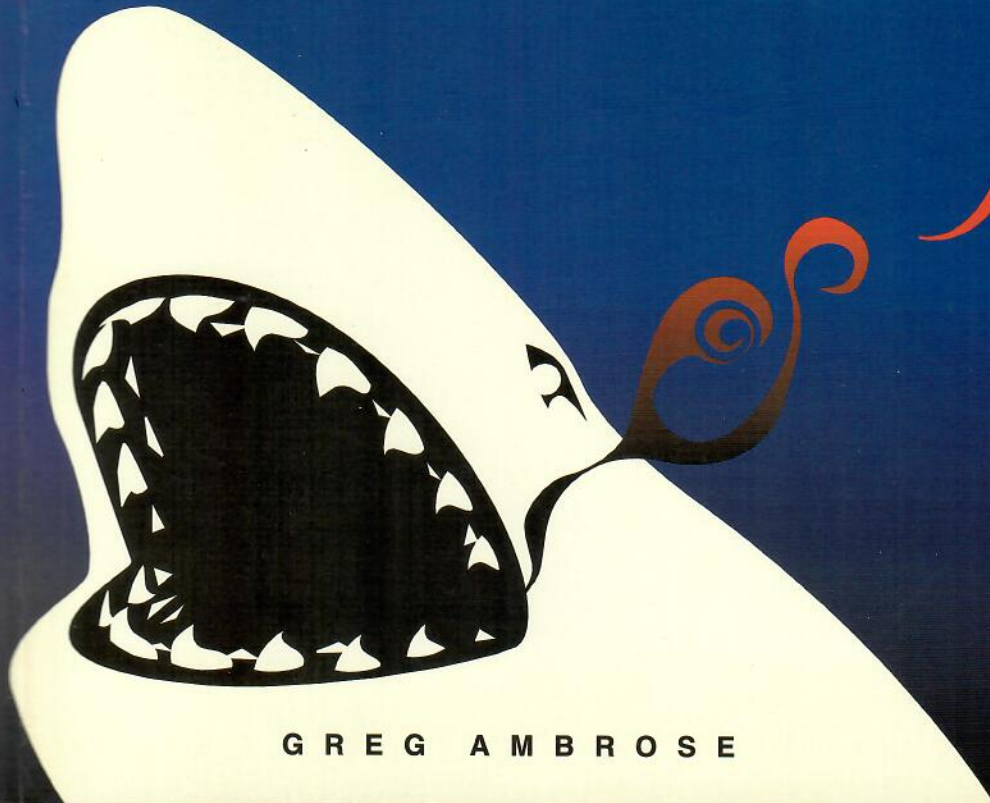


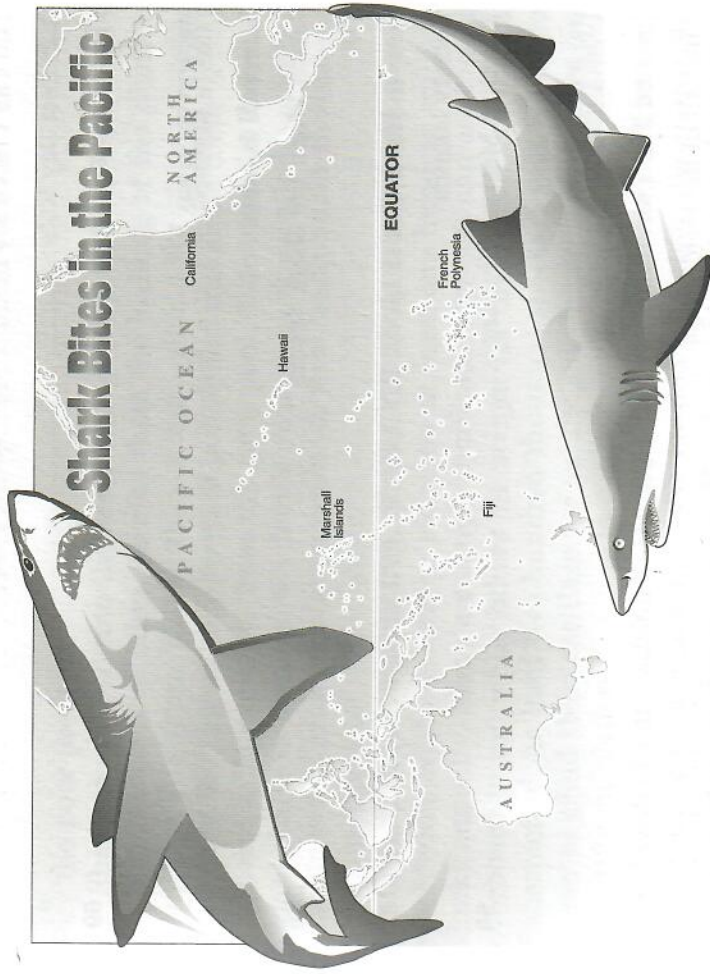
SHARK BITES

TRUE TALES OF SURVIVAL



GREG AMBROSE

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Introduction

Pity the poor predator.

Sharks developed into the ocean's most efficient hunters over 325 million years of evolution, earning them the loathing of the planet's dominant life form. Rather than admire sharks for their strength, speed and the incredible powers of perception that allow them to cull unfit and ailing animals from the gene pool, humans have come to regard sharks as demons, the devil's own attack dogs, mindless eating machines that prowl the ocean poised to ferociously attack the instant a person dips a toe in the water.

In fact, the reverse is true. Sharks kill about ten humans a year worldwide, while fishermen slaughter at least one hundred million sharks annually. Many are caught incidentally in nets and are tossed overboard to rot, while others are sought for their meat. Costa Rica fishermen alone haul two hundred thousand sharks a year from the ocean to grind their cartilage for an alleged cancer cure that has no scientific validation.

When mainland China reopened trade with the West in 1986, an instant market for shark fins was created to satisfy the insatiable Asian appetite for shark fin soup. Hundreds of thousands of captured sharks are cruelly dumped back into the ocean after their fins are hacked off. Unable to maneuver, they blunder about helplessly and die slowly and terribly of starvation. Which is the more savage species, humans or sharks?

The amazing people who tell their stories in this book were selected because they were attacked while enjoying the most popular things people do in near-shore waters, showing that sharks don't single out any group of ocean users. You can be mauled no matter what fun activity lures you into the ocean. But consider how many millions of people venture into the sea every day, and how few are ever attacked by sharks.

You only have to rub two brain cells together to realize that if sharks awarded humans favored-prey status, there would be hundreds of thousands of fatalities a year worldwide. To survive, an apex predator needs to expend as little energy as possible while capturing a meal, and nothing is as easy to catch in the ocean as humans. We swim slowly, can't breathe underwater, and have no fangs, claws, fur or spikes to protect us. We're like floating Spam without the can, and

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It should be a valuable source of protein for sharks. It is not that sharks began developing their diet long before the first humans showed up, while humans have been splashing in the water for only a small fraction of that time. We just aren't on the same level, and sharks still treat humans cautiously, as an oddity rather than a meal.

Sharks are not our short but rapid climb to the throne of the animal kingdom, but they have developed the incredible conceit that we are somehow superior to nature, that we occupy a godlike status above animals and that we control natural forces.

Sharks are howl with arrogant outrage when a shark dares to attack a human, forgetting that when we enter the ocean, we shed our mantle of superiority and become just another link in the food chain, and a vulnerable link at that.

Sharks are not their credit, Polynesians, Micronesians, Melanesians and people from other cultures with a long tradition of using the ocean for food. It is not that they haven't demonized sharks the way Westerners have.

Sharks are not any islanders regard sharks as gods and honor them with special ceremonies. At worst, they consider sharks merely as competitors in the ocean to gather sea life. They think of sharks as among the most graceful and beautiful animals in the ocean, tempering their admiration for sharks with devastatingly efficient hunting skills with a healthy respect for shark strength.

Sharks are not as difficult for some cultures to feel affection toward a creature as young people devour each other in the womb, but fisherman and the park curator Steve Kaiser has learned to love tiger sharks, and he is among the most feared sharks in the world. Kaiser has a splendid female tiger shark swimming freely in his aquarium in the Bahamas and walks fearlessly in the water with this dreaded carnivore. People are amazed to see him affectionately pet this predator as he goes to show visitors that tigers aren't the nasty, mean, ugly, disgusting animal that everybody thinks they are. "They are kind, gentle creatures," Kaiser says, calling them mellow when compared with sharks kept in captivity.

Sharks are not that we can overcome our cultural conditioning, we find there is something about sharks to admire, such as their sleek, streamlined hydrodynamic shape, which allows them to speed through a medium eight times faster than air.

Sharks are not acceleration. Sharks can cruise slowly on patrol with a minimum of effort, and with a flick of a powerful tail launch into rapid pursuit.

Sharks are not the sick, weak and slow animals to maintain the health of the population and ensure that no group of animals increases to the detriment of other groups.

Sharks are not The slaughter of the ocean's apex predator could throw the underwater ecosystem out of balance, which could be disastrous for commercial fisheries and the general health of the ocean. As the top ocean hunter, sharks grow slowly, mature late in life and produce few offspring, which makes them especially vulnerable to overfishing. When sharks are killed more quickly than they can reproduce, the population takes decades to recover after crashes from overfishing.

Sharks are not Recognizing that the ocean's greatest hunter is in danger of being wiped out by the planet's most deadly predator, man, some countries have passed laws to restrict or ban the hunting of sharks. The U.S. government in 1993 protected thirty-nine shark species from Maine to Texas that were in danger of being overfished. And South Africa, Australia and California have passed laws safeguarding the world's most magnificent and feared shark, the great white.

Sharks are not Researchers have learned that sharks aren't mindless eating machines, but sophisticated and remarkably intelligent animals. Ironically, these fierce creatures are fragile, difficult to capture, transport and keep alive in captivity. Scientists are desperate to find out precisely how overfishing has devastated shark populations, but these shy and often solitary creatures are extremely difficult to study.

Sharks are not We fear what we do not understand, and sharks have been marvelously effective in eluding all attempts to quantify them. Unlike big cats, bears and other land-based predators, sharks leave no mark as they range far and wide through their trackless wilderness. Some of the more interesting species are extremely dangerous animals that vanish into the mysterious depths with a few swishes of their tail, confounding frustrated researchers.

Sharks are not Some say the great white shark population off California is increasing ever since its favorite prey, seals and sea lions, have been protected from hunting. Others swear that they are in danger of being overfished to extinction, but no one knows for sure.

Sharks are not Scientists lack knowledge of even the most basic facts about sharks, such as how many there are, their mating behavior, reproductive habits, migratory patterns and range, and especially the big question: why they attack humans.

ta is sparse, but theories abound, the favorite being the case of a
ken identity. When a great white shark lurking below spots a
or surfer near the surface, it perceives the silhouette as a seal
rpedoes its target, launching it into the air with the ferocity of
ack. But when it doesn't taste the expected calorie-rich blubber,
ms away, a good inducement for ocean lovers to diet.

competing attempt to explain why great white sharks seldom
me the humans they attack is the cautious predator theory. The
of a frantically struggling seal or sea lion could gouge the eyes
attacking great white, dooming it to a slow death by starvation.
e shark blasts its prey with a devastating hit, then swims a safe
ace away and waits for the creature to bleed to death before
ing to leisurely finish its meal. Imagine its surprise when
ns don't hang around for the shark to return and devour them.

arine biologists in Hawai'i were puzzled in 1991 when tiger
s began attacking humans in unprecedented numbers. It had
thirty years since the last fatal attack, and by 1995 tiger sharks
killed two people, were suspected of killing a bodyboarder whose
e was never recovered, and had bitten a dozen more people.

eories were put forth and energetically debated, the favorite
the case of mistaken identity. The endangered green sea turtle
made a dramatic recovery under federal protection, while other
te prey of tiger sharks were being fished out. One theory had
sharks moving closer to shore to feed on the green sea turtles,

1 put the sharks in the same areas as surfers, swimmers and
s. In water offering poor visibility, the tiger sharks were biting
ns and swimming away when they realized they didn't taste or
ce their normal prey.

nother explanation was the curious critter theory. Lacking

, sharks investigate things in their watery world with their
n, taste testing to find a good meal. And the humans either fight
e, sending the sharks in the opposite direction.

ne scientists realized that these are only theories, and that they
almost nothing about tiger sharks. Most of what passed as
ledge about tiger sharks was merely folk wisdom, and as
chers began tracking tigers with radio transmitters and tags,
discovered that most of the folk wisdom was actually folk fool-

ss.

ne State of Hawai'i paid lip-service to concern about the tiger
attacks and funded \$20,000 for tracking studies. But as soon as
attacks diminished, the state yanked the money back before the

researchers saw a penny of it.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain federal funding for
shark research, and if scientists are going to solve the mysteries of
where sharks range and how they hunt, the private sector will have
to pay to help find methods to keep humans and sharks apart.

The only ways to be completely safe from sharks are to extermi-
nate them or to stay out of the ocean. Neither option is acceptable to
rational people.

As life on land becomes increasingly complex and frustrating,
some take pleasure in knowing that the ocean is still an exciting, wild
place where they can escape the crowds. It only adds to the sense of
adventure knowing that a person can step into the ocean, drop the
burden of being the world's most dangerous animal and feel the
exquisite alertness that comes from possibly being stalked by a fierce
predator with home-field advantage.

I composed and revised many of this book's stories in my mind
while surfing alone at dawn in areas patrolled by tiger sharks along
O'ahu's North Shore. Because it was the exact worst thing to be think-
ing about, I used mental gymnastics to rid my mind of troubling
thoughts about shark attacks. But the stories were so compelling and
the images so vivid, my mind kept returning to the words of the
shark-attack victims. So I gave in and worked on the tales, while out
of the corner of my eye I thought I spotted shadowy shapes lurking
under the water.

Evoking the details of the attacks while alone and far from shore
gave me a feeling all too rare to humans, that I was prey. During the
lulls between waves, my mind and body were awash in a curious
mixture of exhilaration and paralyzing fear.

But the confidence with which the attack victims plunged back
into the ocean helped me see the truth in what many experts firmly
maintain: the fear of sharks is much greater than the actual danger of
being attacked.

I hope that by the time you finish this book you will be inspired
by the tales of these brave ocean lovers. And maybe you will come to
regard sharks, those beautiful but dangerous and unpredictable crea-
tures, the same way their victims do. With respect instead of fear. ▲

Never Surf Alone Again

Like most Kaua'i surfers, Jude Chamberlin is rugged. You have to be to surf Kaua'i's waves. The reefs are shallow and sharp, the waves powerful, the surf spots isolated. It's no place for the weak of mind or body, and Jude is neither.

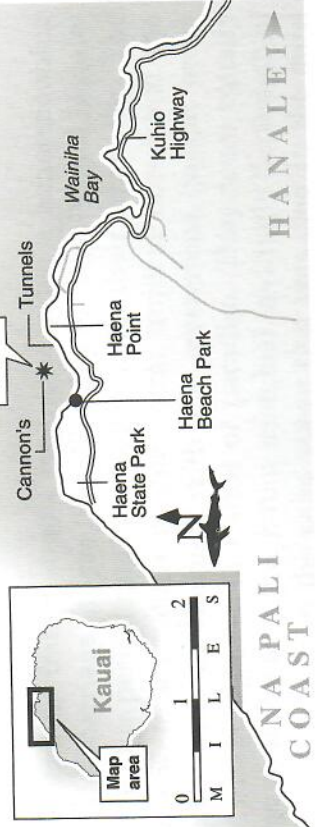
Her favorite spot is Cannon's, near the end of the road at Hā'ena on Kaua'i's north shore. It's a nasty spot with a punishing, hollow wave. Surfers who hesitate or make the slightest mistake are slammed onto the reef, and many bear interesting scars as mute testimony to the surf spot's ferocity.

Jude loves the place. Her preferred tactic is to paddle out in the dark at the first hint of dawn, to surf in delicious solitude.

Jude and her friend Mike Cox were excited at the prospect of good waves as they walked up the beach to check the surf at Cannon's on March 28, 1992. The sun was sending a first few tentative rays over the mountains, and it was already obvious that this was the kind of Hawaiian winter day that people on the mainland dream about before waking up to another blizzard.

The ocean was seventy-two degrees, the air was seventy-two degrees, and there wasn't a cloud to be seen. The water was clear and there were no green sea turtles bobbing offshore for algae, none of the usual indicators that sharks might be prowling the ocean.

Jude was ready to hit the waves immediately, but at 6:45 a light breeze began to ruffle the ocean's surface, and Mike decid-



ed that the wind was going to strengthen and ruin the waves. "More waves for me," Jude thought as Mike headed home.

Another friend arrived and paddled out to Tunnels a few hundred yards away while Jude stroked out to surf Cannon's alone.

The anticipated wind never arrived to chop out the waves, and Jude was pleased to see Mike return to join her in the lineup. After catching a particularly satisfying wave, Jude eagerly stroked back out, anticipating a good morning of surf.

She had skirted the shallow coral and headed through the key-hole-shaped channel of deeper water when she felt her board starting to lift. Annoyed at the interruption, she thought to herself, "Stupid turtle." But when she looked over her shoulder for the culprit that had thrown her off course, she saw something gray hovering over her legs.

She still didn't realize her danger, thinking a big fish was swimming over her. As she looked more intently at the intruder, Jude was horrified to see that it was a large tiger shark, Hawai'i's most dangerous predator. The shark's mouth was gaping wide, exposing rows of nasty, serrated teeth poised to clamp down on Jude's legs.

Sick with fear, Jude watched in a trance as the terrible jaws bit down on her legs. Although her mind was buzzing with terror, one small corner of her brain wondered in fascination why she couldn't feel the hooked teeth tearing into her flesh. The answer came in a lightning bolt: one of her surfboard's three fins must have stuck in the tiger's bottom jaw, preventing the shark from biting through her board and chewing off her leg.

Her brief elation was vaporized by the certainty that the shark's deadly intentions were merely momentarily thwarted, and it would still find a way to get her. Jude clung to her surfboard, her only refuge from the terrifying creature as the great gray shark struggled mightily to close its jaws completely. As it twisted and thrashed, the shark tilted the surfboard, breaking Jude's grip and tossing her from the safe platform. The situation could scarcely be worse. She was in the water with the carnivore as it swung her surfboard like a cat shaking a mouse.

Jude watched the shark thrash her surfboard until the creature did a belly roll and swam away, still chomping on the board. Just as she dared to think that the attack might be over, Jude was yanked after the shark by her leash, which was still attached to her surfboard and her ankle. Jude stroked and kicked furiously to hold her position,

but her efforts were futile as the powerful shark dragged her sixty feet through the water.

Jude was desperate to untie the leash to escape the shark, but she dreaded making any move that might divert its attention from the surfboard to her. She was in a terrible situation, still being dragged by the shark and unable to free herself. She couldn't force herself to put her head under the water to watch the shark; the sight of the tiger turning to attack her would have been unbearable. Luckily, the shark had dragged her into water shallow enough that it couldn't pull her under.

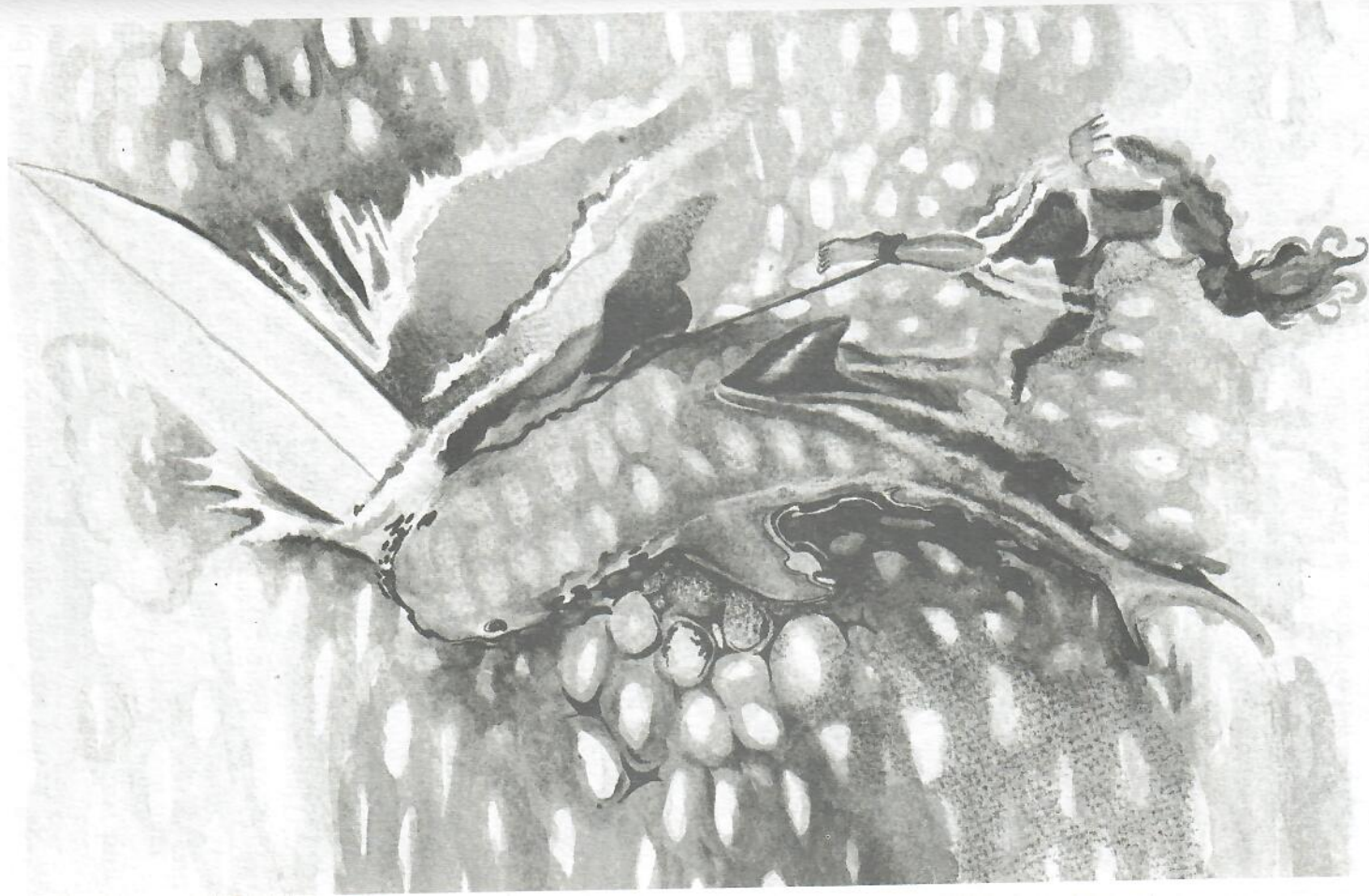
Finally, frantic and endless minutes later, her leash went slack, but it brought no comfort to Jude. She was convinced the shark had tired of battling the surfboard and was circling back to get her, and she was helpless in the water with nothing to shield her from the shark's hideous teeth. Jude felt like a little girl again, and the ultimate bogeyman was about to leap out from under the bed and pounce on her.

And then, to her immense relief, her surfboard popped up from the ocean's depths. Even though it meant possibly swimming straight into the shark's waiting jaws, Jude churned the water in her haste to retrieve the board. Safely aboard her battered board, Jude yelled to Mike that she was heading over the reef.

The deep channel is the usual safe route around the jagged coral, but she already had spent far too much time in the channel with the tiger shark. Jude didn't fully realize what had just happened until she was standing on the shallow reef, finally free from her tormentor. As the sharp coral sliced her feet, Jude began counting to make sure both were still attached to her legs. Then she saw the blood dripping off her surfboard. Minutes earlier she had been too busy fighting for her life for the full impact to register, but now her mind swirled with images of the shark.

Her body shook as the adrenaline worked its way through her system. Jude savored the sweet feeling of being alive, and took a moment to appreciate the terrible fate she had just escaped. "You think that when you're in the water is when you would really freak out," she says. Standing on the reef, Jude watched numbly as blood from her bitten foot dripped into the water and mingled with blood dripping off the surfboard, her blood that had been in the shark's jaws.

Aware that the shark easily could have mangled her, Jude was dumbstruck, unable to speak to another surfer paddling out and warn



him of the shark that might still be lurking in the channel.

Jude had no way of knowing yet that the shark had taken something very special from her.

Limp from emotional exhaustion, Jude made her way to shore, where Mike joined her on the beach, proud that he hadn't abandoned her to bolt for safety. "I stayed out with you. I was going to pull the torso in," Mike told her.

When she got her wits about her, Jude knew that she had to get in the water right away or she might develop an aversion to the ocean, and at thirty-six, she had far too many good days of surf ahead of her to be afraid of the water. So she insisted that they drive to Hanalei to surf the lefts at Waikoko's.

The next morning she went back to Cannon's, but something was different. "I wanted it to feel like it always was, but it was really eerie, and always is now." She paddled rapidly past the place where she had been attacked and joined her friends in the lineup. When a Hawaiian monk seal popped up nearby, Jude came totally unglued, and started frantically stroking for shore until her friends grabbed her and calmed her down, saying, "See, it's only a seal."

She tried to surf Cannon's the next few days alone, but she couldn't enjoy herself. It just wasn't fun. Years after the attack, Jude still addles out at dawn to surf alone. But not at Cannon's. Never at Cannon's.

"I'm not a fearful kind of person," says Jude. "I went out there about ten times to surf it alone, but I couldn't get past myself. I would start looking around, thinking of teeth and jaws, and go in.

"When I'm surfing now, if my hand hits a stick in the water or a turtle pops up, I jump out of my skin. Before, it was never a problem. If I saw something in the water, I never thought it was a shark.

"I wish it wasn't like that. I surf every day, but there is no making it go away.

"When I go out with a friend at Cannon's, I try to paddle past that spot."

She also occasionally dreams about the shark, but in her dreams it's not an attack, it's a battle. "It's always a bigger shark, it's biting me and I'm punching it and we're having a big match in the water."

People asked her if she didn't want to round up volunteers and hunt down the shark, but that was never an option. "There are so many things people have tried to get rid of because they don't like them, and screwed things up even worse," Jude says.

"I guess I needed the drama. I got a free surfboard, some free meals, a TV spot," she says, laughing.

"I do more thinking on it now than at the time. I reminisce, and I think, 'What if I lost my leg? My whole life would be different.' It would have taken away the best thing in my life, surfing."

Mike wasn't so fortunate. Although he wasn't attacked, watching Jude fight for her life was a nightmare come true for him. "He used to be terrified of sharks as a kid in Florida," says Jude. "He used to surf every day, but he hardly surfs anymore.

"Once it gets you, you can't stop thinking about it in the lineup. Things can be going great, and once my mind gets ahold of that thought, I'm shot. I can't get it out of my mind." ▲

More Than a Prayer of a Chance

Roddy Lewis has always felt at home in the ocean. It was a dividend of growing up on the windward side of O'ahu, fishing, diving and surfing in two of Hawaii's finest ocean playgrounds.

Kāne'ōhe, the largest bay in the state, is filled with fish and exquisite coral formations that grow to incredible shapes in the bay's calm waters. And nearby Kailua offers fun waves and a long beach coated with sand soft enough that someone clever could have made a fortune using it to cushion the soles of jogging shoes.

Roddy was content with all the ways he found to extract fun from the ocean. But when he discovered sailboarding, it changed his life forever. It was a miracle to be able to fill his rig's sail with wind and fly across the water, to feel his arms flex as he manipulated the boom and mast to make the board go ever faster.

Sure, it was fun to hit the little waves at Jump City in Kailua Bay at full steam and get launched into the air, creating ever so briefly the illusion of flight. But Roddy was a speed junkie. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't outrun his need to go faster and faster, until he was just a blur across the water.

Kailua offers fine flat water and stiff trade winds, but anyone who is serious about setting his sailboard in motion knows that Maui is magic.

Roddy moved to Maui and found the perfect place for a sailboarding fiend: Kū'au, on Maui's north shore. The tiny little town is a speck on the Hāna Highway, and tourists leaving colorful Pā'ia to zoom off toward heavenly Hāna can easily blink and miss the country store that marks Kū'au.

But Kū'au is the epicenter of world-class

sailboarding, a magnet that attracts fanatical boardsailors from across the globe.

With exceptional waves in his own backyard, Roddy could carry his rig across a small beach and set sail. A few hundred yards east is Ho'okipa Beach Park, where the consistent trade winds blow in fun summer surf perfect for practicing wave-jumping. In winter, fierce storms create fearsome waves that tower over the sailboard masts and threaten to pummel the riders, who laugh and perform daring aerials and other acrobatics as they defy the menacing waves.

But Roddy's main pleasure zone lay a few miles west of Kū'au, at Spreckelsville, named after a powerful sugarcane baron. Northeast trade winds blast across thousands of miles of open ocean to hit Spreckelsville at just the right angle to let sailboarders blaze across the shallow water.

At Spreckelsville Roddy could fill his sails with the howling trade winds and head for the horizon like a bat out of hell, then jibe and double his speed on the way back. With the perfect training ground, Roddy's already impressive skills quickly became daunting. He speared fish to supplement his income as a carpenter, a job that left him plenty of time to sail when the winds were shrieking. Before long, he was winning speed-sailing contests and setting his sights on competition abroad.

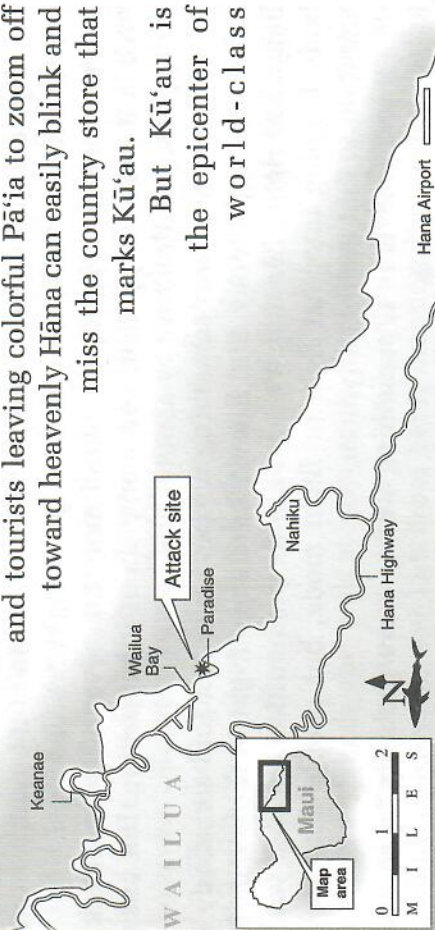
His carpentry work and constant sailing shaped Roddy into a six-foot four-inch pillar of steel, and he felt invincible as he sped across the water. But there were times when encounters in the ocean touched him with a feeling of mortal dread.

Late one afternoon off Kanahā bird sanctuary, the wind was so perfect that Roddy couldn't resist making one more run, even though the sun had long since ducked behind majestic Haleakalā and darkness threatened to descend quickly.

He was blazing along when he caught the top of a swell and soared into the air. Suspended in midair, he spotted a big, bulky shadow directly below him. To his horror, Roddy realized it was a huge tiger shark, with a head wider than his sailboard. He was on a collision course with a beast that was at least twenty feet long.

Roddy used some inspired gymnastics to narrowly miss the shark, and as darkness snatched the light from the sky he sped back to the beach, his mind filled with images of the enormous shark racing after him.

Over the next few days Roddy almost convinced himself the inci-



ent was a trick his mind had played on him with help from the twilight. How could there be a monster tiger shark haunting waters that sailed so frequently?

While talking story with a fisherman, he cautiously mentioned the giant shark, certain the man would scoff at the tale. Instead, the fisherman casually said it sounded like the gigantic shark that often shadowed his crew's twenty-four-foot outrigger canoe when they paddled outside Kahului Harbor.

Slowly, great days of sailing and surfing replaced the memory of the giant tiger shark. Not content to burn grooves in the ocean sailing back and forth at Spreckelsville, Roddy continually sought greater challenges. He and a friend stared across an intimidating expanse of water to barely visible Maui as they rigged up their boards and set sail from the Big Island's Kohala Coast, taking aim at Mākena on Maui's southwest shore.

Their course took them straight across the melodically named Alenuihāhā Channel, a rough stretch of ocean buffeted by fierce winds and tossed by chaotic seas. After hours of strenuous sailing, they were about six miles off Maui and startled a bottomfisherman when they sailed up out of nowhere and swooped past his boat.

After that bit of amusement, the duo tried to do some serious sailing to reach Maui's southwest shore. The crossing was more difficult than they had anticipated, and the sun was hovering just above the horizon. They were two miles off La Perouse Bay, a sparsely populated area with a coastline guarded by jagged lava. It was no place to attempt a blind landing in the dark.

Just as his sails picked up a solid breeze to let Roddy beat the darkness to shore, he was slammed by a tornado of swirling winds that churned the ocean into a maelstrom and ripped the boom right out of his hands.

Roddy went down hard, and every time he tried to set sail the howling wind knocked him flat again. He shouted to warn his friend, but the wind carried his warning away and the hellish storm crumpled his partner.

As the dark curtain of night dropped over the ocean, they decided to roll up their rigging and paddle for La Perouse Bay. Despite his best efforts to entertain more-cheerful thoughts, images of the shadowy tiger came flooding back, and Roddy wondered how many other giant tiger sharks prowled these waters.

An eternity later they reached shore in pitch black and painfully

walked barefoot across the jagged lava. The pack of ten flares in their survival kit was soggy, and the flares sputtered and died until the very last one caught fire and blazed a rescue beacon.

The same bottomfisherman they had surprised earlier was heading home when he spotted the flare, and as he took the sailboarders to Mākena they entertained him with their tale of woe. They were already cold from exposure, but the fisherman chilled their hearts when he told them of the six-hundred-pound tiger shark he had caught right where they had floundered in the storm.

Whether atop the waves or beneath the surface, the ocean was Roddy's playground and his pantry. Surfing and sailboarding nourished his soul, while fishing nurtured his body. In the dark, wave-tossed waters off Maui's isolated north shore, Roddy was spearfishing for his dinner when a Galapagos shark swam out of the deep and gave Roddy the black-death stare with its merciless eye.

Roddy surprised himself by staring the shark down, though he had his spear tip ready to poke the predator if his glowering expression hadn't sent the shark on its way.

The threat of lurking sharks wasn't enough to chase Roddy from the ocean. The wind and the waves were much too important; they had shaped his identity as a person and colored his view of the world. He couldn't begin to imagine a life away from the ocean.

On March 14, 1993, Roddy and surfing buddy John Gangini were eager to take advantage of a north swell that was slamming into Maui. The big waves promised to deliver a full dose of excitement, but they were in a quandary all too familiar to surfers everywhere. They wanted to pick the spot where the waves would be breaking best, but if they made the wrong decision, they risked driving around all day and surfing nowhere.

Anxious to get in the water, they quickly checked the waves at Ho'okipa and other surf spots near Roddy's home, but the blustery trade winds had ripped the waves to shreds. Another dilemma. They could spend nearly two hours speeding to Honolua Bay on Maui's distant northwest coast, where the wind would be offshore, or they could zip along the Hāna Highway forty-five minutes to Honomanū Bay, where steep cliffs might protect the waves from the wind.

A toss of a coin sent them to Honomanū, but storm-tossed seas greeted them when they pulled up in front of the usual surf spot. Discouraged, they continued farther along the Hāna Highway to Wailua Bay, where they saw some friends surfing fair five-foot waves.

It was now three in the afternoon, and they realized this was their last chance to surf for the day.

The pair paddled out and joined their friends in the lineup, but the waves were swarming with energetic younger surfers who were more annoying than a flock of squawking mynah birds. After a half hour the crowd finally drove their friends to the beach, but the waves had scarcely whetted Roddy and John's appetite.

They had heard of a fabulous surf spot with the intriguing name of Paradise around the headland in the next bay and figured this was the best time to head over and see whether it deserved its name.

There are only two ways to reach Paradise, each with its merits. You can take the trail over the headland at full speed and reach the waves in twenty-five minutes, but everywhere are temptations to slow down and enjoy the journey. It's part of the ancient Hawaiian kings' trail, partially paved with cobblestones that weave through a bamboo forest so dense that it creates gloom even in full daylight. At every turn is a breathtaking view of the ocean or valleys. Because the trail isn't marked well, travelers often lose their way.

Paddling from bay to bay takes half the time, and the two surfers started stroking strongly for Paradise, powered by a fierce hunger for more waves.

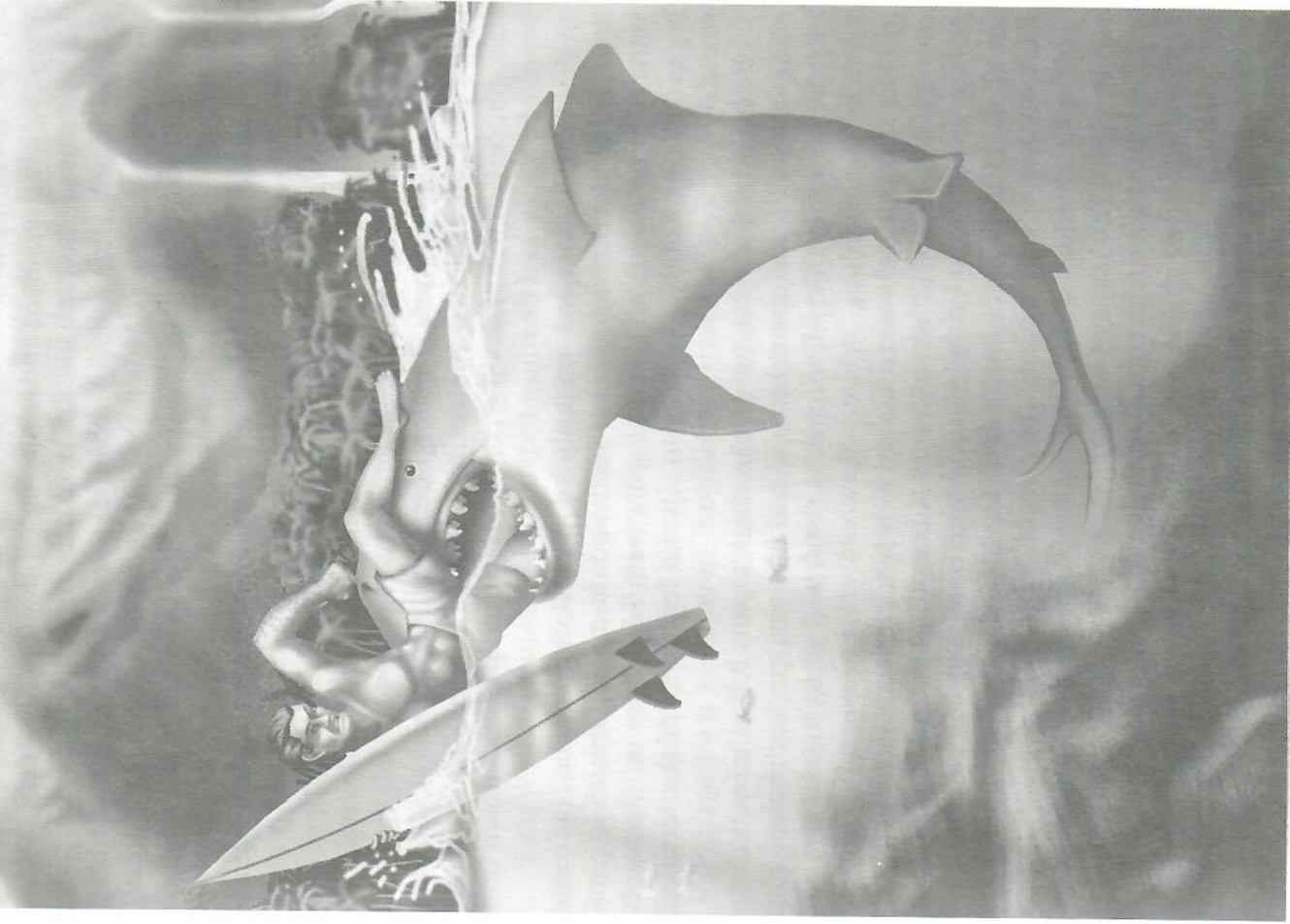
When they rounded the headland, they stopped dead in the water in midstroke. They had truly reached paradise. Twin waterfalls cascaded through a valley filled with exotic tropical foliage. Two streams emptied into the ocean, separated by a palm-lined shore. It was the most beautiful sight either had seen in decades of surfing in Hawai'i.

And on the far side of the bay was perfect surf, rights that jacked up over a shallow ledge and pitched out in a tube that peeled to the shore. The valley funneled the howling wind straight offshore, making the waves clean and desirable. An adept surfer could speed along the wave and step off right onto the rock-covered beach.

The sight was so compelling that the two churned the water in their haste to sample the surf. They didn't pause to wonder why local surfers were standing on shore instead of riding the delectable waves.

As the waves beckoned, the two surfers hit a witches' brew of debris from the streams, branches and twigs and leaves swirling in the current. It looked like a perfect hunting ground for sharks, and the thought sparked a sixth sense in Roddy.

Suddenly, visions of the giant tiger shark filled his mind. He



hifted into a wary mode, but his desire for the waves was so strong that he resumed plowing through the debris at top speed.

Roddy kept his eyes firmly fixed on the waves as he paddled closer, and in his mind he was already speeding along the long walls, swooping off the bottom and snapping off the top. Suddenly, something slammed into him and Roddy felt an incredible pain.

An unknown force had grabbed him, and Roddy felt something tear through the meat of his right calf and hit the leg bone. He belatedly showed in fear and pain, and looked over his shoulder to see what in the hell had hit him.

He was horrified to find that the shadowy shark that had haunted him for so long had become reality. A tiger shark had sunk its rows of serrated teeth into him and was devouring his leg. The tiger had ambushed him from below, and with an unbearably painful hold on his leg it was trying to pull Roddy underwater.

It was every person's worst nightmare, to be eaten alive by a huge predator. Roddy dented his surfboard as he clung with maniacal strength, certain that if he let go the shark would pull him down into the murky water and tear him to pieces.

The shark struggled mightily to pull Roddy under, but was thwarted by the buoyancy of his surfboard. It moved forward to get a better grip on Roddy's leg, sinking its teeth higher up on his leg. It began shaking Roddy violently to rip the leg right off the terrified surfer.

It was a tactical blunder on the shark's part. It had moved close enough to let Roddy counterattack, and fear was quickly replaced by fury. He was only thirty-five, and no shark was going to take him out when he was so young.

The shark's head was in his lap as it worked its teeth furiously to saw his leg off, and it was close to succeeding. Roddy knew it was now or never, so he loaded his rage into one powerful blow and hit the shark on the side of the head so hard that he tore a tendon in his left fist.

The shark released its frightful grip on Roddy's mangled leg and vanished into the murky water.

John watched the drama with disbelief, certain his friend would be killed and other sharks would appear and attack any other person they could find. When he saw Roddy hammer the beast, John stroked urgently for shore, hoping that Roddy was right behind him.

In a daze created by anger, fear, adrenaline and shock, Roddy

paddled wildly for shore. He didn't know whether the shark had chewed off his foot, and the suspense was unbearable. So he stopped his flight to safety long enough to look at his shredded leg, and when he saw his foot, it gave him the strength to resume paddling.

But Roddy wasn't safe yet, from the shark, or from the terrifying images in his mind's eye. He felt confident that if he made it to the beach he could survive, even though his leg was bleeding profusely. Yet it took a massive effort of will to put his arm into the water with each stroke. In his mind he could see the shark beneath him, hungry for another taste of his flesh. But he forced himself to paddle, and stroke by stroke he neared land until finally he bumped his board up against the boulders lining the shore.

He stood shakily, testing his mangled leg, and with each step a river of blood gushed down his leg and flowed into the water. Roddy survived the terror of the attack and paddle, so he was unfazed by the sight of his lower leg torn open to the bone. He had the presence of mind to take the leash from his surfboard and tie it below his knee to stop the flow of blood.

Two Wailua resident surfers, "Papaya John" McCollum and Brian Murphy, had watched the attack from shore and rushed over to assist Roddy. Papaya John ran across the headland for help, while Brian loosened the tourniquet every ten minutes to prevent tissue from being damaged by lack of blood.

Papaya John scampered breathlessly over the trail to Wailua to phone for help, but when rescuers tried to reach the wounded surfer they found that gusty winds had toppled trees, blocking the road to Wailua. They had to telephone across the island to Wailea to get a private helicopter to carry medics to Roddy.

During the ninety minutes it took for rescuers to arrive, Roddy sang praises to God and found the peace of mind to accept his possible death. But when the helicopter finally arrived and carried him to Wailua, the medics were determined to keep Roddy from his heavenly reward. His injuries stabilized, Roddy was transported to Wailuku, where doctors at Maui Memorial Hospital worked feverishly to restore his hideously injured leg.

Surgeons pulled the distinctive hooked tooth of a tiger shark from Roddy's ankle bone and later gave it to him as a memento of his brush with death.

It was the first of five surgeries needed to repair his leg. Doctors used nearly two hundred staples and numerous internal sutures to

close two fourteen-inch gaping cuts on the inside and outside of his right leg and a four-inch gash on his left leg.

But Roddy felt that his worst injury was inflicted by the state Shark Task Force, which was in charge of responding after shark attacks. Task force members decided not to hunt for the shark that had attacked Roddy, saying area Hawaiians wanted the shark to be left alone.

Further, they said, the rough ocean would prevent them from setting baited hooks in the area, giving the culprit time to move to another location. And the visiting surfers should have realized that local surfers were watching the waves from shore because conditions were prime for a shark attack. The streams were discharging the runoff from recent rainstorms, creating murky water in which a shark might mistake a surfer for its natural prey. And a dead cow and pig had been washed into the ocean near where Roddy and John were surfing, which is like ringing the dinner bell for tiger sharks.

Roddy voiced his anger from his hospital bed, wondering aloud how many people needed to be eaten for the state to take action. Brian Murphy listened to Roddy's outrage sympathetically, and he left the hospital to ask fellow Wailua resident Doug Camanase to help hunt for the shark.

It was a difficult decision for Doug, a fierce-looking Hawaiian with long, black hair, a shark tattoo on his shoulder and a sinewy, muscled body that testifies to the active life he has led for fifty years.

He believes that some sharks are *'aumākua*, or guardian spirits, to some Hawaiians, but he explained in his gentle voice that this shark never had been an *'aumakua*, and shouldn't be protected. "Everything I do is with feeling. If the feeling was wrong, I wouldn't do it."

Doug felt strongly that catching this shark would restore the tranquility of Paradise. He and Brian baited two hooks with cow's liver and swam out to set the line and floats near where Roddy was attacked.

The next morning they found a ten-foot tiger shark lying on the beach, tangled in the line. They cut the shark up and brought the tail to Roddy in the hospital. In return, Roddy gave them the tooth that doctors had pulled from his ankle bone, and they matched it with a broken tooth in the shark's upper jaw.

Doug killed the shark for the community, so youngsters could swim and fish and play in the water safely, just like his children did

when they were young. "After we brought the shark out, the beach felt good again," Doug said. "If I did something wrong, it will come back to me."

The pair earned Roddy's respect and gratitude for taking out the shark that had attacked him so viciously. To people who scoffed that killing one shark wasn't going to make the ocean safer all across the state, Roddy responded with a story.

"One day stormy seas tossed thousands of starfish onto the beach. Later, a boy walking along the shore came upon the starfish, and tossed one back into the ocean. An old man who had been watching the deed railed at the boy, telling him he was wasting his time. There are thousands of starfish, the old man said, and you can't possibly make a difference. The boy calmly replied, 'I made a difference to that one.'"

But while the killing of the shark eased the pain in Roddy's heart, his body was in torment. "Every time I hear it called a shark bite, it doesn't begin to describe it. The pain was so intense, it's something you take with you wherever you go.

"It definitely changes the facets of your life. For two months I felt as though I was in a different plane than what we normally think of as life."

With fierce determination, Roddy worked through months of painful therapy until he was physically and mentally at ease in the ocean again. But in the back of his mind was a nagging fear that the shark had robbed him of something special. Before the attack he was a world-class speed sailor, winning some contests and placing high in others, and he had yet to prove that he could recover his championship form.

He embarked for a series of speed-sailing competitions in Europe, and learned to his dismay that his injuries had handicapped him with stiffness and a lack of flexibility. But Roddy amazed spectators, judges and his competitors by breaking several world speed records and winning several events.

Roddy is constantly training to improve on those victories, but he has a new appreciation for life that helps him deal with the inevitable disappointments in competition.

"I had a philosophical moment when I left the hospital and first started getting around on crutches. I tried to shop for food staples, and I was down, feeling sorry for myself. I was hopping around, barely able to carry things to the checkout stand.

"Then I glanced up and saw another guy on crutches. But his right pants leg was pinned up to his belt, and it was the same leg that the shark bit on me." Suddenly, an old saying ran through Roddy's mind. "I felt sorry for myself because I had no shoes, until I saw a man who had no feet."

Roddy is happy to report that life goes on. It's a lesson he learned soon after the attack. "I walked out onto the front yard and saw blue ocean like I had never seen it before and green grass greener than I had ever seen before. It was really sweet.

"You just have to be thankful and enjoy every day, every moment. Because any day could be your last day." ▲

Shaken Up, Baby, Twist and Shout

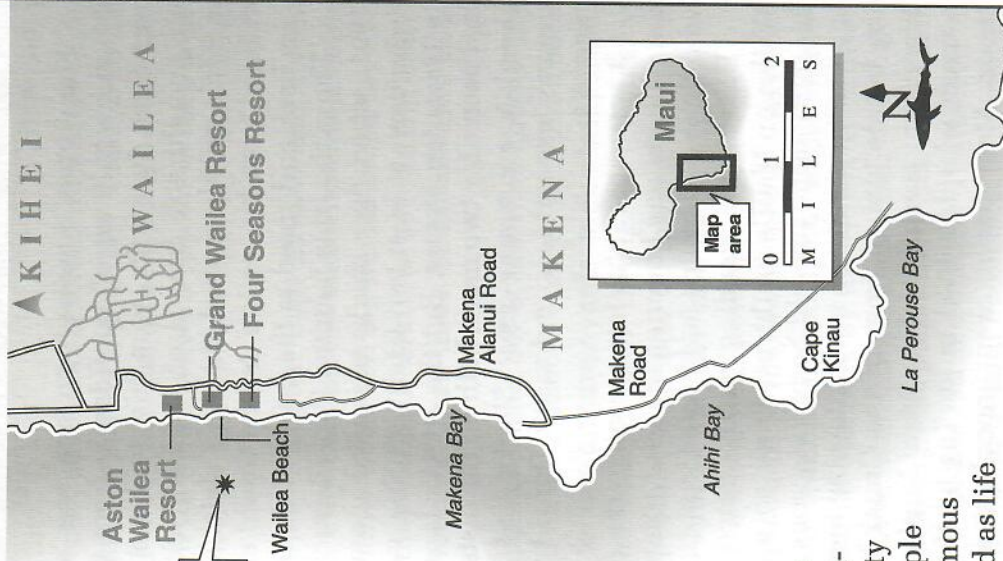
If you felt the need to get some exercise, which would you rather do? Go for a hot, sweaty run, or take a soothing swim?

What if you lived on the west side of Maui, where the ocean is a dozen shades of tropical blue and always warm and inviting? Easy choice.

That was Donald Bloom's choice, ever since he moved to the island paradise of Maui from the mainland in the early eighties.

Donald retired from his catering career at the surprisingly young age of twenty-five, which left him plenty of time to enjoy Maui's ample charms. But Hawai'i is famous for its high cost of living, and as life in paradise drained his savings Donald began to contemplate a return to the working world on Maui.

The stress and frustration of seeking a new lucrative venture built up to the point that he looked forward to his weekly workouts with the Maui Masters Swim Club, a group of men and women who shared a passion for swimming in the open ocean. Donald eagerly anticipated plunging into Maui's invigorating waters and speeding toward the horizon with swift, strong strokes.



You Can't Have My Board

Rick Gruzinsky was certain his life was over when his parents dragged him from New Jersey to Hawai'i in 1982. After all, how could a sixteen-year-old boy survive without his high school friends and romances?

But after a few months, Rick fell in love with the ocean, Hawai'i's most glamorous and enchanting asset. Before long he realized that his parents hadn't ended his life. They had given him a new, exciting beginning.

By the time he graduated from Kaiser High School in 1984, he was firmly hooked on Hawai'i's lifestyle. Even years spent earning a business degree in Southern California couldn't dampen Rick's ardor for Hawai'i's warm ocean and good waves. Diploma in hand, he quickly returned to Hawai'i to resume his love affair with the surf.

Actually, it was more of a harmless flirtation than a fatal attraction. Rick wasn't compelled to challenge the huge, thundering waves that produce such awe in millions of visitors to Hawai'i. Rick wasn't driven by the same inner demons that compel the hard-core thrillseekers to challenge Hawai'i's giant waves.

Rick was in it for the fun, and when the waves were

ten feet and smaller, he contrived any excuse to hit the surf. Now twenty-six, he worked with his father on construction and renovation projects, and the work left him plenty of time to surf.

As Rick cruised O'ahu's North Shore on October 22, 1992, he wasn't thinking about sharks, even though the newspapers had been filled with accounts of tiger sharks attacking people. The year before, in the first fatal attack in thirty-two years, a woman had been partially devoured by a tiger shark while swimming just offshore of her Maui home.

And more recently, surfers had been attacked on Kaua'i, and a bodyboarder had vanished a mile away from where Rick was checking the waves. Only his bodyboard had washed ashore, missing a chunk that fit the jaws of a captured fourteen-foot tiger shark.

Rick was preoccupied, and the thought of sharks never crossed his mind. He was busy tormenting himself with the phrase that surfers are so fond of using to bedevil each other. "You should have been here yesterday," delivered with a subtle nuance of smug satisfaction, can drive another surfer crazy.

And as Rick checked the lumpy little waves at Laniākea, one of his favorite surf spots, he sighed at the thought of his friends' tales of yesterday's overhead, glassy, peeling waves.

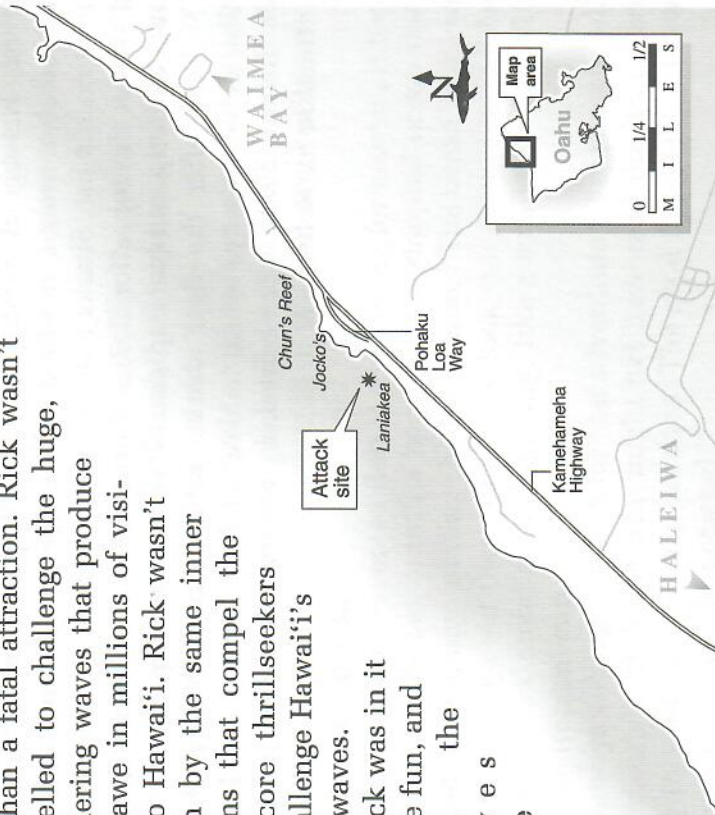
He had driven nearly an hour from Hawai'i Kai, and it was only 7:40 in the morning. The rush-hour traffic heading back into Honolulu would be hellish, so he figured he might as well get wet.

He lingered on the beach for a few minutes, engaging in a harmless fantasy that a new swell would hit the reefs as he watched in delight. He closed his eyes and pictured the waves that made Laniākea so famous.

Laniākea. The name rolled easily off the tongue, a pleasant sound that implied excitement and fun. The waves at Laniākea would hit the reef and jump skyward, pitching out in a perfect tube and peeling across the reef like a runaway freight train.

The lucky surfer could hop aboard and by coaxing all speed his surfboard could produce, would fairly fly across the 250 yards of ocean that stretched from the lava-boulder-lined point to the bridge, where the wave would taper and die in the deep channel.

Opening his eyes, Rick saw that the surf was still small and miserable. With a sigh, he paddled his six-foot-four-inch shortboard out to join a pair of surfers on longboards who were doing more sitting than surfing.



As he sat bobbing in the ocean, admiring the view of the looming Wai'anae Mountains covered in luxuriant tropical foliage, Rick hoped that a rogue set might come through and give him a taste of the great waves that his friends had enjoyed the day before.

The rogue set never materialized, and Rick had plenty of time to think about better waves. He caught a junk little wave, and as he paddled back out to the lineup, he spotted a large green sea turtle. Unfortunately, warning alarms didn't go off in his head when he saw the turtle swim away so rapidly that it created bow waves.

He caught another crummy little wave and was back out waiting for another when the ocean went completely flat. He couldn't believe that the waves could have gotten any smaller, but it was dead calm.

Rick remembers quickly dismissing an eerie feeling that arose in the back of his mind, a notion that something wasn't right.

As he paddled slowly along the lineup, waiting for another wave, he felt a roiling turbulence. No big thing, he thought, crevices in the reef frequently create boils when they release water after a wave has passed. But there hadn't been any waves, and the turbulence was getting stronger.

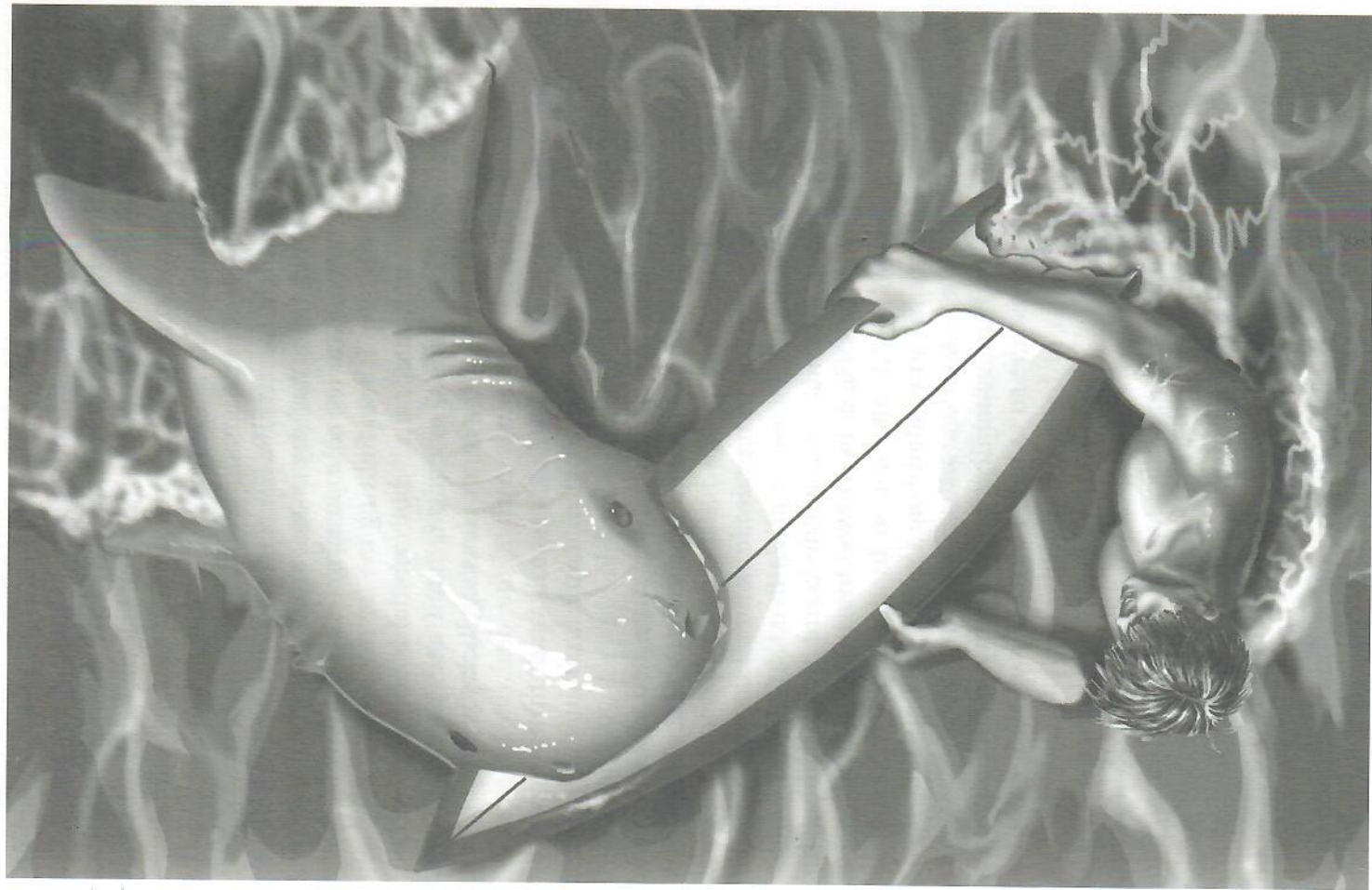
When he spotted a brownish green shadow under his board, Rick idly wondered why the turtle had returned to loiter under his board. Then he saw a flash of white, and something rammed his board.

Whatever had struck him was strong. It lifted the board and Rick's 170-pound body out of the water and easily rolled the board over, with Rick clinging desperately with his legs. The image burned indelibly into his mind as a large tiger shark appeared from under the water's surface and clamped onto the front of the surfboard, about a foot away from where Rick's hands were clutching the board's rails. Rick felt the impact and heard the crunch as the predator's hooked, serrated teeth chomped easily through the foam and fiberglass of his board, which moments ago had seemed so strong.

His eyes were drawn to the teeth, terrible weapons that can pin the shark's prey with sharp points while serrated edges saw through flesh and bone.

The creature was so close he could have spit in its eye, which would have been easy to accomplish, because it wasn't shielded by the opaque membrane that usually protects a shark's eyes from struggling prey when it attacks.

In a panic, Rick realized how close he was to being killed and consumed by Hawaii's most feared ocean predator. He was clinging



to the bottom of the surfboard, with one of its three skegs broken off and another one gouging his armpit.

Rick clung fiercely to his surfboard as the shark shook it back and forth, trying to dislodge the stubborn human. His mind told him that one shark was stronger and ultimately would pull the surfboard away and quickly devour him, but Rick wouldn't give up. His fear slowly was replaced by righteous indignation, and he became more determined than ever to fight for his life.

"I felt that was my space and my board, and I was being violated. I had gotten bitten on the leg as a passing thing, I wouldn't have taken it so personally. But it was fighting me for my board."

So the struggle continued, until both predator and prey won a qualified victory. The shark's saw-edged teeth and powerful jaws snatched a huge chunk out of the board, leaving Rick the rest of it.

Rick realized he got the better part of the deal, as he saw the jagged fiberglass shards cutting into the shark's mouth lining as the creature tried to either swallow its prize or spit it out.

And then the shark disappeared.

As soon as his tormentor vanished, Rick attempted to set a speed record getting to shore. He was motivated by a certainty that the shark was coming back to get him and had just gone below to get a good look at its prey before pulling him under for a horrible, watery death.

Rick was so eager to escape such a grisly fate that he didn't bother to waste precious seconds turning the board over, making his escape even more difficult. He only allowed himself a quick glance to make sure his feet were still attached to his legs, and ignoring the jagged fiberglass from his mutilated board cutting into his chest, he frantically paddled the 120 yards to shore.

He yelled, splashed and generally violated every warning to make smooth, calm, quiet escape so as not to attract the shark's attention again.

To his credit, Rick had the presence of mind to yell a warning to two surfers paddling out to the lineup. Cleverly, they took his shout-and advice and sped back to shore.

Rick hit the beach a mere eight minutes later, but because every scene from every shark documentary and every sentence of every shark story flashed through his brain, the paddle seemed to take an eternity.

On shore, Rick counted his body parts and found that his only injuries were bruises and cuts from his shredded surfboard. Once

news of the attack got out, government officials treated the incident as seriously as if the shark had killed Rick.

They ordered city lifeguards to close the ocean between Waimea Bay and Hale'iwa Beach Park and scrambled a Fire Department rescue helicopter and rescue boats and lifeguards on jet skis to warn beachgoers along the North Shore of the shark attack.

It was easy to persuade surfers not to paddle out at Laniākea, because the waves were so small. But several hundred yards away at Chun's Reef the waves were much better, and the surfers politely thanked the lifeguards on jet skis for the warning and continued surfing.

The state hired a fisherman to set baited hooks just outside of Laniākea's surf line that night in hopes of hooking the culprit, just as they might capture and destroy a rogue elephant or aggressive bear on land.

Rick was on the docks at Hale'iwa Harbor the next day when the fisherman hauled in a trio of tigers. Another fisherman came to the docks carrying a chunk of Rick's surfboard he had found floating in Mokolēi'a, five miles west of Laniākea.

While one fisherman held open the bloody jaws of a fourteen-foot female tiger shark, the other slipped in the surfboard chunk. It fit as perfectly as a custom-made denture.

Rick couldn't force himself to touch the carcass, and he was especially unwilling to put his hands near the mouth. "I just got an eerie feeling like the thing was still alive and it was kind of like a horror movie and it was going to jump up at me," Rick explained.

"It was a sad thing to see, an animal like that dead, as big as it was. And it was scary to realize that we are sharing the ocean with things this big. I believe there is a shark problem, but I don't think shark hunts are the solution."

Four years later, Rick's life returned to normal after his narrow escape from a ghastly death. Mostly normal, that is. He still surfs at Laniākea, and he even surfs areas with a serious sharky reputation, such as the isolated coastline of Mokolēi'a. "Talk about sharks on my mind," he says of his surf adventures.

He surfs all the time, but not alone. Never alone again. "As soon as you're out there alone, it comes right back. Don't give up the board, I always say."

He heads out to the North Shore after work and always takes time to round up somebody to surf with. "I don't like to go out in the water

even if it's crowded unless I have somebody to surf with.

"I've never felt that spooky feeling, except sometimes in the evenings. My friends try not to leave me out last. If we agree on going in, I try to go in early but I always end up out there last in the dark." There are other times he gets tingles, an intuitive warning that the sharks are hunting nearby. The places where the special feelings creep up on his subconscious are Laniākea and Leftovers, where bodyboarder Bryan Adona disappeared while bodyboarding nine months before Rick was attacked.

He wondered how he would react if he encountered another shark while surfing, and got his answer several years after he was hit. He and a buddy spotted a six-foot reef shark while they were surfing at China Walls, off O'ahu's southeast shore. The sleek shark headed straight for Rick and passed right under his surfboard, and the two friends quickly stroked for shore.

The memory of the attack has retreated to a dim, dark corner of Rick's mind and only comes forward during special occasions. After a perfect day of surfing with some friends visiting from Humboldt, California, the conversation turned to sharks.

The cold, dark ocean off Humboldt is prime hunting territory for the dreaded great white shark, and his friends were regaling Rick with tales of the heavy water they surf there. One of their friends had been attacked by a great white, and they were all still dealing with it mentally.

"I think there is something about a great white in the cold, dark water," says Rick. "Nothing could be as bad as that. The conditions here in Hawai'i are so beautiful, it's calming."

Rick joined in the spirit of the evening by recounting his attack, and brought out his surfboard and the huge chunk bitten out by the shark and passed them around.

But mostly, he is happy to let those memories remain buried. You try not to let it paralyze you. I get in the water whenever I can. That's all I do is get in the water. That part about it goes away quickly.

"There are plenty of other things to let bother you. The last thing I want to do is worry about a fish." ▲

A Perfect Day Ruined

Jonathan Mozo awoke before dawn and quietly slipped from bed, careful not to disturb his wife. He was eager to surf that morning and he didn't want to get involved in another emotional exchange.

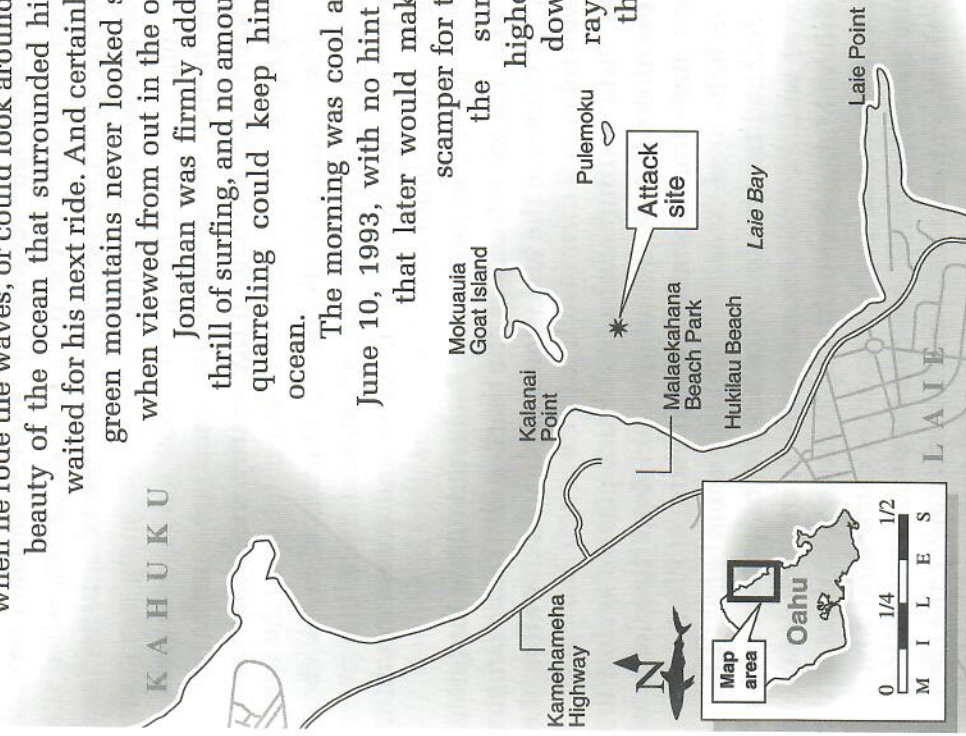
His young bride just didn't understand why Jonathan would leave her and their six-month-old son Makana to go surfing with his friends. They had a happy life together, and Jonathan's business management studies at Brigham Young University-Hawai'i were going well.

If only she could feel the surge of elation that overtook him when he rode the waves, or could look around and see the beauty of the ocean that surrounded him while he waited for his next ride. And certainly the jagged green mountains never looked so lovely as when viewed from out in the ocean.

Jonathan was firmly addicted to the thrill of surfing, and no amount of tearful quarreling could keep him from the ocean.

The morning was cool and clear on June 10, 1993, with no hint of the heat that later would make everyone scamper for the shade as the sun climbed higher to beam down its fierce rays and sizzle the land.

Jonathan and his



his finger there and I flex my foot and it pinches his finger.”

Nowadays Jonathan is busy establishing his studio as a fashion photographer, and the demands of family and work keep him from the waves. But he makes time to get in the ocean when the waves are especially good. “It’s a good part of my life, it keeps things in balance.

“Everyone has something like that. I feel sorry for those who don’t have something as good as surfing.”

The attack is way in the past, just another interesting story that he can tell to amaze strangers. “If anything, I think it happened for a good reason. It put things into perspective for me. Every cloud really does have a silver lining.” ▲

The Reluctant Hunter

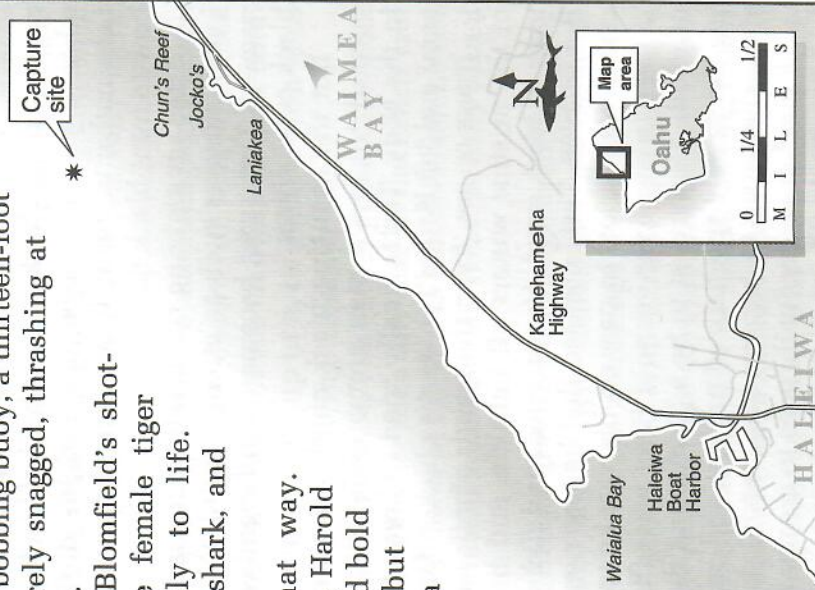
The smell of gunpowder quickly overpowers the sweet scent of the ocean. The blast of the shotgun is deafening, a shocking disruption of a beautiful, sunny Hawaiian winter morning in 1995 on O’ahu’s North Shore.

With each fiery roar of the shotgun, a Remington twenty-gauge Magnum load rips a chunk of flesh from the hooked shark and showers the boat’s crew and passengers with blood and salt water.

More than a mile and a half toward shore across the glassy ocean, surfers are enjoying the perfect, peeling waves at the famous surf spot Laniākea, blissfully unaware of the death struggle of a fourteen-foot female tiger shark, its mouth firmly hooked and its tail hopelessly tangled in the stout fishing line. On a nearby bobbing buoy, a thirteen-foot male tiger shark is securely snagged, thrashing at the end of its fishing line.

Seven times Harold Blomfield’s shot-gun roars, and still the female tiger shark clings tenaciously to life. Harold doesn’t hate the shark, and neither does he fear it.

It wasn’t always that way. Back in the early sixties, Harold was the most talented and bold member of a small but rugged band of scuba divers who pioneered Hawai’i’s black coral industry, which now generates yearly sales of more than \$15 million.



They used the old whaling town of Lahaina on Maui as their headquarters because of its prime location. The strong current that courses through the 'Au'au Channel between Maui and Lāna'i brings a constant supply of fresh, clean ocean water that helps produce the finest black coral in all of Hawai'i.

The work is demanding and exceedingly dangerous, but the lure of making up to one thousand dollars for forty pounds of the rare and beautiful black coral is irresistible.

Humans just weren't designed to descend to two hundred feet and deeper in the ocean. Nitrogen builds up in the blood, and if a diver doesn't decompress slowly as he surfaces, to give the nitrogen a chance to disperse, he can black out and drown, or suffer the hideously painful and paralyzing bends as the nitrogen gas expands in his muscles and joints.

The seductive black coral can lure even the most experienced and daring divers to their doom, such as big-wave daredevil surfer Jose Angel, who died while searching for black coral off Lahaina in 1976.

But Harold was legendary for his safe, successful diving and always brought back the best haul of black coral. So it was no surprise when a young stranger dropped his duffel bag on the floor of a Lahaina bar in the early sixties and demanded that Harold teach him how to hunt black coral.

After scrutinizing the brash young lad, Harold agreed. Timothy LeBallister was such an attentive pupil that he soon earned the nickname of Turtle and became a solid member of the tight-knit Lahaina black coral divers.

But the haunting black coral can claim even the best. Years of deep diving ages a man prematurely as many small incidents linger in the body. Turtle finally tried to break free from the lure of black coral and left Hawai'i to start a chicken farm in Oregon.

It was no use. Even thousands of miles away, Turtle heard the call of the pristine waters off Lahaina, and he could see the glistening reefs of black coral. He returned, and did well for a few more years. But in 1996, Turtle sensed that he was nearing the end of his diving career. So he tried to pass on his vast knowledge to his son, Beau.

The twenty-four-year-old Beau was afflicted with the impatience of youth. He wanted to be a black coral diver now, without completing the years of specialized training and one thousand hours of experience necessary to become a successful deep-sea diver.

A good diver gradually goes to greater depths over at least a year to adjust to the physical stress of nitrogen buildup, but Beau took it

too fast. While diving with his father one day, Beau blacked out. When Turtle saw his son on the bottom, unconscious, his years of experience were overpowered by a father's love for his child.

He dove down to 250 feet and snatched his son in his arms, then sped to the surface. The nitrogen gas that filled his blood never had a chance to dissolve, and father and son died painfully.

But such a horrible death held no special terror for Harold. He loved the freedom of diving deep beneath the troubled world on the surface. At 250 feet, he entered another realm, a beautiful, peaceful world where whales and dolphins cavorted and giant *ulua* and other fish swam gracefully by.

The lure of the black coral was enough to keep Harold diving deep forever. But he also loved his undersea world, where the water filtered out the reds and yellows and left the cool colors of the spectrum to bathe everything in blue and violet until objects finally faded and vanished into gray, and then total black.

"It gives you a mellow feeling," says Harold. "It's so beautiful that you're tempted to stay down there forever." With enough nitrogen in his system, a diver can have the sensation of being drunk, and irrational ideas seem entirely plausible. Some divers have begun to shed their dive gear to swim more freely with the fishes, only to be restrained by friends.

Black-coral divers are especially susceptible to nitrogen narcosis. Sometimes while cruising through vast deserts of sand and rock known as the rolly doldrums, a diver will see an oasis of black coral in the distance. When he swims wildly up to it, he realizes with keen disappointment that his mind was playing tricks on him.

But Harold's underwater haven wasn't an entirely peaceful world. Harold had a dread of sharks greater than any fear of the bends and other hazards of diving deep. Most of the sharks Harold encountered were merely pests that he treated with caution. What he truly feared were the tiger sharks.

With their blunt snout, lifeless gray eyes and huge mouth bristling with those wicked, serrated teeth, tiger sharks are exactly what Harold figured Satan would use as his watchdogs.

The way tigers propel themselves with a sinuous side-to-side motion is especially creepy. And they are adventuresome eaters, gobbling almost anything they encounter, alive or dead. Lacking hands to complement their keen eyesight, extraordinary sense of smell, and ability to detect electrical impulses and vibrations of swimming creatures, tiger sharks explore objects with their mouth.

To a human, an exploratory bite can be as fatal as a determined attack. To make matters worse, tiger sharks are incredibly cunning hunters. They know precisely the limits of human vision underwater and will hover on the edge of visibility as they decide whether the human is a potential meal.

Tiger sharks also constantly maneuver to get into the blind spot directly behind a diver so they can approach unobserved. And they are distressingly stealthy for such a large animal.

Spearfishermen hunting for prey back to back, continuously scanning the water with extreme vigilance, often are startled when a fifteen-foot tiger shark appears suddenly beside them.

Harold was constantly approached by the six- to eight-foot juvenile tiger sharks that seemed to take a perverse pleasure in darting at him and veering away at the last second, messing around with him like a gang of teen-age punks. But he found that much like human hoodlums, if he conked the biggest one on the snout, the others would take off.

Unfortunately, that tactic doesn't work on the adult tigers. Sharks are the jet fighters of the ocean, and a full-grown tiger can go from a lazy cruise to full speed with a flick of its tail. Its body is a solid muscle that can ram a human and rupture organs, and its denticle-covered hide can scrape the skin of a person with the ruthless efficiency of eighty-grit sandpaper on a belt sander.

Its fearsome teeth and powerful jaws can saw through bones and rip deadly chunks out of creatures much tougher than soft humans. Harold preferred the slow agony of the bends to the horror of a shark attack, and continually scanned the ocean for the silhouette of his personal nightmare, a giant shark that could swallow him whole.

And then one day, in the deepest, darkest water at the bottom of the ocean, Harold's life was changed forever. Down where the life-giving sunlight has been filtered by the water, leaving only a dim memory of the comforting light, Harold was searching for an oasis of black coral at about 240 feet.

Off in the murky distance, a shadow moved. Alarmed, Harold abandoned his search for coral and devoted his full attention to the moving shape. He prayed that it was a dolphin or young whale separated from its pod. But the sinuous motion as its whole body moved in long, lazy strokes told him that his prayer was in vain.

His concentration was so intense that he forgot to breathe as the creature came slowly closer, becoming increasingly sinister as it approached. It was a shark, probably a tiger shark judging from the

maddeningly confident way it was cruising, secure in the knowledge that it was a predator without peer and had nothing to fear from any other creature.

Its head moved constantly from side to side as it searched for something to eat. The beast was heading straight for Harold, and as it neared he began to get a sense of how big it was. Its gray body and off-white belly confirmed that it was a tiger shark, the biggest Harold had ever seen, at least twenty feet.

His worst nightmare was coming true, as with strong strokes of its powerful tail, the tiger shark slowly swam toward the paralyzed diver. Still holding his breath, Harold noted that the creature's huge mouth could devour him with enough room that he wouldn't even scrape against the horrible ring of teeth.

The mental image sent him into a panic. Harold began breathing in short, fast breaths as he looked around desperately for someplace to hide from this hideous demon of death and agent of destruction. Unfortunately, he was smack in the middle of the rolly doldrums, surrounded by sand without even a rock to cower behind.

Staring toward the surface, he saw the sun shining faintly, offering the mocking hope of safety. But it would be excruciating suicide to sprint for the surface from this depth. He watched in frustration as a cascade of his air bubbles danced upward, taking the path that he dared not follow.

Amazingly, a sense of calm came over Harold. There was nothing he could do to prevent the shark from eating him, and a cosmic awareness replaced his terror. He could see the scene as if from a distance, and he realized what a little speck he was in the grand scheme of things. His life seemed insignificant when weighed against the natural order of life.

Harold relaxed as he gazed in awe at the magnificent creature. Fear turned to respect as he noticed how effortlessly the mammoth shark glided through the water. Just when he expected the creature to open its huge jaws and swallow him, the shark stopped.

Dead in the water, the shark examined Harold from ten feet away, its gray eye scanning his body from head to foot, repeatedly returning to gaze into his eyes.

Like most men who wrest a hard living from the sea, Harold chooses his words carefully and uses them sparingly. But he says with conviction that at the bottom of the ocean as he looked into the eyes of what he was certain was the agent of his death, he felt a connection.

The shark observed him, he observed the shark, and he sensed that they respected each other. And the shark let Harold keep his life. With one last long, soul-searing look, it swam slowly away, still hunting, its head moving side to side as it searched for food. And as it moved off into the distant wall of blackness, the great shark took with it all the fear Harold previously felt for sharks.

It wasn't sharks or other dangers of the deep that weaned Harold from black coral diving. It was the bottom line. When the market for black coral dried up in the late seventies, Harold moved back to O'ahu to catch crabs, lobsters and reef fish.

During a lifetime of diving and fishing in Hawai'i, Harold has found that most of the fearful people he has taken down to watch sharks swimming free in the ocean are quickly overcome by the beauty of the sight.

Harold recognizes the important role sharks play in maintaining a healthy marine ecosystem, and in appreciation he feeds them by hand.

Galapagos and tiger sharks know the sound when Harold fires up his Maui-built, twenty-four-foot boat named *Huki*. With the Jolly Roger and Hawai'i state flag snapping in the breeze, the sharks follow as he departs Hale'iwa Harbor and motors out to isolated Mokoléi'a.

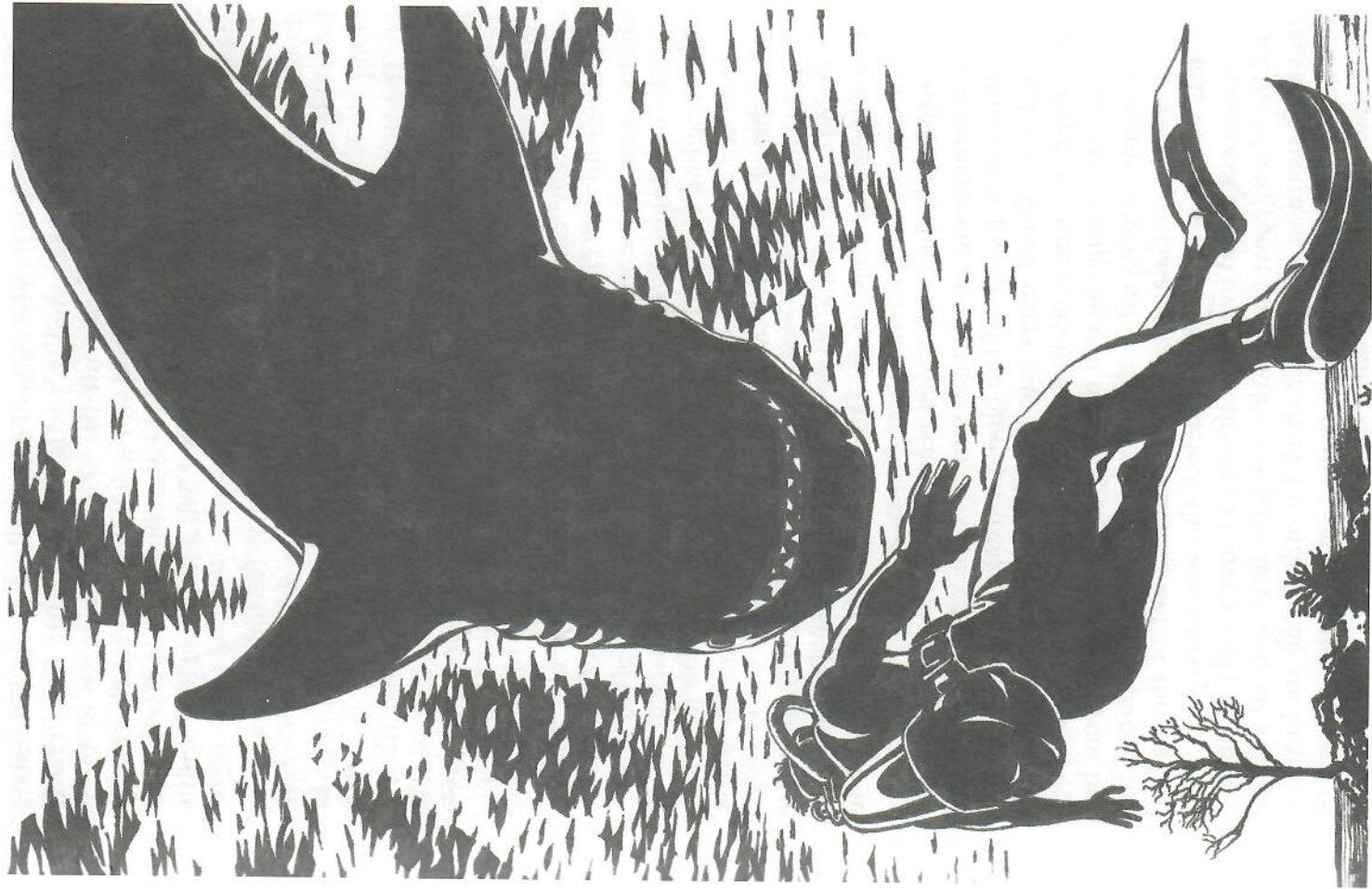
The sharks swim up like a pack of tame dogs, and Harold and crew member Tash Nakamura slip them savory tidbits as they pull up their lobster and crab traps. They even have names for the sharks—Curly, with its drooping dorsal fin, the fierce Keaka, and the others.

But some days, they kill sharks, always with regret. Although Harold doesn't fear sharks, many other people do. Now that green sea turtles are protected by law, their numbers are increasing, while fish are increasingly scarce due to overfishing.

The tiger sharks are going after the more numerous prey, and because surfers, divers and turtles share the same near-shore waters, the humans encounter hunting sharks with frightening frequency.

Although humans are seldom attacked and rarely killed by sharks in Hawai'i, logic vanishes when surfers see a fifteen-foot tiger shark rip off a sea turtle's fins, toss the 250-pound creature in the air and gulp it down. Suddenly, the surfers are convinced the sharks will devour them next.

Harold's son is a professional surfer, his brother is a surfer and their friends are surfers. When enough surfers call Harold with reports of sharks chasing them from the waves, he gives up two days of fishing to set lines baited with *aku* heads in the trouble areas.



Harold figures if these calls of distress were going to the state, officials might feel pressured to instigate a full tiger shark eradication program that could throw off the ecological balance of the ocean. Tigers feed on smaller sharks, and when the state eradicated tigers in great numbers decades ago, the population of smaller sharks skyrocketed, wiped out many of the reef fish and left anglers with empty hooks.

When the surfers and divers hear that Harold has hauled a few monster tiger sharks from their favorite areas, they are comforted, believing that they are now safe, when they were actually safe all along.

The night before, Harold and Tash set their baited lines a mile from shore off the popular surf spots of Laniākea, Chun's Reef and Jocko's. It's a beautiful winter morning, the ocean is a glassy sheet, and from the boat the fishermen can hear the happy shouts of surfers riding perfect waves.

Before they came upon the hooked fourteen-foot female tiger shark, Harold and Tash hauled aboard the head of a Galapagos shark, all that remained after a larger predator dined on the captured shark.

His ears ringing from the shotgun blasts and weary of battling the still-struggling female, Harold secures her tail to the boat to let her bleed to death. The fresh bullet holes add a grisly element to the scars on her dorsal fin, souvenirs of rough mating.

Incredibly, a video cameraman who has been filming the drama insists on going in the water for close-up shots. He asks Harold if other sharks ever come around the hooked sharks, and with a wicked grin, he replies with a terse "Sometimes."

Undaunted, the cameraman recruits his friend to guard his back against intruders as he plunges into the cool, clear blue water to capture the perfect footage of the bloody carnage.

While his friend peers into the distance, staring fiercely for any hint of approaching predators, the cameraman focuses on the pathetic image of the huge female dangling helpless, blood from her shotgun wounds drifting off in the current. The blood is joined by head-sized chunks of Galapagos shark tumbling out of the tiger shark's mouth, evidence of a last meal before she was hooked.

A sense of dread overtakes the two as they slowly begin to realize that the blood, meat and shark's struggles have created a dinner bell that will summon every tiger shark for miles. The are in the middle of a huge chum bucket, and the realization gives them a burst of energy as they scramble onto the deck of the *Huki*.

Seconds after they lift their last toe out of the water, a fifteen-foot tiger shark swims up to aggressively investigate the scene, excited by the blood and meat and eager for a meal. Weak-kneed after their close call, the pair vow to never again be so stupid as they watch the new arrival bump into the boat and nibble the hooked female.

Had they delayed a few more seconds, they might be fighting for their lives. Such gruesome thoughts vanish as Harold orders everyone to quickly lash the female to the side of the boat to prevent the free shark from stealing his prize.

The *Huki* cruises through the ocean slowly, heading for Hale'iwa Harbor several miles away. Heads turn as surfers riding the waves at Hale'iwa check out Harold's catch, and a crowd gathers inside the harbor to catch a glimpse of Harold's grim cargo.

Amazingly, the shark is still alive, though no longer struggling. Harold ties the female to a pier piling until he can haul in the thirteen-foot male and trailer the two tiger sharks to the Windward O'ahu town of Lāi'e. There the Samoans and Tongans will butcher them, send some of the prized meat to their relatives in California, and savor the rest themselves.

As they carve up the sharks, they discover that the female was carrying two dozen pups, a revelation that disturbs Harold. He hates to see any ocean creature killed in vain.

No part of the adult sharks is wasted. Harold gives the teeth and skin to friends or uses them to barter for goods and services. He and Tash have sacrificed two days of fishing, in return for an occasional case of beer from surfers thankful for their newfound sense of security.

"They are beautiful animals," Harold says, gazing out to sea. "It's a shame they attack people." ▲

"The pressure on his back and legs was intense. It didn't feel as if he was being held by an animal, more as if he was being crushed between two cars. To his horror, he could feel the shark moving side to side in a swimming motion that carried the creature straight out of the water with Rob clamped sideways in its jaws, pushing him back and forth as it wriggled."

Diver Rob Revstock survived this terrifying encounter with a shark, as did the fifteen others whose close encounters with the ocean's most feared predator are told in *Shark Bites: True Tales of Survival*. Anyone who ever goes into the ocean will identify with the horror these men and women felt as they battled sharks in the waters of Hawai'i, the Marshall Islands, Fiji, Tahiti, and California.

But this is more than a book about shark attacks. As terrifying as these stories are, they are also educational—and inspirational. If you've ever asked yourself, "Why do sharks attack people? What would I do if a shark attacked me? If I even saw a shark up close, could I ever go in the water again?" this book provides some answers in the examples of the courageous men and women whose stories are told by surfer, journalist, and author Greg Ambrose.

Greg Ambrose surfs daily in the waters of Hawai'i. As the ocean reporter for the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, author of *Surfer's Guide to Hawaii*, and co-author of *Memories of Duke: The Legend Comes to Life*, he has shared his love of the sea with thousands of readers.



Author Greg Ambrose, far right, rubs a tiger shark's belly to put it in a trancelike state. University of Hawai'i researchers will slice open its abdominal wall to insert a transmitter into the shark's body cavity, then sew the incision closed. Recaptured sharks have shown that the wounds have healed without complication. Photo by Carl Meyer.

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