

ACTIVITY: Diving

CASE: GSAF 1984.09.15

DATE: September 15, 1984

LOCATION: The attack took place off Pigeon Point, between Half Moon Bay and Santa Cruz, California, USA

37°11.6'N; 122°24.5'W.

NAME: Omar Conger

DESCRIPTION: He was a 28-year-old male, and was wearing a black wetsuit.

WEATHER: The sky was overcast.

SEA CONDITIONS: The sea was calm with less than a metre underwater visibility.

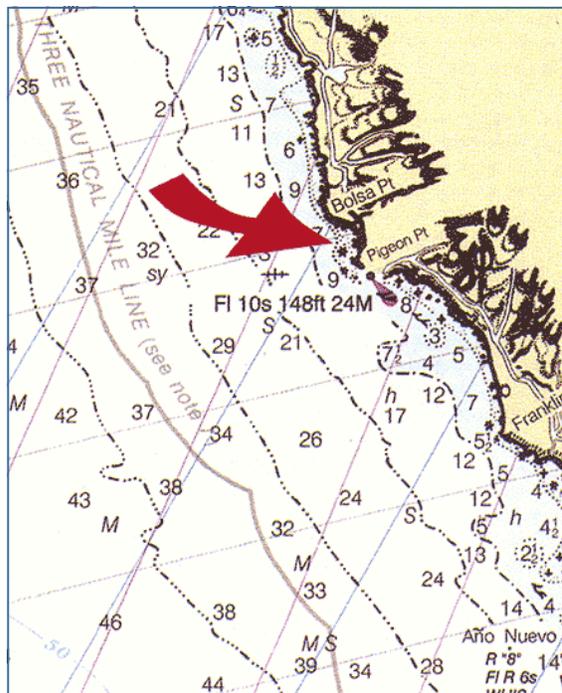
MOON PHASE: Waning Gibbous, 77% of the moon was illuminated.

ENVIRONMENT: The ocean floor was rocky and reef-like, with short kelps and sea grasses covering the majority of the substrate.

DISTANCE FROM SHORE: 150 metres

DEPTH OF WATER: Two fathoms

TIME: 08h30



NARRATIVE: Conger and his dive companion, Chris Rehm, were 0.4 km north of Pigeon Point. Conger and Rehm shared a blue-and-yellow surf mat. The two men had been in the water 20 to 30 minutes and had collected two or three abalone.

The divers were five metres apart, with Conger resting vertically in the water looking out to sea, toward the west. Rehm was holding onto the mat, facing north and watching his friend, when a “huge White Shark came up, grabbed him [Conger] from behind, and while shaking him violently, pulled him under the water. I never saw the shark before the attack,” Rehm told researchers Lea and Collier.

Within a few seconds the shark reappeared with its back completely out of the water, with Conger still in its mouth. Almost immediately upon surfacing, “like a big submarine,” the shark headed toward Rehm, releasing Conger when only a few metre away. Rehm swam to his friend, pulled him onto the dive mat, and headed for shore.

Upon reaching the safety of the beach, it was clear that Conger had died as a result of his injuries. The direction from which the attack came suggested that the shark must have swum directly under Rehm prior to attacking and mortally wounding Omar Conger. This was the second white shark attack from this recurring location.

INJURY: Fatal. The San Mateo County coroner determined the cause of death to be “exsanguination as the result of multiple shark bites. There were multiple lacerations to the dorsal and palmar surfaces of the hands, fingers and wrists ranging from 5 to 15 centimeters in length. There were numerous lacerations to both posterior thighs and

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buttocks, with the femoral vessels severed in both thighs.” The locations of the wounds suggest that the shark first grabbed Conger by both thighs, pulling him under the water. The injuries to the hands were probably the result of his trying to fend off the shark.

SPECIES: The wound measurements suggest a white shark, 4.5 to 5 metres in length, was involved in this incident..

SOURCES: Ralph Collier (2003), page 92
Shark Research Committee, http://www.sharkresearchcommittee.com/unprovoked_diver.htm

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Ralph Collier