

North Carolina Shark Attacks Project

Note: The following article describes a shark attack that occurred on August 22nd, 1995, at Wrightsville Beach in New Hanover County. This article appeared in *The Wilmington Star-News*, August 23rd, 1995.

Man gets 37 sutures after bitten by shark

By **ROGER FRIEDMAN**

Staff Writer

Scott Hall says he's going to stick to swimming pools for a while after his foot mistakenly became shark bait at Wrightsville Beach on Tuesday afternoon.

Several officials think Mr. Hall, a 23-year-old employee of Shell Island Resort, became North Carolina's 10th shark-bite victim in the past 90 years.

The Roanoke, Va., native received 39 stitches at Doctor's Urgent Care Centre — at a cost of nearly \$1,000 — after the fish sliced open his foot with razor-like teeth.

"I don't have any questions that it was a shark," said Dr. Ward Bennett, the doctor who sewed up Mr. Hall's right foot. He bases that on the size and appearance of the wound.

Mr. Hall and three friends were swimming Tuesday in waist-deep water between a sand bar and the beach near Johnnie Mercer's Pier. They noticed fish jumping out of



Staff photo: JAMIE

Scott Hall needed 39 stitches

the water near them and soon found the reason for the mullets' enthusiasm.

"We turned around and there's a shark with his fin sticking up out of

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the water, just like in the movies," said Kenny Beavers, one of Mr. Hall's friends.

Mr. Beavers, 28, and Gordon Evans, 23, pushed the shark away from them and made their way to the shore. The shark, estimated at about 6 feet, circled around to Mr. Hall and Rob Frappier, 24.

"He jumped on my back trying to get out of the thing's way," Mr. Frappier said. "I'd love to have a picture of our faces."

Mr. Hall, under mild sedation after being stitched up, had a slightly different view of the event.

"I was trying to push Rob and help him get out of the water," Mr. Hall said. "Then the . . . thing bit me. It probably thought my foot was his lunch."

Andy Wood, the education curator at the N.C. Aquarium at Fort Fisher, thinks at least part of that is a likely scenario.

The shark was chasing fish and saw splashing and flopping in the water, he said, and assumed it was an injured member of the school.

"I'm sure it was as much of a surprise to the shark as to the bather," Mr. Wood said. "Actually, it was probably more of a shock to the shark. The bather at least saw it first."

Without seeing the wound or having any other information, Mr. Wood couldn't identify what type of

shark was responsible.

"If it wasn't a hammerhead, it would be nearly impossible to identify the shark," he said. "There are a bunch of sharks with a nearly identical silhouette."

His best guesses for this incident were a black tip, bull or dusky shark.

He stressed that sharks do not go after people as part of their normal diet.

"This was a case of mistaken identity," he said. "Obviously he wasn't bent on dragging him out to sea and eating him."

Lifeguards on the beach thought the threat of another bite was minimal. After clearing the water for about a half-hour, lifeguard Mike Bennett and others allowed beachgoers to swim at their own risk, he said.

"It was a freak accident. It will probably never happen again," Mr. Bennett said.

But at least one swimmer would have preferred to know about the incident.

"If we'd have known there was a shark out there, there's no way we'd have gone in swimming," said Sherry Loftus of Wilmington.

Mr. Wood wasn't concerned about future effects for either Mr. Hall or Wrightsville Beach swimmers.

"There's no more of a threat to swimmers now. They just have to be aware when they're surrounded by a school of fish," he said. "As for (Mr. Hall), he'll have something to boast about, and he'll have the scars to prove it."