



North Carolina Shark Attacks Project

Note: The following article describes an attack by a great white shark attack that occurred in the late fall of 1883 in Beaufort Inlet near Fort Macon in Carteret County. The article appeared in the *Springfield Republican*, February 4th, 1884.

A DIVER'S ADVENTURE WITH A SHARK.

[From the Panama Herald]

Alfetto, the Spanish diver, who has been at work on the wreck of the *Atlanta*, near Morehead, thus speaks of an adventure had by him a few days ago: At the time I was at the bottom of the sea. I was just about to signal to be drawn up for a moment's rest, when I noticed a shadowy body moving at some distance above me and toward me. In a moment every fish had disappeared, the very crustaceans lay still upon the sand and the cuttle fish scurried away as fast as they could. I was not thinking of danger, and my first thought was that it was the shadow of a passing boat. But suddenly a feeling of terror seized me. I felt impelled to flee from something I knew not what. A vague horror seemed grasping after me, such as a child fancies when leaving a darkened room. By this time the shadow had come nearer and taken shape. It scarcely needed a glance to show me that it was a man-eater, and of the largest size. Had I signaled to be drawn up then it would have been certain death. All I could do was to remain still until it left. It lay off 20 or 25 feet, just outside the rigging of the ship, its body motionless, its fins barely stirring the water about its gills.

It was a monster as it was, but to add to the horror the pressure of water upon my head made it appear as if pouring flames from its eyes and mouth, and every movement of its fins and tail seemed accompanied by a display of fireworks. I was sure the fish was 30 feet long, and so near that I could see its double row of white teeth. Involuntarily I shrank closer to the side of the vessel. But my first movement betrayed my presence. I saw the shining eyes fixed upon me; its tail quivered as it darted at me like a streak of light. I shrank closer to the side of the ship. I saw it turn on one side, its mouth open, and heard the teeth snap as it darted by me. It had missed me, but only for a moment. The sweep of its mighty tail had

thrown me forward. I saw it turn, balance itself, and its tail quivered as it darted at me again. There was no escape. It turned on its back as it swooped down on me like a hawk on a sparrow. The jaws opened and the long, shining teeth grated as they closed on my metal harness.

It had me. I could feel its teeth grinding on my copper breastplate as it tried to bite me in two, for, fortunately, it had caught me just across the middle, where I was best protected. Having seized me it went tearing through the water. I could feel it bound forward at each stroke of its tail. Had it not been for my copper helmet my head would have been torn off by the rush through the water. I was perfectly conscious, but somehow I felt no terror at all. There was only a feeling of numbness. I wondered how long it would be before those teeth would crunch thorough and whether they would strike first into my back or my breast, when I thought of Maggie and the baby and wondered who would take care of them and if she would ever know what had become of me. All these thoughts passed through my brain in an instant, but in that time the connecting air tube had been snapped and my head seemed ready to burst with pressure, while the monster's teeth kept crunching and grinding away upon my harness. Then I felt the cold water begin to pour in and I heard the bubble, bubble, bubble, as the air escaped into the creature's mouth. I began to hear great guns and to see fireworks and rainbows and sunshine and all kinds of pretty things, then I thought I was floating away on a rosy summer cloud, dreaming to the sounds of sweet music. Then all became blank. The shark might have eaten me at his leisure, and I never would have been the wiser. Imagine my astonishment then when I opened my eyes on board this boat and saw you fellows around me. Yes, sir, I thought I was dead and ate up, sure.

Alfetto was found by his comrades a few minutes after the snapping of the line. He was picked up insensible, with several holes punched in the metallic part of his diving suit.