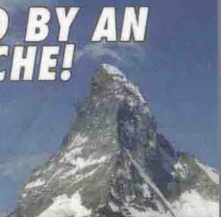


**SHOT IN
THE HEAD!**



**CRUSHED BY AN
AVALANCHE!**

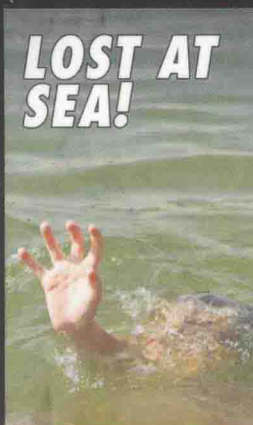


HOW IT FEELS TO BE ATTACKED BY A SHARK

**And Other Amazing
Life-or-Death Situations!**



**LOST AT
SEA!**



Michelle Hamer

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ATTACKED
BY A SHARK***

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HOW IT FEELS TO BE
ATTACKED
BY A SHARK

To Rob

I still can't believe my luck

INTRODUCTION

You're in the jaws of a huge animal, the life force is being squeezed from your body and its immense teeth are ripping open your flesh . . .

Your lungs are exploding; blood begins to seep from your eyes and you know that if you don't get air soon it'll be too late—then the world goes black . . .

There's an explosion, it feels as if you've been hit in the head with a baseball bat and then you realize that blood is pouring from a head wound—you've been shot . . .

REMEMBER THE SHOCKING footage of lawyer Gerald Curry being shot five times at point-blank range outside a courthouse in California which brought violence and horror right into our living rooms? Or how about the strength and determination of star surfer Bethany Hamilton who survived a vicious tiger shark mauling

INTRODUCTION

that saw her lose her arm. And how many of us wondered if we too could have had the same gritty courage and determination as Aspen mountaineer, Aron Roston who severed his own arm with a pocketknife to escape a 1000-pound boulder that was pinning him down.

All of these stories stay with us long after the headlines have faded because they are powerful reminders of what human beings can achieve when pushed to the limit; and that even in the face of unimaginable pain and suffering there is hope—and faith.

These sorts of intense experience happen to only a few of us, but capture all our imaginations.

If you've ever wanted to know just how it feels to experience some of life's more extreme moments then settle down and enjoy this collection of stories about ordinary folk who have achieved the extraordinary and who faced with crisis, were able to triumph.

These are the gripping, real-life stories of people who have teetered on the brink of death, faced life-changing experiences or found incredible inner resources will amaze and inspire you.

You'll be stunned by the sheer determination and endurance of each person in this book, and you'll wonder—what would I do in a similar situation? How would I cope? Could I be so brave? These stories will shake you to your core and remind you of the fragility

of life—and of humankind's amazing ability to overcome even the worst that life dishes up.

You'll read about such incredible experiences as:

- The man who felt the jagged teeth of a shark crack against the bones in his legs.
- The policeman who risked his life to save a child from a flooded drain.
- The construction worker who accidentally shot himself in the heart with his nail gun and sat waiting to die.
- The woman who was death rolled by a crocodile—three times—and came out of the experience with a whole new take on life.

These are truly awe-inspiring stories, but you'll also feel humbled by how these everyday people, faced with extraordinary situations, triumph over potential tragedy and then move on to integrate the experience into the rest of their life.

Then there are lighter stories to enthrall readers, including the animal psychic who tunes into pets and tells their owners what food they like and what they really think about wearing that rhinestone collar. And the stories that are almost too bizarre to be true, such as the young man who forces a cheeseburger down his

INTRODUCTION

throat as a party trick, but then finds himself suffocating and perilously close to death. Or the shocked man who wakes to find himself being studied by aliens.

This book is packed with dozens of compelling first-person accounts along with stunning true tales to get your adrenalin pumping, your heart racing and to restore your faith in the power of the human spirit. Read these accounts and you will be drawn into a confronting reality that few of us, fortunately, will ever have to experience

It's been my privilege to walk a short way with each of these people on their journey through life and to collect their thoughts and memories. I'm sure you'll enjoy getting to know them too.

HOW IT FEELS TO BE
ATTACKED
BY A SHARK

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*"When I felt his teeth hit my bone,
I thought he was going to break me."*

HOW IT FEELS TO BE ATTACKED BY A GREAT WHITE SHARK

ALLAN OPPERT, 46

I'VE BEEN DIVING all my life. I love diving for crays, or rock lobsters. If the weather's good, we dive once a week. I've seen sharks in the water before, but it has never been a problem. I'd been in twice that day and gotten some crays, but I thought I'd go back for these last three. I jumped in the water feetfirst; normally I go in headfirst, but for some reason that time I didn't. I stopped at about fifty-five feet (that's nearly seventeen meters), and as I looked at my depth gauge, I was sort of in a standing position, just to let everything thicken up—my blood and so on.

As I studied my gauge, I looked down below me, and that's when I saw the great white. I thought, "Oh my

God, here we go.” Right away, I thought, “What a big shark!” Turns out he was about fifteen feet. I wasn’t worried at that stage. I concentrated on slowing my heart right down. As soon as I identified what it was, I thought, “Well, a great white. If it comes at me, he’s going to try to knock me out,” because that’s what they do—and he did exactly that.

I took a couple of deep breaths and relaxed and relaxed—because they can hear your heartbeats, these sharks—and I just thought, “Well, if it comes, it comes, but I’ll be ready.” And sure enough he spun around on the bottom and came straight at me. I took a deep breath and pushed my guts out.

As he was coming up he just opened up his mouth and punched me with his nose. Then both my legs were in his mouth and there was just a huge force, a huge push. It felt like my dive bottle was trying to come through my back because he was pushing me up to the surface with tremendous force. He hit me in the stomach with his nose, then he bit down, and I could feel the bite go in on top of my knees and underneath my calf muscles.

It was just excruciating pain. I thought, “Hang on, he’s going to bite my legs in half, my knees are going to snap.” The pressure was just unbelievable. I felt his teeth sink in and go right to the bone. I could feel his teeth grinding against my bones. My legs were in his

mouth and he started thrashing me around like a rag doll—like a little fox terrier thrashing a rat.

It was the worst pain I've ever experienced—I couldn't wish that on anybody. That bite down on my knees and the bite at the back of my calf muscles—oh boy. You've got to remember that, in the bottom of its jaw, the great white has two sets of teeth. When I felt his teeth hit my bone, I thought he was going to break me. I was reaching for my knife to poke him in the eyes, but I think that as he came up, his teeth just sheared the knife off the side of my leg, and then when he bit down, I think he bit into my spear gun, which lay across my lap. I'd put a new head on that spear gun and this thing was really sharp.

My mask had come off the side of my face, so I pushed it back on and I'm looking down and thinking, "Whoa, what a big head." His eyeballs were, I think, about thirty-five inches apart. He was twisting me around so much that I could see the gills just down below his eyes and I could count them all. This probably lasted ten seconds—or ten hours, I couldn't say.

He had my legs in his mouth, and I was face-to-face with this massive head. I was thinking, "This is not happening, this is not happening, but yes, it's happening." I knew I was going to die, but I didn't think it would be at that particular moment. He let me go—he spat me out, I think. Once he'd bitten through the top

of my knees, he'd also bitten through my spear gun and bitten it in half, and three-quarters of it had gone down his gullet. My theory is that my knife was inside him already—and it was a brand new knife too—and my spear gun's down there too, and he probably thought, "This is no good," and he let go.

By then my BCD was full of air. That's my buoyancy control device, which you wear as part of your vest, but I can't remember pushing the button to inflate it. It's compulsory when you're diving deep. I was being pushed up to the surface. He let me go and I went blasting straight out of the water; I probably went the last three or four meters just flat out. My mask had slipped down over my chin on the way up, so you can imagine the force.

When I got to the surface, that's when I thought I was going to die. As I got there, just knowing what these great whites do, I knew I had about ten seconds before he came back to finish me. I was counting, "A thousand-and-one, a thousand-and-two . . ." waiting for him to come after me.

I yelled out to the boys on the boat to come and get me, that I'd been attacked by a shark. I was screaming at them. As soon as they began to pull me into the boat the shark came up underneath me. One of my friends yelled out, "Hurry up, hurry up, he's here! He's coming up!" They pulled me in, and he came straight up under-

neath our boat and straight across to the other boat and attacked the propeller. He was pretty mad; he had a go at the anchor as well. He wasn't very happy at all.

My injuries were pretty horrific. I knew how bad they were because I'd probed with my fingers. I had to put my kneecap back together. It was sticking up in the air so I pushed my fingers in there and pushed it down. I could feel the muscles and tendons spilling out onto my legs. The pain was extreme; it was worse when I bound my legs up with an old fishing jersey and a towel. That's when my feet started to go numb.

It took us about forty minutes to get back in. I was lucky not to bleed to death. I could feel the blood running down and pooling around my buttocks. There was plenty of blood. I was in the hospital for six days, and then it was about three weeks before I could walk again. I don't have any feeling in the back of my calves now, and sometimes my knees seize up.

I've been back diving several times since, but not at that depth. I will, though, because that's the only way to get the big crays, and I love getting them. But I'm more wary now; I tend to look around a bit more carefully. I look into the distance as far as I can. I never used to have a care in the world under the water, but now I'm more aware.