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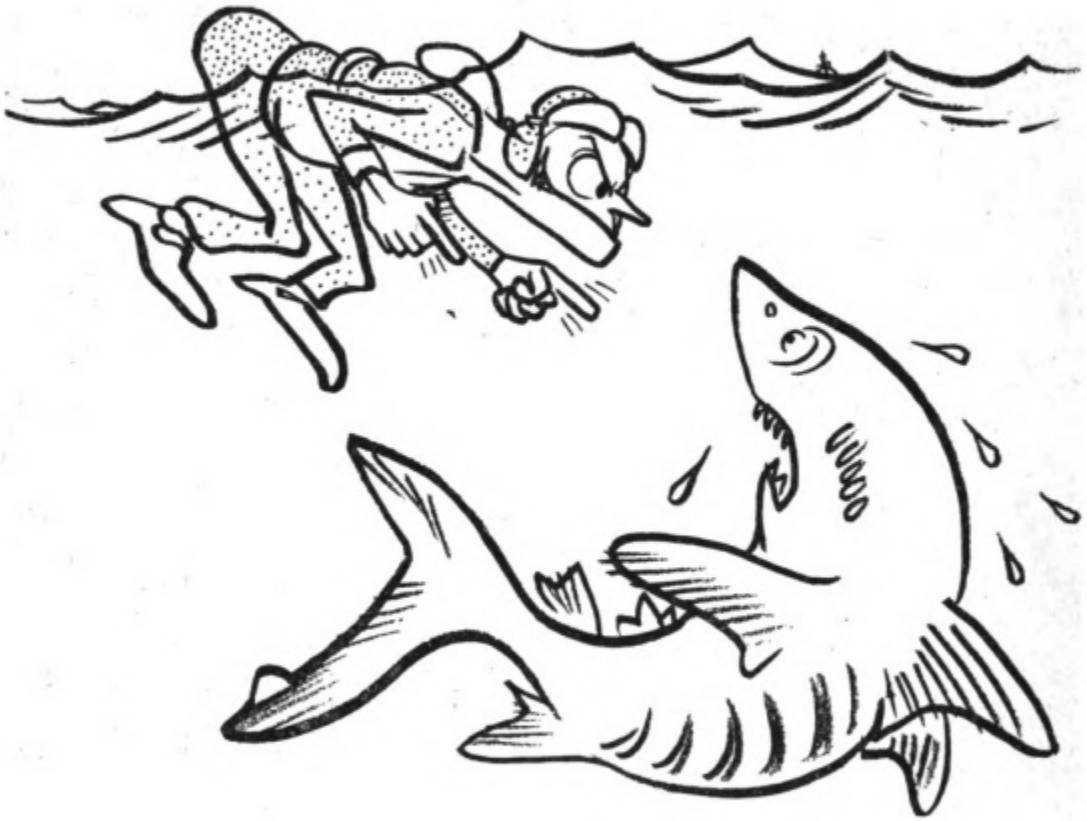

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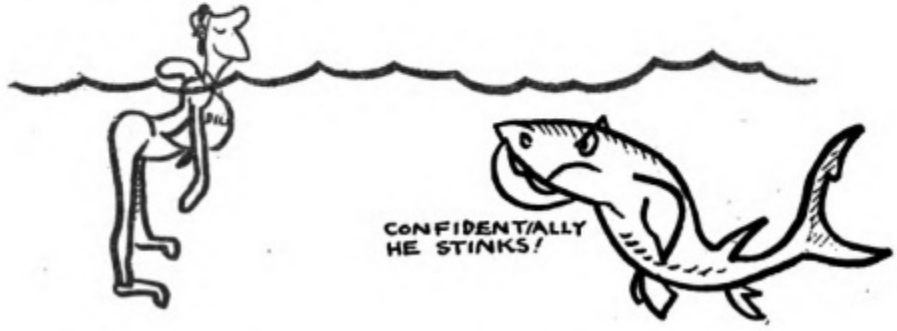
Circumstances under which humans have been attacked by sharks, when the details were known, indicate the attacks came about because of unusual conditions. In at least one case of attack, the shark was trapped in shallow water, and like any "cornered animal," was fighting his way out in the only way he knew. In another case, a bather had cut his foot on a shell and was bleeding profusely.

All shark men agree that fresh blood attracts sharks more readily than any other thing. As to how this attracts them, there is disagreement. The general belief is that the sharks have a *very keen sense of smell.*



Some experts declare the shark hunts his food exclusively by the sense of smell. Others think he hunts both by sense of smell and sense of sight. Science has yet to demonstrate that sharks can smell, in the way humans understand operation of the olfactory system. This gives rise to another "sense" idea: vibrations in the water.

There is a report—not authenticated—that a Marine Corps major in Guam frightened and drove off sharks by beating two small stones together under water. Whether the water vibrations caused by pounding the stones together frightened the sharks is not known. It is known with certainty, however, that sharks are easily frightened. It is possible that the mere presence of the officer frightened them off.

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his relative worthlessness, commercially, the ichthyologists and marine biologists have devoted comparatively little time to the study of his habits.

For years there has been some minor commercial activity to supply a small demand for shark hides. To this activity later was added the use of the carcass for making fertilizer. Even then the commerce was insufficiently important to attract a great deal of scientific research. Recently, however, it has been discovered that the shark liver is 200 times as rich in vitamins as the liver of the cod fish. With the current vitamin-taking fad, great impetus has been given to commercial shark fishing, and the large operating companies are employing their own scientists to study these outcasts of the sea. Now, shark hides are marketed as "sea leather," and no more do the carcasses make fertilizer; they turn up in grocery stores, salted and dried, as *bacalao*. And wholesome food it is, too. This is merely one version of "man bites dog."

The main hurdle to take concerning sharks—should you be adrift in a life jacket or rubber boat in shark-infested waters—is the mental hazard.

Nearly everybody, at one time or another, has heard horrible tales about sharks. Oddly enough, the farther inland one goes, the more horrendous these tales become.

These stories—usually cited as absolutely true, because the narrator knew a man who was a cousin of a witness—are the legitimate descendants of the tales the ancient sailors told of sea monsters, sea serpents, and seagoing dragons. Time and travel have tamed them down. Sharks do not devour entire ships at one gulp, as did the old sea dragon, nor do they cave in the ship's side with a swish of their tail, as did the sea serpent. But push a fourteenth century sailor overboard, and he'll land in the mouth of a monstrously big shark, every time.

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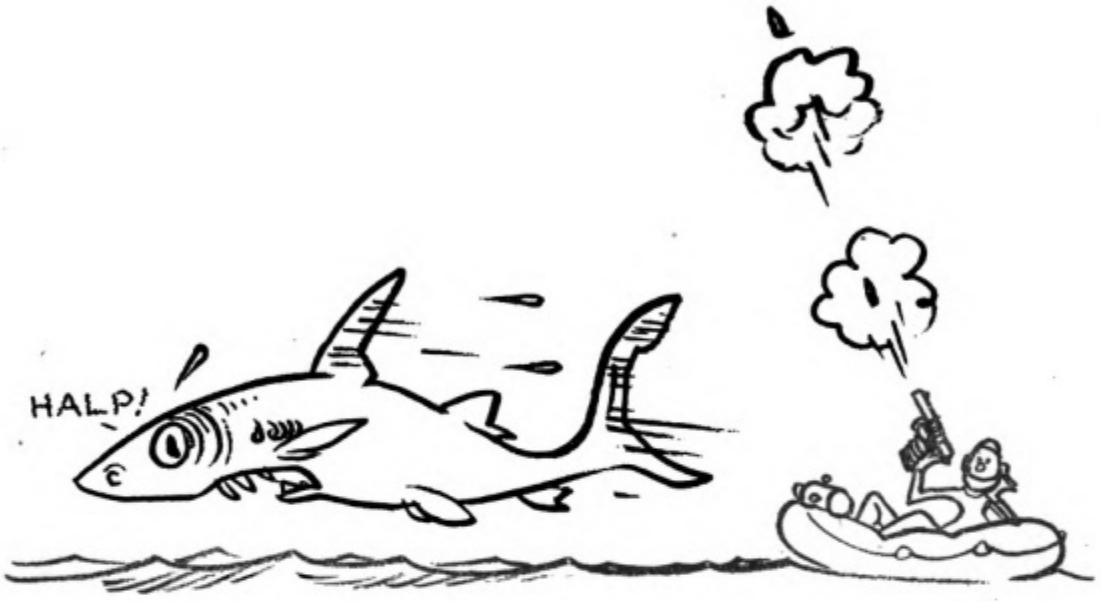
If you have your pistol and can do so, a shot may be fired—*but not into the shark*. The noise of the explosion will frighten the shark away. If you shoot the shark,



even though you may kill him, there will be blood in the water, and blood always attracts all the sharks in the vicinity.

Needless to say, if you should be wounded, all shark men agree the safest thing to do is staunch the flow of blood as soon as you disengage the parachute. That action will be your best protection.

The idea of hitting a shark on the nose with your fist or whatever weapon you may have, has been tried—according to some sources with success. In the one case reported, the shark swam away, immediately. However, sponge fishermen, who carry a metal hook for removing sponges from their moorings on the bottom, purposely avoid striking sharks. "The shark is liable to wheel about and slap you with his tail," they point out. This is not a case of the shark fighting back; it merely is the case of a rapid exit.

If a big shark should attack you, you are not altogether helpless. Your most important defensive weapon in this case, is your human intelligence. Keep your wits about you, and think—and act—fast.

In spite of the fact that honey bees and step-ants seem to have their social existence

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Killing the shark, naturally, will get blood in the water, and probably will attract other sharks to that spot. Get away from it as quickly as you can.

Admittedly your chances of whipping an excited shark in the water—unless you are properly armed and trained for just that—may not be 100 percent. But it has been done, and your chances of doing it and surviving are greater than they would be if you did not try it. Remember that the shark strikes with his mouth opened wide, and his vision blocked. If you can avoid his mouth by moving a foot or so out of his path, it is a miss for the shark, and a temporary reprieve for you.

If you can attach yourself to him by grabbing a fin, when he turns for another attack, you aren't there; you are riding with him, behind his mouth and out of danger from his teeth. Hold tight and hang on as long as you can without drowning yourself. In the meantime, after missing his target, the shark may lose his viciousness and become his usual cowardly self again.

Another fish that is getting a reputation among the fiction writers is the barracuda. He is a native of tropical and subtropical waters. He sometimes attains a length of 8 feet, is swift in the water, and reputedly vicious. A few years ago, it became very stylish to blame all the man-killing tales on the barracuda instead of

the shark. His reputation became one of evil, almost over night. There are authenticated instances of a barracuda's slashing a swimmer, but these, like the shark attacks, are not nearly as numerous as they are sensational.

If it makes any difference after the biting is done, it is easy to tell whether a man was bitten by a shark or a barracuda by the shape of the wound. A shark leaves a semicircular jagged wound, whereas the barracuda bite is said to be as straight as a surgeon's incision.

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