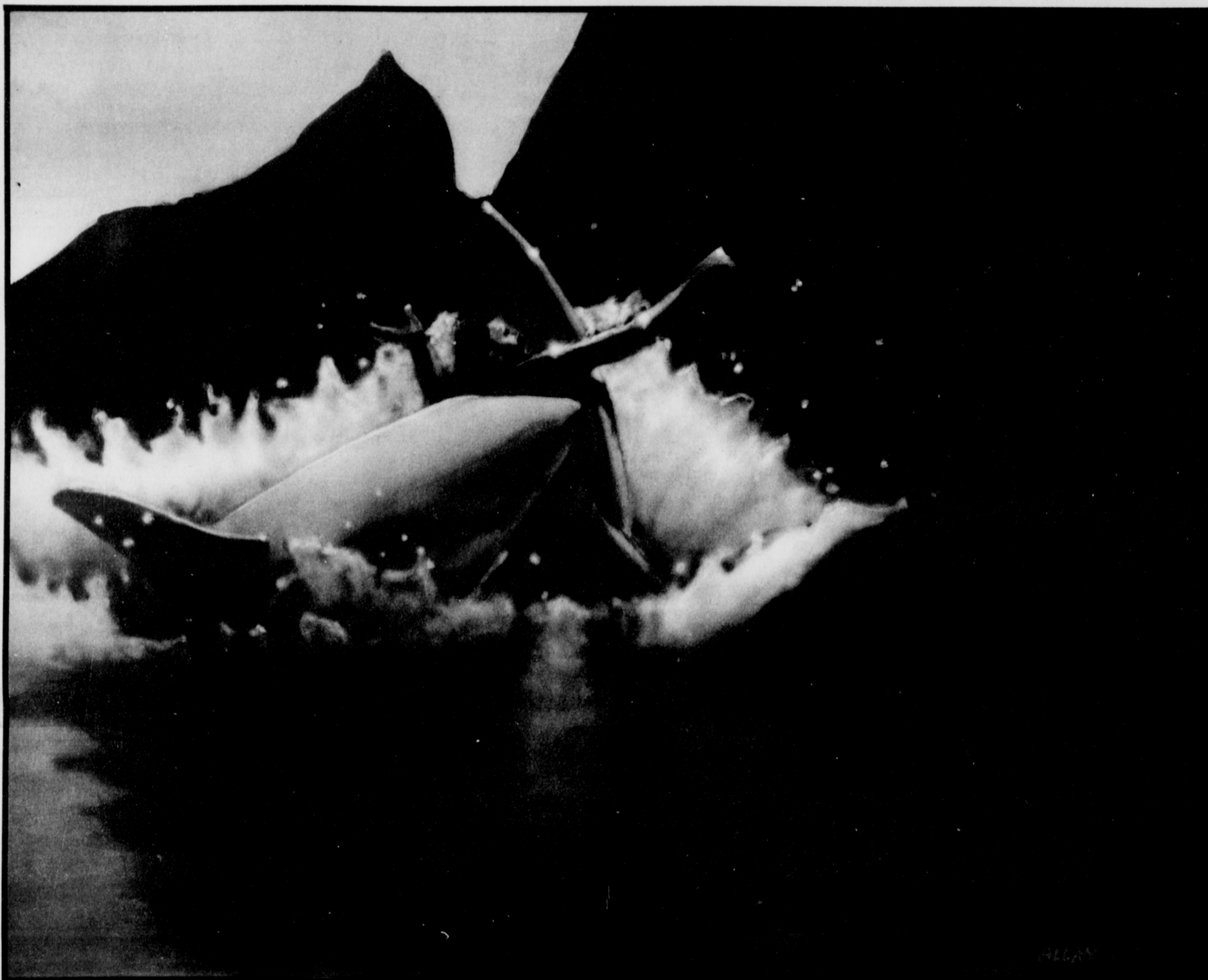




THE OREGON STORY



Allan Gibbons

The Great White Shark

Three years ago, on November 27, 1979, Kenny Doudt, a twenty-eight year old carpenter from Seaside, was surfing near Haystack Rock in Cannon Beach when he was attacked by a Great White Shark. It was the first time in recorded history that a great white had seriously assaulted a human off the Oregon coast. The attack lasted only a few seconds and left Doudt with a massive wound from which he has fully recovered. He was recently interviewed in Eureka, California for a CBS special, "Science Times," which will air early next year. TV Guide of Great Britain has requested an interview. He is currently writing a book and a screenplay about the shark attack. He is also surfing again.

by Kenny Doudt

It was a classic November day at Cannon Beach. The clouds were high and it was not too sunny. I was staying in Seaside with Jack Bird. We had checked the waves at Seaside but the wind was wrong. So we drove the fifteen minutes south to Cannon Beach. After looking at the surf we decided to try our luck near Haystack Rock.

Jack and I took our surfboards out of the car, got into our wetsuits and ran up the beach to the north side of the rock. Jack was in the water before I was. After slipping on a pair of gloves I started paddling through the rip next to the rock. I caught three or four waves and was

enjoying the sun and water. The water seemed chilly, which was nothing new. The temperature was about thirty five degrees Fahrenheit that day, and the water was about fifty-two degrees.

Five of us were surfing. I looked over at Steve Absher, and said: "The next good wave that comes in, I'm going to get it." A good wave came in and I surfed it in. Then I turned around and started paddling out for another one.

When a surfer is paddling out he usually travels as fast as he can to avoid getting hit by a breaking wave. I do anyway. I have been surfing for sixteen years. I was thinking of getting out past the breakers when the shark hit.

I never saw it coming. It came from my left side and its jaws sandwiched me onto the fiberglass and foam surfboard. The attack was so sudden and quick that I was amazed and bewildered. I heard the shark leave the water and then it was on me. It was a fourteen foot great white shark and it weighed about three thousand pounds. Later, scientists told me that the shark was probably female, as females are usually more aggressive.

The first thing the shark tried to do was take me underwater. It submerged me two feet deep instantly and attacked while my left arm was above my head. If the shark had hit a split second earlier or later, it would have ripped my arm off. Then I would not have been able to paddle into shore.

The shark could not keep me under for more than a few seconds because of the buoyancy of the surfboard. It started swimming with me

while turned on its right side with the board in its mouth. The shark had me out of the water from my waist up, and it flayed me from side to side.

Steve Absner had seen the shark attack, and he started paddling toward me as fast as he could. He was about ten yards away when we looked each other straight in the eyes. I remember thinking that he was the last person I was ever going to see.

I swung my arms at the shark, which did not seem to phase it at all. Only the board kept the shark from ripping my whole side away. The first thing I heard when the shark bit me was my board and ribs go crunch. A great white that size has about fifteen thousand pounds per square inch of pressure in its bite.

Then, just as quickly as it had grabbed me, the shark let go. It just opened its mouth and I was free. The entire attack had lasted only about twenty seconds, which was time enough for my life to flash in front of me. I thought the shark was going to bite me in half. It had held me in its jaws from the middle of my armpit to the middle of my buttocks, and about an inch from my backbone. As soon as the shark let go of me I stopped screaming.

The water around me was blood red. I saw my surfboard floating about ten feet away. I was preparing to die when I saw the board, and suddenly I just wanted to get to shore as quickly as possible. My adrenaline was flowing at its maximum. I reached the board and painfully mounted it on my belly. I started paddling as hard as I could. I paddled about thirty yards