

Surfer shares saga after shark bite

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



Cole Herrington suffered wounds to his foot, ankle and leg after he was attacked by a shark in December near the Cove.

Bystanders helped pull Herrington to safety and applied a field tourniquet to the injured leg to slow the bleeding. Medix took Herrington to Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria before he was transferred to a Portland trauma center for surgery. Herrington, 20, a 2018 graduate of Seaside High School, spoke in an interview about his experience, his career aspirations and his love of surfing.

Q: Can you talk about the incident?

A: A buddy hit me up asking me if I wanted to meet him and surf. I looked at the forecast and it looked like it had some fun waves. I walked out with my buddy, Travis (Cockroft), and another friend, Clarisse (Coventry), and saw a couple sets through. I caught a couple waves and about 45 minutes later, Travis caught the last waves in the set. I was waiting to roll in. I was sitting at the peak, so I was the last one out in the water. It happened so fast. I was just sitting there and then I was scrambling to get on my board. I don't really remember much from that point on. It's hard to recall. I think I just kind of blacked out in that moment. They say it came from behind me, jumped up and spun in the air. It must have turned me in the air and clamped down. Then it brought us into the water and the board popped up. Everybody thinks it was a great white shark. People behind me said they saw a little gray and white color of the shark and said it had 2 1/2-foot fins. I grabbed the board and my friend said it was the fastest he'd ever seen anybody paddle for the rocks. I was thinking, I don't want to die, asking God to help me get back to the rocks. Luckily, I caught the next wave. That kind of pushed me further in toward the rocks. I rode the white wash up onto the rocks. and crawled the best I could to get out past the white water. A couple of the other older local guys, seeing I needed help, ran up and grabbed me. My foot had a big gash and it was bleeding. A surfer grabbed the leash (of the surfboard) and put a stick underneath it to tighten the circulation. Clarisse called 911 and grabbed her tank top to help tie the stick down. That cut off the circulation really good. Then they just picked me up, my arm around my buddy, the other arm around my other buddy. They walked me until I met with the medics. The medics got me right before I got to a log. They put me on the log, cut my wetsuit off and put another tourniquet on to cut off circulation. From there on they put me on a stretcher and carried me to the ambulance.

Q: What was going through your head?

A: I was worried I was going to lose my leg. I tried to focused on breathing.



Cole Herrington at Legacy Emanuel Hospital in Portland.

Amy Powell



Surfers come to the aid of Cole Herrington, helping to carry him over rocks to the Cove.

I was kind of angry and confused why it even happened. You never expect that to happen.

Q: Then you were taken to the hospital before going to Portland?

A: They cleaned and dressed the wound in Astoria up and stopped most of the bleeding. Then they took me in an ambulance to Portland because the helicopter was fogged in. I had surgery Sunday night (Dec. 6) at (Legacy) Emanuel.

Q: Are you an experienced surfer?

A: I started surfing back in 2016 when my buddies got me into it. I just grew a huge passion for it and it became my everyday thing where I was just out there in the water surfing all the time, trying to progress. It's one of my most passion-

ate things I like in this world so I'll definitely be back in the water after I heal up from this.

Q: Is it a matter of pride to get back in the water?

A: Yeah, man. Only surfers know the feeling, but when you catch a wave it's a feeling you can't explain. It's pretty powerful. It means a lot.

Q: Are you working?

A: I was working for Oregon Electric Group as a material handler because I'm trying to become an electrician. So come January, I'm going to turn in my application for the five-year apprenticeship program. After I go into that I will be seeking an electrical job around the coast so I can just work and surf.

Q: Your mother flew to Portland from Alabama to be with you. What did it mean to have your mother with you?

A: It means a lot. I'm happy everybody made a way for her to get out here and spend time with me. I've found a lot of love and support from the surf community and the community around Seaside in general. A lot of my friends have been reaching out and checking on me. Everybody's kind of worried about me.

Q: Any shout-outs?

A: Everybody who helped me out of the water and get off the rocks and onto the ambulance. All the local surfers that were involved that day. I really appreciate them helping me.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please withdraw from school sale

This letter was sent to members of the Seaside School District Board of Directors. It is printed at the writers' request.

We are writing you as a taxpayers in your district, concerned about the sale of Broadway Middle School to Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, another entity to which we pay taxes.

We understand you are considerably over budget on the new school we are providing for you and are motivated to sell the property, as evidenced by the fact that you practically gave away Gearhart Elementary. We voters supported you when we passed Measure 4-2006. We now need your support.

As you may be aware, the citizens in the district are opposed to the sale of the middle school without voter approval. The SEPRD board had asked for a 60-day extension for their due diligence and you only granted them 30. What motivated you to deny their request? The citizens in the district deserve the right to vote whether this transaction should be finalized. The school district, also being a public entity, owes it to its

citizens to allow SEPRD time to develop a business plan and present it for a vote.

We understand Seaside School District finds the middle school of value if SEPRD takes control of the property because you will be able to use the lockers and the gyms when needed. But the middle school is a large property in a prime location. That said, the gyms are on the least desirable part of this large piece of land. Has the district considered subdividing the property prior to a sale? This corner, being all publicly owned, could serve the purposes of the city, SEPRD and the school district if divided up to benefit all entities. This is an ideal opportunity for these three public entities in Seaside to sit down together to properly allocate the properties to best serve the public. The school district could then sell off the remaining property. This could be a win-win for all involved.

We taxpayers feel that the public entities, which we own, owe it to us to work together for the best interest of its citizens.

We ask you to withdraw from the sale of Broadway Middle School at this time to allow a feasible plan to be worked out and presented to

the people for a vote.

**Diane Wells
Transparency for SEPRD Taxpayers**

VRD owners seek follow-up

This letter was sent to Mayor Jay Barber and members of the City Council, and is reprinted at the writers' request.

It was our hope that you would have at least acknowledged our recent communications and responded to us by now. Your lack of communicating with us Seaside vacation rental dwelling owners all along remains a serious disappointment for us all and frankly kind of a slap in the face. Ignoring does not feel like how you should be treating a group of Seaside property owners who contribute so significantly to your city budget and the general well-being of Seaside.

We would like to remind you of the overall significance of Seaside's approximate 400 VRD owners in case you have lost sight of the collective value that VRDs bring to the City that you currently oversee.

The most significant benefit that VRDs bring to Seaside is a very personal lodg-

ing option for families and groups of visitors who are seeking that true sense of staying in your own beach house while in Seaside

- \$1 million of annual lodging taxes paid to the Seaside budget, about 20% of your total lodging tax revenue
- \$200,000 of annual VRD license fees, way more than fully funding the new compliance officer position
- \$200 million of estimated total property valuation equals approximately \$1.5 million of direct tax support to Seaside

What we are specifically asking for is that you arrange a Zoom meeting inviting all Seaside VRD owners to have an opportunity to dialog with you and the appropriate city staff personnel regarding review of the VRD license fees and how those fees are currently being utilized.

Since you imposed this outsized fee increase on us this year it seems only fair that you now provide us some accountability for this 400% increase.

More specifically, we were never successful in getting data from you supporting the primary concerns you all expressed of significant negative citizen complaints on VRDs in

your neighborhoods.

Since citizen complaints was communicated to us as being a primary driver in hiring a full-time VRD compliance officer, we now feel it is time to be getting some data that supports your actions, which we still think was a huge overreach on your part.

Besides this we were told on a couple of occasions earlier this year that you would be reviewing the economics of your VRD oversight process before the end of this year. Our recollection is that this understanding was communicated to us during conversations we had with Councilman Seth Morrissey and on a separate occasion with Planning Director Kevin Cupples.

Our \$500 VRD annual license fee that you chose raises double what you need to support your full-time officer. In addition, \$500 is close to the annual business license fee for a 50-room motel in Seaside.

The VRD annual fee seems very disproportionate when you consider all the city services that are needed to support the number of guests that occupy 50 rooms in one of your motels versus our smaller VRDs that typically may have four to 10 guests. It is time for a more

honest and fuller reckoning of your VRD oversight process and the fees associated with that process.

We have been attempting to be respectful with our requests including allowing you time to do what was necessary during these past eight months while you worked out the kinks in your new VRD compliance process.

You all totally ignoring our request to discuss some accountability makes it more difficult to maintain this respect. Since you have chosen to not communicate with Seaside Vacation Rental Owners Association at all, we have now recommended to our more than 100 participants to make contact directly with you to express their concerns personally about your unwillingness to respond to our requests for accountability and review. You may be hearing from some of them soon. We remain hopeful that you will also show some mutual respect and communicate with us soon to arrange a virtual meeting such as we have suggested. Thank you.

**Joe Foss
Darren Karr
Mike Myers
Marlow Hornberger
Seaside Vacation Rental Owners Association**

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.

TUESDAY, DEC. 29

Gearhart City Council, 6 p.m., work session, 670 Pacific Way.

TUESDAY, JAN. 19

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, 5:15 p.m., 1225

Avenue A.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., www.seaside.k12.or.us/meetings.

TUESDAY, FEB. 16

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, 5:15 p.m., 1225

Avenue A.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., www.seaside.k12.or.us/meetings.