

The First Time I Heard The 'Jaws' Tune in My Head

The first time I heard the Jaws music in my head ...

I was diving in Mossel Bay. Water visibility was poor and we were searching for scientific equipment at the bottom of the sea. I saw a shadow pass by. I remembered all the stories about how even a "small" Great White looks huge underwater, but this was huge! And close. I can't say I wet my pants being underwater but I was very relieved when the massive shadow turned out to be a Southern Right whale.

The first time I "played" with a Great White ...

I've had many occasions to "play" with a Great White but I'm a scientist and conservationist, not a cowboy. I respect that they are wild animals and if I put myself in a situation where something could happen, it would be my fault but the shark would get the blame. Sharks are inquisitive, so it's up to us not to "feed" that curiosity.

The first time I was afraid out of the water ...

My supervisor and I were on a boat, doing an experiment with a bite-meter. He was holding the pole with the meter in the water. The shark bit and didn't want to let go. There was a struggle and the shark's tail came clear out of the water, hit the boat motor and then my supervisor on the back. It was more scary than painful.

The first time I really made a difference ...

On a BBC programme, I set out to prove that a Great White bites softly, and very seldom goes for the kill. Sharks are very curious but don't have hands, so to "touch and inspect" the environment they use their mouths. I think I made a difference in what people really think about sharks.

My first fight ...

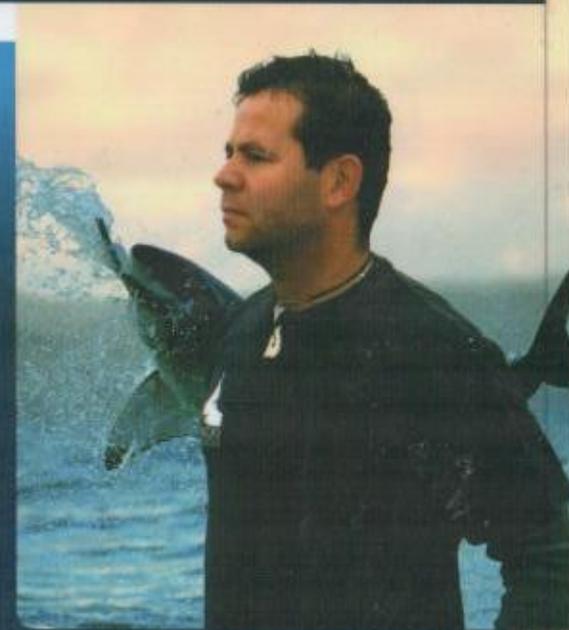
It was an argument with a surfer who interrupted a conversation I was having about sharks and started shouting how sharks should be killed because they kill people. I asked him if he dressed like a zebra and walked in front of a lion in the Kruger Park, would he blame the lion for attacking him? He said, "No, of course not!" So I asked why he would choose to enter the sea dressed like a seal and then blame a shark when he bites. He didn't have an answer.

The first time I got really lost ...

I found myself, and my boat, in a thick bank of mist. As an experienced Captain I decided to test my sense of position and not to use the GPS onboard. I was sure I would get us straight to the harbour. Then one of my students asked why we were almost on the beach. I now always use my GPS!

My first experience with a tourist ...

The funniest comment was from a young lady, who learned that a male shark has two large sexual organs or claspers and said, "Lucky her!" Her boyfriend was not impressed. 🐋



Enrico Gennari, aka Hero of The Great White Shark, is a celebrated marine biologist and one of four directors of OCEANS, an organization where marine scientists study Great White Sharks and other top marine predators. Their mission is to explore, discover, understand and conserve our oceans. Here, he splashes about with some of his life firsts ...

OCEANS research is starting several projects and research stations all along Southern Africa's coast on bull (Zambezi) sharks, manta rays, whale sharks, whales, dolphins and seals. Visit these websites:
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