

Queue up the Jaws music; the debate continues

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# the DESTIN Log

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## MIDWEEK EDITION

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## Sharks are killing machines, not cuddly creatures

As a five year old, I was horrified at the sight of several lions attacking, killing, then eating a defenseless antelope. I was watching an episode of Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom.

"The lions are eating Bambi," I cried. Mom responded, "It's okay, Billy," then to Dad she said, "Turn that show off!"

"Why? It's real life!" he yelled back. "Some things die to sustain other animals. The boy's gotta learn about real life. Ya want the kid to grow up and be a sissy?"

Not to worry, Dad, by the time I was 10, I'd learned plenty about the survival of the fittest.

At 17, I was a runaway living a commercial fisherman's life in Florida, far from native Pittsburgh. Not many lions prowling along the Gulf of Mexico, but I did learn a lot about sharks.

They are savage predators that tore apart our gill nets, crab traps and grouper long lines to eat our catch. More times than I can remember, they would cut a prized fish in half, before I could get it boatside.

Still, the reality of shark predation didn't hit me until I watched my pet German shepherd, Lucky, die in the trap-like jaws of an 11-foot hammerhead while my girlfriend and I frantically swam to my boat only 200 yards from the beach.

The reality of that day impacted me as much as when I was five, watching those lions drag that animal carcass to dinner.

I spent the next 30 years fishing for those predator sharks, often capturing them live for display in public oceanariums. Maintaining species like tiger, bull, lemon and sand tiger sharks gave visitors the opportunity to view them close up. I often thought of Lucky while watching those savage sharks rip into a tuna or jack we fed them in the Shark Channel at the Miami Seaquarium.

At Marineland in St. Augustine, we had to remove some sharks from the display, once they had adapted to captivity and would eat each other at night. The reality of sharks is simple: They eat and make more sharks.

Part of the food chain? Yes. Misunderstood and

dwindling in numbers? Don't believe it.

Somehow, after those epic shark movies hit the screen in the '70s, the perception of sharks began to reverse.

Times sure have changed: We have satellites in space, moonwalks, worldwide instant communication, instant photography and gay marriage. And we have those now cute little sharks needing our protection.

Huh? We got earth harmony — the world's coming to an end if we don't "go green!" Protect everything (except humans, as soldiers are still dying in wars). Meanwhile, elephants are overpopulating Africa in the name of conservation (for tourism, mind you, but that's another article), while these pachyderms kill natives.

Environmentalists say our oceans are losing sharks, they're "near extinction" and they only bite (or eat) humans by accident — mistaken identity, they claim.

Guess those Wild Kingdom episodes got turned off because the parents thought the kids couldn't handle reality.

My own son came home from school one day saying his science teacher told the

class the fishermen had killed all the sharks. I had to take him and his brother fishing that night. I thought of sending him to school the next day with one of our blacktip catches on ice, but figured he'd get sent to detention.

Let me give you some facts about how your kids are getting brainwashed by these environmental extremists.

My wife and I visited the Florida Aquarium in Tampa and got a dose of how they desensitize the real danger that sharks pose.

Visitors are encouraged to don a wetsuit and face mask, and enter a shark protective cage so they can see how the captive sharks swim in harmony, showing no interest in humans. We watched as small nurse, Australian zebra, dogfish and sandbar sharks swam harmlessly about the aquarium.

None of the aforementioned species are worthy of any true example of shark danger.

Hell, those pups couldn't pull apart a pizza pie!

Missing from the exhibit were the tiger, bull, lemon and sand tiger sharks that would've been legitimate aggressors. Their exhibit was more like strolling



**BILL GOLDSCHMITT**  
Captain's Log

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## Opinion

**GOLDSCHMITT** from page A4

the park, photographing butterflies and squirrels, not like jumping a junkyard fence protected by frothing dobermans or rottweilers.

Get the difference?

I wonder what those many shark attack victims or those who lost loved ones to sharks think of this insane propaganda.

My wife and I then toured Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota. We entered a theater where the visitors and their children are encouraged to assume the identity of a cute caricature of a swimming, pregnant, sand tiger shark as it searches for food to, nourish its unborn babies.

"Aaahh..." the narrator chimes as he warns you, (the shark) to watch out for those BAD fishermen who want to kill you with their SHARP HOOKS!

Narrator continues to claim you must give birth to your two babies, if

your species is to survive extinction!

I was amused, walking out of the theater, that the film producers chose to portray the sand tiger species, rather than the more prolific tiger or great hammerheads that give birth to hundreds of pups at a time. And they also chose to omit one really important fact about the sand tiger: The species learns cannibalism before birth as the first two embryos eat their brothers and sisters before mom gives birth to the two sharks, one from each oviduct.

Selective education, I think.

After the visitors exit the show, and feeling now very sympathetic toward the poor defenseless shark, they are encouraged to have their picture taken with Gilly, the soft and cuddly Mote shark mascot! Like the famous rodent

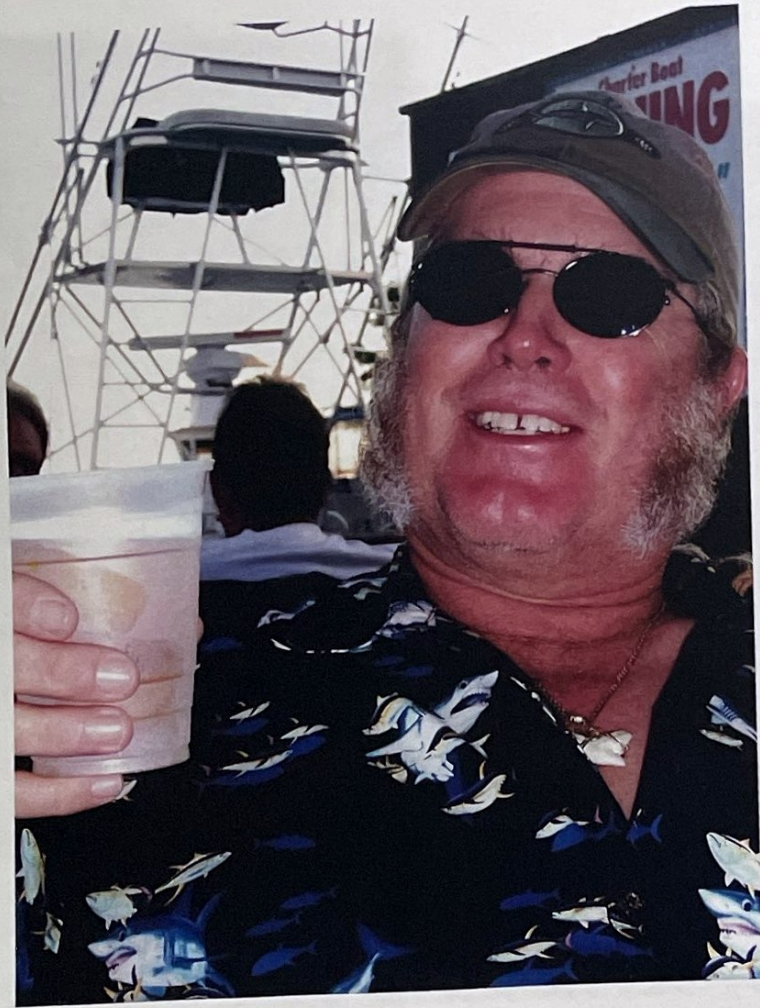
that feeds on garbage and carries diseases, that Walt Disney enshrined as Mickey Mouse, the exploitation never ends!

Good luck if your child, now flush with misinformation about sharks, ever bumps into a shark while swimming at the beach; the result won't be as fun as meeting Gilly.

We cannot ask Jamie Daigle, a 14-year-old shark attack victim, she's dead. The experts said she swam out too far in Miramar Beach.

Well, did she know any better? If a shark is a cuddly thing that needs protecting, why not swim out as far as you want?

*Captain Bill Goldschmitt is a retired commercial fisherman in Sarasota. He recently wrote a book and his Web site is sharkmanofcortez.com.*



Excellent, Excellent article from someone who knows better than the elitest Marine Biologist.

Karen - Nov 16, 2009 04:56:08 PM

1. Excellent article. It shows how everything has to be so politically correct even to the point of being wrong. This writer does know what he is talking about and gives a lesson that should be learned. Frank - Nov 22, 2009 03:26:42 PM

Wonderful article. Finally a voice of reason instead of the typical romantized version of sharks from the greenies. Sharks tastes good.

KillerKitty - Nov 17, 2009 09:30:15 AM