

Sharks on Display vs. Shark Attack Reality

By Captain Bill Goldschmitt

“Sharks don’t eat us Mommy, they’re really misunderstood,” a child says to her mother. “I know, baby,” don’t they look so cute swimming around, almost smiling at us?” Mom answers. The aquarium narrator proclaims: “Sharks have more to fear from humans, and they are essential to the world’s eco-systems.” I roll my eyes and quietly listen to the exchange between visitors at the Florida Aquarium and their “experts.” I’ve observed this protectionist “theme” at Mote Marine Aquarium, Sea World and countless other shark exhibits world-wide.

I’m Captain Bill Goldschmitt, and I captured live sharks for many of these public aquariums for nearly two decades. But I’m not a welcomed guest anymore. Why? Because they couldn’t convert me to their philosophy. I wouldn’t subscribe to this reckless deception and brainwashing of children and impressionable others. Fact is, viewing harmless shark species like nurse, zebra, bonnet head or dogfish—sharks that couldn’t bite through wet slices of pizza—hardly represents the reality of meeting a killer face-to-face. Even 3 or 4 foot black-nose or sandbar sharks, with their non-aggressive disposition, aren’t the same as an encounter with savage predators the likes of tiger, bull, lemon, oceanic white tip, Galapagos, reef, great hammerhead, or white sharks. These sharks have been responsible for human deaths. The list of other dangerous man-eaters could go on but I’m short of space.

What’s important is truth represented by facts, enabling those entering the world’s oceans to understand the actual risk. Unfortunately, eco-protectionists have their agenda and it’s not to distribute the truth. Their beliefs are based on the need to protect sharks from humans. They downplay any danger sharks pose against people while upgrading shark stature as almost god-like. One marine biologist working at an aquarium in San Francisco was filmed sporting an almost intoxicated expression as his group of merry men dumped a great white shark back into the Pacific. Fearing it would die in captivity, this lunatic decided to release it back into the wild and he was nearly in tears at the thought of being a shark savior. (Straight jackets please!) Get the picture? Shark savers, employed at these public aquariums are a growing cancer, distributing harmful propaganda they say is necessary to re-educate a confused public. Oh, really? Our children deserve a better education, not fantasy dealt out by emotional extremists.

The reality is our oceans are filled with risk. Drowning tops the list. But anyone swimming in the water, enjoying a day at the beach, could meet their worst nightmare. Not one of those harmless pizza-eaters displayed at the local aquarium but the REAL DEAL. (Sorry, Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Bureau). Ask the parents of little Jessie Arbogast or Jamie Daigle, both victims of attacks near Pensacola, Florida, what



losing a child is like. Or ask Natasha Baulina what it was like when she and her fiancé, Sergay Salucino were attacked while swimming off the east coast. Natasha was quoted in the hospital after surgery, “The shark was circling around us, taking chunks out of us. It was really meaning to eat us.” No mistaken identity there. Gary Harkin, a rescuer who pulled a dying Sergay from the surf recounted, “His foot came off in my hands and his leg was gone. There was so much gore and blood I was sickened and scared.”

These attacks ARE reality, not fantasy! One might also investigate the shark attack on ten year old David Peltier off Virginia Beach. This attack, like the others, is a heart wrenching tragedy. David’s father Richard was bitten as he tried in vain to protect his son by putting the boy onto his long (surf) board. Fighting the savagely attacking shark, his heart pounded as David cried, “Daddy, help me.” Mr. Peltier was quoted after his son received a complete, though futile, transfusion, “I knew my son was going to die.” Tears dripped from his face as he whispered “goodbye” into David’s ear. Again, quoting his father, “They (the experts) can say all they want about (attack) statistics. The odds mean absolutely *nothing* when it happens to you in real life. When it’s your child that takes his last breath. My son is dead.” Folks this is raw emotion coming from those who have suffered what protectionists or shark savers lightly refer to as “unfortunate accidents”! I don’t believe Mr. Peltier or any of the aforementioned shark victims travelled to Washington to lobby Congress for stricter protection of sharks. I believe the public can see through that eco-obscurity.

While watching several of those smiling sharks circling the tank at Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota last week, and listening to the eco-aquarist lament about the poor sharks, I overhear one visitor remark to his wife, “It’s a f---’n fish for crying out loud. And they are dangerous. I know that!”

Good advice? ...you bet.