

I had been invited by Jack and his son John to participate in a film they were making about shark diving. I had been diving and writing about the ocean for a decade and had frequently found myself in the water with sharks. Never intentionally. They just appeared, unwanted. The idea of swimming with them seemed dangerous. Still, Jack McKen- ney had asked me to participate. 1)_____

To attract the sharks, we laid out plastic boxes wired together and filled with frozen fish. Once dropped over the side, the boxes lay half in and half out of the water. As the bait thawed, a long line of blood and fish followed us. (2)_____

The stars of the film promised to be blue sharks. Fast and slim-bodied with pointed snouts, they grow to 12 feet in length and are known to attack humans. (3)_____I thought someone was welcoming our visitors by pounding rapidly on a large bass drum. Then I realised that the fierce pounding was the beating of my own heart.

The shark cage sat on the deck. It was mainly constructed from wire. The idea was to swim into the cage once under the water. The only hand-held weapon I was given was a broom handle.

By the time I got to the cage, five sharks were swimming around us. As they glided past, they seemed curious, and I felt like something hung up in a meat market. (4)_____Strangely, proximity seemed to calm my fear.

We began to hand-feed the sharks as they cruised by the cage. Several times, I offered a fish, then yanked it away at the crucial moment. Then I felt guilty about teasing the monsters and began to want more contact.

I decided to go outside the cage. (5)_____“They tend to hit some part of your body that is not moving. Usually this means the head.”

Outside the cage and checking in all directions, I moved to where Jack was shooting one particular shark for the film. (6)_____It put on a slight burst of speed and glided in my direction. I had ten seconds to get my own broom handle in position, and when the shark was a foot away, I hit it firmly, on the snout. The shark twisted away, and disappeared into the depths. Relieved, I realised the mildest show of aggression seemed to put these fellows off their feed.

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- 1 — The shark, a six-foot male, seemed mildly annoyed by all the attention.
- 2 — But gradually my heartbeat settled to a mild thud.
- 3 — With this in hand, I hesitantly slipped into the sea and swam towards the open cage door.
- 4 — Jack had advised me to be careful about sharks approaching from the rear.

1) 1 2) 2 3) 3 4) 4