

This week's serving won't mean much to our readers who live inland from the ocean, for instance, Zimbabwe (where several hundred of our e-friends live) is entirely land-locked – far from the ocean. We can read about something, maybe even watch a TV report on it, but it's just not the same as being there!

But for anyone who has lived near the ocean and had an encounter of the kind this Friday Food 'n' Therapy focuses on..... there is a primal fear that rises up that words can't describe.

In coastal Australia there is an expression that says it all.... **GREAT WHITE.....** This is not referring to an overweight murungu (white man)! But to the white pointer shark – the most efficient killing machine known on earth. Yes, the film JAWS exaggerated their size (they have been caught “only” up to 7 metres long), but the reality of what the more common 5m long specimens can do is legendary in our part of the world.

Most Saturday mornings, I jog (while Elizabeth walks with our dog) with our running club alongside Georges River, some 30km from the ocean. There are signs nearby warning bathers about sharks. In 1936 a 5m shark lost its way up the river, and hungry, it killed and ate two people in two weeks. About five years ago, I swam across the same river nearby (where it's only about 300m across); on the other side a man warned me that a dog was taken by a shark only the week before.... and I had to swim back (no bridges there)!! It was quite an experience (my fingers barely touched the water!)....

In 1963, during a spear-fishing competition at Sellicks Beach, south of Adelaide in South Australia, the then champion Rodney Fox encountered such an experience of raw, enervating fear. What happened, and how he countered the fear that subsequently rose up seeking to overpower him, [is recounted here \(125kb\)](#). It's compulsive reading.

How does one face such raw fear – which is the consequence of an external circumstance and not merely an internal phobia?

Ten years ago, Elizabeth was walking along the beach outside the Lifeline Base at Beira, Mozambique. She had a \$2 hat on with a drawstring, and was with Josephine, a missionary from Papua New Guinea. Suddenly a young man leapt in front of her and held a knife to her throat. He demanded her hat and tried to pull it off her head. The drawstring stuck fast, and he got very agitated. She managed to loosen it, handed it over, and he ran off. Traumatic.

But the worst thing would have been for her to decide never to go and walk of that beach again. We have been back there many times, and yes, we always exercise considerable care, but she refused to let the **fear** activated by a **real-life** incident restrict her activities in an ongoing and exaggerated manner.

And yes, praying helps! We worship the One who has promised to watch over our “comings and goings”, as Psalm 121 states.

## RODNEY FOX – WHITE POINTER SURVIVOR

Rodney Fox was attacked by a great white shark and badly bitten around the chest and arm in December 1963. His story of the attack and escape has been published many times. He is regarded as a miracle survivor of one of the world's worst non-fatal shark attacks. Here's a collected account of the attack.

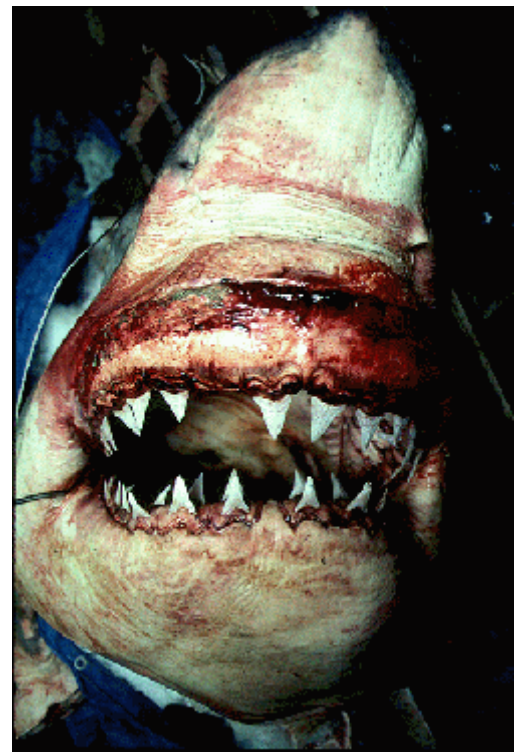
### RODNEY FOX'S OWN TESTIMONY:

December 8, 1963 is a date that I'll never forget. I was the South Australian spear fishing champion, and I was trying to regain my title. Halfway through the competition, I'd swam off shore trying to find a big strong fish. And I dived down, I saw one. I was within split seconds of shooting it -- when all of a sudden this huge crunch, and it hit me in the chest, knocked my gun out of my hand, the mask off my face, and I was hurled through the water faster than I've ever swam before. It was just a nightmare.

In the hospital, they cut my wetsuit off me, and they found that there were these huge gashes and teeth marks, and every rib in my chest had been broken, there was a hole through the shoulder blade, the lung had been punctured.

Another miracle is the main artery from the heart to the stomach was left exposed, together with the spleen. One nick and I would have died. Nothing was missing, so when they stitched me up, I repaired, and I've really nothing wrong with me today, except the scars.

In the attack Rodney's abdomen was fully exposed and all ribs broken on his left hand side. His diaphragm was punctured, lung ripped open, scapula was pierced, spleen uncovered, the main artery from his heart was exposed



Rod Fox

and he was minutes away from his veins collapsing due to the loss of large amounts of blood. Tendons, fingers and thumb in his right hand were all cut and to this day he still has part of a great white tooth embedded in his wrist. Many stitches (462) were required to sew him together after the attack.



His wetsuit is credited with holding him together. One lung was punctured. His ribs were exposed and bone was showing along his right hand and arm.

Amazingly, Fox returned to the sea and diving after his attack. He went on to design and build the first under water observation cage to dive with the great white shark (white pointer shark), and for over 40 years has now led major expeditions to film and study his attacker. He is now regarded as a world authority on the great white shark and has a great reputation as an expedition leader and producer of shark films. Rodney was involved in some way with most great white shark films made in the 20th century. Rodney's life since the attack has involved consulting and coordinating film crews and arranging and guiding ecotourism adventure trips and expeditions specializing in great white sharks (white pointer shark) and other marine creatures.

(Brian adds) As someone who has surfed all my adult life, I still have a very real awareness of Fox's ordeal (having had a few scares myself with sharks – but nothing like what he faced), and read many years ago a more expanded account of that happened. How Fox was diving deep near the end of the 4-hour spear-fishing competition, and how the shark came from behind and hurled him through the water as it chomped on his torso. He punched it in the eye, and it spat him out. As he surfaced, blood everywhere, it attacked again and took him under a second time. He again struggled free and as it circled to attack a third time, it smelt the fish and blood on his catch-raft nearby and attacked that. It dived again with the raft, and the sea-anchor rope wrapped around his leg, pulling him down too. As he lost consciousness, the rope snapped and he floated to the surface (his wetsuit providing some buoyancy). By this time the officials could see what was happening, and he was rescued by an observer boat nearby then rushed by ambulance 60km to Adelaide Hospital. The police stopped traffic at every main intersection along the route and his life was preserved by the speed of the rescue and treatment.

#### Quotations

"Rodney Fox's attack is perhaps the best known of all shark attacks. Rodney Fox is a man whose life has been all but defined by the white pointer. The 1963 attack left him with a great fold in his left side where he was sewn together, but he nonetheless chose to devote much of his life to the pursuit (with camera and tourists) of the Great White Shark. There has scarcely been an expedition, movie, book or scientific study of the great white shark in which Rodney was not involved. - From "Great White Shark" 1992, by Richard Ellis & John McCosker.

"An Australian named Rodney Fox, probably has more experience with live White Sharks than anyone. For more than 20 years he has conducted regular sorties into their realm." - From the Cousteau Society's *Calypso* Log, August 1989

"Rodney Fox, an Australian man of the sea who had guided us to this spot, knew about white shark attacks and miraculous escapes at first hand. In 1963, while participating in a spear-fishing tournament off Aldinga Beach south of Adelaide, his home town, Rodney was nearly bitten in half by a great white. Held together by his wet suit, he was rushed to a hospital, where 462 stitches were required to sew him up. Rodney was back in the water less than three months afterward. Today he is regarded as one of the world's foremost authorities on the behaviour of the great white shark." - From National Geographic Magazine article Australian Southern Seas.

#### My Own Comment – Dealing with Fear

The following year, after this horrendous experience, Rodney Fox returned to the **same beach** and went diving again – to face the fear that engulfed him after the attack. He recalled how by returning to that beach and entering the ocean, he overcame his deep fear.

He also recounted later he never dived so deep again, and left the deep to the king of the ocean! Sometimes our deep fears teach us about boundaries to be lived within....

When David encountered Goliath, a giant that had filled Israel's finest soldiers with great fear, the Bible tells us (in 1 Samuel 17:48-51) that David **ran quickly at him!** There are times when we too must face our worst fear, and "run quickly at it" in some way – breaking its paralysing hold on our mindset and life.

## [Brian and Elizabeth Rensfords' website](#)

### **Other Friday Food 'n' Therapy** [– Serious Stuff; - and Not So Serious](#)