

By now you have heard the <sup>haunting</sup> ~~spine-tingling~~ story – just a day before Halloween--Scott Stephens was surfing at a place called Bunkers ~~in Humboldt County~~ a few hundred yards up from the north Jetty on the Samoa Peninsula. Scott was suddenly attacked by a Great White shark. The shark took a bite out of his surfboard, and bit into of Scott's side. Scott punched the monstrous fish til it let him go, then paddled in, bleeding profusely and in shock. He was aided by some surfers on the beach who heard his cry for help; one Good Samaritan stopped Scott's bleeding by applying direct body pressure; they transported him to the paramedics in timely fashion, saving Scott's life.

The many surfers of Humboldt County are pleased to hear about Scott's survival and recovery. A recent picture on the front page of the Times Standard shows a bare-chested Scott ~~Stephens~~ with stitches and staples pulling together his many lacerations.

But the Good Samaritan story goes on: almost as heartening as Scott's survival, is the story of the local surfers who continue to help Scott through the Humboldt Surfrider Foundation. Not only did local surfers save Scott's life, the Humboldt Surfrider Foundation recently raised over a thousand dollars to offset Mr. Stephen's medical expenses. They even bought him a new wetsuit... well, we won't ask Scott's mom what she thinks about the new wetsuit; like most moms she'd rather not have Scott enter the ocean ~~to ever again—ever. / Who could blame her.~~

It took me a few days after hearing of Scott's ordeal in the nearby Pacific Ocean, to get back into the water. Is it worth it to paddle out where sharks are possibly going to take a bite? No one can answer that except each individual surfer. From the look of things, there are a lot of surfers in the water after October 30<sup>th</sup> who think it is worth it. I guess I have to count myself as one of them... We live in a risk-averse culture where life is getting increasingly boring for most people. Risk taking is something that is a part of the human experience because those afraid to risk probably fear living as much as dying.

I look forward to seeing Scott out at Bunkers or the jetty in a few months. I am also comforted to know that surfers on the north coast are a breed apart. In most areas the crowds are so thick there is little or no friendship lost between surfers. It is comforting to know that if the next victim is me, there is likely to be someone nearby who is willing to render assistance. That kind of help demonstrates the spirit ~~of~~ the north coast, at its best.

There is a lot of talk today about near death experiences; a close brush with death can lend a perspective on life that injects life with meaning and purpose. It sounds to me that this was the case with Scott, who says, "I'm so happy to be here and be alive right now, If I can give other people a little bit of joy or a little bit of happiness, I think that's what I'm meant to do." Well spoken, Scott, and I think shark bite or not, that is what we are all meant to do.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment