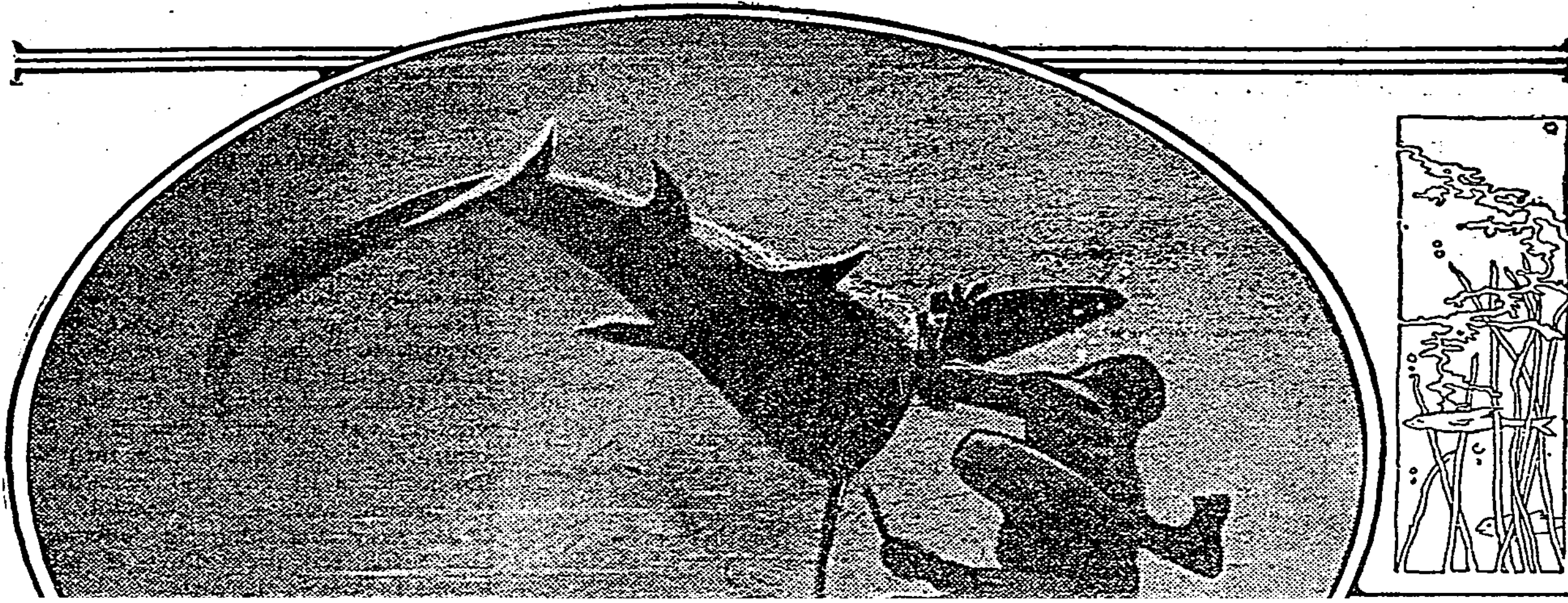


Do Sharks Attack Humans Only When Crazy?

J. Ernest Williamson, Who Took Undersea Pictures of Them and Fought One, Declares Them Cowardly by Nature



we fastened our hooks to chains. The first shark I caught had made such a complete job of swallowing the bait, hook and part of the chain that I made no effort to recover the hook. We chopped the brute into several pieces and threw him back into the sea. Thirty-five minutes later one of our party caught another shark and when we cut it open we found in its stomach portions of the first shark, including the hook and fragment of the chain.

"It is perfectly useless, as a rule, to fight sharks with any weapon but a knife. Their heads are peculiarly tough. I have seen them beaten over the head with heavy oars without effect. Our party repeatedly shot them, but if the bullets had any effect on them we didn't notice it. The knife, however, puts them hors de combat in a few seconds.

"The natives dive deep and come up

Duel Between a Native and a Man-Eating Shark in the Waters Near Nassau, Bahama Islands.

MAN-EATING sharks are the most cautious and cowardly fish that swim the sea and attack human beings only in moments of temporary frenzy that resembles the disease of horses called 'blind staggers.'

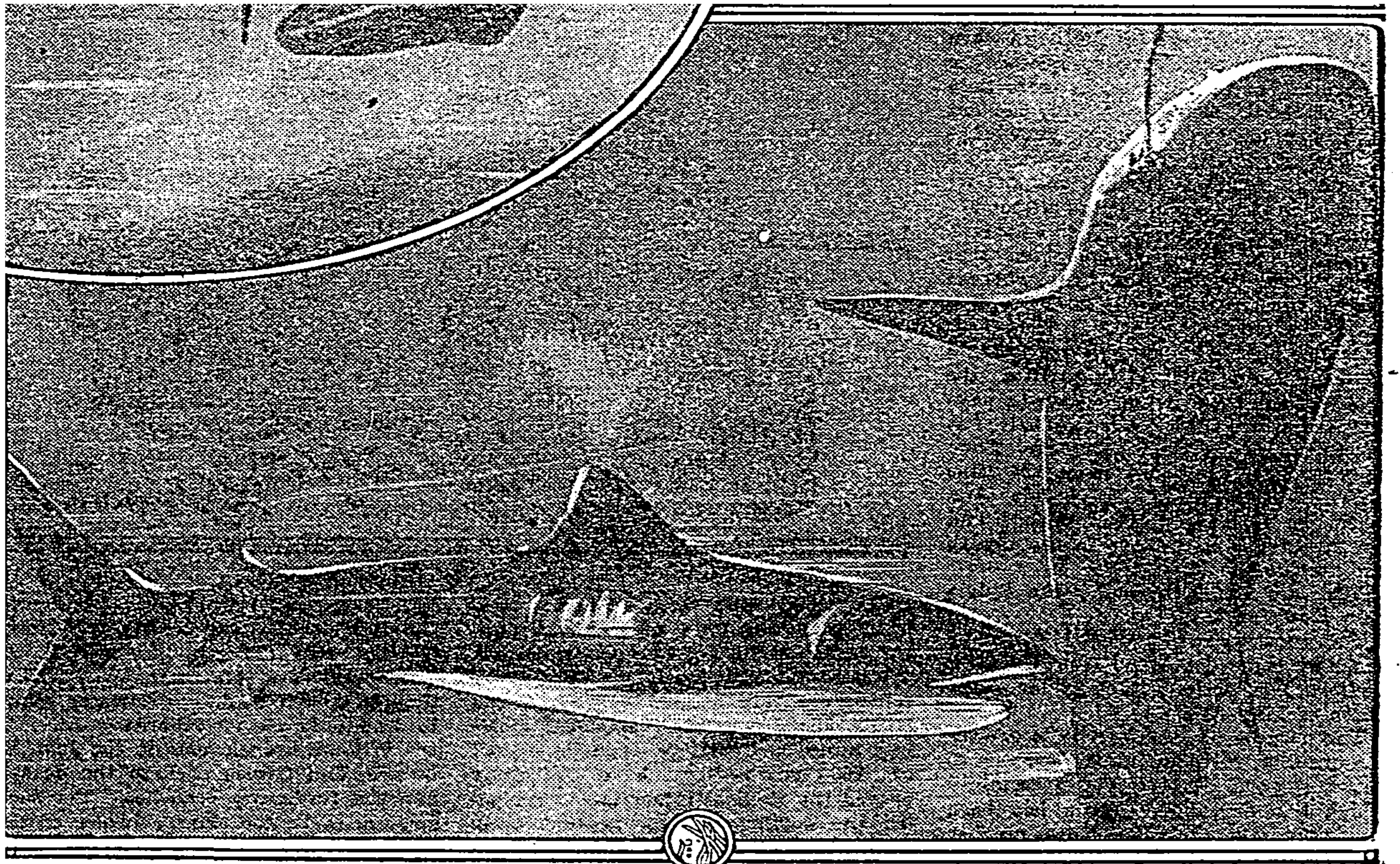
This positive statement is made by J. Ernest Williamson, submarine and diving expert. Mr. Williamson, who returned this week from the Bahamas, is the only white man in the United States who has fought a duel with a shark in the open sea. He and his brother, George M. Williamson, spent many weeks in a submarine chamber on the bottom of the ocean studying the habits and peculiarities of the man-eating shark and other big fish that inhabit the West Indian waters.

"The natives of the Bahamas have a contempt for these so-called man-eaters," Mr. Williamson adds. "They do not fear them, and do not hesitate to attack them with knives in the open sea. It was my observation of many successful attacks on sharks by natives that impelled me to try the same 'stunt' three years ago in the waters off Nassau. I succeeded in killing a ten-foot shark with a heavy hunting knife, but, in the light of what I afterward learned about these big fish, I would not attempt to repeat the adventure for any consideration that could be named.

"My brother and I were in charge of a project to photograph under water a reproduction of Jules Verne's 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.' We were called upon to get close-up pictures of sharks. The particular feat required weeks and months of patient waiting and quiet observation, but I think it is safe to say we were given opportunities to study the habits of 'man-eating' sharks that have not been enjoyed by any other human beings.

"Let me go on record with the statement that sharks are not necessarily scavengers of the sea. We were told to use fetid carcasses of animals as bait. We did so and had little success. Finally we decided to use freshly slaughtered calves as a lure for the big fish, and this bait gave us our pictures and a chance to study sharks at close range.

"About a half hour after our bait was placed and we had taken our positions behind the glass window the first shark appeared. It was a big specimen, between twenty and thirty feet in length. It swam close to our hiding place, and gave us



Undersea Photograph of Man-Eating Shark Attacking Captured Shark. (Photos © Universal's "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" Film.)

every opportunity to study its appearance in its native element. Like all other sharks I have seen under water its big, cold, gray eyes rolled in their sockets like those of a human being. There was a wicked gleam back of the icy stare with which these sharks studied the bait that gave us an odd sensation.

"The first shark swam around the calf repeatedly, but made no effort to attack it. Instead, it retired after ten or fifteen minutes, and we thought our day's work would be wasted. After a short time, however, the first shark returned with a companion, and both fish swam in a leisurely but very timid manner around and around the bait. Then both sharks disappeared. They came back in less than half an hour with six other sharks. These tactics were repeated until a school of more than thirty sharks was inspecting the bait and our submarine tube. It was more than six hours after the first shark appeared on the scene before one of the school, swimming slowly past the calf, suddenly made a snap at it.

"In a moment there was enacted the wildest scene of ferocity I have ever witnessed. Simultaneously, the big fish seemed to go mad. They did not limit their attacks to the bait. They bit just

as viciously and blindly at one another, and when one was wounded it was soon devoured by its companions. One big fish snapped at a floating stick and crushed it between its strong teeth. At that moment a human being, no matter how clever a fighter with a knife, would have been torn to shreds in a few seconds.

"I had discovered before this experience that sharks eat other sharks. Several days previously we amused ourselves by fishing for sharks from the deck or our tug. Ordinarily lines were snapped into pieces by the big fish, so

under their prey. One quick upward thrust with a sharp knife does the trick. It is only necessary to hold the knife firmly and allow the swift-swimming shark to rip itself open. When it is disembowled in this manner the shark becomes helpless almost immediately.

"There's no reason to doubt that the sharks which have taken lives on the Atlantic Coast of North America this Summer are West Indian sharks. These big man-eaters travel much faster than the swiftest steamer. On repeated trips to and from the Bahamas I have seen big sharks easily outdistance the vessel on which I was traveling. The sharks that figured in the recent tragedies might easily have been swimming in West Indian waters only a day or two before they were sighted off the New Jersey coast.

"I am strongly inclined to believe that all the killings may be attributed to one big school. I am confident that sharks, attacked by the dementia I have described, remain ferocious for several days and possibly for several weeks.

"Under ordinary circumstances, the so-called man-eating shark has a pronounced streak of yellow in its make-up and will fly in deadly fear from man."



J. Ernest Williamson.

