

BEHIND THE JAWS OF JAWS

Bruce, the 25-foot great white shark that terrorizes the beach town of Amity in Steven Spielberg's classic 1975 thriller "Jaws," was an amalgamation of multiple animatronic sharks built for the film — but the sharks frequently malfunctioned during filming.

The movie was filmed in open water off the coast of Martha's Vineyard — but the sharks **had only been tested in freshwater**. The saltwater of the Atlantic corroded the sharks, making them unresponsive to controls. Spielberg was forced to get creative, and in most of the film Bruce is suggested via movement or only seen in glimpses.

The sharks were designed at a full-size 25-foot scale after Spielberg insisted he wouldn't use miniatures in the shoot.

The sharks were designed by production designer Joe Alves and constructed by Bob Matthey, who also worked on sea creatures for the 1954 adaptation of "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea."

The animatronic sharks had hatches on the sides, for access to the system inside the shark for quick repairs — but despite the access, problems mounted.

An underwater adjustable pivot arm allowed the crew to rotate the shark (when it wasn't malfunctioning.)

The shark was named **Bruce**, after Spielberg's lawyer Bruce Ramer.

In the movie, **Chief Martin Brody** (Roy Scheider) ultimately kills the shark with a gun shot to a pressurized scuba tank in its mouth. Scheider was 5'9" tall, and Bruce was over four times his height.

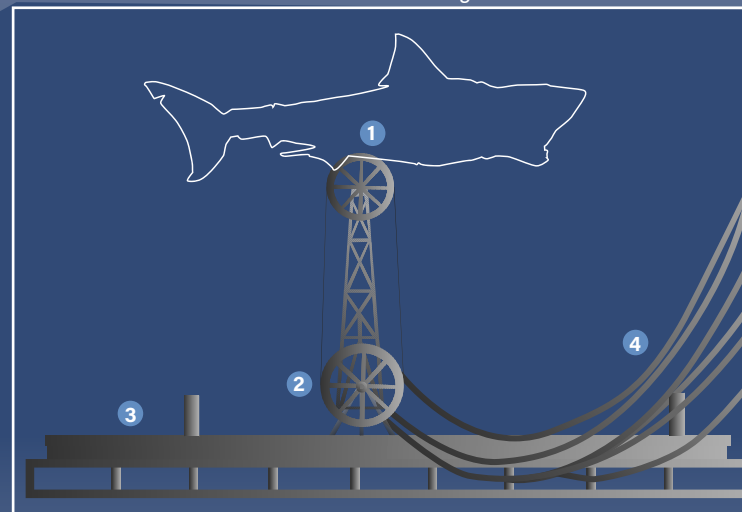
The malfunctions led to Spielberg calling the sharks "The Great White Turd."

Two barges followed the action, a camera barge for shooting and a special effects barge connected to the pneumatic control hoses.

All three sharks had a steel skeleton and a mouth moved with a set of hydraulics.

THE SHARK SLED

One of three shark mechanisms used in filming



- 1 One of the "Bruce" animatronic sharks, attached to the pivot arm.
- 2 The "trolley," which moved up and down the submerged platform.
- 3 The 12-ton, 60-foot submersible steel platform "rail" for the trolley.
- 4 Pneumatic control hoses, used to operate the pivot arm.