

The New York Times® Reprints

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

April 2, 2011

With Bethany Hamilton

By **VINCENT M. MALLOZZI**

Bethany Hamilton was 13 when she was attacked by a 14-foot tiger shark while surfing off Kauai in Hawaii, on Oct. 31, 2003. She is the subject of a new movie, "[Soul Surfer](#)," which opens nationwide on Friday. Hamilton, who has a cameo in the film, lost her left arm in the attack but returned to competitive surfing three months later. In 2005, she won her first national title in the 18-and-under division of the National Scholastic Surfing Association championships. Hamilton, who is now 21, lives in Kauai and surfs professionally. **VINCENT M. MALLOZZI**

Q. *What do you think about the film?*

A. I'm really happy with how it turned out. It's kind of nerve-racking when you combine a true story with a Hollywood twist because you never know how it will turn out. My family and I had a lot of say in what went into the movie and it turned out very well, and we are really excited. It tells of the struggles that me and my family went through after the attack and the passion we have for both surfing and God.

Q. *During production of the film or in viewing it, did you relive the pain and fear of that day?*

A. Not really. Making a movie and the actual real-life events which the movie is based on are very different. My family and I just tried helping producers make the movie as real as possible.

Q. *Did you fear going back into the water?*

A. Yeah, definitely. But my main fear was that I wasn't going to be able to surf any longer. In the end, my love for surfing helped me overcome my fear of sharks.

Q. *What gave you the strength to continue surfing?*

A. I believe in Jesus Christ and I believe he gave me the passion and determination to continue surfing. You fall off the horse and you get back on. I had to go for it.

Q. *You turned pro in 2007?*

A. It was a dream come true. I have worked so hard to get to this point. It's a challenging sport, but I enjoy those challenges.

Q. *What is your main goal?*

A. I want to make it to the world championship tour and I would like to get better at big-wave surfing, which I am very passionate about.

Q. *AnnaSophia Robb plays you in the movie. What did you think of her performance?*

A. I thought she was great. She is a very talented actress. In fact, my mom and I had seen her in other films and we had suggested her for the role, and she ended up getting the part. She hung out with me over two weeks in March of last year to help in her portrayal of me. She came back out in January, and I taught her how to surf. We hung out in Oahu, where they filmed the movie.

Q. *Do you have an active social life?*

A. I enjoy hanging out with friends, going on hikes and playing tennis. I also enjoy Bible study and making dinners. I have a pretty mellow life away from the water.

Q. *Who has been the greatest influence on your life?*

A. There's been a lot of people, but I would have to say my parents. They have encouraged me in my relationship with Jesus Christ and in my passion for surfing. Aside from them, I have a youth leader named Sarah Hill, who is played in the movie by [Carrie Underwood](#). Sarah has been a friend since I was 8 or 9 years old. We all need that extra friend outside of our immediate family to talk about that extra stuff you wouldn't normally talk to your parents about.

Q. *Do you still relive the shark attack?*

A. I'm past it, and I feel really blessed that I was able to heal well after that experience. I'm enjoying life now as a pro surfer and going on surf trips all around the world. I have a pretty exciting life. It was a terrible thing that happened to me, but so many good things have come out of it that it has turned into a beautiful thing.