Violent incidents between humans and orcas in captivity

Several accounts of violent incidents with humans have appeared in books and news clips, with little information on the dates or details of those incidents. Other descriptions have made headlines, and some were captured on video tape. There are also anecdotal reports of incidents that were never officially documented.

NO.	DATE	AQUARIUM	WHALEs	INCIDENT	SOURCE		
	early years						
#1	1968	New York Aquarium, USA	<u>Lupa</u>	When water level was lowered for pool cleaning, young female Lupa sent trainers scrambling from the pool, snapping her jaws threatening.	Edward R. Riciuti, , New York, Walker & Co., 1973, pp. 227-228.		
#2	1969-1970	Flamingo Park, England	<u>Cuddles</u>	Young male Cuddles became so increasingly aggressive, having a hold of at least two trainers, that keepers had to clean the pool from the protection of a shark cage. Cuddles also dragged keeper Don Robinson into the pool when he was at Dudley Zoo but that was possibly a PR stunt.	Edward R. Riciuti, <i>Killers</i> of the Sea, New York, Walker & Co., 1973, pp. 227-228; Reading Eagle, August 15, 1971; Doug Cartlidge, personal communication, March 2010.		
#3	1970s	unknown	unknown	Karen Pryor writes, "I have since heard of at least one killer whale which launched an unprovoked attack on a favorite trainer, in normal circumstances, savaged him very badly, and nearly killed him."	Karen Pryor, Lads Before the Wind, New York, Harper & Row, 1976, p. 220.		
#4	1970's	Vancouver Aquarium, Canada	<u>Skana</u>	Trainer Doug Pemberton described young female Skana as the dominant animal in the pool. "She is capable of changing moods in minutes". He described Skana and her young male companion Hyak 2 as "moody", and	Cranky killer whales put trainers through their paces, The Province, May 5, 1978.		

				recalled that, "Skana once showed her dislike by dragging a trainer around the pool. Her teeth sank into his wetsuit but missed his leg."	
#5	1970's	Vancouver Aquarium, Canada	Hyak 2	Undocumented report of young male Hyak 2 breaking a trainer's leg by hitting it with his tail fluke.	Story on internet sites but no original source known.
#6	early 1970's	Marine World California, USA	<u>Kianu</u>	Trainer Jeff Pulaski, accustomed to riding young female Kianu during performances, was thrown off and chased out of the tank.	Don C. Reed, <i>Notes from</i> an <i>Underwater Zoo</i> , Dial Press, 1981, p. 250.
#7	early 1970's	Marine World California, USA	<u>Nepo</u>	Trainer Dave Worcester was dragged to the bottom of the pool by young male Nepo.	Don C. Reed, <i>Notes from</i> an <i>Underwater Zoo</i> , Dial Press, 1981, p. 250.
#8	early 1970's	Miami Seaquarium, USA	Hugo	Administrative director Anthony G. Toran declared that working with young male Hugo has become too risky after Hugo had "made what appeared to be direct efforts to harm the human performers".	St. Petersburg Times, July 24, 1971
#9	early 1970's	Miami Seaquarium, USA	<u>Hugo</u>	Trainer Chris Christiansen received seven stitches in his cheeks after placing his head within the jaws of young male Hugo, closing his mouth on a mis-cue.	Edward R. Riciuti, <i>Killers</i> of the Sea, New York, Walker & Co., 1973, pp. 232-233.
#10	early 1970's	Miami Seaquarium, USA	Hugo, Lolita	Trainer Manny Velasco recalled both young whales Hugo and Lolita becoming aggressive, lunging at trainers on the platform.	Edward R. Riciuti, <i>Killers</i> of the Sea, New York, Walker & Co., 1973, pp. 232-233.
#11	early 1970's	Miami Seaquarium, USA	Hugo, Lolita	Trainer Chip Kirk got away with a permanent scar on his arm after being pushed around continously by young male Hugo. Trainer Jeff Pulaski had been grabbed by Hugo, then had his wetsuit torn from him by both Hugo and Lolita.	The Miami News, December 17, 1975
#12	early 1970's	Marineland of the Pacific, USA	Orky 2	Unidentified male trainer was seized by the leg and held at the bottom of the pool until the man almost lost consciousness by young male Orky 2.	Edward R. Riciuti, <i>Killers</i> of the Sea, New York, Walker & Co., 1973, pp. 228-229.
#13	1971/04/20	Sea World California, USA	Shamu	PR Secretary Annette Eckis, wearing a bikini, slid off the back of an orca she was riding for a publicity stunt. 5-year-old female Shamu seized her leg and swam around the tank refusing to release the screaming woman until familiar divers entered the pool. Eckis suffered lacerations and puncture wounds.	Edward R. Riciuti, <i>Killers</i> of the Sea, New York, Walker & Co., 1973, pp. 229-231; Mike Lee, SeaWorld San Diego suspends Shamu show, San Diego Union-Tribune, February 24, 2010; Video.

#14	1974	Windsor Safari Park, England	Winston	4-year-old male Winston, then known as Ramu, attacked trainer Doug Cartlidge. There was on official report which was sent to SeaWorld and all other facilities holding orca detailing the attack. SeaWorld have video of Ramu coming out of the water and trying to pull Doug Cartlidge from the training platform. It was part of the video showing all the hand signals before he went over there. Winston also nearly had HRH Prince of Wales when he was swimming with himbut staff saw the "red eye" and got the prince out just in time. He also had a model and punctured skin on her legshe sued but was paid off	Doug Cartlidge, personal communication, March 2010.
#15	late 1970's	Marineland Antibes, France	<u>Kim</u>	Young male Kim took a trainer in his mouth and held him at the bottom of the pool. Finally releasing him, he allowed the trainer to exit safely.	Story on internet sites but no original source known.
#16	1978/05/02	Marineland of the Pacific, USA	Orky 2	Trainer Jill Stratton, 27, was nearly drowned when 10-year-old male Orky 2 suddenly pinned her to the bottom of the tank and held her underwater for four minutes.	Cathleen Decker, Trainer Leaves Hospital, Isn't Angry with Whale, Los Angeles Times, May 1978.
				expansion years	
#17	1980's	Nanki Shirahama Adventure World, Japan	<u>Benkei</u>	Male Benkei pinched his trainer's arm.	Story on internet sites but no original source known.
#18	1984/02/23	Sea World California, USA	Kandu 5	7-year-old female Kandu 5 took trainer Joanne Hay in her mouth and pinned her against a wall during a performance.	Mike Lee, SeaWorld San Diego suspends Shamu show, San Diego Union- Tribune, February 24, 2010.
#19	1984/08/12	Sea World California, USA	unknown	Two killer whales grabbed the legs of trainer Bud Krames and pinned him against a glass retaining wall during a performance. Krames suffers bruises.	Mike Lee, SeaWorld San Diego suspends Shamu show, San Diego Union- Tribune, February 24, 2010.
#20	1984/11/02	Sea World California, USA	Kandu 5	7-year-old female Kandu 5 briefly grabbed the legs of trainer Georgia Jones during a Shamu show but released the trainer unhurt. The 4,500-pound killer whale took Jones' legs in her mouth, but didn't bite down.	Mike Lee, SeaWorld San Diego suspends Shamu show, San Diego Union- Tribune, February 24, 2010.
#21	1986	Marineland	Kandu 7	There have been reports of trainers being held underwater by the mammals. In	Enzo di Matto, Mahem in

		Ontario, Canada		1986, one trainer was taken to the hospital when he fell off young male Kandu 7 and was dragged by the leg around the pool during a stunt.	Marineland, NOW Magazine, October 10-16, 1996, Vol. 16 No. 6.
#22	1986	Marineland Ontario, Canada	Nootka 5	4-year-old female Nootka 5 whacked one trainer in the head with his pectoral during a trick. According to a former trainer, the whale often leapt out of the water to strike trainers by the pool in the chest.	Enzo di Matto, <i>Mahem in Marineland</i> , NOW Magazine, October 10-16, 1996, Vol. 16 No. 6.
#23	1986/11/16	Sea World California, USA	Kandu 5	9-year-old female Kandu 5 pressed her snout against trainer Mark Beeler and held him against a wall for a few seconds during a performance before several hundred spectators.	Dayna Lynn Fried & John Wilkens, Kandu bled to death, San Diego Union-Tribune, August 23, 1989; Mike Lee, SeaWorld San Diego suspends Shamu show, San Diego Union-Tribune, February 24, 2010.
#24	1987	Sea World California, USA	unknown	Numerous San Diego newspapers reported on a "white paper" disclosing at least 14 trainer injuries of various severity while working with orcas within a five-month period in 1987. Only a few of the incidents were were described in the media.	Janny Scott, Waves of trouble at Sea World, Los Angeles Times, December 20, 1987, p. 1.
#25	1987/03/04	Sea World California, USA	Kandu 5, Kenau	A six-ton orca suddenly grabbed trainer Jonathan Smith, 21, in its teeth, dove to the bottom of the tank, then carried him bleeding to the surface and spat him out. Smith gallantly waved to the crowd - which he attributed to his training as a Sea World performer - when a second orca slammed into him. He continued to pretend he was unhurt as the whales repeatedly dragged him 32 ft to the bottom of the pool. Smith was cut all around his torso, had a ruptured kidney and a six-inch laceration of his liver, yet he managed to escape and get out of the pool. Later reports indicate that the whales involved had been 10-year-old female Kenau and 9-year-old female Kandu 5.	Erich Hoyt, <i>The</i> Performing Orca, WDCS, 1992, p. 32; Video.
#26	1987/06/15	Sea World California, USA	Kandu 5	Trainer Joanne Webber, 29, suffered a fractured neck when 9-year-old female Kandu 5 landed on top of her and pushed her to the bottom of the pool during a practice session. Webber had five years experience working with orcas.	Ex-trainer suing Sea World for neck injury, San Diego Union-Tribune, June 15, 1988, p. B-3.
#27	1987/09/28	Sea World California, USA	unknown	Trainer Mark McHugh was bitten on the hand while feeding an orca between shows.	Killer whale injures trainer, Daily Breeze, October 1, 1987.
#28	1987/09/30	Sea World	unknown	While working with one orca during a performance trainer Chris Barlow, 24,	Killer whale injures

		California, USA		was being rammed in the stomach by another orca. Barlow was hospitalized with minor injuries.	trainer, Daily Breeze, October 1, 1987; Mike Lee, SeaWorld San Diego suspends Shamu show, San Diego Union-Tribune, February 24, 2010.
#29	1987/11/21	Sea World California, USA	Orky 2	Trainer John Sillick, 26, suffered fractured vertebrae (T1 to T12), a fractured femur, and a fractured pelvis after 19-year-old male Orky 2 breached on top of him while riding on another orca during a performance. Sillick had less than two years experience working with orcas.	Robert Reinhold, At Sea World, stress tests whale and man, New York Times, April 4, 1988, p. A- 1.
#30	end of 1988	Kamogawa Sea World, Japan Sealand of the Pacific, Canada		In May 1991, one of the trainers that swam with the orcas, told after a show that he had been pinned to the bottom of the pool by an orca and that it happened all the time.	Peter Hamilton, <u>Lifeforce</u> Foundation, personal communication May 1991.
#31	1989/04/01	Sealand of the Pacific, Canada	Nootka 4	Trainer Henriette Huber fell into the whale pool after 6-year-old female Nootka 4 closed her mouth on her hand while scratching Nootka's tongue. Several stitches were required to close the puncture wound.	Barbara McLintock, Whale bit me - ex trainer, The Province, May 3, 1991.
#32	1989	Sealand of the Pacific, Canada	Nootka 4	6-year-old female Nootka 4 had grabbed a tourist's camera that was lowered to water level. Head trainer Steve Huxter grabbed the camera strap and was pulled into the pool. The orca had hold of his leg while he was pulled out by hand by fellow trainer Eric Walters.	Dirk Meissner, Safety worries led to Sealand resignations, Times Colonist, February 22, 1991, p. A-1.
#33	1991/02/20	Sealand of the Pacific, Canada	Haida 2, Nootka 4, Tilikum	Trainer Keltie Byrne, 20, slipped into the whale pool and was carried into the middle by 8-year-old female Haida 2, and repeatedly submerged as the other two orcas, 8-year-old female Nootka 4 and 7-year-old male Tilikum, joined in. After futile attempts of rescue, Byrne drowned.	Dirk Meissner, Whales pull trainer to death, Times Colonist, February 21, 1991, p. A-1.
#34	1993	Sea World California, USA	<u>Kasatka</u>	14-year-old female Kasatka tried to bite a trainer (not Kenneth Peters, btw).	Pauline Repard, Killer whale bites trainer, takes him to tank bottom, San Diego Union-Tribune, November 30, 2006.
				recent years	
#35	1999/06/12	Sea World California, USA	<u>Kasatka</u>	22-year-old Kasatka, the dominant female in the park, began acting strangely during a show, grabbed trainer Kenneth Peters' leg and attempted to throw him out of the pool at SeaWorld San Diego. Peters was able to get out of the pool.	Killer whales: Other Sea World attacks, Orlando Sentinel, February 27, 2010.
#36	1999/07/05	Sea World	<u>Tilikum</u>	A dead man's naked body was found at SeaWorld Florida in Orlando,	Orlando Sentinel, July 6,

		Florida, USA		scratched, bruised and draped over 15-year-old male Tilikum, the largest killer whale in captivity. The 27-year-old, later identified as a man with a history of mental illness, apparently made his way past security at SeaWorld, remaining in the park after it had closed. Wearing only his underwear, the man either jumped, fell or was pulled into Tilikum's huge tank. A medical examiner concluded the man suffered hypothermia and drowned.	1999.
#37	2000's	Sea World Texas, USA	<u>Tuar</u>	Young male Tuar has been involved in several incidents with trainers, none officially reported.	Story on internet sites but no original source known.
#38	2001	Kamogawa SeaWorld, Japan	Bingo	Male Bingo pushed his trainer through and under water during a show.	Story on internet sites but no original source known.
#39		Nanki Shirahama Adventure World, Japan	Ran, Goro	Female Ran and male Goro broke a trainer's leg during a show.	Story on internet sites but no original source known.
#40	2002/08/07	Sea World California, USA	Splash, Orkid	A female SeaWorld trainer was hospitalized and recovering from a broken arm after an incident at Shamu Stadium on Wednesday. The 28-year-old Tamaree was doing poolside training with 12-year-old male Splash and 13-year-old female Orkid. "She was playing with the whales, talking to them," said SeaWorld spokeswoman Darla Davis. "The next thing we know, as it appears from the video, she was pulled into the water." The park has its own video from a pool camera, and it also reviewed a video taken by a visitor who was recording his children nearby. Park officials said the trainer swam out of the water on her own. She was taken to a local hospital, where a pin was put in her arm. Doctors also are monitoring scrapes for possible infection.	Shanna McCord, San Diego Union-Tribune, August 8, 2002.
#41	2004/07/27	Sea World Texas, USA	<u>Kyuquot</u>	12-year-old male Kyuquot repeatedly slammed trainer Steve Aibel underwater during a show. Aibel, who was uninjured, had trained Kyuquot for 10 years.	SeaWorld San Antonio Killer Whale Trainer Has Close Cal, KSAT San Antonio, July 27, 2004; Video.
#42	2005/04/01	Sea World Florida, USA	<u>Taku</u>	A SeaWorld Orlando trainer is expected to return to work soon after being injured by an "overly excited" killer whale, a theme-park spokeswoman said Sunday. 11-year-old male Taku, one of nine at the park that go by the stage name Shamu, swam rapidly past the trainer and circled back, bumping him	Christopher Sherman, Killer whale jolts trainer, Orlando Sentinel, April 4, 2005.

				repeatedly during the Shamu Adventure show at 12:30 p.m. Friday, spokeswoman Becca Bides said. "The trainer maintained control of the animal," Bides said, and the show continued uninterrupted. The trainer, supervisor Sam Davis, was taken to Sand Lake Hospital for unspecified minor injuries and released the same day, she said. Additional eyewitness account: "The trainer and Taku were about to slide on the slide out at the end of the show when Taku completly stopped and started "bumping" the trainer. The trainer was male and he finally swam out of the tank. I knew something was wrong because non of the whale except Kalina wanted to perform. Then they finally got Taku out to splash people at the end of the show, when this incident took place."	
#43	2006/11/15	Sea World California, USA	<u>Orkid</u>	A SeaWorld trainer was injured, when 18-year-old female Orkid grabbed senior trainer Brian Rokeach by the leg, pulled him to the bottom of the pool and held him under water for about 26 seconds. Orkid released Rokeach after Peters repeatedly slapped the water, the signal for the animals to return to the front of the Shamu Stadium stage. Rokeach suffered a torn ankle ligament but was not hospitalized. In response to the incident, SeaWorld increased to five the number of trainers who must be available during live performances and other times when trainers are in the water with the whales.	Terry Rodgers, Marine park cited after whale attack, San Diego Union-Tribune, March 4, 2007; Video.
#44	2006/11/29	Sea World California, USA	<u>Kasatka</u>	28-year-old female Kasatka attacked Kenneth Peters, SeaWorld San Diego's most experienced trainer, during a show at Shamu Stadium. Kasatka grabbed the trainer's foot and dove to the bottom of the 36-foot tank. They surfaced less than a minute later, but she ignored other trainers' signals to draw her to the side. The orca dove a second time with the trainer for about a minute. Peters only escaped after other trainers worked a large safety net between the two. He suffered puncture wounds and a broken left foot. That's the second reported attack by Kasatka on Peters. (OHAS report)	Pauline Repard, Killer whale bites trainer, takes him to tank bottom, San Diego Union-Tribune, November 30, 2006; Killer whale attacks Sea World trainer, CNN, November 30, 2006; Video.
#45	2007/04/10	Sea World California, USA	<u>Orkid</u>	18-year-old female Orkid was getting a sonogram to prepare for possible artificial insemination when she knocked her trainer off a low wall Tuesday. The 35-year-old trainer was taken to a hospital for examination and was found to have suffered minor injuries after the bump from the 5,900-pound whale.	KFMB-CBS, San Diego, April 11, 2007.
#46	2007/10/06	Loro Parque Tenerife, Spain	<u>Tekoa</u>	A trainer at the Loro Parque theme park on Tenerife is in hospital after she was injured this weekend during a training session with 6-year-old male Tekoa at	Trainer attacked by killer whale at Loro Parque theme park on Tenerife,

					Typically Spanish, October 7, 2007.
#47	, ,	Sea World Florida, USA	<u>Takara</u>	16-year-old female Takara hit a trainer with her tail fluke, who was smacked off the slide-out. Judging from the video this doesn't look intentional.	Video.
#48	Inta/2008	Marineland Antibes, France	<u>Valentin</u>		Story on internet sites but no original source known.
#49	2008/09/09	Marineland Antibes, France	<u>Freya</u>	26-year-old female Freya pushed a trainer through and under water (not as part of training or show).	Video.
#50	Spring 2009	Loro Parque Tenerife, Spain	<u>Skyla</u>	In the spring of 2009, during a public show, 5-year-old female Skyla started pushing her trainer around the pool and up against the pool wall. Shortly thereafter, special protocols (limits on water work and a mandate that only senior trainers work with her) that had been standard practice for Tekoa after the incident in 2007 were enacted for Skyla as well.	Tim Zimmermann, <i>Blood</i> in the Water, Outside Magazine, July 18, 2011.
#51	2009/07/17	Marineland Antibes, France	<u>Wikie</u>		Eyewitness account on internet site.
#52	September 2009	Loro Parque Tenerife, Spain	<u>Keto</u>	Not further detailed incident between 14-year-old male Keto and trainer Brian Rokeach, noted by fellow trainer Alexis Martinez.	Tim Zimmermann, Blood in the Water, Outside Magazine, July 18, 2011.
#53	2009/12/24	Loro Parque Tenerife, Spain	<u>Keto</u>	Christmas Special planned for the New Year. The other / trainers were also	Trainer dies in accident at Killer Whale park in Tenerife, Typically Spanish, December 24, 2009;Tim Zimmermann, Blood in the Water, Outside Magazine, July 18, 2011.

				before he could be rescued. The autopsy report on Martinez was telling and states bluntly that his was a "violent death." It describes multiple cuts and bruises, the collapse of both lungs, fractures of the ribs and sternum, a lacerated liver, severely damaged vital organs, and puncture marks "consistent with the teeth of an orca." It concludes that the immediate cause of death was fluid in the lungs (i.e., drowning) but that the fundamental cause was "mechanical asphyxiation due to compression and crushing of the thoracic abdomen with injuries to the vital organs." In other words, at some point Keto probably slammed into Mart'nez with such force that he caved in his chest.	
#54	2010/02/24	Sea World Florida, USA	<u>Tilikum</u>	Brancheau, 40, into the orca's tank about 2pm. Witnesses told that the animal suddenly grabbed Brancheau by the upper arm, tossed her around in his mouth and pulled her beneath the water as dozens of tourists looked on in horror. The coroner catalogued a fractured neck, a broken jaw, and a dislocated elbow and	Jason Garcia and Susan Jacobsen, Animal trainer killed at Sea World, Los Angeles Times, February 25, 2010; Tim Zimmermann, The Killer in the Pool, Outside Magazine, July 30, 2010.

Marine mammal veterinarian Jay Sweeney:

"Aggression expressed by killer whales toward their trainers is a matter of grave concern. Show situations involving water behaviors with trainers and orcas have become popular in recent years. Aggressive manifestations toward trainers have included bumping, biting, grabbing, dunking, and holding trainers on the bottom of pools preventing their escape. Several situations have resulted in potentially life-threatening incidents. In a few such cases, we can attribute this behavior to disease or to the presence of frustrating or confusing situations, but in other cases, there have been no clear casual factors."

(in Marine Mammal Behavioral Diagnostics, L. Dierauf (Ed.). 1990. Handbook of Marine Mammal Medicine, pp. 53-72.)

OHAS report on the Kasatka incident in November 2006:

"The contributing factors to the accident, in the simplest of terms, is that swimming with captive orcas is inherently dangerous and if someone hasn't been killed already it is only a matter of time before it does happen. The trainers recognize this risk and train not for *if* an attack will happen but *when*." (in Occupational Health and Safety report, March 2, 2007; under pressure from SeaWorld this official report was rewritten and the harsh critique all but eliminated)

Sources:

- Orca The Whale Called Killer, Erich Hoyt, 1990
- The Performing Orca, Erich Hoyt, 1992
- Newsclippings, Websites
- and a very special credit goes to the great work of Jerye Mooney