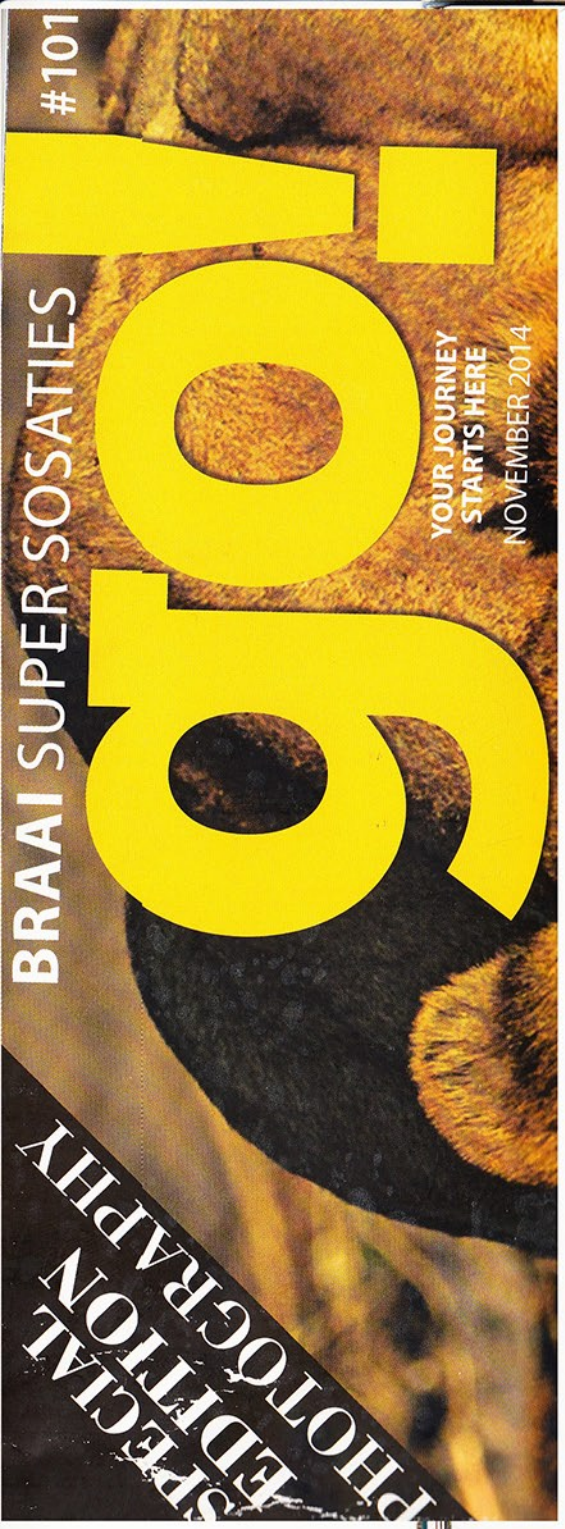


BOOKS

Meet the author

Jerry Buirski is well known in local scuba-diving circles. He's a wreck hunter, spearfisherman and a scientific observer with more than 1 400 sea days on Antarctic trips alone. *You Should Have Been Here Yesterday!* is filled with vivid anecdotes from his life at sea.

Where does your love of the ocean come from? My best holidays have always been at the seaside, ever since I was a kid. My dad taught me how to fish and I spent hours practising the perfect cast with a Penn reel. Later I started snorkelling at Infanta and diving in my uncle's old diving suit.

What inspired you to write the book? I wrote a chapter about my shark encounters for Al J Venter's book *Shark Stories* (2012). A few years later, during a visit to Antarctica, I wrote an 11 000-word piece about wrecks in one sitting. I thought to myself: *Sjoe*, this is easy! A week later I started writing this book.

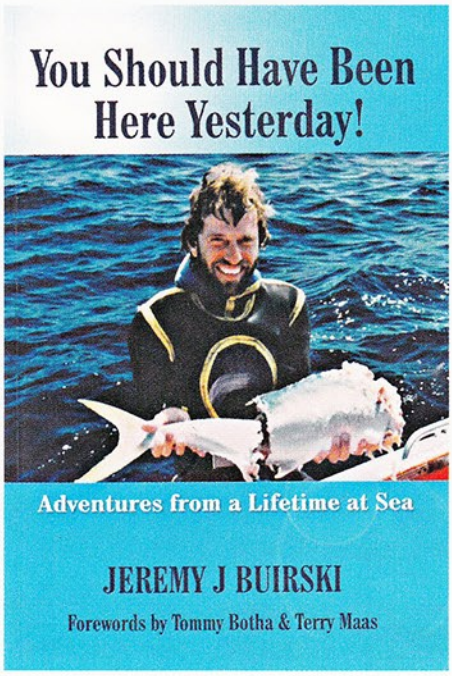
Tell us more about the title. I lived in Struisbaai for eight years and dived whenever I felt like it. Most other divers could only come on weekends. If they encountered bad weather or poor visibility, I always told them: "You should have been here yesterday!"

You've stared a great white shark in the eye many times... Believe me, fear is the last thing on your mind. I always feel like I'm watching the encounter from afar. I keep an eye on the shark and stay calm.

I've met many great whites with no interest in attacking me. People need to know that sharks aren't monsters that eat everything they see. They're mostly just curious.

What's your favourite wreck in South Africa? I like the *Alcestis*, an American ship that ran aground on the rocks a mile from the Agulhas lighthouse in 1892. There's lots to see of the wreck and there are always large schools of fish around.

Your next sea adventure? At the end of the year I'll be travelling to Antarctica aboard a Japanese ship. I'm also planning a trip to Belize, one of the top diving destinations in the world. I can't wait, especially because my wife Lindie and daughter Melodi, also avid divers, will accompany me. It sounds like the perfect family holiday destination.

– Erns Grundling

You Should Have Been Here Yesterday! (R250) is available in bookstores or from newvoices.co.za