

Location in Kruse Audiofiles #1: 1:20:32-1:29:03. Pages 35-39

*Dewey Livingston:* What were you specifically doing down there? What did you see? Some examples of wonderful things you saw or interesting things or your impressions of being down there, since your first dive, you didn't really see too much and we have photos.

*Tom Santilena:* For me, it may have been more beautiful than Bill because Bill was taking pictures of me so I was right on the bottom and as we've seen from many pictures in the past, is absolutely gorgeous. Life is living on top of life and if there was room, life was living on that spot.

One of the real interesting things for me, also, was when he found this hole. It's clearly not supposed to be there. I said that before in other interviews, that this hole was definitely out of place. It definitely wasn't natural and it was fairly symmetrical. It was a round circle. And that was pretty unbelievable and when you look at the sides, the sides aren't quite as vegetated as everything else, as usually sides would be. So that even more confirmed to me that this was something that was man made. And of course, Bill was taking pictures of me so I was down there up close and personal with the beautiful life that was down there.

*Jennifer Stock:* In terms of the habitat and the life that you saw, were you surprised when you really got a glimpse of that? Was that a surprise, to see that density?

*Tom Santilena:* It absolutely is a surprise. You go down to Monastery and you go to 150 feet or so, you don't see much of anything, but to go down here, you're below 120 feet. Now subsequently, we found that we were not on the high spot, very few people ever got right to the high spot, to see the corals and the colors. Luckily, we had light to see the vibrant colors. As far as I was concerned, you would not see life like this at the bottom, no possible way. There's not enough light. When there's no light, things don't live.

But the only thing that I can attribute to all the life that we saw was that it was clear enough out there where some of that light, ambient light, got down to the bottom. The beauty and the life down there, I did not expect to see that at all.

*Dewey Livingston:* Did you know what a lot of that was?

*Tom Santilena:*

Yeah, a lot of it I knew what it was. From teaching diving, you have to tell people what things are, so just through time, you know what it is. Could I tell you the family and genus and all that? Absolutely not. But a species of fish? I probably could tell you a species of fish. This is coral. That's a starfish. This is a sponge. California, these corals here, and so for me, I just totally did not expect this to be that way. There should be nothing there.

*Bill Kruse:*

One of my impressions of Cordell Bank compared it to my diving experience in Monterey where I started in 1965 and watched as they put the sewage outfall in off of Carmel and saw the decline of the diversity of the ecology of the bottom over the years to what it at least was the last time I saw it, pretty bare in comparison. Monterey and perhaps Point Lobos, Point Lobos probably came as close to what we saw at Cordell Bank but it didn't measure up, probably because it was near shore, more sedimentation, and also the fresh water from Carmel.

But Cordell Bank had a higher density of life on it than anything I've seen except in the Red Sea, and of course that's completely different, completely different species and such. But the Red Sea was the only place where I'd seen comparable densities of stuff climbing all over everything. This was pretty special. It was like going on a trip to some foreign country and finding something that you'd never see along the coast of California and that was impressive.

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The other thing that I noted is that we started, of course, on the 19-fathom pinnacle because it was the shallowest place and perhaps the most accessible, but as soon as you get to 150 feet, there's almost this demarcation where everything changes within about 10 feet as far as – and I assume being an engineer rather than a biologist has much to do with the light that gets down there. So that we found this lush coverage many of these places we dove, like Craine's Point and the Western Pinnacle, they were not as lush but they were deeper and that was consistent. But still, everything looked really healthy and most of the time, we had good visibility at the bottom, even if we didn't have good visibility at the surface. That, of course, enhanced the impression of what we found.

Relative to the holes – we were looking at a picture here of the 19-fathom pinnacle of the first hole we found and that we found right at the beginning, pretty well the first time we dove there. We found that 'cause

it's right at the top and it can't be missed and we thought, among other things, "My gosh, what would cause this?" And there was wild speculation at the time.

What we didn't realize is there's numerous other holes in the area of the ridges surrounding here and we found a year or two later a much larger one just across the channel on another ridge, on a deeper ridge, more than three or four times as large. By then, we were learning that the Navy probably had something to do with this but this was all very cloak and dagger type information at that point in time and we puzzled about it a lot. But it was also when you don't have your full capacity of thinking, and that was the case at 150, 180 feet when we were doing it, this kind of caught you by surprise.

So we were blown away. We didn't know it and Tom and I came across them first because we were laying the transect line and that's when we found them. It was totally unexpected. Beyond all the biodiversity, I think that blew us away as much, if not more, because it seemed impossible. We didn't know at the beginning what could have caused it so it was like this is impossible. How can it happen? And it's there and we see it and we have pictures of it.

That was part of the adventure. There was the spirit of adventure there because you're finding things beyond what you ever imagined, completely different, having nothing to do with Cordell Bank, the location.

*Tom Santilena:* I remember being kind of disappointed because it was like somebody's been here first. It must have been like Scott and the South Pole when Amundsen already got there before him and he was devastated. I remember being a little disappointed. It was so difficult for us to get there and these guys got here pretty well and they dug holes there.

*Jennifer Stock:* The holes, as you saw them, they looked pretty clean, right? There wasn't a lot of marine life in them?

*Tom Santilena:* There was less marine life. The close in crustacean type stuff was in there, little sea anemones, but as you can see in the pictures, it's not gonna get as much light when you have a cylinder there. The sunlight's gonna come from one angle and there just wasn't – it was clean. I could stand down in those holes and not worry about an urchin or anything like that.

