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Steve Williamson: The first log that I have written here, and I believe it's accurate, would be the first dive we made other than Jerry on Cordell Bank was on October 10th, 1981, north end of Cordell Bank. And I have here the depth the first dive, the top of the pinnacle is 145 feet, and we were down 15 minutes, water visibility 60 to 70 feet. And name of partners was John Walton and Dave Cassotta, which meant that Dave Walls and Jerry were probably diving together as partners. And I believe that John and I were just basically used to collect marine samples off the bottom, and Dave was – I don't know if Dave was using his camera at that time. I believe so, and go from there.

That was the first dive on Cordell Bank, as I remember, and for me it was an awe-inspiring event that was incredible. You're going down, floating down the descent line. What I noticed was that we were staggered as we're going down, and you can actually see each other 10, 15 feet apart. And as we reached the bottom, you could see the bottom coming up at you, and it was more of a kind of a greenish haze at first, and as you got closer, then some of the colors started coming out, and then the marine life and the abundance of juvenile rockfish and the hydrocoral is what caught my eye.

Jennifer Stock: How about Jerry? Since you dove there first and reported back to everybody, why don't you talk about your first dive?

Jerry Seawell: My first dive was – at first I was a little, of course, nervous, apprehensive, 'cause I wanted to fit in with the group that was there and prove that I was worthy of my skills. And I remember jumping off – basically being pushed off the boat. That's what they did, 'cause you had to sit on the edge of the boat, and they'd hold on to your yoke, your tanks, so you didn't fall in too soon. And as the boat would cruise by the buoy, then they'd tap you or push you.

So I went in, and I went with Bob Schmieder. Got in. The Zodiac – the safety crew handed me my camera from the Zodiac boat. Bob gave me the thumbs-up, ready to go, and I told him, "Sure," and we went down. There was a current, a pretty good current, and I had to pull myself down at least 30, 40 feet. And at that distance, 40 feet away I could see the top of the peak, just the outline of it. I was going, "Holy cow, I can see it from here."

And as I got closer, I noticed the current decreased. It was pretty just awe-inspiring, and then the amount of fish. The first thing, I saw stuff moving, just like amoebae. Didn't know what it was, and then as it got clearer and clearer, I saw all these rockfish, and literally had to push 'em outta the

way, swim outta the way. And then once you got through them, I saw the bottom and the hydrocoral, and I just – it would just inspire. I had to sit there for a minute, just take it all in before I – “Oh, I’m supposed to take pictures.” So I mean, there was a good minute or so I was just looking around and forgot what I was supposed to. But I was just so impressed.

And then we timed a 15-minute dive. We get the thumbs up. We both checked in our watches. I started coming up, and I just said, “Man, I have to leave already? It just seems like I just got here.” And I didn’t wanna leave. I just wanted to stay down there. But I said, “Well, there’s another day to come back.” So yeah, it was probably the most impressive dive of my life.

Dewey Livingston: And were you on the second dive, then, that Steve just described, that same year?

Jerry Seawell: Yeah.

Steve Williamson: They dove that – Dave Walls and Jerry probably were dive partners. But they would do – [5:00] a lot of times we would go in in groups of five, but we would be in pairs of three or two, with separate tasks or at separate times.

Dewey Livingston: Since you have the mic, do you have something to say about that?

Jerry Seawell: Yeah, I think the first year or two that we dove as the five of us, I believe we dove in two-man teams, and so John and Dave would go down and collect specimens, and then the next team would go down, get some more specimens. And I’d be hooked up with Dave and later on with Lew Stark, and then I would take photos while the other one collected samples. And it was kinda like collecting samples was, like, ad hoc, I mean, at first. They just use a goodie bag. You just start scooping. And then as you’re coming up, you see stuff trailing out. The small sediment would trail outta the bags, but at the time, that was what they were using, and then we had to find a different way to do it. So basically, that’s...

Dewey Livingston: First dive?

John Walton: Boy, and I remember being really nervous sitting on the side of the boat, ‘cause you’re 20 miles out to sea and there’s usually a fog bank. You can’t see shore, so it’s pretty intimidating looking down.

I remember Bob giving us the – getting prepared for the dive, getting your gear hooked up. He would give us a little rundown of what he wanted. He wanted us to collect as much as we could, typically fist-sized, pieces of

hydrocoral or tunicates or any of the sponges, anything that we saw, and to try to cover the whole transect line.

The first dive I don't have a lot of memory of. I do remember I was really impressed with the dropping down through the gloom and then seeing the bank kinda pop up at you, and the fish. I remember diving down through olive rockfish and literally having to push 'em out of the way. They were just all around you, just like all over you. And once you broke through 'em, you could see the bottom and get down on the substrate.

I have more recollection of other dives that I did later on. I don't know if you wanna go into that now or wanna just continue – I do remember sitting on the rail, waiting to go on one particular dive, and I think Jerry and I were there, and a couple blue sharks swam by underneath us. Bob was holding us up on the boat, on the rail. We watched – getting ready to – buoy's approaching. We're getting ready to jump, and here come these sharks, and Bob taps us on the shoulders: "How do you feel about diving today?" [Laughter] "Let's go."