

*Jennifer Stock:* Well, let's move a little bit more into what Bob's main goal was for this entire mission. And at the time when you were on these dives, did you have any idea really what body of knowledge this was contributing towards in terms of where this was all gonna go eventually, versus just collecting stuff and collecting stuff? What were your thoughts on that, in terms of the purpose of the expedition?

*Dave Walls:* I kinda agree with Dave Cassotta that [20:00] certainly I, too, was first attracted just the sense of adventure. Just the word "expedition." For us guys that taught scuba, going off the beach in Monterey and kneeling on the bottom while students did skills got really frustrating, because we got into it because we love the ocean, love the marine life and all that.

I know that personally, after just a few dives, I began to understand what I was a part of, and that became the excitement too, that we're doing something meaningful, something that can make a difference. I don't know if I really appreciated that we were going into the direction of having it become a marine sanctuary till later. But yeah, I was glad to be part of it.

*Dave Cassotta:* I agree with Dave Walls. While we were doing the expedition, I didn't have any idea what it took to get an area designated as a national marine sanctuary. I wasn't so interested in protecting the area, except for protecting it from oil drilling. Once I saw what was there, I thought, "Oh, this would be a tragedy if this was contaminated by a major disaster."

And being a conservationist and not a prohibitionist, I could see that, as a resource, as a fishery, it was very valuable – it was full of juvenile rockfish – and that I knew there were charter boats going there to fish, and I thought, "Well, I don't want that to stop, but I do believe it needs to be regulated to preserve this." So I started getting more into the idea of what we were really doing.

But really, to be honest, after a while of year after year of doing this, and as was mentioned earlier, we had to pay for it all ourselves. And owning a dive shop and being called upon a lot, after a while I felt like the Sacto Team was being used. I just kinda felt like, okay, this is the Bob Schmieder expedition; it's not going anywhere. Because I was on the dive side, collecting, taking pictures, but as far as what's being done with that, I didn't really know.

It wasn't till he published the book that I realized "Wow, we really did something, and this could really happen. This could really become a

national marine sanctuary.” And it wasn’t till then that the real reality of it hit me.

*Steve Williamson:*

I echo what Dave Cassotta and Dave Walls said. I don’t need to add any more to that. I agree that once the book was published, it began to set in that, okay, this was really for something.

Where it hit me the most – and this was 29 years later, 27 years later – Dave Cassotta and I were at the Fisherman’s Festival, Bodega, year before last. And we were walking around having our token beer and corndog or whatever it was, looking at the festivities, and we looked over, and there was a Cordell Bank Marine Sanctuary booth set up. And of course, we were drawn right to it and walked over there and started looking at all these things and the posters that they had and what they’ve accomplished. And Dave looked at me and goes, “This is what we did this for,” and that’s when it set in with me personally is that “Wow.”

Then the lady that was there – Dave talks more than I do; told her we were divers, and then hence we – at least I gave my first autograph. But that’s where it kinda accumulated for me is – or it came up as the – what it was there for. Like everybody else, though, I started off for the adventure and then bought into the reason and the quest for the sanctuary, like everybody else.

*John Walton:*

Again, I did it for the adventure. I mean, how often do you get to go to places that have never been dived in the world and have the opportunity to be the first people to see it? In the beginning national marine sanctuary wasn’t even in the picture. We didn’t even talk about it. [25:00] We were out there to dive in a really neat place, and as far as biologically, it was a marine biologist heaven. And that’s what really interested me was the fact that they started to find new species and range extensions and depth extensions, and it was just an amazing place.

And as time went on in the late ‘80s, when it was finally given that sanctuary status, no one really knew about us. I mean, we were just divers on an expedition, but you felt proud because you could look out and say, “I was out there, and I saw that, and we did that.” So I always felt good about it. No recognition.

But the part that was really fun was the October dinner where we were invited down and given recognition. I was proud of us all, and we did something that was a highlight of my life. And when I pass, that’s where I wanna go. I wanna be dumped out on Cordell Bank. So it’s a special place.

*Jerry Seawell:*

When I first started in the expedition, in my wildest dreams I would've never thought it'd end up the way it is. I just thought it was a bunch of wild and crazy guys getting together by a leader who had some visions, but I thought maybe this would just end up being a scientific paper, something like that; it wouldn't go any further. Like I said, I would have never dreamed it'd have been a national sanctuary.

And at the time, it was like – these other teammates here, just an adventure. Fun adventure, see somewhere, and then I felt a little selfish that I've been someplace that the majority of divers and people that have never seen this world, and I've been there and they haven't. So it was a bit of selfishness on my part there.

But once I heard it became a sanctuary, said, "Hey, I contributed something." And like John said, it's a pat-yourself-on-the-back kind of moment. But I never dreamed it was as big as when we came back in October for the get-together, and just the reception we got. I said, "Holy cow. I can't believe this." But yeah, it's something I'll never forget.