

*Dewey Livingston:* It is afternoon now on March 9<sup>th</sup>, talking with Sue Estey and Don and Elaine Dvorak. We'd like to continue and ask about the practice dives that you made as part of this expedition series: what was required of you, where did you go, things like that.

*Don Dvorak:* As part of preparing to dive on Cordell Bank, we needed to do practice dives. They could be done on your own or it could be done as a group. One of the first dives I remember was not at the ocean but it was at Marine World Africa USA in Belmont. We got to dive and went into the tanks with the fish. We would swim around in the tank and we would look out at the people looking at us. But that was a real treat. I don't think I could have done it any other way except through the expedition to dive in their tanks.

But we were trying out new equipment. We didn't need to do deep dives for new equipment; we were trying out communications underwater, what they called hydrophones between divers and the surface. At that time the technology was very new. We needed to trail about a six-foot wire behind us that was on a buoy, a little flotation device. And the systems worked but it was very cumbersome with this thing trailing behind you. It was more overhead to where you need special masks with the microphone in the regulator. So we determined that wasn't a good option to dive on Cordell Bank.

And other places we'd practice at were Monastery. I think two months earlier they dove in Monastery. The interesting thing about Monastery is it's a beach dive, and of course we don't do beach dives to get to Cordell Bank. It's a long swim for one thing, but it gives us the opportunity to evaluate the divers that want to be part of the expedition. You can see how well they can operate with their twin tanks and octopus regulator. You have to have a certain amount of strength and be able to handle this equipment. And it's even a little more complicated on sand. And we did see that some people's enthusiasm was a little higher than their ability and this is what we need to know. We just had to politely say, "I'm sorry, this don't quite meet our requirements."

We also dove the Farallon Islands. If I knew then what I know about the Farallones now I might have opted out. I didn't realize it was the place where the seals pulled out during breeding season, a lot of little pups around. And that's shark food, and I could be mistaken for shark food. However I don't remember the date of the dive so we might have been diving there off season. We had the opportunity to dive there and collect samples, I think we had a

permit to collect samples. And of particular interest to me – was that the North Farallones where the caves were?

*Sue Estey:* My dive log has May 1990, North Farallones, so it was well after all the Cordell Bank dives I'd done.

*Don Dvorak:* I see. I do remember diving there and we found a horizontal cave. It was shallow, maybe about six feet, eight feet or ten feet, but we all explored, went in there. And as you went in it got narrower and narrower. But what was unusual is, when you went in there and the further back you get the louder the surf noise became. And it became so loud that it was uncomfortable on your ears,

at least on this dive. So I never ventured too far back because it was just too uncomfortable. But there is an anemone, a large anemone. I think it's called anthopleura, it's an anemone that often lives in sand or hard substrate and it could be six to twelve inches across. And they're intertidal, in shallow water. They do get a lot of sunlight and they are green from the algae that grows in the tentacles. I was so used to seeing anthopleura as green; in the caves I saw an anemone I haven't seen before, same size as anthopleura but the tentacles were almost clear luminescent and they were white with a little purple on it and I says, "Wow, what a pretty anemone." I did manage to take pictures of it, says, "I've seen something new."

Later on I found out it is anthopleura but since there is no sunlight the algae doesn't grow in it so it keeps that whitish clear picture to it. That was an interesting part of diving the Farallones, besides the potential of the sharks, which I didn't know about.

*Dewey Livingston:* Sue, did you have anything to say about practice dives?

*Sue Estey:* First about the Farallones. I remember going in and it looked like that was an arch, just an arched rock kind of thing and I went to swim through that, but then I saw light kind of in a different direction so I went that way towards the light. I was turned around, I did not really understand at first that there were the arch and this tunnel, but I saw the light, I went to the light, figuring I was going out, and I got further in and it got rougher, kind of more surge and gooseneck barnacles were growing towards the other end, and then this gray shape kind of suddenly appeared out of the green water and, oh my God. But I was quite relieved to discover it was really a seal, not a great white shark. Once I got to the far end and realized I'm \_\_\_\_ towards the open ocean because there was a lot more movement in the water I turned around, went out back the other way. But I have pictures of those white and pink anemones too, and it's pretty neat.

But practice dives, the ones that I remember mostly they were aimed at getting deep but close to shore so we could get assistance if we needed it. So there would be, either at Monastery or Point Lobos where the marine canyon, the Monterey Canyon comes in close so you can get deep pretty quickly. A good way to remind yourself what narcosis feels like and still be able to get back to dry land pretty fast.