

*Dewey Livingston:* Did you take part in the planning of the first dives?

*Tom Santilena:* I think everybody, to a degree, took part in the planning. I don't think anybody knew how it was going to come out and everybody had certainly their opinions on how it should be done, but I think in the end, it just came about by itself. And if you're talking about on the boat directly, that's when it all came together because Bill and I knew we were going to be the first ones. It was my Zodiac so we knew from that standpoint what was going to have to be done. It evolved like a normal dive. For us, it was pretty normal equipment and it's just that we were probably a little bit more competent than the other people to actually do it. So we really just got there and once we were there, we did it.

*Dewey Livingston:* So you're saying there wasn't a lot of preparation meetings, do this, do that?

*Tom Santilena:* I'm sure there was a lot of preparation and meetings but when it comes down to it happening, it happens completely different than what you planned.

*Bill Kruse:* We did have meetings although I don't remember them in detail. I'm sure Bob has them documented in a box somewhere. But we did do practice dives in Monterey with the gear, making sure we could doff it and don it and get in through the surf. And also, I think we actually took the boat out, as well, and fell off the boat and climbed back into the boat, tried to simulate as much as we could in Monterey the types of conditions.

But I don't remember feeling as confident in our capabilities as Tom seems to remember when we went out there. It seems to me in my memory that we made several trips out there before we actually were able to dive that season and we didn't know the weather window. We didn't know currents. So it seemed like it was getting iffier and iffier as each trip occurred and we were starting to wonder if we really knew what we were doing and knew if we could do it. So I wasn't as confident as Tom seems to think he was.

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*Tom Santilena:* Well, I actually skipped the beginning part. There was a lot of preparation in terms of practice dives and this sort of thing to make sure that what

really were the capabilities of the people who were there? Were they capable of doing the things that they advertised themselves for? How good of a diver are you? 'Cause Bill and I can look at people and pretty much size them up on what their capabilities are.

Yes, there was a lot of preparation. Whenever we'd go out, Bill's right, we didn't get out there and jump in the water and go to the bottom. There were many things, many times, and attempts to get out there. But I think the thing that was most intimidating was the weather. You never knew how the weather was gonna be and coming out from Drake's Bay around the point, the conditions of the sea are always a bit lumpy there until you get beyond.

So you never knew what you were getting into until you got there and then the problem was can we find this place? That was what took the most problems and that's what ruined a lot of it – ruined or made a lot of the dives unsuccessful or trips unsuccessful, because we couldn't find it.

*Bill Kruse:* So I have to correct you. In the early days, we came out of Bodega Bay exclusively.

*Tom Santilena:* Okay, yes, that's right.

*Bill Kruse:* 'Cause that's where we could rent a boat and a skipper who would take divers out, which was pretty unusual.

*Dewey Livingston:* Now, Bob definitely had his goals for this expedition and what turned into an official expedition. Did you have any particular goals or something you wanted to get out of it?

*Tom Santilena:* I just wanted to have fun and go into a project. That's my only preconceived desire and goal was just go out and get it done.

*Bill Kruse:* So you didn't have to do yard work.

*Tom Santilena:* It's better than yard work. It's harder than yard work but much more interesting.

*Bill Kruse:* I was interested in the photographic opportunities 'cause I'm still an amateur photographer but I love to do it. So I was interested in taking

what we learned in the cave diving and applying it to the offshore diving. I'd done photography all over the world and in Monterey a lot. I'd traveled before this and so Cordell Bank was a place that nobody had been before so it seemed like an opportunity to get the first pictures of someplace where nobody had been.

You think back to the moon landing and you think, well, nobody's been there. Well, nobody had ever been to Cordell Bank before, at least that we knew at the time, and so that was the spirit of adventure for me other than just the mechanics of doing it all, which of course I get into. And we'll probably get into this later, but it evolved into actually mapping the place. That, to me, became, other than photography, the most important thing for me.

*Dewey Livingston:* You mentioned the chart and all you had to go on then was that one chart. How was it approached to find this place if all you had was a chart that didn't give you a lot of confidence?

*Tom Santilena:* Well, we were depending totally on LORAN and just our general direction. I guess Bob had been there before so he knew generally where it was but in those days, it was by the seat of our pants that we would get out there. I think first was LORAN-A and then it got to the more sophisticated, what was it, LORAN-C?

*Bill Kruse:* We actually depended upon the skipper of the boat that we rented initially and whatever navigation equipment that he had, be it a compass, be it a finger in the wind, or be it a LORAN-A or C. None of these things seemed particularly reliable and the shallow point on the chart was a dot 20 miles out to sea that was just a little hard to imagine finding. It actually amazes me that it was found and it was because of the skipper and his sea sense that actually brought it together.

But finding it again over time, we continued to evolve our methods, of course, until I think just about on the last trip in 1986, we actually had one of the first GPS systems but only for two hours a day because there's weren't enough satellites up there and it required a huge 19-inch rack of equipment and also, an engineer from Motorola to operate the thing. So as time went on, the navigation improved, but by the time we essentially ended our intense efforts on the project, we still didn't have what we have today, which can put us right on the spot within meters.

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*Jennifer Stock:* Do you remember the date of the NOAA chart you were working – was it a NOAA chart you were working with?

*Bill Kruse:* Um-hum.

*Jennifer Stock:* Do you remember the date of that chart?

*Bill Kruse:* No.

*Jennifer Stock:* It was an early chart, though?

*Bill Kruse:* It had to be like 1975 or something like that.