

Location is Sacto Audio files #3: 20:28-24:41. Pages 29-30

*Jennifer Stock:* So did anyone want to talk a little bit more about any of their diving experiences in terms of marine life and ascent/descent and currents?

*Dave Walls:* I mentioned a little earlier that one of my favorite experiences with the whole Cordell Bank – with the first few times, certainly, of making the dives – was the descents. The experience, especially given the amount of time it took to get to the bottom, of just getting into a skydiving position and literally flying down, perhaps rotating around the descent line. And I remember in my first experiences – I don't know if it was the first dive; probably – that I had the sensation that I was looking virtually into the abyss. It just went dark blue, and there was nothing below. And then as others have described, would faintly see something down there. And then as you got really close, just the explosion of color, just color everywhere, which was a total shock given the depths that we were going to. Really loved that. Didn't like the ascents too much because it took forever, obviously, and worried me at points, where is the surface.

*Dave Cassotta:* I think the descent, especially my first one, was probably the most exciting because you had no idea what to expect. We've seen the photographs. We've talked. We've heard all of the briefings and what to expect, what the task was supposed to be. You're trying to visualize what to expect as you're going down the descent line, and as you're passing the strobes on the way down, you can feel the pressure increasing. I mean, you have to equalize, but you actually feel some suit squeeze and so on on the way down, so you know you're getting deep. And it's dark. Generally, it's getting pretty dark.

And you go through the first group of marine life and species that are on the surface, like jellyfish and so on, and you pass through the layer of that, and then you get down a little further and there's nothing. And then you see this real dark outline, and okay, there's the bottom. And so you go to land on the bottom, but there's no place to land without crushing something, because it is just covered with hydrocoral and sponges and a variety of other marine life and, as was mentioned earlier, all of the fish, the schools of rockfish, and some of 'em huge, that we don't normally catch when we're out rockfish fishing or so on. Some really big fish. And lots of juveniles too, a lot of juvenile fish.

I think one of the coolest things is being a cinematographer and having a movie light. You only have about five minutes of light and then the battery goes dead. So you're conserving light, and so you get near the bottom, and everything looks kinda dark. You can make out some colors, like Dave was saying, which was surprising that you could see color at that depth. But then when you turn the movie light on, which is much

brighter than your average underwater flashlight, and it just lights up. Just the color was phenomenal and was like nothing I had ever seen before.

And as I said, as a group we dove all over California and in the tropics and other places, and we thought we'd seen everything in California. I mean, how many times can you dive Monterey and see the same thing, or Fort Bragg, over and over? But to get out there and see stuff that we had never seen before was just unbelievable.

And as Jerry was saying, you didn't want to have to end the dive. You wish you could just hang out there a little longer, that it was a safer environment or that there was a place like that you could go up on land where you could see stuff like that. But you still – being the creatures we are, we had to head back to the surface.