



# The Journal of Diving History



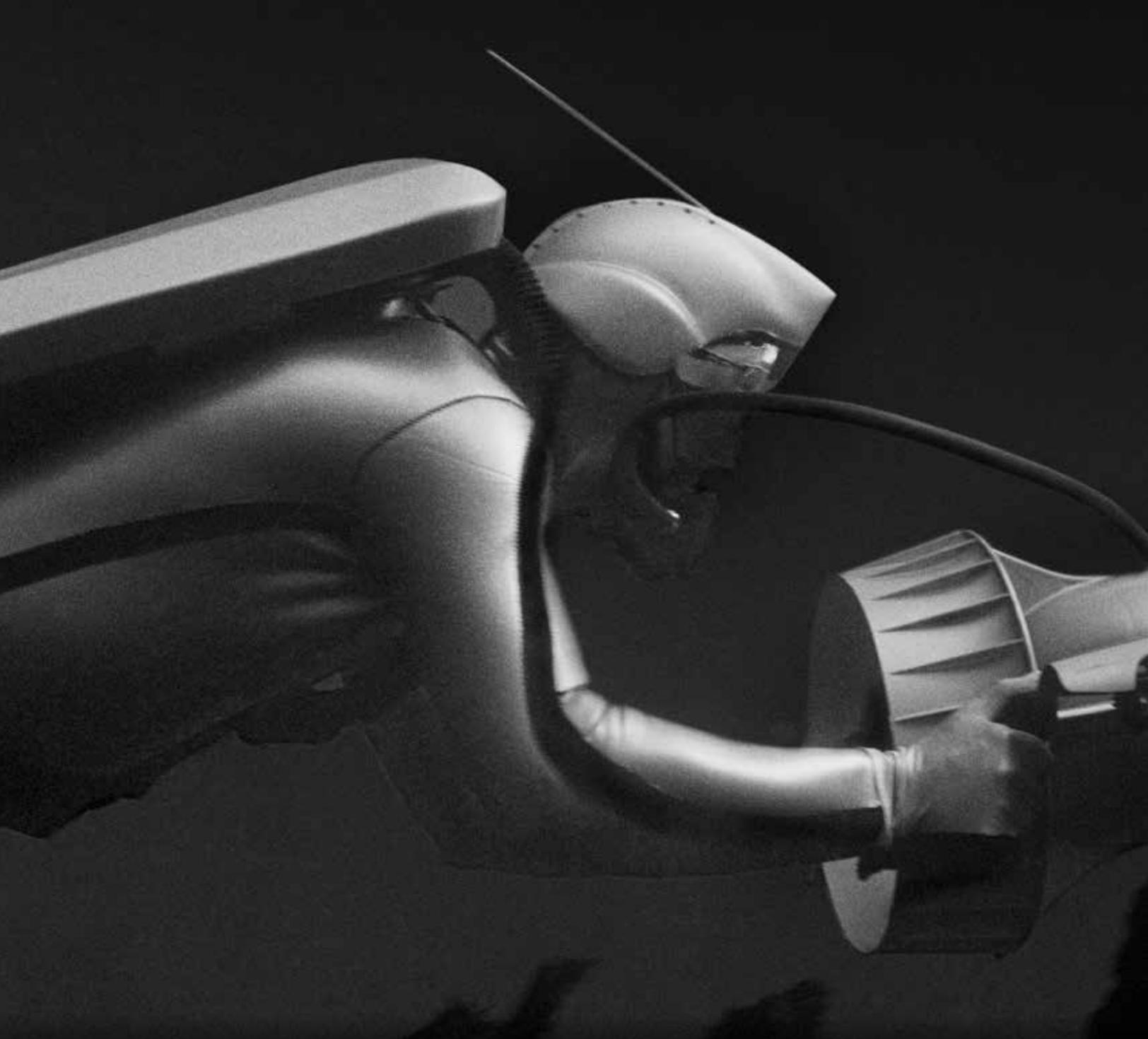
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ERNIE BROOKS

The Master of Depth and Light



# ERNIE BROOKS

## The Master of Depth and Light

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In a career that spans the full history of American recreational scuba diving, Ernie Brooks has established himself as *the* premier black and white underwater photographer. Using the Santa Barbara Channel Islands as his workshop, Ernie exposed this area of America's underwater national parks in multi shades of grey and brilliant shimmering silver. His influence on a generation of underwater photographers can still be seen in the work of Cathy Church, David Doubilet, Chuck Davis, Richard Salas, and numerous other A-List underwater photographers, all of whom passed through his programs at The Brooks Institute of Photography. His magnificent 2002 book *Silver Seas: A Retrospective* set the world standard for the black and white format, and has long since sold out. His portfolio of work is often compared to that of Ansel Adams, and a major international exhibition featuring both their work is scheduled to open later this year.

As one of the Society's most ardent supporters, Ernie has played a pivotal role in many of the Society's successes. Arguably, the Society's finest hour was the 1998 Hans and Lotte Hass Film Festival, conceived by Steve Barsky and executed by a team lead by Ed Stetson. Working behind the scenes, Ernie opened the critical doors that allowed the Festival to be what Stan Waterman called "*The finest tribute festival I have ever attended.*" Many attendees echoed that sentiment. Some still do. Hans's pioneering black and white images from the 1930s and 1940s were an inspirational spark in Ernie's early years as an underwater photographer, and Ernie was delighted to welcome Hans back to America.

With major international exhibits of his work now being prepared we are proud to present a few of Ernie's most popular images with this article. The bulk of the interview here was conducted by Michel Gilbert and Daniel Alary, with additional questions by Leslie Leaney.

### **Was photography always your career?**

I was born to be an image-maker. My grandmother was a portrait photographer, my uncle was a landscape photographer, both in black and white. My father turned the corner in color; he became a world-famous flower photographer before founding a photography institute. Photography was in the conversations. I loved the process, it was time consuming but beautiful. Being in the dark was also a very important part of it. It took a lot of time so it gave you time to think, time to be with yourself. And I think a lot of my work is that way; it is very peaceful, at peace with itself.

### **All the work we have seen from you is done in black and white. Has it always been like that?**

Definitely. My father was colorblind; I can't see how he accomplished what he did. Black and white has always been in my life. This is how I have seen everything. Coming from a photographic school later in my life, the black and white process was just fantastic; having complete control of everything, starting from the light up to the finished product. It also has to do with my mentors, the people that I studied: Ernst Haas, Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen. I just love the quality of black and white, and *the color*.

### **You mean the absence of color?**

No, the color of black and white; it has its own color. Grey is beautiful; and black; and white.

### **Did you want to emulate what Ansel Adams has done in land photography?**

Only his light. I tried to learn and apply the way my mentors were seeing the light; the way they were capturing it... the details in the highlight and the details in the shadow. You have to know where to put the exposure and you have to know in what range you want to process it. It needs to fit the emulsion, the range of the film. That's the way we were raised. That curve has to be there. Today, it is possible to falsify that a bit with computers and software, but the joy then was getting that on the negative and into the darkroom making the print. That was an important part of my work and so was the importance of the statement.

### **And what about u/w photography?**

Portrait, landscape, nature and flowers were already taken so, I was left with very little to explore: I turned to the sea.

### **When did you start diving?**

1949, that was very early skin diving.

### **Did you start in underwater photography at that time?**

It was around; Dr. Hans Haas was my hero. He and his wife produced beautiful black and white images. I would show those pictures to my parents and they would say, "Their blacks and their whites are not that great." But for me it was the discovery of a whole new world. In the late 1940s and early 1950s there were some great underwater photographers that produced wonderful work. Jerry Greenberg and Luis Marden, for example. The latter even presented me with the NOGI Award in 1975.

### **You were also part of an emerging breed of great photographers?**

We can say so. People like Ron Church. He and I used to enter competitions and it was great. He was good and so was I. He had the advantage of photographing turtles and corals in all these exotic places. I would have kelp and sea lions. Al Giddings, then a still photographer, along with Bob Hollis were just starting. We founded the Academy of Underwater Photographers at the time.

### **What was your first underwater camera and how did it evolve from there?**

My father had an old Exakta, a very primitive camera. I built a housing for it. It leaked miserably. I took one or two photographs with that rig and decided that 35mm was not for me. Remember, the only film we had was Panatomic X, ASA 40 – try to push that one some place... it didn't work. So 2 x2 and 70mm became my style.

### **Which camera did you use then?**

The Rolleimarin, a Hans Haas-designed housing manufactured by Franke and Heidecke that enclosed their twin-lens Rolleiflex camera. It was housing number 107. I had an f2.8 Rollei lens.

### **Many of your published work was done with a Hasselblad; when did it come into action?**

I went from the Rolleimarin directly to the Hasselblad SWC. The former was too

limiting for me. I like wider angles and I didn't like macro. I don't care for close-ups. I like the vista, the feeling... the great expanse of the ocean. I liked the wider view, the sunlight, the "landscape".

### **Haven't you done macro photography underwater?**

In 1975 I made two rolls of 35mm macro pictures and the resulting images created an exhibit later that year in Beijing. For me there was no challenge in underwater macro photography.

### **Your father founded the Brooks Institute of Photography; did you introduce underwater photography in the program?**

My father founded the Institute back in 1945. I came along and assumed the presidency in 1971. I turned the school into a 4-year university-level program. I introduced the audio-visual, the undersea technology, the high science end of it, physics and optics. I brought it into more of a liberal education and created a graduate school for master degrees in art and science. But the undersea program gave me my birth, everything I ever wanted in life. It was the students that made it.

### **Was the underwater photography program always your favourite at the Institute?**

Definitely, without it I wouldn't have stayed! As divers know, there is a calling into the ocean. We wanted our students to make a statement on what they felt about a subject and publish their work. This made the program different.

### **Was the underwater photography program profitable?**

It never made money. It was the costliest one. I would meet with my board of directors and tell them, "Let's see how much publicity this underwater photography program can create for us, how much energy it can generate for the institution."

### **You later sold the Institute but I think that they still have an underwater photography program, don't they?**

The have a smaller underwater photography program than what it used to be. Had I stayed there I would have made it into a 4-year program.

### **North Americans tend to talk too much**



*Winged Angel.* Santa Barbara Island, November 6, 1993. Hasselblad SWC 38mm in a Hasselblad underwater housing. 1/125 sec @f8. T - Max ISO 400. "Under the rays of the afternoon sun, she came towards me with innocent curiosity. Another favorite dive site is this sea lion rookery on the south-facing end of Santa Barbara island. Over the years, I've spent countless hours here, studying their behavior and social patterns, but I still continue to be amazed by how easily they accept me into their midst."

**about equipment and/or technique. Was it hard for you to tell students that equipment and technique are part of the work but there is far more to it?**

F-stops and shutter speeds don't work! You learn technique early in school and you are right, photographers tend to concentrate too much on technique. You see it so much in the portraiture field and also in other aspects of photography. It's all about optics, physical optics, shutter speeds. It has nothing to do with what I wanted to say. I learned my craft very well. I could walk outside, look at the sun and tell you exactly what exposure I need in the deepest shadows, in the brightest highlights. So, what else do you want to talk about? Let's talk about how we will light the subject, this is important. How will we separate it from the background so it comes forward? Or do you want it to come forward? What is the most important thing you want to say with your image? Those are the important issues.

**How do we tell or teach someone to go beyond the f-stop question, start seeing the light and use it effectively?**

Today, with the technologies that drive the profession and the amateur field, they are slowly learning what it took us years to absorb. They are realizing that digital photography cannot record the highlights and shadows on the same exposure like film did. They are thus using techniques like masking, adjusting it, fine tuning it. In other words, getting a foundation probably without even knowing it. This is almost a self-taught process today. Also, everyone must get continuing education. I personally love to go to school and to continue to learn. You cannot stop learning. I opened up a book today and I looked at some of the images where I found new scenes, new ways of looking at things. There are also new media created and all of this is very exciting.

**Wouldn't it make us better photographers if we started in black and white? It imposes an approach where one has to concentrate on contrast, shapes, texture and composition. Isn't it the best school to learn the basics?**

I tend to agree with the statement. Black and white is like starting with a blank piece of paper. It is one tone and you create something on it. The 21 or 8 steps of grey create such delicate transitions. I definitely would not be where I am, had

I had just color in my background. Some of the best photographers in the business today started that way. This is all we had then.

However, when I look at Chris Newbert's work or at your work for example, so much of it has to be in color. It is nature's way of living. My work takes some of that away. In my case, I love the way highlights and shadows fall on the subject. Also, it is easy today to turn a color picture into a black and white one. In the end, it depends on the subject.

**As photographers, we found that the learning curve is not straight. It starts slowly and then, over the years, there is a dramatic improvement. Has this been the case for you as well?**

One becomes more selective. You know what you want to do, which statement you want to make with your images. Your eye becomes more selective. In my case, since I only had 10 exposures to work with, I would take just one or two photographs during a dive. I was searching for light first and then for the subject or, conversely, if I found a subject, I would search for proper light and try to bring the subject into this light. The idea is to make a statement with light. I had a rule on my boat, *Just Love*, which I used to teach underwater photography. I told my students that they had to control their index finger. They did not have to come back from a dive with a full roll of exposed film. The selective eye is a key notion in photography and there were many books written on this concept.

**In the case of your imagery, were most of the images made in your mind before entering the water?**

No, it was not the case. A few maybe, but not the majority. An image that comes to my mind is the three sea lions perfectly positioned, shot against bright sunlit background from 60-ft. deep that became my signature. I squinted and saw that they were in the ideal composition and made only one picture. Each time I would go in the water with sea lions afterward I would try to make a similar photograph and it never happened.

**Your book, *Silver Seas*, contains incredible images. Tell us how it came to be?**

I never even thought about doing a book. I had always promised to myself that

at 65 I would retire and do something else. A good part of my life was spent as an administrator and this was not my favourite type of work. I loved the students and the teaching though. So, when I was preparing to retire, my Vice-President and former students convinced me. They found a publishing company and told me that I simply needed to pick the negatives and they would do the rest of the work. The name *Silver Seas*, a natural, came up from Media 27, those involved in the publishing. Also, the proceeds, when they come, will go to organizations like Ocean Future and when they are exhibited, it should also benefit the kids.

**There are many images in the book, which one is your favourite?**

It has to be "Spot" the harbour seal because there is a story behind the image, an interesting story. It is 6:30 one morning in August, 12 students are aboard *Just Love*. We are anchored off Anacapa in the Channel Islands near a sea lion and harbor seal rookery. I am alone, snorkelling, looking through the kelp. Here comes this harbor seal. I think it is a boy since it is fat. It comes up, grabs one of my fins, spits it out and leaves.

I swim back to my boat with one fin as the students are getting up. They ask, "Mr. Brooks, how come you only have one fin?" My answer, "Don't talk to me, get me my Hasselblad." The students add, "Isn't it early to go snorkelling?" I said, "That's enough, can I borrow your fins?" Someone hands me those very long blade fins - I hate them. I get my snorkel, look down, it's 7:15 and I say to myself, "I am diving down to 15 feet, he's going to be 1/125<sup>th</sup> at about f/8, ISO 800, and I'll nail him!"

I dive, snap one image, and come back up. The seal leaves and, as I swim back to the boat, the guy tries to grab my snorkel with its mouth - a terrible character. We photographed Spot many times over the years but I never got the same image again. Also, one year, we get there and Spot had a little one... this is when I realized that the seal was female. She comes forward and pushes her pup towards me... this brought tears in my eyes as I realized the bond that existed between us. Spot is my favourite picture because of the story.

**Tell us a bit about your technique?**

I know how to read light and here's an



*Spot*. Anacapa Island, August 23, 1990. Hasselblad SWC 38mm in a Hasselblad underwater housing. 1/125 sec @ f8. T - Max ISO 400. "While enjoying free diving, I set out to snorkel in the kelp forest. At fifteen feet below the surface, nestled in the kelp fronds, *Spot* appeared. A sweet shaft of early morning light graced her face; her expression, priceless."

interesting story. I got my Hasselblad in 1961 and gave it up in 2000 without ever changing an O-ring! Some water would creep in and, eventually the shutter got stuck at 1/125... Of course, I wouldn't tell my students... Since the shutter and the aperture were coupled together, I ended up with a fixed combination, it was either 1/125 at f/8 or 1/250 at f/4 and so on... those became my settings. I would go and find a subject to fit them.

**And you never seem to use a strobe?**

I only used a strobe once with my underwater work. The image is in my book. It is called *Magnificent Blue*; a Blue shark lit from underneath. This is the only picture I lit with a strobe.

**What would be your first advice to someone who would like to take up underwater photography, as a hobby or a profession?**

First, education is really important. You need to understand today's craft. Not so much what I was raised with but today's technologies and techniques. You need to perfect that up to a point where the person comes up with a realistic image. Then the person needs to find an outlet for what he or she wants to say. It does not need to be a magazine; it can be through books, the Internet, etc. There needs to be an audience, an outlet for what you need to say. If I was starting today I would go see the *Hemisphere* magazine people or the *American Way* magazine publisher, *En Route* magazine editor and bring them my story, my statements. I would tell them, "Here's what I want to say to your customers, here's my story." It needs to be done more. You need to go beyond the obvious.

**And where should underwater photographers go for inspiration?**

This is a good point. I would go to a library, a hardcopy library. I'd look at books. I'd look at the pages, the paper they were printed on, the beauty of the images and the statements that are made by the artists. It could be pictures from years ago. Look at them like you do with all art. You cannot go "www.photography.com" and find it. You find those things under Library of Congress number XYZ. Look at Adams, Steichen, Stieglitz, Weston and others. Look at those who influenced the earlier people. Who did they look up to? You have to go way back in history as well

as exploring contemporary photographers and artists.

**Is it easier to make a photographer out of a diver or a diver out of a photographer?**

Good question, because they are mixed techniques. But I'd rather work with a photographer. First, because we speak the same language. And I think that if you do a cross-section of today's underwater photography it is done by someone who truly loves photography and wants to do something with it. There are exceptions but someplace, there is land-based photography in their blood.

**How does someone learn to see in an artistic way like you do?**

It is hard to say; some of those things are in your genes. For whatever reason, I have always been able to see the little ants walking on the ground. My uncles and my parents have always been visual people. They would look at people differently; you have to have that. Language creates the vision; the words create the vision.

**What is the most overlooked aspect of underwater photography in what you see from contemporary photographers?**

What we need yet to do is to make statements that are significant and that make some changes within the ocean environment to a positive stance. That's easy to do with shark-fining or whaling, for example. What is much harder to do is to make pictures that will help in reducing water pollution. There is a need to do more visually to show to the world what is happening when we use cyanide to capture fishes for aquariums. The same applies to the dynamite use in fishing. Also, we need to show the true aspect of bleaching. We have a responsibility with our craft to do something. We see artists doing it and we are artists. This is one of the reasons we created the Ocean Artists Society.

**What do you see in the coming years in the underwater photography field?**

It is now global; it is an international subject. Many photographers from all around the world are making statements. This is healthy. I see more and more documentary work about what is happening in the ocean and how we can contribute. We need to publish more in foreign languages, not only in English.

**Is digital a blessing or a curse for photography?**

It is truly an incredible blessing because it allows more people to do it, with the help of modern technology, in their homes. It is healthy.

**Should someone start by learning the craft using film or digital?**

I think that you do not need to learn with film. It won't be long before you won't see much film around. I don't look for Fuji or Kodak to continue this foolish polluting process that is chemical photography. I have seen too much chemicals go down the drains.

**Is there an image that you would want to make but have never been able to achieve in your lifetime?**

Not really. I love my craft and the joy of making images fulfilled my dreams. Something interesting: many times I would not realize how good the image was until I started working on it in my lab. I would watch the image materialize on the paper and see how much better it was than when I tripped the shutter.

**So, on many occasions, the print would be better than what you thought it would; was it the case more often than the opposite?**

Yes, and there is an image in particular in the book; it is called *California Gold*. You are looking up at the kelp on the surface and just where the bubbles are on the kelp there is a little starburst. I did not see it when I was making the picture. I saw the whole kelp but not that detail. I happened to make my test strip just in the middle of the image where this starburst is located. When I saw that I felt lucky; to me this came as an extra.

**If you had to relive the past, would it be the same or would it be different?**

I wish I had been more of a shepherd, to bring more young people into the program; help more those who could not afford it. Education is expensive and I wish I had gone to other schools and found ways to attract more students through scholarships. I did as much as I could but I could have done more.

**HDS: Being an underwater photographer based in Santa Barbara in the 1960s, you were witness to the rapid development of commercial diving equipment and**



*The Magnificent Blue.* Anacapa Passage, September 30, 1981. Hasselblad SWC 38mm in a Hasselblad underwater housing. 1/125 sec @ f8. Plus - X ISO 200. "Only vulnerable to the predation of man, this powerful and truly magnificent creature, with its ancient, sleek design, easily survives all others in the sea."

**the rise of the oilfield support dive companies. Did your work cover any of that?**

From 1964 on I was involved with several projects with the commercial diving industry. My photographic interest in perfecting underwater lighting for the

many firms—International Divers, Ocean Systems, Murray Black's DIVCON, Texaco, etc.—that were exploring our coastal waters. Platform Helen was our model for discoveries. Chris Swann came aboard in later years. Woody Treen and his diving team were also involved.

**the underwater Ansel Adams and now a major exhibit featuring work from both of you is being planned in China. Two American land/seascape photographers opening up in a communist country. How did that come about?**

The title, "Ernie Brooks - the Ansel Adams of the Sea," has been like a tattoo on me for so many years. It hasn't washed off, and it seems it is because of my love of black and white within the oceans of our colorful planet. I chose my subjects to be within a timeframe that is endless. It could be 2012. Or it could be 1492. That is the power that Ansel and others who perfect the "Art and Science of the Image." Making a statement for all ages in time. And after my 60 years of being published and presenting programs worldwide and having photo-exhibitions about the grandeur of living in Santa Barbara, the 1969 oil spill image I captured January 17, 1969 came of notice recently by Jeanne Adams, the curator of the Ansel Adams exhibits. My latest exhibit, "Fragile Waters," is being planned to travel the world as a major Museum of Art Exhibition... the opening will be assured! And China may well be the first showing for 2012... and there will be a lesson learned from all ages. This timeline will be viewed without a political sentence. It will be a continuing focal point for centuries to come, and new responsible words will come to be – in every language –



divers began with an early association with the Dillingham Corp. The Navy underwater lights were designed as a working light source and not for photography and especially color. An ideal light output would be daylight of 5,000 degree kelvin temperature. The navy light was 3,200 degree kelvin which gives a warm color, so the ideal light would be dysprosium and quartz iodide gas-discharge lamps. And these did become the standard for all underwater studies, providing true colors of outstanding quality, and the rest is history. Santa Barbara was the center for testing and my Brooks Institute merged its Undersea Technology Program to assist in the photographic documentation of the

**HDS: You recently started working with an infrared camera. It seems that at even this stage of your career you are still engaged in the cutting edge of your craft. Do you feel there is still something you have to achieve?**

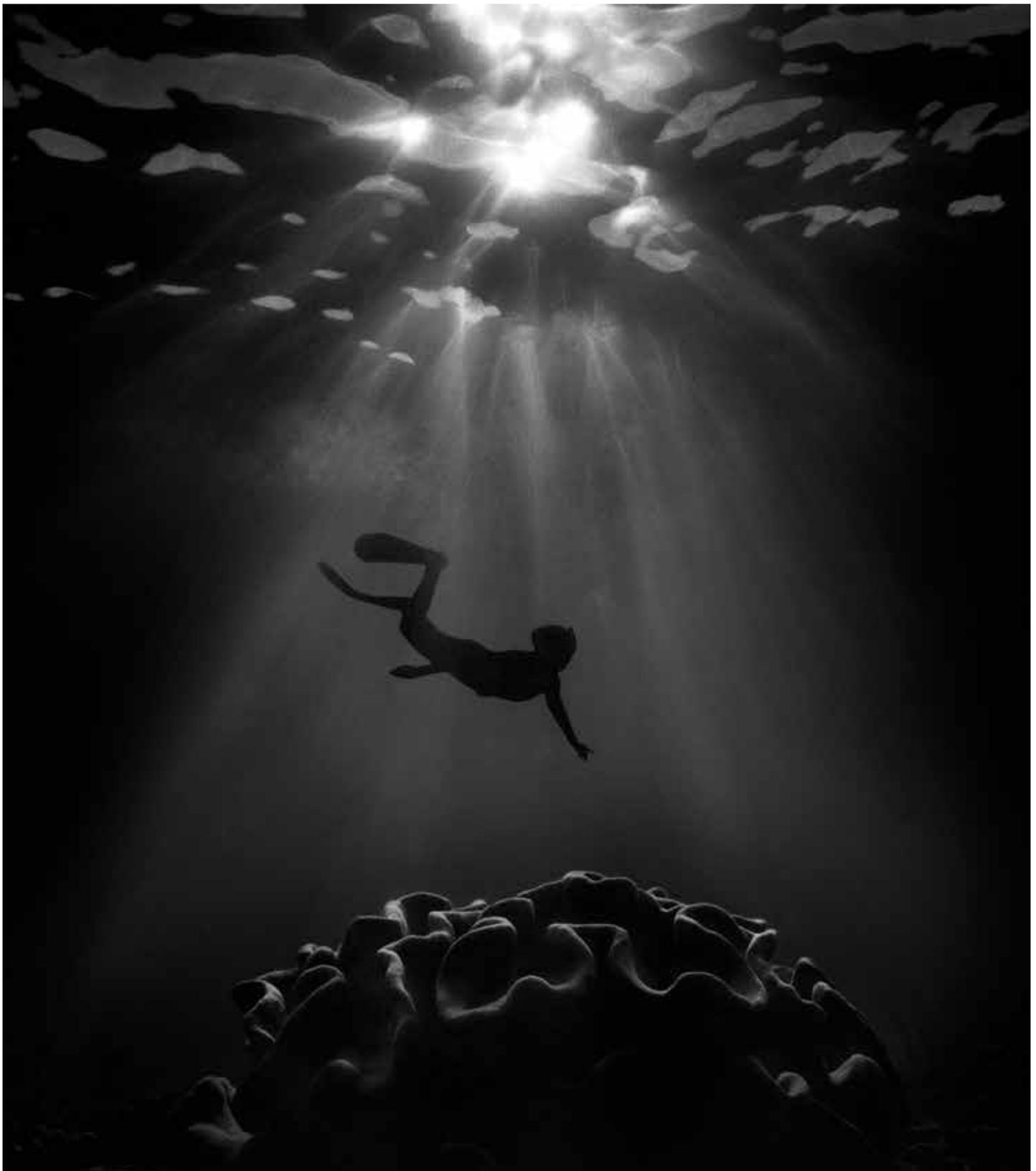
At 76 my life has had a new beginning. My focus has been enlarged to bring about a role as one that "Visually Explains" the change we are experiencing on the planet. My infrared images attract the eyes first, and the subject next and they become a comparison for information (I was) filming in Antarctica earlier this year. The portrait of our 7th Continent brought a message about its FRAGILE state. The beauty, the solitude and the future that lies ahead.

**HDS: You have often been referred to as**

to preserve.

**NOTES**

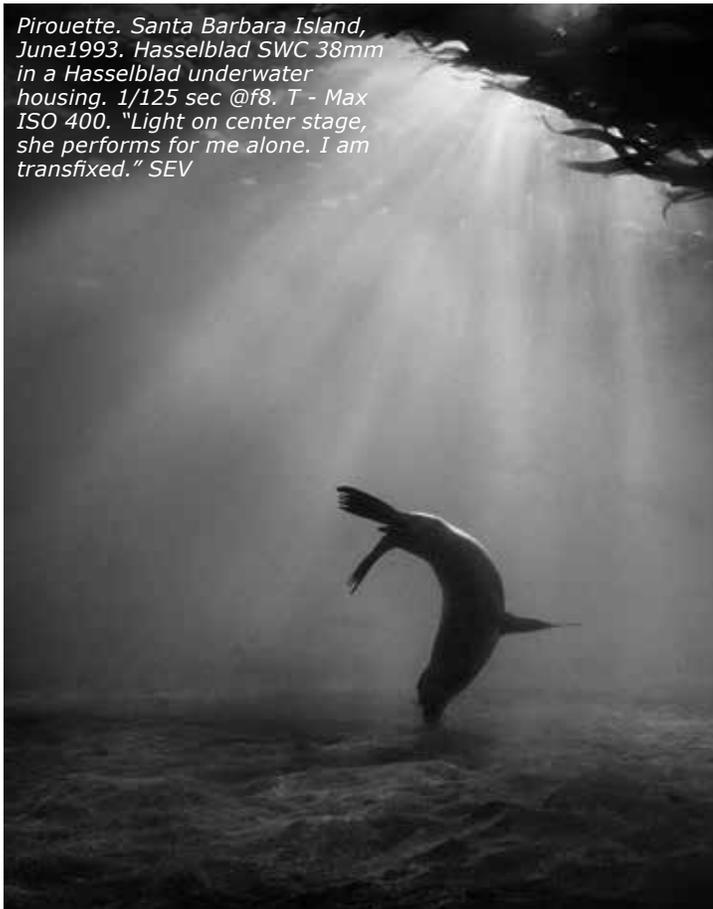
*This interview was first published in the March 2007 edition of Diver Magazine (divermag.com). The complete interview, conducted by Michel Gilbert and Danielle Alary, can be found in Diving Pioneers and Innovators: An In-Depth Series of Interviews, by Brett Gilliam. The book is available from the Society. Details are on page 56 of this Journal. Ernie Brooks's magnificent book, Silver Seas, may ordered through Media 27 Inc., 3030 State St., Santa Barbara, CA 93105-3304. Phone: 805-563-0099. Visit them online at www.media27.com.*



*(Preceding page) Storm Under the Sea. Cocos Island, Costa Rica, January 8, 1990. Hasselblad SWC 38mm in a Hasselblad underwater housing. 1/500 sec @f3.5. T - Max ISO 800. The turbulent and violent wave activity of the Pacific swell is hammering the oceanic face of Cocos Island. I feel the pounding at eighty feet as the waves break and crash onto the surface. I patiently await each break to capture a series of underwater "Clouds."*

*Freedom. North Tubbataha, Sulu Sea, Philippines, 1996. Nikonos V, 20mm lens, 1/125 sec @ f8. T - Max ISO 400. There are moments when enough falls into place; perfect early morning sunlight, crystal clear water and a fabulous coral garden. My model, diver, and photographer, Lyn Funkhouser, explores the coral setting.*

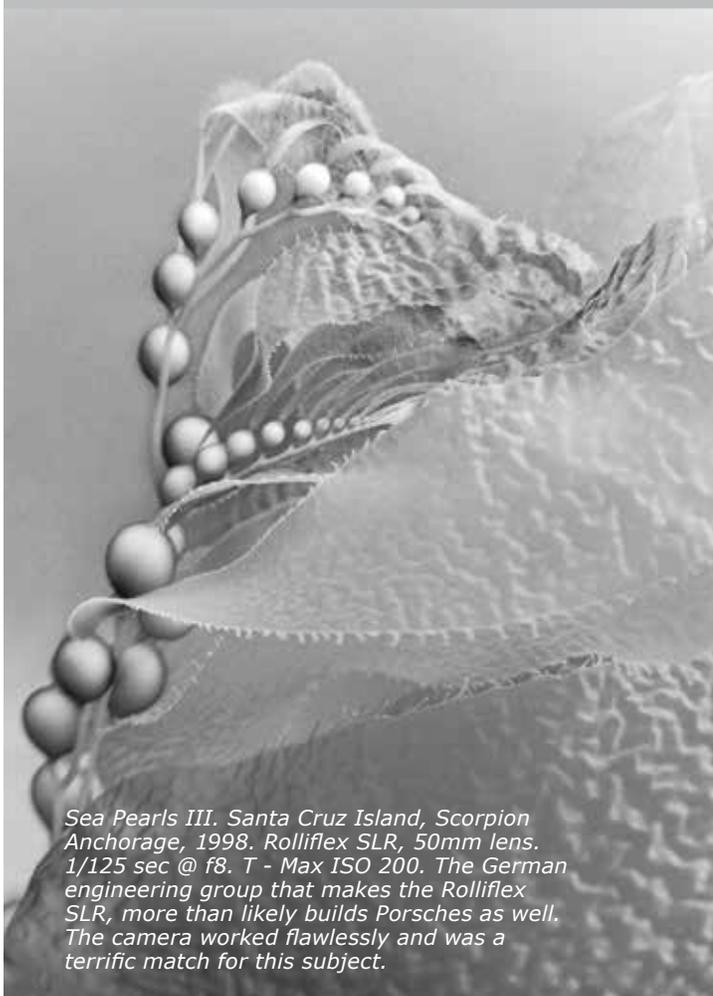
*Pirouette. Santa Barbara Island, June 1993. Hasselblad SWC 38mm in a Hasselblad underwater housing. 1/125 sec @f8. T - Max ISO 400. "Light on center stage, she performs for me alone. I am transfixed." SEV*



*Clowns of the Sea. Santa Barbara Island, April 3, 1993. Hasselblad SWC 38mm in a Hasselblad underwater housing. 1/125 sec @f8. T - Max ISO 200. These two female sea lions learned this trick by watching divers. Here they begin exhaling at the same instant I did, matching my breathing pattern. Later that same dive, I discovered that other sea lions in the area were practicing the same routine.*



*Sea Pearls III. Santa Cruz Island, Scorpion Anchorage, 1998. Rolliflex SLR, 50mm lens. 1/125 sec @ f8. T - Max ISO 200. The German engineering group that makes the Rolliflex SLR, more than likely builds Porsches as well. The camera worked flawlessly and was a terrific match for this subject.*



*Sun and the Moon. Monterey Bay, September 18, 1994. Hasselblad SWC 38mm in a Hasselblad underwater housing. 1/125 sec @f8. T - Max ISO 400. The sea voyage from Santa Barbara to Monterey was rough and windy as we skirted around Point Conception and Point Sal on our way to Carmel Bay. Near a serene anchorage, we encountered hundreds of Moon Jellyfish seeking shelter in a quiet cove.*



# A Tribute to Ernie Brooks

By Leslie Leaney



(Above) Image © 2013 Lina Hitchcock.

(Below) Image © 2013 Mary Barron.



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On September 14, 2013, the Historical Diving Society partnered with the Santa Barbara Underwater Film Festival in presenting a Tribute to Ernie Brooks, a long-time Society Patron and Advisory Board member. Held at the historic Arlington Theatre in Santa Barbara, California, the tribute program was a benefit for the Historical Diving Society (HDS) and the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum (SBMM), and drew over 1,500 attendees.

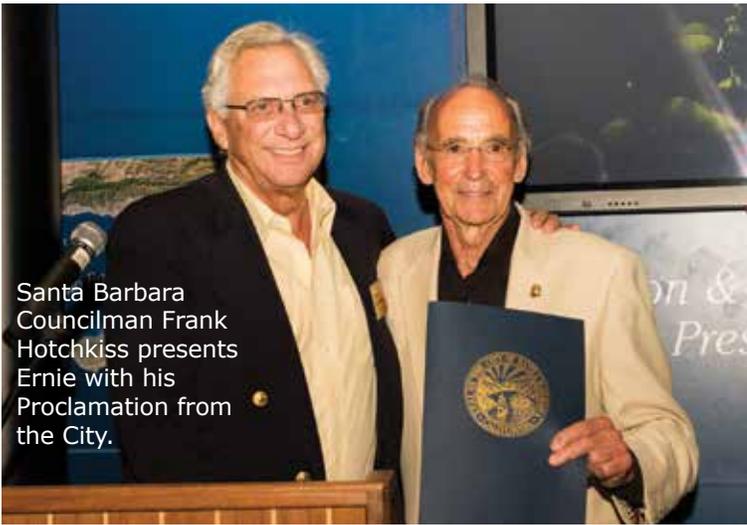
The event was organized by Ed Stetson and Leslie Leaney, who had previously produced the 1998 Hans and Lotte Hass Film Festival at the same venue. As with that Festival, the organization was headed by Ed who drew together a like-minded team of volunteers from the local diving community. Just like the Hans and Lotte Hass Festival, everybody was a volunteer and nobody was paid. All the proceeds were donated to the HDS and SBMM.

The idea of staging a tribute event for Ernie had been a topic of discussion between the two organizers for some time. The decision to move forward was finally made by Ed during the party following this year's Film Festival at the Beneath The Sea show at New Jersey in late March.

Ed recalled, "That was my first BTS show. When I saw Ernie, Stan and Valerie all on stage together, it hit me. I wanted to do another big Underwater Film Festival in Santa Barbara. This one will be for Ernie, so it's going to be first class, all the way."

Once Ed had a buy-in from the HDS and SBMM, he put together a volunteer Festival Committee and started working on a specific date and venue. The HDS was represented on the Committee by President Sid Macken, and the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum by former HDS President, Don Barthelmess, and SBMM Executive Director Greg Gorga.

Earl Richmond signed on as the Festival Video Producer and Steve Barsky of Marine Marketing & Consulting headed up the Media and Public Relations department. Both Earl and Steve had been on the Hans and Lotte Hass Film Festival Committee and brought a great deal of experience and expertise to the team. Program graphics and design were handled by Bonnie Toth Advertising & Design, of San Clemente, California. Bonnie



Santa Barbara Councilman Frank Hotchkiss presents Ernie with his Proclamation from the City.



L to R Dietmar Fuchs, Bret Gilliam, John Teth, David Doubilet, Rodney Fox and Pete Romano. Image © 2013 Lina Hitchcock.



Rodney Fox and Valerie Taylor talk sharks. Image © 2013 Lina Hitchcock.



IMAX underwater film makers Howard and Michele Hall.



HDS Director James Forte between Bob Kirby and Bev Morgan at Santa Barbara Maritime Museum.

produced a beautiful 48-page, full color program that was given to every attendee as they entered the theater. Bonnie is the current President of the Women Divers Hall of Fame and that organization was instrumental in doing some of the early promotion of the event, which several members attended.

Getting commitments from the leading underwater film-makers and photographers to present their work in tribute to Ernie was easy. Ed invited a few of Ernie's former students and close friends to be presenters and every one of them that he invited said "Yes." As expected, juggling international schedules presented some problems. However, several of the presenters changed or cancelled commitments just so they could take part in the program.

The Tribute weekend started on Friday September 13, with a Sold Out VIP Reception orchestrated by Carol Kallman at the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum. Blancpain watches, the prime sponsor of the Tribute, exhibited some of their Fifty Fathoms dive watches and presented attendees with their oversize Fifty Fathoms Portfolio, which featured several images taken by Ernie, one of which was used on the cover.

Greg Gorga welcomed the more than 450 guests to the museum, whose several diving exhibits provided an appropriate ambience, and Sid Macken welcomed guests on behalf of the HDS. Festival co-organizer Leslie Leaney gave a special welcome to international attendees who included HDS Asia Co-Founder John Teth from Singapore, HDS Advisory Board members Valerie Taylor and Rodney Fox from Australia, Hans Hass Award Committee Chairman Krov Menuhin, Laurent Ballesta and Manuel Lefevre all from France, Martha Watkins Gilkes from Anitgua, and journalist and publisher Dietmar Fuchs from Germany.

Also taking the podium were Wyland, who hosted a live auction, and Bret Gilliam who presented Valerie and Ernie with special TDI Diving Pioneer & Living Legend certification cards #2 and # 3. (Stan Waterman had already received #1 back in New York.)

Ernie's influence on the community of Santa Barbara was recognized by a Proclamation from the City of Santa Barbara, which was presented to him by City Council member Frank Hotchkiss. Ernie thanked everyone for their support of HDS and SBMM, and thanked all those who had come from overseas to attend his Tribute event.

On Saturday afternoon all presenters and production staff assembled at the Arlington Theatre for a run-through of the evening's program. Following the agreed upon directions from Ed to keep introductions short and allow for maximum impact of the images, every presentation was screened by Earl to ensure there were no surprises for the evening program.

The Saturday night Film Festival was opened with a video introduction produced by medium format underwater photographer Doug Cummings and scored by his son Seldon. Doug had also produced the introduction to the Hans and Lotte Hass festival 15 years earlier.

Master of Ceremonies Leslie Leaney welcomed everyone to the event, acknowledging prime sponsor Blancpain watches, and recognizing representatives from HDS strategic partners from across the United States who were in the audience.

These included Divers Alert Network (DAN) President Bill Zieffle and DAN Foundation's Virginia Parker from North Carolina, Beneath The Sea's Chairman Bob Rickie, President JoAnne Zigahan, Executive Director Armand Zigahan and Director of Publicity Maria Hults from New York, Theresa Kaplan and Dana Stewart from PADI of Santa Margarita, California, and representatives from Houston's Association of Diving Contractors International (ADCI) and San Diego's Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA).

Leslie introduced some historical perspective regarding the divers who would be presenting during the evening, noting that the combined total diving experience of all the presenters taking the stage during the evening added up to 918 years. If those years were credited to a single diver they would have entered the water in the year 1095! The air would be thick with diving history.

The evening's presentations were launched with a humorous film by the very popular diver, the late Dick Anderson, who Leslie likened to "the Mark Twain of our diving tribe." Kid Diver showed Dick's two-year old son, Rick, diving in the Beverly Hilton swimming pool with an assortment of different diving equipment and drew constant laughter from the audience.

HDS Chairman Dan Orr took the stage next to introduce one of Ernie's most internationally successful students, David Doubilet. Noting that Monterey Bay and also the San Diego area might claim to be the center of California's underwater photography, Santa Barbara had what those places did not. And that was Ernie Brooks, and Santa Barbara was therefore the California center. David presented National Geographic Underwater, highlighting some of his most spectacular images that had been published in their magazines and books.

The next presenters were a group of very accomplished Brooks students who had gone on to stellar professional careers in film and photography. During their time as students they had all worked



Wyland and Stan Waterman at the Friday reception. Image © 2013 Lina Hitchcock.



Underwater photographers Chuck Nicklin & David Doubilet.



Stan Waterman and Laurent Ballesta.



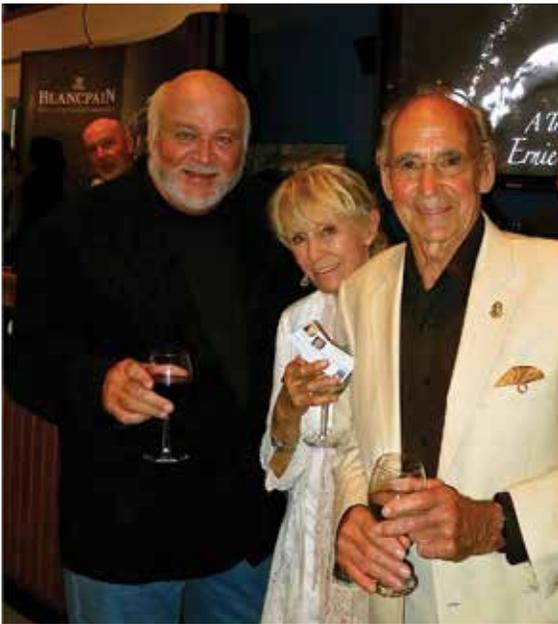
Zale Parry arriving at the Arlington. Image © 2013 Mary Barron.



(Left) Rodney Fox and HDS President Sid Macken.



(Below) Robin MacFadden Parish and Sara Shoemaker Lind at the VIP reception.



Bret Gilliam presented TDI Diving Pioneer & Legend cards to Valerie Taylor and Ernie Brooks. Image © 2013 Lina Hitchcock.

aboard Ernie's boat, *Just Love*, during photographic expeditions throughout the Sea of Cortez, Mexico.

Tim Angulo, Louis Prezelin, Ralph Clevenger, Chuck Davis and Richard Salas had all benefited from Ernie's guidance and stayed in contact with their mentor during the course of their careers.

In introducing them, Leslie likened Ernie to a diving Sergeant Pepper, and the crew of the *Just Love* were the band he taught to play. Louis Prezelin had been a cinematographer aboard *Calypso*, and remains active in the industry; Chuck Davis continues as a successful underwater photographer and IMAX cinematographer; Richard Salas has produced two books on his underwater images (*Sea of Light* and *Blue Visions*); Ralph Clevenger continued a career in underwater photography and continues to teach the Undersea Photography courses at Brooks Institute; and Tim Angulo, who has a very successful career as a Hollywood motion picture cinematographer. Each of these divers presented images from their career.

Ernie Brooks was to close the first half of the program and the organizers had thought long and hard as to who would be the most appropriate person to introduce him. As a pioneer diver in the same era and in the same town as Ernie, the reclusive Bev Morgan agreed to do the honors. As one of the founding members of the HDS, Bev holds the unique distinction of being inducted into the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame, the Commercial Diving Hall of Fame, and the Surfing Hall of Fame. Making a very rare appearance in a tuxedo, Bev noted the influence Ernie had had on several generations of divers as a mentor.

As the master of black and white photography, Ernie's Silver Seas presentation was accompanied by a live narration to some of his most famous underwater images. Still very active in photography, Ernie extended his presentation to include his more recent work in Antarctica and with clouds. It is worth noting that many of these images are included in Ernie's exhibition with Ansell Adams and Dorothy Kerper Monnelly, titled "Fragile Waters," that is currently touring America.

At the end of Ernie's presentation Adam Bossi, the North American brand manager of Blancpain, took the podium. Adam made reference to Ernie's career and all his contributions to the marine environment. In recognition of his work Adam, on behalf of Blancpain, presented Ernie with the new model Fifty Fathoms Bathyscaphe watch.

Ernie's presentation closed the first half of the program. The intermission allowed attendees to view products at booths hosted by Blancpain, HDS and also Richard Salas.



(Above) Hans Hass Fifty Fathom Award recipients, Laurent Ballesta and Ernie Brooks.

(Below) "ALMOST the whole gang at Richard Salas's studio. © 2013 Richard Salas.



The second half of the program opened with a salute to the popular Santa Barbara diver and film-maker Mike deGruy, who lost his life in a helicopter accident while filming in 2012. Harry Rabin and Peck Euwer had compiled the salute from numerous clips from Mike's on-screen appearances, which featured Sir David Attenborough recalling his adventures with Mike when filming the BBC series, *The Blue Planet*.

Santa Barbara is home to some members of the Lloyd Bridges' family and in recognition of Lloyd's influential television role as Mike Nelson, the printed program contained an article titled, "Lloyd Bridges and Sea Hunt, the first underwater TV series."

Pioneering female diver Zale Parry starred in several episodes of that famous TV series and she was introduced to the stage by Lloyd's daughter, Lucinda Bridges. Zale recalled her time working with Lloyd and showed some of her on-screen roles from *Sea Hunt* and from TV commercial appearances of that period. It was a trip down recreational diving's Memory Lane of the late 1950s and early 1960s that many in the audience could connect to.

Introduced by Leslie as "The Queen of Sharks" and the "Diver with the Most Famous Scar in the History of Diving," Australian legends Valerie Taylor and Rodney Fox took the stage to recall their first meetings with Stan Waterman, which took place during the filming of *Blue Water White Death* in the early 1970s. Never short on wit, the pair delivered amusing anecdotes about Stan who joined them on stage, looking very spry for 90 years of age. It was a historic moment as it was a reunion of the three main surviving actors from *Blue Water White Death*.

Stan's presentation was titled Sharks: Blue Water White Death and the exceptional open-water footage from that landmark movie was still able to draw gasps from an audience, some of who no doubt were very familiar with the adventures of modern day divers in TV's "Shark Week."

Introduced as diving's answer to Ricky Gervais, Bret Gilliam was next at the podium and presented a humorous video of Stan in Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico, looking to regain some of his youthful vitality. The video was shot by Sid Macken while on shore in Ensenada between the two HDS Great White Shark dives to Guadalupe Island, Mexico that Stan led in 2012.

Next up to the podium was ocean artist Wyland, whose paintings can be found around the world, and whose series of whaling walls are viewed by tens of thousands of people daily. It was his pleasure to introduce his good friends Howard and Michele Hall, whose underwater filming career has earned them seven Emmy Awards. Noted for their career in IMAX filming, the Hall's screened footage purely from their work off the California coast. Aptly titled California Dreamin', it was a feast of color and beauty.

When putting the Tribute evening program together, Ed and Leslie had discussed who should close the show.

Their feeling was that the evening's presentations would be about the influence Ernie had had on the careers of the presenters, so it would be a "look back" over recent history. Ed, Leslie and Ernie all agreed that the evening should close with a glimpse of the future: What lay ahead, not what lay behind.

After considering several options they decided to approach French diver Laurent Ballesta, who Leslie had worked with earlier in the year when he received the 2013 Hans Hass Fifty Fathoms Award in Germany. As Ernie was the first recipient of the award, there was a good connection between Ernie's career and that of Laurent. It was agreed that it would be Ernie who would introduce Laurent to his first American audience.

Showing images from dives that he and his team spent 10 years training to execute, Laurent took the audience through the challenges of back-to-back daily diving to depths up to 600 feet using rebreathers, and open water decompressing for five and a half hours, while searching for the prehistoric Coelacanth in the Mozambique channel. Laurent took the first ever underwater photos of the Coelacanth by a diver and showed them in his presentation titled Coelacanth: The Living Fossil, which gave a glimpse of the future of deep scuba diving and the obstacles that need to be overcome to achieve it. It was a truly unique presentation that probably nobody in attendance had ever seen before, and will probably never forget.

To close the evening all the presenters took to the stage with Ernie, who received a lengthy standing ovation in recognition of a career that had influenced so many. Ernie walked across the stage and personally thanked each presenter and thanked everyone in the audience for attending. It was a very historical night and one that will long be remembered by those fortunate enough to have attended it.

The program would not have been possible without the valued sponsorship of prime sponsor Blancpain watches, and sponsors Brooks Institute, Divers Alert Network, Dive Training/Dive Center Business/California Diving News, Nautilus Explorer, Conway Family Wines, PADI, Beneath The Sea, Bret Gilliam, Santa Barbara Middle School, Rick Salas, Ask Photography, Kirby Morgan Diving Systems International, Printing Impressions, DEMA, Association of Diving Contractors International, Association of Commercial Diving Educators, John & Vicki Wood of the Ocean Corporation, Women Divers Hall of Fame, The Dirty Dozen, Best Publishing, Truth Aquatics, Heal The Ocean, Bonnie Toth Advertising & Design, Richmond Productions, Marine Marketing & Consulting, Fanta Sea Island Divers, X-Ray Magazine, Santa Barbara Independent, Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, and the Historical Diving Society.

The HDS offers its sincere thanks to Festival Organizer Ed Stetson and to his entire volunteer team. Without them, none of this could have happened. 🐻

**VIP Reception**

Friday, September 13, 2013 - Santa Barbara Maritime Museum

**Santa Barbara Underwater Film Festival 2013**

Saturday, September 14, 2013 - The Arlington Theatre

**Doug Cummings :: Introduction**

**Leslie Leaney, Master of Ceremonies :: Welcome**

***Dick Anderson :: Kid Diver***

*Dan Orr introduces*

**David Doubilet :: *National Geographic Underwater***

*Leslie Leaney introduces*

**Tim Angulo, Louis Prezelin, Ralph Clevenger, Chuck Davis, Richard Salas**

***The Crew of the Just Love***

*Bev Morgan introduces*

**Ernie Brooks :: *Silver Seas***

**INTERMISSION**

***Mike deGruy :: Remembering Our Friend***

*Members of Lloyd Bridges' family introduce*

**Zale Parry :: *Sea Hunt***

*Valerie Taylor & Rodney Fox introduce*

**Stan Waterman :: *Sharks: Blue Water, White Death***

*Bret Gilliam introduces*

***Dos Viejos Gringos Buzos Buscan de Romance en la Noche Mexicana***

*Wyland introduces*

**Howard & Michele Hall :: *California Dreamin'***

*Ernie Brooks introduces*

**Laurent Ballesta :: *Coelacath: The Living Fossil***

**FILM FESTIVAL ORGANIZER: ED STETSON**

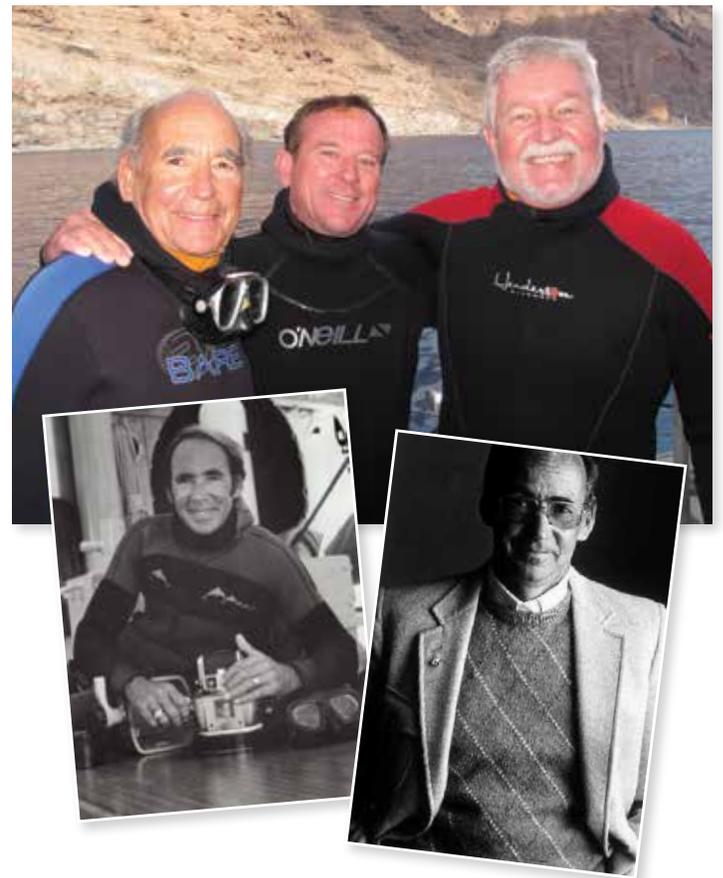
Tickets available from [www.hds.org](http://www.hds.org)



Left: With light commercial diving hat, circa 1971. Center: Aboard private yacht *Brooksea*, 2011. Right: With one of his favorite subjects.



Left: Father and son, Ernie Brooks Sr. and Ernie Brooks II, circa. 1960.



Top: Ernie, Ed Stetson & Dan Orr at Guadalupe Island, October, 2012.  
Bottom left: Ernie preparing for a dive, 1973. Bottom right: Portrait, 2006.

Photos from the Santa Barbara Underwater Film Festival Program - *A Tribute to Ernie Brooks* - September 14, 2013



Left: With Rolleimarin camera system circa 1965. Right: Ernie and daughter Denise in the cockpit of Brooks Institute's K250 submarine, *Snoopy*, Santa Cruz Island, California. Inset: Ernie holds court with a group of students in the galley of the *Just Love*, July 1993.



Top left: Valerie, Stan & Ernie. Bottom left: Valerie signs the vintage "Blue Water, White Death" poster. Center: Leslie Leaney hosts a rousing auction of the priceless poster. Right: Up close and personal with shark at Guadalupe Island.

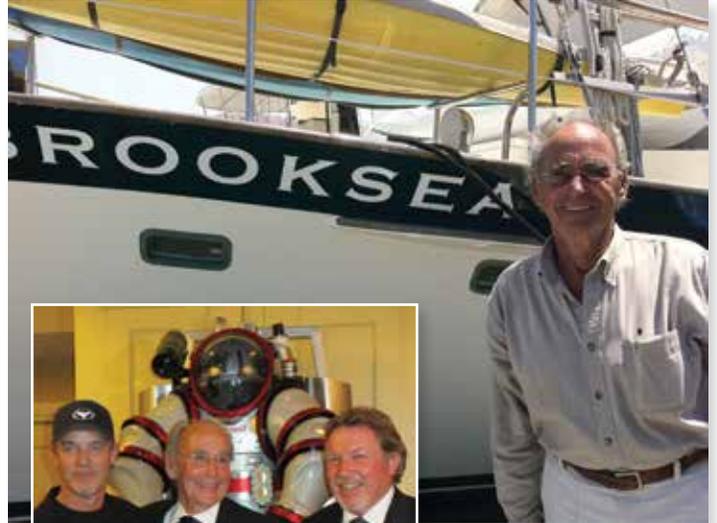


Ernie, Val and Stan relaxing in the hot tub after all day with great white sharks, Guadalupe Island, October, 2012.

Photos from the Santa Barbara Underwater Film Festival Program - *A Tribute to Ernie Brooks* - September 14, 2013



Left to right: Chuck Davis, Ernie Brooks, Ralph Clevenger, Richard Salas & Tim Angulo, the crew of the *Just Love*. (not shown: Louis Prezelin)



Ernie with his private yacht, *Brooksea*, 2012.



Wyland, Ernie and Leslie Leaney with a mockup of the Exosuit at Beneath the Sea, March, 2012.



Ernie with granite statue of himself at Santa Barbara Maritime Museum, 2012.



Michele & Howard Hall with Ernie in Ensenada, Mexico, October, 2012.



Ernie Brooks filming *Purisma* 1964. Photo by Bev Morgan

