

DIVE BRIEFS

The Latest News About **DIVING** and the **OCEAN ENVIRONMENT**

Reef Soldiers and the King of Hollywood

Titanic director helps keep the RV *Heraclitus* afloat for her continuing environmental mission

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY RYAN ALLEN



THE SENTINEL The RV *Heraclitus* has traveled more than 200,000 miles in her ongoing mission to monitor the state and health of the world's coral reefs.

there. When I'm in that place, I'm at peace in a way that's impossible to describe," Cameron says. "It's like nothing that happens during my surface life."

Under the spell of his 33-year aquatic love affair, Cameron joined forces with the Planetary Coral Reef Foundation (PCRF), a nonprofit organization working to map, monitor, restore and preserve coral reefs worldwide. Cameron got involved with the PCRF through its cofounder and president, Abigail Alling. The two sea-loving souls first met at a Mars Society conference in 1989. Alling was present due to her work on the Biosphere II project, for which she served as director of marine systems and scientific director, creating and managing the 900,000-

gallon man-made coral reef tank. When she began telling Cameron about her work with the PCRF, the two bonded over their love of the ocean and diving.

Cameron was mesmerized by Alling's accounts of the RV *Heraclitus*, an 82-foot ship fashioned after a Chinese junk and crewed by 14 volunteers. The PCRF chartered the *Heraclitus* in 1995 to use as its research vessel in an initial five-year expedition to study the health of the world's coral reefs. Although equipped with GPS and a diesel engine, the ship and its international crew are primarily at the whim of the planetary currents and winds. The ultimate goal of the expedition is to create a satellite surveillance system that will observe and monitor the reefs on a global scale, while the *Heraclitus* and her crew serve as the ground troops. The aim is for this information to be made available to scientists as well as the general public.

Academy-Award winning director James Cameron (*Titanic* and *The Abyss*) has been a scuba diver since 1969. As one of the privileged few who witness and interact with coral reefs up close, Cameron has an understanding of the importance of these threatened underwater ecosystems and has become as much a dedicated environmentalist as he is a filmmaker.

"I've dived the great coral reefs and seen the myriad diversified life forms that swarm

Unfortunately, thus far the findings of the crew only confirm the reality of the ailing health of the reefs. Under attack by pollution, overfishing (especially through use of cyanide and dynamite) and rising water temperatures, these delicate ecosystems are disappearing at an alarming rate. For example, over the past few years Florida has lost a staggering 38 percent of its reefs, largely because of pollutant runoff such as sewage.

"This is a global problem," Cameron says. "It's an issue of global scientific interest, and it's everybody's problem to solve together."

To carry out this daunting task, PCRF has partnered with esteemed scientists such as Dr. Sylvia Earle (one of the original inductees into the Women Divers Hall of Fame) and Dr. Phil Dustan (the first person to use satellite imagery to map coral reefs), as well as institutions such as MIT, Scripps Institution of Oceanography and SeaSpace Corporation. And the charter of *RV Heraclitus* has since been extended to "the foreseeable future."

Cameron was on board this past November to greet the *RV Heraclitus* when it was escorted into Marina del Rey, California, by tall ships *Exy* and *Irving Johnson* as part of a homecoming tour. During its time away from home, *Heraclitus* has traveled more than 200,000 nautical miles in the quest to protect and study the world's coral reefs, equivalent to eight circumnavigations of the world.

What's next for Cameron?

"I have to do another definitive dive movie," he says. "Deep-wall divers really got off on *The Abyss*. Now I want to do something that has a little more of an environmental conscience to it that is also a rip-roaring adventure. I'm actually writing a script in that vein."

In the meantime, he'll also keep busy running his Earthship Productions, which does environmental- and ocean-themed documentaries, and trying to get his message out to fellow divers.

"Most divers respect coral reef life and are trained to do so. But it's not just about hitting the reef with your fins. You've got to be a warrior when you're back in your day job. You've got to figure out ways to do that, like by paying attention to whom you vote for."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

on PCRF and updates on the adventures of *RV Heraclitus*, visit www.pcrf.org.

Japanese Midget Sub

Submarine pilot discovers the wreck of a Japanese World War II midget sub, armed with torpedoes, off Pearl Harbor

BY ELLSWORTH BOYD

MARIANNE ALLEN OF DAVENPORT, IOWA, wants to know if a Japanese submarine that attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941 was discovered recently in deep water near the harbor.

More than 60 years after the attack, the 78-foot-long midget submarine was found by Terry Kerby, pilot of the *Pisces IV* deep-diving submersible. The two-man sub — its two torpedoes intact —

rests in 1,200 feet of water about three miles outside the harbor. Scientists from the Hawaii Undersea Research Laboratory were conducting routine training dives in an area described as a "military junkyard" when they made the discovery. Records show that the *USS Ward*, a Navy destroyer patrolling the area in 1941, reported firing on a submarine about an hour before the attack on Pearl Harbor. The captain radioed headquarters: "We have attacked, fired upon and dropped depth charges on a submarine, while operating in a defensive sea area." But the military base and ships in the harbor were never placed on alert; Washington insisted upon confirmation. This was the third of five midget subs that have been found since the attack. None had fired their torpedoes.

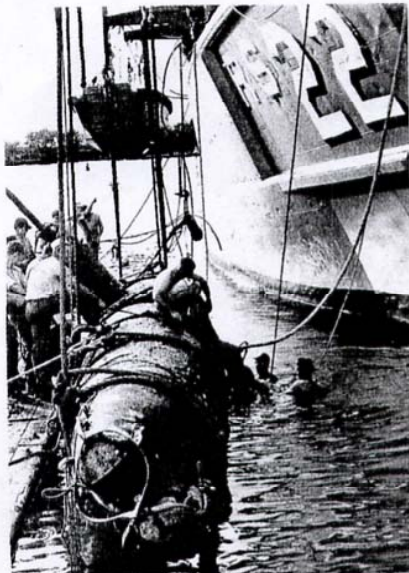


PHOTO COURTESY OF ELLSWORTH BOYD

GERARD CLOSSET OF POMONA, NEW YORK, asks about a "phantom shipwreck." In 1955, as a youngster traveling aboard the *Antilles*, a French liner that cruised from Le Havre, France, to Cartagena, Colombia, Closset became hooked on cruise ships. But he learned that the *Antilles* ran aground and sank in 1971 off Mustique in the Grenadines. He wonders if divers are visiting it.

Bill Tewes of Dive St. Vincent says the

Antilles, sunk in 30 feet of water off the north end of Mustique, is "junked up pretty bad." Part of this passenger liner's unidentifiable superstructure rises out of the water at low tide. Strong currents sweep the area, prompting divers to explore the vessel at slack tide. Most divers still feel it's worth exploring.

CRYSTAL KING OF KENOSHA, WISCONSIN, says she heard that the *Chicora* — a package freighter and passenger ship that sank in Lake Michigan in 1895 — had been found in deep water.

Researchers using remote-control video cameras thought they had located the long-lost mystery steamer. But tech diver Chuck Larsen and his buddies, exploring the wreck in 290 feet of water, dispelled the *Chicora* claim. They say the engine gauge is marked Ferryburg, Michigan, not Detroit, where the steamship was built. They also

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question the size of the wreck. Researcher Brendon Baillod says the wreck might be the smaller *H.C. Akeley*, a wooden steamer that foundered in a storm in 1883. Details of the *Chicora*'s demise are documented in *Ghost Ships of the Great Lakes* by Dwight Boyer.

Send your wreck questions to Ellsworth Boyd, 1120 Bernoudy Road, White Hall, Maryland 21161. Include an SASE for a personal reply. Send e-mail to ellsboyd@aol.com.