

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE OCEANOGRAPHY SOCIETY: MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA; AUGUST 27-30, 1989

By David A. Brooks

IF YOU MISSED Monterey, you missed a historic meeting with a special, almost magical quality. The Inaugural Meeting of The Oceanography Society (TOS) was held at the Doubletree Hotel, adjacent to the excellent facilities of the Monterey Conference Center, just a stone's throw from Fisherman's Wharf and the sunrise bark of seals.

We met in the theater-style Steinbeck Forum for half-day invited sessions organized around multidisciplinary themes. Coordinated poster sessions filled out each day and gave the opportunity for relaxed browsing and scientific exchange. Exhibitors' booths and the posters shared the same room, permitting an active interchange

between science and supporting technology.

The single-theme scientific sessions, cast in the relaxed, Pacific seaside ambience of the hotel and surroundings, gave this meeting an unrushed, informal style that seemed light-years removed from the cacophony of parallel sessions and missed connections. The final assessment awaits analysis of the meeting questionnaire, but an informal survey of about fifty participants yielded unanimous praise for the format and relaxed style of the meeting. It was an auspicious beginning for the Society and a unique moment in the history of our science.

The Meetings Committee, co-chaired by Stan Wilson and Chris Mooers, decided

at the outset to take a different tack. We wanted a format that allowed thoughtful scientific presentations in a comfortable setting, combined with the synergism of spirited poster sessions and the opportunity for small, independent caucuses. Monterey was chosen in part because of its spectacular scenery, but also because of its concentration of marine activity, notably at the Naval Postgraduate School, the Hopkins Marine Station, the Moss Landing Marine Laboratory, the Coast Guard Station, the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute and the Monterey Bay Aquarium itself.

The Aquarium—what a splendid evening buffet they laid on for us! We had grilled chicken, mussels and fettucini among the kelp and sharks; then chocolate-coated strawberries and truffles with the whales. Even the fog cooperated, and the lights of Monterey and Santa Cruz charmed the periphery of the bay. Walking home along Cannery Row, past the memorial to John Steinbeck, I fully expected Ed Ricketts to cut across the street to meet Mack and the boys at the Bear Flag. I gladly would have joined them for a sandwich.

The meeting program was diligently chaired and organized by Rana Fine. Successive days in the three-day format featured themes on stratification, productivity and technology, respectively chaired by Arnold Gordon, Trevor Platt and Melbourne Briscoe. Opening remarks for the respective sessions were delivered by David Packard, Chairman of the Board, Hewlett-Packard Company; John Knauss, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; and Robert Corell, Assistant Director for Geosciences, National Science Foundation. In addition to the science lectures and posters, the first and last sessions included special Technology Advances seminars entitled "Trends in Graphics and Visualization," by James J. O'Brien of Florida State University, and

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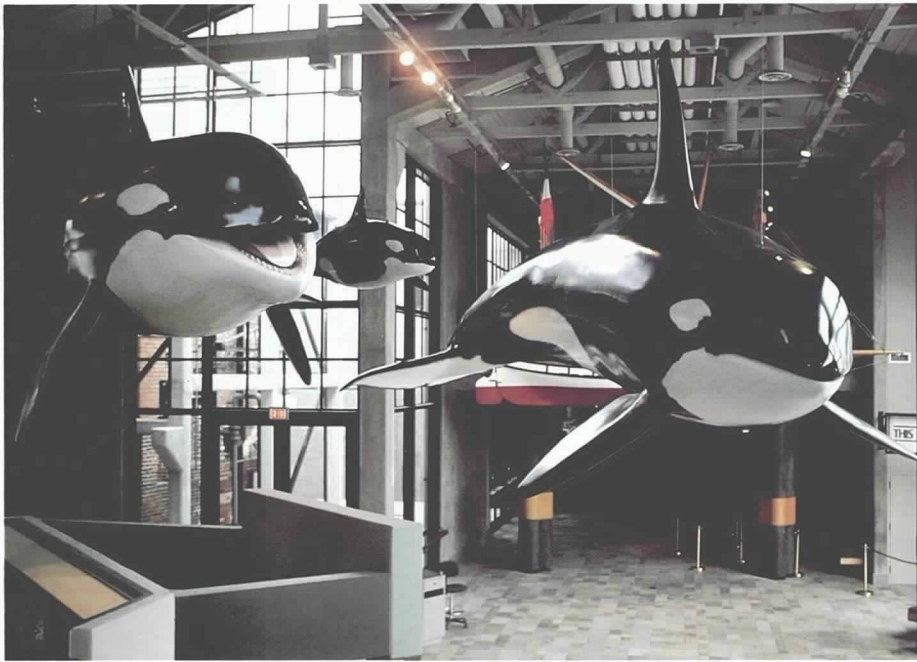
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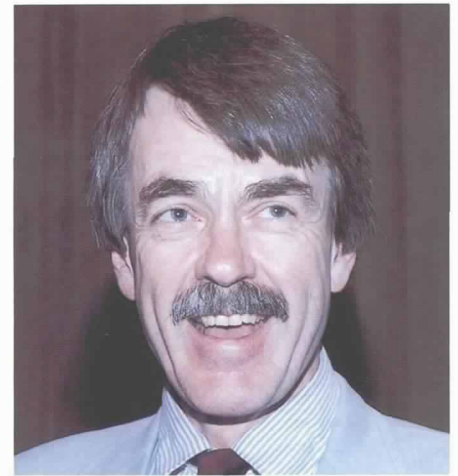
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© MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM

Clockwise from upper left: The touch pool at the aquarium buffet; Rana Fine, Program Chairperson; Stan Wilson, Meetings Committee Co-Chairman; Curt Collins, Local Organizing Committee Chairman; Models of Orca whales in the aquarium foyer.



“Solving Global Ocean Problems by Judicious Supercomputing,” by Bert Semtner of the Naval Postgraduate School.

The afternoon of the second session featured a delightfully entertaining keynote address entitled “Why We Are Oceanographers,” presented by Henry Stommel, who reminded us of the importance of individual creativity and the dangers of exces-

sive bureaucratic viscosity. There followed a brief business meeting, during which the newly-elected officers were formally installed. In fine fettle, we then adjourned to the walled courtyard of the adjacent Pacific House, a carefully restored adobe building that was once the site of dusty bull fights and bear-wrestling matches. In the courtyard we enjoyed a strolling ten-member

mariachi band, which was distinguished by a string section comprising four female violinists, an extraordinary embellishment of the genre. Mozart was not on the musical menu, but I’m sure he would have enjoyed the spirited performance.

Each science session was limited to five

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Arnold L. Gordon

Presently, he serves on the Ocean Studies Board of the National Research Council, as Chairman of the Core Project 2 (Southern Ocean) of WOCE, and on the Scientific Steering Committee of the U.S. WOCE Program. He received the U.S. Antarctic Service Medal in 1978; the ninth Henry Bryant Bigelow Medal (awarded by Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution) in 1984; and was elected a Fellow of the AGU in 1989. □

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invited speakers, which allowed time for comparatively luxurious development of multidisciplinary topics. The talks were of almost uniformly high quality, and the careful attention to detail and presentation for the most part carried over to the allied poster sessions. Although not promoted as such, an overarching theme of global climate change emerged from the meeting, with highlights on inter-ocean deep water circulation; nutrient, trace-metal and optical control of oceanic productivity; and methods for observing sea-floor spreading centers and long-term global warming. Abstracts for the invited talks and poster papers were printed in the Meeting Program, which is still available for five dollars from TOS headquarters while supplies last.

Students are an important part of the Society, and they played an active role in the meeting. It is fitting that the tradition of recognizing the best student paper was established at Monterey. It was a difficult choice, but the judges, lead by Mary Batten, awarded the prize to Gary Kirkpatrick from North Carolina State University for his poster, with co-authors, entitled "Measurement of Photosynthetic Response to Euphotic Zone Physical Forcing." Gary's abstract is published elsewhere in this issue, and the full paper will appear in a subsequent issue.

In a moment of spontaneous inspiration, Mel Briscoe presented awards, drawn from a paper sack with pomp and circumstance, for the two posters best reflecting the use of innovative technology. Again it was a daunting choice. The first prize went to Cynthia Pilskaln and Mary Silver, who received a fine specimen of California Cabernet for their paper, "The Role of Marine Snow in the Mid-Water Regeneration Zone: An *in situ* Study Using an ROV." The "next-first" prize was accepted by Tim Stanton who, in the emerging spirit of

multidisciplinary bliss, received a glittering corkscrew for his paper, "Estimation of Reynolds Stresses Using a Bistatic Acoustic Doppler Profiler." It is not known if the relationship was consummated.

The final registration count was 546, not including 85 spouses. The evening at the Aquarium was enjoyed by 563 persons. About 80 persons registered at the meeting, indicating unusual support for a fledgling society, according to our meetings contractor, Ed Pechan. One hundred forty-seven posters were displayed in the three sessions. The last-minute burst of registrations was a fine vote of confidence for the meeting strategy. In the end, the attendance figures exceeded expectations, although there were a few unsettling weeks in the summer doldrums when enrollment lagged in proportion to the afternoon temperatures.

It's difficult to summarize the impact of this meeting from close perspective, and to attempt to do so is to risk sentimentality and fatuousness. Yet, it seems clear that we have been part of a successful experiment born of a determination to—as David Packard admonished—"do it ourselves," or take the helm of our own vessel. The result produced a special charm and warmth, something akin to the luminosity of a twentieth high school reunion, as one person suggested at the icebreaker gathering. Walter Munk put it closer to our hearts in his closing remarks, given elsewhere in this issue. Paraphrasing, on the final day he said the emotional response to this meeting "is like the feeling one gets after being at sea for three days," which for me means the easy familiarity and close companionship of brothers-in-arms. As Walter said, we all left "elated and a little exhausted." We also learned a little more about the oceans, and maybe about ourselves; and we had a grand time in the process. It will be a treasured experience. □