

Dr. Sylvia Earle

“Her Deepness”

Into the blue in the Deepsee submersible, near Coiba Island. Panama, March, 2012. Photo credit: Shannon Joy

Profile: Sylvia Earle

Age: 77

Family: Daughter Elizabeth Taylor; son John Richie Mead; daughter Gale Mead. Four grandchildren.

Education: B.S. Florida State; M.A. & Ph.D., Duke University; Research Associate, UC Berkeley; Research Associate, Harvard. Numerous Honorary Degrees.

Occupation: (partial list) “Guardian Voice of and for the Oceans” and our “Blue Heart – Hope Spots.” Explorer-in-Residence (first and current), National Geographic Society. Chair, Google Ocean Advisory Council. Record-setting Aquanaut. Oceanographer, more than 100 Ocean expeditions. Former Chief

Scientist (first woman), U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, (NOAA). World Expert Marine Biologist. Author, over 180 scientific publications; adult and children’s books. Keynote Presenter (80+ countries) governments, universities, TV-radio-digital-documentaries. Chair/Advisory Council, Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies. Founder, Mission Blue/Sylvia Earle Alliance Global Initiative. Founding Member/Council, OceanElders. Founder, Deep Ocean Exploration and Research (DOER Marine). Global Ambassador, America’s Cup Healthy Ocean Project.

Honors & Accomplishments: (partial) TIME Magazine’s first “Hero of the Planet.” Library of Congress “Living Legend.”

First and only person to walk without a lifeline on the ocean floor (1,250 ft) for 2 1/2 hours. TED prize winner. Pioneer of Manned Subs. 2011 National Council for Science and the Environment Lifetime Achievement Award. IUCN Patron for Nature. U.S. Department of Interior Conservation Service Award. 2012 Power of One Award, Blue Film Festival, Monterey. National Women’s Hall of Fame. Lindbergh Foundation Medal. July 2012 led underwater expedition, resulted in winning support for NOAA’s Aquarius Reef Base, the world’s last remaining underwater science lab.

Residences: San Francisco and Tampa; oceans



Eye to eye with a sea hare,
Earle explores a kelp forest
at Catalina Island, CA. Photo
Credit: Al Giddings, 1979



Profile by Marsha Felton

It became her “*childhood backyard & laboratory.*” In 2010, Dr. Earle was called to testify before Congress on the Deepwater Horizon Environmental disaster in the Gulf, the largest oil spill in U.S. history.

Dr. Earle stated: “*These are assets worth protecting as if our lives depend on them, because in no small measure, they do.*”

In December 2012, a \$1.4 billion settlement was announced but challenges persist to the Gulf’s ecosystems. As Sylvia works to secure its bio-diversity and critical economic role, she will be joined by other Advisory Council members at the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies, Corpus Christi, Texas.

Ed Harte read Dr. Earle’s book *Sea Change: A Message of the Oceans*, and in 2000 was inspired to donate \$46 million dollars.

“*She wrote the book, I wrote the check!*”—Ed Harte, Founder, Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies

“What we do—or fail to do—in the next 10 years will have a magnified impact on the next 10,000 years. This is the moment. It is not too late...This is the magical point in time when we can act on what we know right now to make a difference to secure an enduring place for us as part of the natural systems that keep us alive.”—Dr. Sylvia Earle

I was privileged to meet the legendary (“Her Deepness”) Dr. Sylvia Earle, pioneering and mesmerizing Oceanographer at an America’s Cup Healthy Ocean Project launch last fall in San Francisco. Prominent leaders and activists had gathered to hear Dr. Earle’s impassioned plea to save our oceans.

This profile offers a glimpse of this extraordinary scientist and explorer who has logged more than 7,000 hours in deep water.

The Changed Gulf of Mexico

When Sylvia was 12, her family moved from New Jersey to Florida’s Gulf Coast. Here she lost her heart to the ocean, “*The sea appeared to be a blue infinity too large, too wild to be harmed by anything people could do.*”

“Onward & Downward”

Fact: 3/4 of the Planet is Blue

Sylvia has transcended gender challenges with courage, brilliance and grace, overcoming decades when women marine scientists were not easily accepted by the scientific world.

She received her first invitation for exploration to the Indian Ocean while earning her Ph.D. at Duke in 1964. *The Mombasa Times* headline read: “*Sylvia Sails Away with 70 Men.*”

Years later, when she surfaced after two weeks leading the all-women Tektite II research team in the U.S. Virgin Islands, media referred to her as ‘aquababe’ rather than ‘aquanaut.’ She pondered, “*would astronauts be referred to as ‘astrohunks’?*”



Top: Jacques Cousteau sharing sea stories with Sylvia Earle at the DEMA conference in Orlando, FL, 1996. Photo credit: Mort and Alese Pechter

Middle: Sir Richard Branson, recipient of the Ted Turner Captain Planet Exemplar Award in 2012 scoops Sylvia Earle, recipient of the award in 2011. Looking on are Turner's daughter, Laura Seydel and her husband, Rutherford Seydel. Taken at the Georgia Aquarium by Spark St. Jude, © Magic on Film 2012

Bottom: Wisdom, a 62 year old Laysan albatross sitting on her most recent egg at Midway Island, learned how to fly at about the same time Earle learned how to dive

Like her friends Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong, Sylvia completed amazing walks, theirs on the moon, hers on the ocean floor—an avalanche of technicolor life surrounding her.

"The biggest problem is that most people haven't known the extent to which the ocean is in trouble," she says. "We know more about space than we do about our oceans, even though the oceans sustain all life on our planet. No water, no life. No blue, no green."

Sylvia has observed the devastating consequences of **70% of coral reefs** vanishing and **90% of big fish** decimated by over-exploitation, greed and lack of awareness.

"The impossible missions are the only ones which succeed."—**Jacques-Yves Cousteau**

"That Was The Week That Was!" Mission Blue/Sylvia Earle Alliance and TED Prize

"The talk of my life," Sylvia says, as a TED (Technology,

Entertainment and Design) prize recipient in 2009 of \$100,000.

Sylvia's wish: "To protect our oceans, inspire awareness, draw public attention and urgently needed action."

Dr. Earle's TED Prize/Mission Blue Voyage to the Galapagos Islands was launched in 2010. Over 100 scientists, business leaders, philanthropists and entertainment icons gathered for an epic adventure.

Spectacular results: \$17 million was raised to support establishing Mission Blue as a global partnership initiative. Sylvia's "wish" enlivened to protect and establish marine protected areas, 'Hope Spots,' large enough to save and restore the ocean, the Blue Heart of the Planet.

OceanElders, a global web-based advocacy platform, originated on this voyage. Board members include Dr. Earle, Sir Richard Branson, Jean-Michel Cousteau, Ted Turner, Neil Young, Gigi Brisson (founder), Jackson Browne, Queen Noor and Prince Albert.

SYLVIA WANTS YOU!

Healthy Oceans | Healthy Humans

*Join 'I Pledge' action campaign, America's Cup Healthy Ocean Project (in this profile)

*Support Sylvia's "Wish" & Mission Blue/Sylvia Earle Alliance:
<http://mission-blue.org/>

Like Mission Blue on Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/missionblue>

*Take a deep dive in Google Earth's Ocean:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppT6y3Bo6Jo&list=PL5797DDB45AFAC0BD&index=5>

*Read Sylvia's prolific books for adults or children.

*Watch motivational documentaries, such as 'Bag It.'

*Eliminate your consumption of single use plastics. Use glass or stainless steel water bottles.

*Be wise about what you eat and use from the sea. Consider giving life in the sea a break.

*Participate in a beach clean-up, i.e., Sea Scavenger Conservancy:
<http://www.seascavenger.org/sanfranciscoshoreshorelinecleanup.html>

*"Get wet!" Enjoy and learn more about the oceans; visit aquariums, especially the big ones, the sea or ocean!

The Same Week of Dr. Earle's TED Talk, Google Earth Embraces Oceans

"I first met Sylvia at a conference in Spain in 2009. She publicly goaded me for not giving the ocean fair treatment in Google Earth. I was instantly inspired by her passionate conviction and articulation for saving the world's oceans from environmental destruction. Our fateful meeting led to Sylvia's major role to make Google Earth complete. She's remarkable and is truly one of my heroes."—John Hanke, VP, Product Google; former VP, Google Earth & Maps

"To protect our oceans, inspire awareness, draw public attention and urgently needed action."

The Ocean Takes Center Stage

Sylvia's family credo: "Whatever we do, make sure we try to leave the world a better place than we found it." Home provided a sanctuary for all wounded creatures and intrepid exploration. Her mother learned to parallel park at age 79 and to dive at age 81!

From Sylvia's first scuba dive at age 17, then swimming with whales, she was transformed by her awareness and passion for exploring and protecting the ocean.

Sylvia's adult children share her passion. Deep Ocean Exploration and Research (DOER Marine) was founded by Dr. Earle in 1992. Today it is helmed by daughter Elizabeth, President/CEO, and son-in-law Ian Griffith, operations manager. They have expanded engineering expertise for submersibles and innovative technologies for accessing deep seas and remote environments, such as Antarctica.

The mechanical arm and other equipment used by film director James Cameron in his recent depth-defining dive was designed and built by DOER.

The 34th America's Cup Healthy Ocean Project & Dr. Sylvia Earle

A global "Call to Action" campaign that embraces the connection between sailing and the ocean. Our overall goal is to create awareness around the problems that face the ocean and inspire individual action around the solutions that exist. Our efforts focus on three core issues: Marine Protected Areas, Sustainable Seafood and Marine Debris/Plastics. Core initiatives include monthly beach clean ups, a Film and Lecture Series bringing global leaders in ocean conservation to the Bay Area, and the 'I Pledge campaign,' encouraging individuals to pledge action on behalf of the ocean. America's Cup Healthy Ocean Project local partners are: Mission Blue, Aquarium of the Bay, The Marine Mammal Center, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuaries, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Save the Bay, Sailors for the Sea, and Thank You Ocean.

"Sylvia's enthusiasm and love for protecting the ocean is absolutely exhilarating. We are truly fortunate to have Dr. Earle as our Global Healthy Ocean Project Ambassador for the 34th America's Cup to awaken, inspire and engage a new generation of sailors and fans to love the ocean as much as we do, and help us turn that energy into actions to protect it!"—Jill McCarthy, Head of Partnerships, America's Cup Event Authority

Please join our 'I Pledge' actions campaign: <http://americascup.com/pledge-blue>

Watch the Healthy Ocean Project video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxpavD6kAdo&list=PLA500136FCA9AEE86&index=1>

"Not many kids can say their grandmothers hang out with barracudas and sea horses!"—grandson Russell Mead quote, Meet My Grandmother: She's a Deep Sea Explorer

On being a scientist and explorer, Dr. Earle advises: *"Ask questions like a young child: 'who, what, why, when, where, how?'* You never stop, you are never bored, you never cease being surprised."

Dr. Earle was recently asked: "Are you still diving?" Sylvia smiled and replied: *"Well, yes, I breathe. So I can dive."*

"We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the

ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop."—

Mother Teresa



ABOUT MARSHA FELTON

"I'm on the Protect the Ocean beat. I cover inspiring people

and uplifting endeavors." Marsha Felton is an accomplished entrepreneur, marketing consultant and freelance correspondent based in San Francisco. Email: marshabf@gmail.com.